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## PUBLIC EDUCATION POSITIONS

### Preamble

Historically, Congress has recognized the preeminent role of the states in education. NASBE believes that public education is a fundamental obligation of state government. Major policy and oversight responsibility is placed in constitutionally or statutorily created state boards of education, composed primarily of lay citizens. State boards have the primary responsibility for governing education, setting educational policy, goals, and priorities based on data and research, and for continuous improvement. While citizens who serve on state boards may be chosen because they are from a specific region or constituency, they should represent all students in the state. The charge to state boards is setting the long-term vision and direction that will make education meaningful for every student. Schools must be dynamic educational systems that graduate students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in school, work, and life.

### State Boards of Education

While the role of state board members is often clearly defined by state constitutions or statutes, all state board members, regardless of how they are chosen, need to understand and respond to national issues affecting education in their states. The educationally sound governing structure for education includes a state board of education that is a policy leader, professional staff to assist the state board, and a chief state school officer who administers policies.

## PART I: POSITIONS ON STATE GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION

### A. State Responsibility for Education and the Role of State Boards

The Tenth Amendment of the United State Constitution reserves to citizens of the states the powers not delegated to the federal government, thereby granting citizens of states primary responsibility for the governance of education. The Fourteenth Amendment, providing that a state may not “deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws,” applies to public elementary and secondary schools. States have developed structures to plan, provide, and oversee the delivery of instructional services to children through state boards of education, which are charged with the general supervision of public schools. Compulsory attendance confers on states and educators an obligation to protect the welfare of their students and the integrity of the learning environment.

State boards should exercise all aspects of their leadership role authorizing policy in pursuit of equity and excellence for all students, posing questions to ensure state policies address diverse learning needs ,and convening constituents and other stakeholders as part of a collaborative policymaking process. Members of state boards of education should reflect the citizen’s voice in education, advocate for students of all backgrounds and circumstances, and exercise their granted authority to support high levels of achievement for all students.

## **B. State Partnerships**

### **(i) State Government Collaboration**

State boards of education lead the efforts to engage state government in developing and providing coherent, coordinated, and efficient educational programs:

- promote ongoing, meaningful communication and cooperation among the state board of education, local school boards, state legislators, governor, and the state department of education;
- exercise policy leadership by collaborating with workforce agencies, postsecondary boards, community college boards, military institutions, and others to seek out and promote evidence-based strategies that help prepare students for postsecondary education, military service, or workforce employment;
- encourage broad cultural, ethnic, and gender representation in state agencies and on all state task forces, commissions, advisory boards, adoption committees, and working groups;
- empower meaningful student involvement in state education policymaking and encourage school districts and school councils to provide similar opportunities for students at the local level;
- facilitate consistent, tailored engagement strategies for state associations, advocacy and civil rights groups, and community organizations to build relationships and dialogue with state government partners.

### **(ii) School Partnerships with Communities and Families**

State boards of education leverage their leadership and policymaking roles in the following ways to promote the importance of school-community partnerships:

- facilitate and integrate ongoing engagement and input of community and family organizations into a framework for policy decision making;
- define and promote the specific roles of parents and other caretakers, businesses, faith communities, mental and physical health organizations, and other community organizations in fostering student success;
- develop and facilitate partnerships and support local collaborations that build connections to workforce development, postsecondary education, families, and the community at large;
- support policies and programs to encourage parent involvement in all aspects of their children's education, specific learning activities, volunteering in classrooms and school programs, and governance and advocacy in education;
- encourage and expand professional learning opportunities for educators and other school and district leaders to enhance family involvement and improve programs, resources, and tools to foster family and community involvement in education;
- pursue partnerships with the private sector, foundations, and other public agencies to achieve state-defined priorities.

### **(iii) Corporate Involvement in Schools**

State boards of education ensure school-business relationships are ethical, contribute to high-quality education, and are structured in accordance with the following principles:

- schools and educators hold sponsored and donated materials to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curriculum materials;
- the classroom is not used for access to a captive audience or selling for commercial purposes, thereby upholding public trust;
- programs of corporate involvement meet an identified education need, not a commercial motive, and are evaluated for educational effectiveness on an ongoing basis.

### **C. Funding**

State boards of education should lead these efforts to initiate and enhance educational funding to provide an equitable and high-quality education for all students enrolled in public schools:

- coordinate with state legislators and all other citizens on the financial needs of public schools and account for the use made of state funds and the accomplishments of the public school system;
- advocate, in coalition with state policymakers, local districts, and other stakeholders, for consistent finance mechanisms that distribute education resources equitably across the state and help reduce funding disparities between districts;
- ensure the state education agency receives, administers, and accounts for all federal education funds;
- ensure that whenever state or federal mandates result in added costs to state agencies or local districts, the mandating authority should provide funding to defray such costs;
- set the highest priority on budget areas directly affecting student achievement in difficult economic times.

