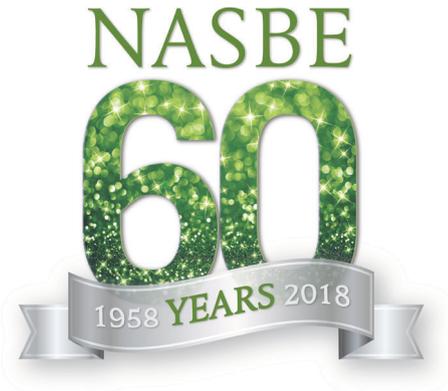


State boards reflect
the history of public
education in America

NASBE
BLOG



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in celebration of NASBE's 60th anniversary.
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NASBE at 60: State Boards Reflect the History of Public Education in America

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2018. From a small band of eight state board members who gathered in Miami in 1958 to today's vibrant national association, NASBE has been a strong partner to the citizen leaders who serve on state boards of education.

Because state boards of education are public bodies, their history in many ways mirrors the history of education in America. The last 60 years have seen momentous changes—from *Brown v. Board of Education* through the Every Student Succeeds Act. Through every major change in the education policy landscape during this period, state board members have been the citizen's voice in education.

This publication looks back at our rich history... and forward to a promising future.

The Roots of Education Governance in America

The founders of our country understood that a democracy required educated citizens. In his Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, Thomas Jefferson linked education with democratic self-government, noting that “laws will be wisely formed, and honestly administered, in proportion as those who form and administer them are wise and honest.”

Education was not seen as a federal responsibility. In the colonial era, wealthy citizens educated their children at home or sent them to private academies. But there were early efforts to create public schools. For example, beginning in 1785, a territory’s admission to the Union was in part contingent on a requirement to create public schools using donated federal land. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 codified this practice: “Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the

“A state is a big responsibility.”

—former Secretary of Education Richard Riley

happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.”

Some local communities established and ran their own schools. Starting in 1647, the Massachusetts Bay Colony required towns to establish and maintain schools that were administered by citizens through their town meetings. Eventually, many communities elected school committees to take over this responsibility. But near the turn of the 19th century, states began to consider how to govern a statewide system of public schools.

In 1784, the state of New York established the Board of Regents to oversee the colleges and academies that had been authorized by the English Crown. Some historians suggest that this was the first state board of education, although it was not until 1904 that the board was given the responsibility of administering all public schools in the state.

In 1809, Virginia’s Governor James H. Tyler attempted to secure public funding for public schools. In what may have been the nation’s first battle over adequate and equitable education funding, Tyler criticized the General Assembly for “its failure, by reason of a fatal apathy and a parsimonious policy, to provide state schools.”

The next year, Virginia established the Literary Fund, designed to fund public schools throughout the state. The Fund’s trustees are considered to be the precursor of Virginia’s state board of education. In 1825, North Carolina also established a Literary Fund with a board of trustees.

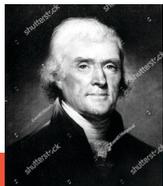


In 1837, Massachusetts Governor Edward Everett suggested that the state had a responsibility to improve public schools for all children. He asked the legislature “whether the creation of a board of commissioners of schools, to serve without salary, with authority to appoint a secretary, on a reasonable compensation, to be paid from the school fund, would not be of great utility.” Horace Mann, then president of the state senate, was named the secretary of the board.

These **early state boards helped establish a culture of citizen leadership of public schools that continues into the 21st century.** Members were responsible for creation of policy and not for day-to-day oversight. And—most critically—they served as the citizen’s voice in education.

State Boards of Education Established before 1900

1784	New York
1810	Virginia
1820–29	North Carolina, Vermont
1837	Massachusetts
1860–69	Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, Texas
1870–79	Colorado, Delaware, South Carolina
1880–89	Arizona
1890–99	Idaho, Montana, Oklahoma, Wyoming



Thomas Jefferson writes Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge.

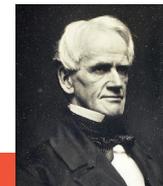
1778

Virginia establishes Literary Fund, a state board of education precursor. North Carolina sets up its fund in 1825.

1810

The New York legislature creates position, state superintendent of the common schools. Annual salary: \$800.

1812



Massachusetts creates a state board, with Horace Mann as its secretary.

1837

The Founding of NASBE

Early state boards of education were sometimes made up of state officials who served *ex officio*. The 1876 Colorado state board consisted of three members: the superintendent of public instruction, secretary of state, and attorney general. In 1890, 20 of the 29 state boards were so constituted.

But in the 20th century, board makeup changed. They began to include a majority of citizens who were not already state officials. These leaders, who usually served without salary, needed support and training so they could effectively represent the citizen's voice in education. They also needed support to understand the issues they were expected to address. Phyllis Blaunstein, who served as NASBE's executive director from 1981 to 1986, quoted a board member who reported that before every board meeting, he was presented with a stack of information "as high as my sofa."

State board members frequently attended the National School Boards Association (NSBA) meetings, where governance issues were discussed. But by the middle of the 20th century, state board members felt a need to form a distinct organization that officially represented their concerns.

At the NSBA meeting in Miami in 1958, eight board members decided to form the Associated State Boards of Education. They elected Steven E. Brogoitti, a member of the Oregon state board of education, as president. Members of the first coordinating committee were Steven Brogoitti (chair), Oregon; Charles Rochelle, Indiana; Robert Manchester, Ohio; Francis Smith, Oregon; Stuart McLaughlin, Colorado; Mrs. Henry Kramer, Minnesota; and George Whitman, Georgia.

Anna Petteys, the first woman to be elected to the Colorado state board of education, and Indiana state board member Charles Rochelle, the first African American to receive a doctor of education degree from the University of California, were the new association's next two presidents.

In 1960, the group met again in Chicago and adopted a constitution and bylaws. They set annual dues of \$100 per state. By 1961, 15 states had joined. In 1963, the group changed its name to the National Association of State Boards of Education. The following year, NASBE met in Austin, Texas, for their first independent meeting.



Charles
Rochelle



Anna Petteys

Much of the work of NASBE in the 1960s focused on state regulations.

NASBE was seen as a place where boards could share information and coordinate activities, and these remain core activities of the association today.

Board members were actively engaged in NASBE’s day-to-day operations and annual conference planning. Conference themes reflected a strong state focus that would not appear again for nearly 50 years (see *appendix A for the full list*):

1966	State Boards as Education Leaders
1967	State Boards Look to the Seventies
1968	State Boards: Agents of Change
1969	Meeting Today’s Challenges
1970	Education: Focus on the State

The creation of a new organization for state boards of education came in the context of big challenges facing states. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which outlawed segregation in public schools, was just four years

old. Little Rock’s Central High School enrolled its first African American students in 1957. By 1958, some states had begun integrating schools.

The Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957—the year before NASBE’s founding—spurring a national conversation about whether the U.S. education system was preparing students for the science and technology needs of the nation. “Many thought the United States found itself second-best in space exploration because its educational system was second-best. It had not produced the experts that an increasingly scientific and technological age demanded,” noted Jeffrey Herold in the *McGill Journal of Education*.



There are 29 state boards.

1890

There are 32 boards. In 12 states, members are wholly or mostly appointed or elected.

1910

Board terms range from 2 years in Kansas to 12 in New York and Alabama.

1920

Colorado abolishes its three-member *ex officio* board and creates an elected board.

1948

In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which offered federal assistance to improve the teaching of math, science, and foreign language; to strengthen counseling and testing in high schools; to promote educational technology; and to provide college loans and fellowships in higher education. NDEA set an important precedent: In the view of Congress and many at the federal level, substantial reform of education had to occur at the national level and be funded by the federal government. The issue would be revisited again and again throughout NASBE's first 60 years.

In 1965, as part of President Johnson's War on Poverty, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The law significantly expanded the federal role in education, particularly in meeting the needs of children living in poverty. Fifty years later, the law remains the nation's most significant piece of education legislation.

Staff Leadership in the 1960s

Executive Secretary William Schabacker (1966–67)

Bernice Frieder (1968–69), Ronald Smith (1969–70)

In 1966, NASBE secured its first permanent office within the Colorado Department of Education. Colorado's Bernice Frieder, NASBE president in 1967 and then its executive secretary, was the only full-time NASBE employee, although she had some assistance from part-time staffers.

As another NASBE president recalled, "No person has done more to put the NASBE kite in the air than Bernice Frieder. As a member of the Colorado State Board, she went to her superintendent and requested a place for this Association. State board staff cleaned out a broom closet somewhere in the state office building and said, 'Here it is.' Bernice moved in and declared it to be the national headquarters of the Associated State Boards of Education."



There are boards in 40 states.

Brown v. Board of Education declares that separate schools are "inherently unequal." *Brown II* in 1955 requires states to integrate schools "with all deliberate haste."

Sputnik is launched.

Eight state members meet in Miami to form the Associated State Boards of Education. U.S. Congress passes National Defense Education Act.

1950

1954

1957

1958

Staff Leadership in the 1970s

Executive Directors: David Tronsgard (1970–74)

Wesley Apker (1975–81)

Move to Washington, DC

In 1975, NASBE opened an office in Washington, DC, in the Hall of States near the U.S. Capitol. In 1977, the Washington office became the official association headquarters. Federal relations were a big reason for the relocation. Presidents starting with Lyndon Johnson reached out to NASBE both formally and informally. In 1970, NASBE President Emil Koehn and Vice President Carl H. Pforzheimer were appointed by President Nixon as initial members of the National Reading Council. In 1975, NASBE President Robert H. McBride attended the first in a series of “Tuesdays at the White House” as part of President Ford’s attempt to create two-way communication between administrative officials and leaders in the field.

In 1979, Emlyn O. Griffith, NASBE president, was invited to represent state boards at the swearing in of Education Secretary Shirley Hufstедler. NASBE had advocated for the creation of a cabinet-level department since 1965, and its first set of policy resolutions adopted in 1970 included a statement of support. **Since the establishment of the U.S. Department of Education, NASBE leaders have met with every U.S. secretary of education.**

“Right from the Start” on Early Childhood Education

NASBE’s focus on early childhood education began early in its history. The association’s first-ever policy resolutions, adopted in 1970, urged “the legislatures of the several states to adopt legislation which provides for mandatory kindergarten programs and the necessary financial support.”

Association changes its name to National Association of State Boards of Education.

1963

The Civil Rights Act is signed.

1964



President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

1965



NASBE holds annual conference in St. Paul, with the theme “State Boards as Education Leaders.”

1966

Board members' concern came at a time when many states, particularly those in the South and West, did not provide state funding for kindergarten programs. In the mid-1960s, only 26 states and the District of Columbia offered some funding for kindergarten programs. Between 1966 and 1975, 19 states began funding kindergarten for the first time. By the late 1970s, only two states—Mississippi and North Dakota—did not fund kindergarten programs.