### **D. Professional Learning for State Board Members**

State boards of education should devote attention and resources to their members' professional learning, in the following ways:

- conduct an initial orientation and ongoing professional learning to better understand board member roles and responsibilities, to improve skills, and to gain greater understanding of specific education issues;
- encourage members to take advantage of NASBE training programs, both by attending NASBE events and by bringing NASBE presenters to their states.

### **E. Strategic Planning and Policy Review Cycles**

State boards of education should lead the design, implementation, and refinement of a vision and strategic plan for education in their state through the following activities:

- create a dynamic vision for state education, provide proactive leadership, and mobilize resources to achieve the vision;

- engage in strategic planning to articulate clear goals and expectations for improved student learning outcomes aligned to rigorous student learning standards;
- create coherence in the education system by aligning goals and expectations at the state, district, school, classroom, and student level;
- seek input and feedback on priorities for education from diverse stakeholders within the state;
- align board agendas, policy considerations, and administrative actions to the state-defined vision and goals for education;
- support professional learning resources for local boards, district administrators, school leaders, and teachers to empower their implementation of the state board's strategic plan and align local policies to the state's vision for education;
- set measurable goals to gauge improvements in academic achievement and equity that are ambitious and achievable over a state-defined number of years;
- engage in continuous improvement through a regular review of the state strategic plan and by incorporating evaluation into all decisions as policies are created.

## PART II: POSITIONS ON EDUCATION POLICY

### A. Well-Rounded Education

State boards of education should lead the development, empower the high-quality implementation, and continuously improve a well-rounded education program that encompasses the academic content standards, an aligned early childhood education system, career and technical education, and integrated student supports that will enable students to graduate ready for postsecondary education, careers, and civic life.

#### (i) Academic Content Standards

- adopt or encourage the adoption of rigorous and comprehensive college-, career-, and civic-ready academic content and achievement standards in areas such as mathematics, English language arts, science, technology, social sciences, citizenship, fine arts, health, financial literacy, and world languages/cultures for all public schools;
- establish the expectation, consistent with current law, that the federal government should not require—directly or indirectly—the adoption of specific standards;
- commit to improving standards' alignment and coherence to support learning in close partnership with birth through grade 3 early childhood education systems, institutions of postsecondary education, workforce leaders, and recognizing relevant research and international benchmarks.

#### (ii) Content Standards Implementation

- ensure all students have access to a rigorous, standards-based education that requires them to engage in critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, and project-based learning so that students attain competencies that prepare them for postsecondary education, meaningful employment, citizenship, and life;
- develop, adopt, and implement a statewide coordinated literacy strategy aligned from early childhood to graduation to ensure that all students can read proficiently and that teachers receive research-based preparation and professional learning to provide effective, content-based literacy instruction;
- empower local school districts to adopt curricula that foster broad knowledge and deeper learning for all students, align with early childhood standards, expand opportunities for rigorous coursework, and access to dual enrollment and other advanced learning opportunities;
- align high school graduation requirements with expectations for postsecondary education and workforce readiness;
- encourage professional learning opportunities for educators that facilitate deeper learning instructional approaches and invest in tools and resources that support deeper learning approaches.

### **(iii) Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

- expand opportunities for all students to engage in rigorous and relevant CTE, both at the high school level and in the middle grades;
- encourage and support the alignment and integration of high-quality CTE with other teaching and learning;
- encourage state and local integration of CTE into dual enrollment programs and support expanding such programs to more students in poverty;
- encourage greater stakeholder collaboration, including with industry and business, as a strategy for strengthening CTE and ensuring its relevance to students' success after high school;
- support seamless transitions for students from high school to postsecondary education and beyond;
- invest in building the capacity of CTE educators and their school leaders.

### **(iv) Integrated Student Supports**

- coordinate a well-aligned system of student supports and promote the development of safe, healthy, nurturing learning environments for all students;
- encourage the development of guidelines and resources for the teaching and learning of successful student behavior that provide a proactive, positive, skill-building approach;
- ensure that educators can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and support the development of relationships between schools and community and family organizations;
- strengthen and expand partnerships to improve coordination between early childhood education, high-quality extended-day and summer learning programs, social service agencies, and funding streams;
- collect and apply longitudinal data to make informed decisions that support excellent, equitable student learning in areas such as early childhood education;
- promote civic engagement in schools by encouraging schools to work with community organizations to offer innovative opportunities that are relevant to students' everyday lives and to academics;
- develop recommendations and guidance that will improve outcomes for students in alternative education settings, homeless youth, adult education programs, and those who have experienced court support services, or have been part of the juvenile justice system;
- expand access to high-quality library-media specialists and a comprehensive library program with a wide variety of resources, including current digital learning tools;
- promote research-based practices in student personalized learning experiences.