NASBE's focus on early childhood education did not diminish as state-funded kindergarten became a reality. Instead, the association turned toward expanding preschool opportunities for all children.

At the 1971 Legislative Conference of National Organizations—which included associations of superintendents, state school chiefs, parents, teachers, and local school boards—NASBE put forward proposals urging the U.S. Congress to increase financial assistance to public schools for encouragement of early childhood development programs. By the 1980s, NASBE had secured grant funding to help four states—Alaska, Delaware, Virginia, and Oregon—examine policy options for effective early childhood programming.

In 1988, NASBE created the Task Force on Early Childhood Education. This high-level task force included bipartisan representation that included Arkansas First Lady

Hillary Clinton, Missouri Secretary of State Roy Blunt, Missouri Democratic Representative Kaye Steinmetz, and Republican Cathy Zeuske from Wisconsin. Noted early childhood experts such as Sharon Lynn Kagan from Yale University and David Elkind from Tufts University were also part of the group.

Late that year, NASBE released a report on the task force's work titled "Right from the Start." It laid out a comprehensive plan for incorporating and strengthening early childhood education for all children.

The National Task Force on School Readiness, sponsored by NASBE and co-chaired by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton and Jim Crain, vice president of the New England Telephone and Telegraph Company, released the report "Caring Communities" in 1991. Task force members included U.S. Surgeon General Antonio Novello; John MacDonald, assistant U.S. secretary for elementary and secondary education; Betty Castor, Florida's commissioner of education; and Constance E. Clayton, superintendent of Philadelphia public schools.

NASBE has continued to play an active role in early childhood education. In 2018, four states are part of NASBE's ECE Network, which is collaborating in support of a stronger ECE workforce.



“We recognize that healthy child development begins during the pre-natal period and that education begins at birth. We need to create a comprehensive system of early childhood services including parent education and family support programs; child care; and health, social, and mental health services. We believe public schools and other early childhood programs need to work together to build this system through joint planning, advocacy, and partnerships in sponsoring services. Just as public schools have developed partnerships with businesses and higher education institutions that accept their graduates, public schools and the early childhood community need to work together.”

—“Right from the Start: The Report of NASBE’s Task Force on Early Childhood Education” (1988)

A Board Member’s Advice on Listening

“Board members must deal with the realities of the day and plan for the future. They must “think young” because the education they are responsible for is not for them but for the new generations. They must “think big” because our world is getting smaller, and our children will be dealing with the whole of it.

You owe it to yourself to lower your voice and listen to what the young are telling you, to try to understand the feelings of teachers, to think of adapting the curriculum to the living. Sort out your values. Hold those most dear. Let the trivia go.”

—Helen Ure, vice chairman, Utah State Board of Education, NASBE FOCUS newsletter, July 1970

<p>NASBE membership includes 50 state boards and 3 territorial boards.</p>	<p>NASBE President Emil Koehn, North Dakota, and Vice President Carl H. Pforzheimer, New York, named initial members of President Richard M. Nixon’s National Reading Council.</p>	<p>NASBE has two full-time employees. Member services include an annual conference, four regional conferences, and a newsletter published 10 times annually.</p>	<p>Congress passes the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, later reauthorized as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.</p>
<p>1969</p>	<p>1970</p>	<p>1972</p>	<p>1975</p>

Staff Leadership in the 1980s

Executive Directors: Wesley Apker (1975–81), Phyllis

Blaunstein (1981–86), Gene Wilhoit (1986–93)

Proactive Engagement on AIDS Education

While state boards largely focused on education issues, by the early 1980s, they also confronted health challenges that students and schools were facing. In 1981, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) noted that 328 people had contracted a disease that they identified as possibly a strain of pneumonia. By 1989, more than 100,000 people were reported to be infected with a disease that by then was known as AIDS.

Some of those infected were students and teachers, and there were no protocols and no consensus on what schools should do. When Ryan White contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion, local school officials were unwilling to allow him to return to class. The state eventually intervened, but the case put a human face on a problem schools were addressing alone.

State boards struggled to find ways to help schools and districts. Unsurprisingly, they turned to NASBE, which had a decade of experience on school health policy and had identified board leaders and experts in crafting science-based school health policy.

NASBE met with Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to discuss how schools should respond, and NASBE and the American Medical Association co-sponsored a meeting to explore potential community responses. NASBE surveyed state boards to determine what policies and procedures were in place. Executive Director Phyllis Blaunstein reported that, while states were taking action, “some of the more difficult issues [were] not being addressed.”

Under a CDC grant, NASBE published “Effective AIDS Education: A Policymaker’s Guide,” to encourage states to develop a comprehensive approach and ask tough questions: Should AIDS education be mandated or recommended? What grade levels should receive instruction? How should schools address the concerns of parents who objected to AIDS instruction?

Many questions that applied to other curriculum standards applied here, the guide said. Who was qualified to teach AIDS education? How would they be trained and evaluated?

States and local districts were encouraged to convene parents and experts as they developed local plans. The publication also recommended working with agencies such as health departments.

Finally, NASBE launched a public information campaign. In 1989, NASBE President Connie Hubbell testified to Congress that state boards “are in a unique position to build a consensus among parties seeking to have an impact on issues and policies on issues of AIDS.”

In 1989, NASBE also released “Someone at School Has AIDS,” a guide to developing policy on AIDS at schools. UNESCO praised it as “an example of good practice both within the United States and internationally,” noting that it “served to guide the efforts of education authorities involved in HIV/AIDS policy development in many states and countries of the world.”

Today, 33 states mandate HIV education. The Americans with Disabilities Act would eventually extend protections to students with HIV/AIDS. But for states that had followed NASBE’s recommendations, this change codified policies already in place.

Asking questions, convening experts and concerned parties, and developing policy based on research—sound familiar? Successful boards

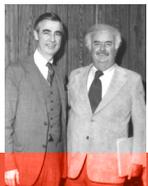


take the same approach today. Issues may change, but leadership practices remain the same. They are still how state boards exercise their place as the citizen voice in education.

Staff Leadership in the 1990s

Executive Directors: Gene Wilhoit (1986–93)

Brenda Welburn (1993–2012)



Bob Keeshan (Captain Kangaroo) and Fred Rogers address NASBE’s annual conference.

1978



Vice President Mondale addresses CCSSO and NASBE’s joint legislative conference. Shirley Hufstедler is sworn in as the nation’s first secretary of education.

1979

NASBE moves to Alexandria, Virginia, the same year that the U.S. Department of Education publishes “A Nation at Risk.”

1983

Thomas N. Urban, Iowa, is named the first Policy Leader of the Year.

1985

Changing Education Governance

Brenda Welburn, who served as NASBE's executive director from 1993 to 2012, is the longest serving executive in the organization's history. She first came to NASBE as its director of governmental affairs in 1984, then served as deputy executive director from 1988 to 1993.

During her nearly 30 years at NASBE, Welburn saw a real evolution in the relationship between state boards and other policymakers. "At the start, governors left boards alone. Board members had positions that were like the Supreme Court—once board members were appointed, they were charged to do the right thing," she said.

That changed when education became a critical issue for voters. "Governors had the 'a-ha' moment," said Welburn. "They would no longer leave the boards alone." Today,

governors expect to appoint most of the members of the state board rather than leaving their predecessor's selections in place.

In Welburn's first address to state board members as executive director, she set out her enduring philosophy when she said, "I will challenge you to be visionary in your commitment to this nation's students. I will challenge you to provide the absolute best education available to every child in your state—the one with the fresh scrubbed, eager face and the one with the dreadlocks. The one with the correct answers and the one with the bad attitude."

Welburn believed that schools need to "educate the whole child in the arts, civic learning, global learning. The purpose of schooling is more than just reading, writing, computing. School boards need to understand what students need to know and be able to do. And then we need to mesh that with policies that direct the training and licensing of principals and teachers."

"Good state boards are not political—they are about setting goals," she advised boards and governors. She strongly advised boards to schedule regular meetings—at least twice a year—with the governor. She also

NASBE meets with Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to discuss how schools should respond to the AIDS epidemic.



NASBE breaks ground on headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, where it will remain until 1999.



NASBE launches publications division. In the same year, NASBE President Jolly Ann Davidson appears on NBC's "Today Show" to introduce the report "Helping Youth Say No."

1986

1986

1987

encouraged boards to get to know legislators. She recalled one state board that scheduled a dinner with newly elected legislators prior to the legislators' orientation.

State boards, she believes, “are the unsung heroes—committing time and energy, and sometimes getting beat up for their efforts. If no one else says ‘thank you’ in the service of children, NASBE does.”

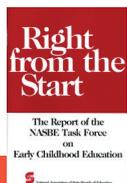
“It is a joy to see state boards in action,” Welburn said. “[The members] are energetic, and NASBE has loved working with them. They are interesting and dedicated.”

Two examples of just such dedicated action will suffice to illustrate the powers of state boards to transform public education: Kentucky and Kansas.

State Boards in Action: Kentucky Raises the Bar

In the 1980s, few people would have predicted that Kentucky would make a major, statewide commitment to improving education that would secure the state a national leadership role. The state ranked 50th in the nation in adult literacy and the percentage of adults with a high school diploma, 49th in college graduates, 42nd in per pupil expenditure, and 41st in its pupil-teacher ratio. As former Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday observed, “There was nowhere to go but up.”

Education in the state was highly politicized and its funding sorely inadequate. When 66 poor school districts won a lawsuit that argued their funding was inadequate, the state had to develop a new governance system for public education in Kentucky.



NASBE publishes “Right from the Start,” report of Task Force on Early Childhood Education.

1988

NASBE President Connie Hubbell testifies on state board role on AIDS-related policies. President George H. W. Bush convenes Education Summit.

1989

First Lady Barbara Bush, strong champion of literacy and of empowering families through literacy, is named NASBE’s Policy Leader of the Year.

1989

Mississippi Governor William Winter, known for his strong support of public education and racial reconciliation, is named NASBE’s Policy Leader of the Year.

1991

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), which passed in 1990, made major changes. Instead of an elected superintendent, the Kentucky Board of Education would appoint a professional educator as the commissioner. “That certainly raised the profile of the state board of education and made it clear it was an organization with power,” said board member Gary Houchens.

And more than a decade before the federal law No Child Left Behind was passed, KERA put in place a system of standards and accountability. “This was Kentuckians saying, ‘We want our schools to be better,’ ” Holliday said. A broad coalition of local school districts, state legislators, state board members, and successive governors kept the state moving forward over time. “It took all of those different constituencies working together with a common commitment to educational progress to make the progress we have made,” he said.

For the state to “really push forward, education needed to be professionalized and protected against political interference at both the state and local level,” said Brigitte Blom Ramsay, executive director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence. By marshalling the efforts of citizens across the state, the Prichard Committee became an important force in the state’s ongoing school improvement and remains so today.

Since 1990, the state has set meaningful, rigorous state standards, emphasized helping students leave school prepared for college and a career, and focused on school improvement.

Those are ambitious goals. Progress made during any one legislative term or a single governor’s administration is insufficient to attain them. Houchens said that policymakers must see their job as building on progress rather than starting from scratch every four years. Balance is key, he added. “We have to jealously guard the progress we’ve made but at the same time be very real about the progress that still awaits us. Sometimes there’s a tension there.”

“All decisions we make should be in service to that positive trajectory that we have committed ourselves to,” Ramsay added. “Our story is not yet complete, but we are continuing to write it.”

State Boards in Action: Kansas Engages Citizens in Conversations on a Vision for Education

It’s hard to be the citizen’s voice in education without listening to citizens, an idea enshrined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which encouraged state policymakers to engage community leaders in discussion about their hopes and dreams for the next generation.

Before ESSA was signed into law in 2015, the Kansas state board, for one, had already begun to engage people across their state in a wide-ranging series of conversations about what a Kansas high school graduate should know and be able to do. Working with the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), the state board formulated a vision: All Kansas students can be successful if they are given the necessary skills to succeed. KSDE staff then sought input on what was necessary to give students the skills to achieve postsecondary success.

Before the initiative began, “there were many voices telling the state board and the legislators what they could and could not do,” said then state board chairman Jim McNiece, “but the voice of parents, business, and local stakeholders wasn’t part of the process.” To kick off the planning process, 290 focus groups were held across the state.

*“With its landmark study, **Winners All**, NASBE became the first major general education association to recognize the need to include students with disabilities as much as possible within general education settings. The impact of this study has been, and continues to be, substantial.”*

—Tom Hehir, director of the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education



NASBE publishes “Winners All,” which outlines ways to foster full inclusion of students with disabilities in general education settings.

1992



Brenda Welburn is named executive director, a position she holds until 2011.

1994

NASBE launches its first web page (www.nasbe.org).

1996

Respondents did not downplay the need for students to have strong academics. They wanted their children to grow up to be good citizens, good neighbors, and contributors to their communities. Students need skills that are just as important as academics—taking responsibility, showing respect, engaging in hard work. In particular, local business leaders said it was important for schools to focus more on collaboration with employers through sponsorships, internships, job shadowing, and increased community service opportunities.

Since then, the board and KSDE have worked to implement the vision. And even in a political climate that anyone would say is challenging, they are coming together to work on shared goals. In advocating for the vision they have named Kansans Can, they are joined by the business community, parents, and civic leaders of all stripes, who embrace the goals because they helped form them.

State Boards: Citizen's Voice

In sum, “state boards play a very important role,” said former governor and U.S. secretary of education Richard Riley. “First of all, it’s really important for the state board chair and members to work well with the chiefs, the secretary of education, and the governor.

“People will argue that [the federal government] ought to do more of this or do more of that, [but] the state is responsible for public education,” he added. “That doesn’t mean there’s not a role for the federal government, but the responsibility, you have to remember, is a state responsibility.”

“State boards are the citizen’s group—the citizen’s voice,” Riley said. “Saying that [NASBE] is the citizen’s voice is a fine way to describe state boards of education. I hope the state boards would take that to heart.”

Era of Increasing Federal Power

The 1980s saw the pendulum swing, nonetheless, toward increased federal prescription of education policy. In 1983, the U.S. Department of Education published *A Nation at Risk*. This report included the ominous language, “If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.” *A Nation at Risk* elevated education in the national discourse and set in motion a consolidation of education power and authority at the federal level that lasted for a generation.

In 1989, President George H.W. Bush and the nation’s governors proclaimed that the country needed to set educational goals on issues ranging from early childhood education to adult literacy and to hold itself accountable for meeting those goals. That agreement was forged during a summit in Charlottesville, Virginia. For only the third time in American history, the White House met with chief executives of nearly every state to discuss a single policy issue.

Subsequent reauthorizations of ESEA stressed the need for states to develop standards and assessments. The 2001 reauthorization, known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was the high-water mark for this approach. Passed with bipartisan support, NCLB required states to assess students in grades 3-8 annually in reading and math. They had to report results for the entire student population and for particular subgroups, including English learners and students in special education, racial minorities, and children from low-income families.

While NCLB received most of the subsequent animus for excessive federal control of education, it was really the 2008 recession that marked the peak of federal intervention. In 2008, the economy lost 2.6 million jobs, and unemployment reached its highest level since 1945. The 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided \$100 billion for the Department of Education, \$53.6 billion of which was earmarked to “prevent layoffs and cutbacks” in local school districts.

Included in ARRA was a small investment—just \$4.35 billion—to spur innovation and reforms in states. The Race to the Top (RTT) grant program

awarded points to states for adopting policies for developing performance-based evaluations for educators, common standards, turning around the lowest performing schools, and building and using data systems. States were so cash-strapped that nearly all of them applied. In the aftermath of RTT, “all states experienced a marked surge in the adoption of education policies.”

Over time, state opposition to the increased federal role grew. States used the Tenth Amendment to argue that the federal government lacked the authority to withhold federal funding based on education policy decisions made at the state level.

At the same time, NASBE worked to influence federal policy where it could. In 1989, as President George H.W. Bush and his aides prepared for the Education Summit, NASBE President Roseann Bentley met with the president to discuss goals in education.

Education Secretary Richard Riley, South Carolina, receives NASBE’s Distinguished Service Award.

Supported by the CDC’s School Health Branch, NASBE develops the State School Health Policy Database.



NASBE publishes its first issue of the *State Education Standard*.

No Child Left Behind Act is signed.

1997

1998

2000

2001

NASBE continued to emphasize its commitment to equity and accountability. In a policy adopted by the Delegate Assembly in 1998, NASBE reaffirmed that states should develop accountability systems that

- set clear goals for student achievement and performance;
- held schools accountable for the performance of all students;
- used multiple measures producing accurate, meaningful, and valid results; and
- sent consistent messages about the state's educational goals.

“NASBE is strongly committed to holding high expectations for all students and eliminating persistent disparities in achievement performance among students of different racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups. NASBE believes all children are capable of learning at high individual levels when supported by a receptive and nurturing community, quality instruction, and rigorous curriculum.”

—NASBE Public Education Positions,
adopted by the Delegate Assembly, 2012

Staff Leadership in 2000–2018

Executive Directors: Brenda Welburn (1993–2012)

Jim Kohlmoos (2012–13), Kris Amundson (2013–18)

Power Returns to States

NCLB was to have undergone reauthorization in 2007, but Congress was unable to do so despite efforts by the Obama administration and both parties. Meanwhile, under NCLB all schools were supposed to reach proficiency by 2014. Because they had not, NCLB allowed the secretary of education to grant waivers from certain provisions of the law. Both Secretary Margaret Spellings and Secretary Arne Duncan used waivers to address state concerns.

After a White House meeting, NASBE welcomed the waivers as a temporary solution but pressed the administration and Congress to pass a reauthorized education bill. “The law passed 10 years ago no longer reflects the progress states have made preparing America’s students for life beyond high school,” Welburn said. “It is simply unrealistic and unrelated to the work of states today,” she noted. “The adoption of a revised law is critical to the work of state boards as the primary adopters of college- and career-ready standards, accountability systems, and teacher and principal standards in most states.”

NASBE began to lay the groundwork for the next reauthorization of ESEA. Working with its Government Affairs Committee and collaborating with a host of like-minded national education organizations, NASBE pressed for the new legislation to embody state boards' desired aims:

- ensure equity and excellence;
- establish high expectations;
- promote meaningful accountability;
- support state and local leadership and capacity building; and
- promote aligned and coherent birth through higher education systems.

In December 2015, ESEA was finally reauthorized with broad bipartisan support. ESSA marked a dramatic shift in education governance. The *Wall Street Journal* called it “the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter century.”

“The federal government must recognize...the lead role of the states in education reform and the central role they play in education policy. States are the catalysts for innovation in public education, and state boards are responsible for adopting and implementing effective policies nationwide.”

—NASBE response to the State of the Union address, 2012

Sen. Johnny Isakson, former member of the Georgia state board, is named NASBE’s Policy Leader of the Year.



U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings addresses NASBE members.

Education Department launches Race to the Top grant program.

NASBE awards grants to seven states to help them develop school nutrition policies.

2006

2007

2009

2012

Kristen Amundson, NASBE's executive director, applauded the bill's passage. "We know that ensuring that every child is prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship will be a challenge for states to address in the coming years, particularly as our schools become more diverse.

The nation's state boards of education stand ready to redouble their commitment to educational equity. ESSA gives the policy certainty they need to make long-term plans to better support teachers, students, and schools."

Under ESSA, state boards play a primary role in developing a state accountability system, and in 31 states, state boards have primary authority over the state summative assessment. In 45 states, the state board adopts the learning standards on which the state's summative assessment should be aligned. Nearly all state boards have primary responsibility for setting the quality standards for teachers and school leaders, and in 32 states the board has sole responsibility for teacher licensure. Most boards have rulemaking authority over education data and data privacy.

Following passage of ESSA, NASBE began to work closely with state boards of education on implementing the new law. The association issued a series of policy updates outlining ways states should use ESSA to ensure coherence across education policies in a number of areas: student and educator expectations, curriculum design, educational materials, measures of effectiveness, accountability, and professional development.

"ESSA's success will largely be judged by how well SBEs thoughtfully and strategically implement it over the long term," said Robert Hull, then director of NASBE's Center for College, Career, and Civic Readiness. "If boards start with that in mind, they will exemplify the proactive leadership that will truly benefit students and schools."

Looking to the Future

Mississippi board member John Kelly was chair of NASBE's board in its 60th year: "State board members genuinely care about the communities in which they live," he said. "They see board service as an opportunity to make their communities better places to live and raise families. They have a high regard for public education, and they want to use it as a way of improving the outcomes for people in their state.

"I came on the state board in 2012, recruited by then Governor Haley Barbour. As an African American who grew up in Mississippi, and as the son of a dirt farmer and a farm owner, I learned the value of education. I learned how education and hard work could change the trajectory of one's life.

“Being a state board member has been one of the most meaningful volunteer roles in which I have served,” Kelly said. He describes the relationship among members on his board as one of mutual respect: “I don’t mean that we agree on all of the issues. But what we do agree on is that the children of Mississippi are important. We also have been able to remain cohesive because we have allowed our strategic plan to guide our work. Every item that goes on our board agenda has a strategic goal tied to it.”

With the passage of ESSA, more power and authority—and responsibility—returned to states like Mississippi. “State boards have been given the opportunity to be responsible for the destinies of their own education systems and not have politicians in Washington, DC, make policies for their states,” Kelly said. “Accountability and governance are a huge responsibility. I hope that every state will make sure it does not abdicate that authority. Because if we fumble the ball, we will again see the federal government come in and tell us what needs to be done and how it needs to be done.”

State boards have an opportunity to focus on equity and achievement gaps in every school district, he said. “Take a look at the data your state collects.

Look at what those data say about special needs children, at children of color. Make sure that all children have the opportunity to do the very best that they can do.”

“NASBE is the only organization that has positioned itself to train, educate, and inform state board members—really prepare them for the work ahead,” Kelly added. **“We have the opportunity to look at best practices from all over the country, apply those best practices on our individual boards, and share them with other states.”**

NASBE’s 60th anniversary coincides with this time of renewed importance for states and state boards of education. As education policy expert Jack Jennings noted in the *Phi Delta Kappan*, “ESSA diminished the federal government’s role in school reform, and it gave much more authority to states to implement the law, measure their students’ progress, intervene in their lowest performing schools, and evaluate the work of their teachers and principals.”

Kristen Amundson, a former Virginia state legislator, is named executive director of NASBE.



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan addresses NASBE’s Legislative Conference.



NASBE develops standard-based policy alignment model. ESSA is signed.

NASBE relaunches its Early Childhood Education Network, focusing on workforce issues.

2013

2014

2015

2016

NASBE responded to the changing environment with a new strategic plan. Adopted by the Board of Directors in September 2018, it articulates a clear mission and core values for the organization that will guide the organization for years to come (see page 25):

We believe that **state boards of education are uniquely suited to play a central role in a changing educational policy environment.** We believe NASBE can provide the guidance, action-oriented analysis, and partnership with a community of peers to assist them.

NASBE has been a source of reliable, unbiased analysis, partnership, and action-oriented guidance for state boards for 60 years. It continues to give state boards a voice at the federal level and remains the only national organization committed to bringing state board members together to share solutions and ideas in a nonpartisan setting.

“NASBE enters its seventh decade at a critical time for states and state boards of education,” Amundson observed. “The need for citizen leadership and nonpartisan, research-based policymaking is greater than ever. That is what NASBE has advocated since its founding, and that is the reason I believe the future is bright.”



State Board Insight website chronicles state board agendas across the country. U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos addresses NASBE Legislative Conference.

2017

NASBE launches first cohort for the Leading for Equity and Excellence Project (LEEP). The association adopts new strategic plan.

2018

NASBE: Who We Are

NASBE is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that elevates state board members' voices in national and state policymaking, facilitates the exchange of informed ideas, and supports members in advancing equity and excellence in public education for students of all races, genders, and circumstances.

NASBE Mission Statement

NASBE develops, supports, and empowers citizen leaders on state boards of education to strengthen public education systems so students of all backgrounds and circumstances are prepared to succeed in school, work, and life.

NASBE Core Values

We believe in equity and excellence:

We believe that students of all races, genders, and circumstances deserve the supports they need to thrive in school.

We believe all students can learn at high levels and must have the opportunity to do so through state policies that address their diverse learning needs.

- **We prioritize state leadership of public education:** We believe that state boards of education, in partnership with chief state school officers, governors, and legislatures, are best positioned to craft, promote, and oversee state education policies.
- **We empower citizen leaders:** We build the capacity of state board members to question, convene, and act boldly with and for students, educators, and families.
- **We elevate evidence in policymaking:** We ground our resources, tools, and services in the strongest evidence available and help our members make informed decisions in the best interest of students.
- **We build community:** We facilitate productive dialogue and nonpartisan exchange among members with diverse perspectives, creating lasting channels for the sharing of evidence-based strategies and solutions.
- **We collaborate:** We promote respectful collaboration, both among our members and between our members and the broader education community.

NASBE Presidents/Board Chairs

1959	Steven E. Brogoitti (OR) *	1981	Henry Pogue IV (KY)	2003	Alma Allen (TX)
1960	Anna Petteys (CO) *	1982	Rosemary K. Clarke (NV)	2004	Robert Lazard (IN)
1961	Charles Rochelle (IN)	1983	Joanne Goldsmith (MD)	2005	Kim Burningham (UT)
1962	Robert Manchester (OH)	1984	Jolly Ann Davidson (IA)	2006	Diane Fladmo (MT)
1963	Robert Manchester (OH)	1985	Mark Fravel, Jr. (VA)	2007	W. Bradley Bryant (GA)
1964	Edward Jennings (TN)	1986	Kenneth Hilton (DE)	2008	Karabelle Pizzigati (MD)
1965	Edward Jennings (TN)	1987	Clifford Freeman (OR)	2009	Kenneth Willard (KS)
1966	Francis Smith (OR)	1988	Richard Owens (GA)	2010	Lowell Johnson (WV)
1967	Bernice Frieder (CO)	1989	Roseann Bentley (MO)	2011	Allan Taylor (CT)
1968	Pierce J. Ross (WV)	1990	Philip Swain (WA)	2012	Gayle Manchin (WV)
1969	Wayne Shaffer (OH)	1991	A. Walter Esdaile (CT)	2013	Patrick Guida (RI)
1970	Emil Koehn (ND)	1992	Patricia Hamner (WV)	2014	Jane Goff (CO)
1971	James Rowland (PA)	1993	Connie Hubbell (KS)	2015	Mary Lord (DC)
1972	Carl Pforzheimer, Jr. (NY)	1994	Felipe Veloz (OR)	2016	James McNiece (KS)
1973	Virla Krotz (CA)	1995	Maud Dahme (NJ)	2017	Jay Barth (AR) **
1974	Richard Bye (MN)	1996	Patricia Hayes (CO)	2018	John Kelly (MS) **
1975	Robert McBride (DE)	1997	Thomas Davis (MO)		
1976	James Connor (SC)	1998	Hon. James Dawson (NY)		
1977	Grant Anderson (WA)	1999	Rene Nunez (TX)		
1978	Louis Smerling (MN)	2000	Judy Stiegler (OR)		
1979	Adrienne Bailey (IL)	2001	Corine Hadley (IA)		
1980	Emlyn Griffith (NY)	2002	Betty Preston (MO)		

* *president of the Associated State Boards of Education*

** *In 2017, NASBE changed the bylaws and renamed the office of "President" as the "Board Chair."*

Appendix A. NASBE Annual Conferences

1964	Austin, TX		
1965	Portland, OR		
1966	St. Paul, MN	“State Boards as Education Leaders”	
1967	New York, NY	“State Boards Look to the Seventies”	
1968	Salt Lake City, UT	“State Boards: Agents of Change”	
1969	Los Angeles, CA	“Meeting Today’s Challenges”	
1970	New Haven, CT	“Education: Focus on the State”	
1971	Atlanta, GA	“State Board Responsibilities in Financing Education”	
1972	Des Moines, IA	“State Opportunities for Excellence”	
1973	Portland, OR	“Priorities and Goals of Education”	
1974	New York, NY	“Challenges to State Board Effectiveness”	
1975	New Orleans, LA	“Who Controls Education?”	
1976	Minneapolis, MN	“Restoring Public Trust in Education”	
1977	San Francisco, CA	“The Future Is Now”	
1978	Hershey, PA	“Broadcasters Are Educators, Too”	
1979	Williamsburg, VA	“The Past (and Present) as Bridge to the Future”	
1980	Denver, CO	“Frontiers in Education: A Decade of Decision”	
1981	Reno, NV	“Education and the Law”	
1982	Boston, MA	“Who’s Running Public Education?”	
1983	New Orleans, LA	“The Educated Person: A Definition and Commitment”	
1984	Dearborn, MI	“1984 and Beyond: Education for a Free Society”	
1985	Seattle, WA	“Educational Options: Scanning the Globe”	
1986	Baltimore, MD	“Scenario 2000”	
1987	Lexington, KY	“The Constitution: The Foundation of Liberty and Learning”	
1988	Chicago, IL	“Educating Everyone: The Challenge of Diversity”	
1989	Honolulu, HI	“Changing Schools, Changing Roles”	
1990	Newport, RI	“Expanding Visions”	
1991	Biloxi, MS	“Assessment, Achievement, and Accountability”	
1992	Cincinnati, OH	“Bold Strokes: Shaping the Future”	
1993	Portland, OR	“35th Anniversary”	
1994	San Antonio, TX	“Children, Change, Achievement”	
1995	Pittsburgh, PA	“Building Leadership for Better Schools”	
1996	San Francisco, CA	“Learning at Its Best”	
1997	Kiawah Island, SC	“(E): An Essential Experience”	
1998	Denver, CO	“Connecting the Nation’s Policy Leaders”	
1999	New Orleans, LA		
2000	St. Louis, MO	“Promise, Policy, and Performance: The Gateway to Excellence”	
2001	San Diego, CA	CANCELED	
2002	San Diego, CA	“Realizing America’s Dream”	
2003	Baltimore, MD	“Effective Leadership in Challenging Times”	
2004	Orlando, FL	“Higher Goals, Higher Achievement: A Vision for Every Child”	
2005	Phoenix, AZ	“Keeping the Public Engaged in Public Education”	
2006	Louisville, KY	“The Changing Face of Public Education”	
2007	Philadelphia, PA	“Public Education, the Foundation of a Democratic Society”	
2008	Arlington, VA	“Celebrating Fifty Years of State Board Leadership”	
2009	Cincinnati, OH	“Leading Innovation for Public Education”	
2010	Salt Lake City, UT	“Educating the Digital Native”	
2011	Atlanta, GA	“Lessons in Learning: An International Perspective”	
2012	Chicago, IL	“The Future is Now... What’s Next?”	
2013	Arlington, VA	“Born in Another Time: Learners and Learning, Now and Beyond”	
2014	Denver, CO	“Leaders Learning from Leaders”	
2015	Baltimore, MD	“States Charting a Course for Change”	
2016	Kansas City, MO	“State Leadership for Student Success”	
2017	Atlanta, GA	“Moving Beyond the State Plan: Excellence, Equity, Innovation”	
2018	Denver, CO	“NASBE: 60 Years, 1958-2018”	

Notes to Essay

¹ Julian P. Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, John Catanzariti, Barbara B. Oberg, et al, eds. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* Vol. 2 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950–), p. 526–27.

² William Arthur Maddox, *The Free School Idea in Virginia Before the Civil War* (New York: Teacher’s College, Columbia University, 1918), p. 47.

³ Massachusetts General Court records for 1837, Senate #1, page 17.

⁴ Jeffrey Herrold, “Sputnik in American Education: A History and Reappraisal,” *McGill Journal of Education* (September 1974): 143–64.

⁵ Elizabeth U. Cascio, “What Happened When Kindergarten Went Universal,” *Education Next* (Spring 2010).

⁶ William G. Howell, “Results of President Obama’s Race to the Top,” *Education Next* (Fall 2015).

⁷ National Association of State Boards of Education, “Public Education Positions” (Alexandria, VA: NASBE, 1998).

⁸ Jack Jennings, “It’s Time to Redefine the Federal Role in Education,” *Phi Delta Kappan* (September 2018): 9.

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