## **B. Accountability, Accreditation, and School Improvement**

State boards of education should lead the design, implementation, and improvement of a high-quality assessment, accreditation, and accountability system that fosters continuous progress toward state-defined goals through the following:

- implement and regularly review a balanced assessment system that provides actionable insight into student learning and mastery of state-defined academic content standards;

- investigate and pursue innovative forms of assessment that support measures of student growth and instructional and administrative decision making;
- encourage transparency by informing parents and the public in a clear, concise manner about student, subgroup, school, and district performance on multiple measures including academic proficiency and measures of student growth;
- evaluate the effectiveness, fairness, and validity of the accountability and accreditation system, including measures and resulting interventions;
- establish clear roles, and articulate shared responsibilities for each level of the education system, including schools, districts, and the state;
- invest in supports, professional learning, and resources to enable educators and districts to meet state-defined goals and respond to accountability indicators with effective instructional and other intervention strategies;
- share and promote proven practices and evidence-based interventions that address the specific needs of students;
- monitor all publicly funded schools to ensure adherence to uniform public transparency standards and address any unintended consequences of the accountability and accreditation system;
- support alignment of the accountability system with the process for school accreditation;
- encourage innovation, continuous improvement, and allow for customization to meet the unique needs of schools;
- review accountability and accreditation systems in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure it creates the conditions, supports, and incentives to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students, including children from birth to grade three;
- ensure regular monitoring of school districts' adherence to state regulations and set expectations beyond compliance to foster continuous improvement and growth in learning.

### **C. Equity**

State board members believe that all children can learn at high levels and must have the opportunity to do so through policies that address their diverse learning needs. State boards of education should also ensure equal protection for all students. State boards of education should strive to advance equity and excellence in public education by advancing access, opportunity, and excellence to ensure that students from impoverished rural, suburban, urban communities and students of all races, genders, circumstances, and cultures receive the supports they need to succeed:

#### **(i) Promoting Access**

- support and preserve the right to free, quality public education for all students, no matter their race, gender, circumstances, or culture;
- expand access to high-quality teaching and safe learning environments for students of all backgrounds and circumstances;
- ensure each child with a disability has access to a high-quality, free, appropriate education that prepares them for further postsecondary education, workforce employment, and independent life, as required by federal law;

- foster efforts that support the educational needs of homeless youth, as required by federal law;
- ensure students attending small schools and schools in sparsely populated areas have equitable access to high-quality educational programs and services, leveraging incentive programs to attract high-quality educators, and digital learning tools to expand access to educational opportunities;
- consider the impact of policy decisions deliberately and intentionally by addressing access and opportunity for students of all races, genders, circumstances, and cultures and refine policy to avoid potential unintended consequences;
- analyze opportunity and achievement gaps with an intentional focus on deep data disaggregation to ensure equitable access to high-quality education opportunities and the elimination of ineffective institutional practices that are barriers for students; and
- keep the public informed of the state's progress towards equity and school success by reporting data by student groups in a manner that protects individual student privacy.

### **(ii) Expanding Opportunity**

- ensure all students are prepared for success with high-quality early childhood education programs, beginning with children from families in poverty;
- promote educational experiences and instructional approaches that identify and respond to the individual learning needs of each student with a disability, the disadvantaged, migrant, gifted or talented, parenting or pregnant, minority, English learners, or other circumstances;
- develop a culturally responsive education system that helps all students and school staff interact cohesively and constructively with individuals from diverse backgrounds;
- allocate resources based on student need and collaborate with schools and districts to ensure resources are effectively used to attain high achievement for all students;
- identify and remove policies, cultural norms, and institutional practices, whether explicit or implicit, that deny students opportunities and allow persistent underachievement, stereotyping, and intolerance;
- promote the implementation of effective English learner programming, and advance professional learning opportunities for English learners and general education teachers;
- engage in research and effective policymaking to accelerate efforts to enact solutions to problems stemming from disparities such as exclusionary discipline and disengagement, which lead to loss of essential instruction time; and
- establish policies to implement early warning systems for students at risk of dropping out of school by maintaining successful intervention programs and fostering policies that vigorously seek out and encourage students who have dropped out to earn a high school diploma.

### **(ii) Excellence for Students of All Backgrounds and Circumstances**

- support education policies and programs that advance excellence for each and every student;
- leverage rigorous, comprehensive, and evidence-based academic standards and standards-based accountability as the basis of instruction so that students of all races, genders, and circumstances can learn at high levels;

- advocate for the equitable distribution of resources to ensure that every student has access to an effective teacher workforce, a high-quality learning environment, and the supports they need to thrive in school;
- empower teachers through evidenced-based professional learning experiences, grounded in research, to meet whole child needs;
- ensure that alternative schools and programs for students in vulnerable situations adhere to state standards, maintain rigorous programs for parent involvement, and provide ongoing professional learning; and
- promote the importance of diversity in preparing students, staff, and educators to become culturally responsive and aware on a local, national, and global scale.

### **D. Choice and Innovation**

State boards of education should undertake the following to encourage innovation and foster high-quality education options to meet each student's needs:

- encourage a range of school and district choice and options to meet the needs of all students within the state regulatory framework;
- maintain oversight of all publicly funded schools and innovative alternatives to ensure adherence to uniform standards of fiscal and public accountability, equal access and opportunity, and alignment to high-quality, rigorous standards for teaching and learning;
- promote awareness of high-quality options available to local communities, and engage families and local communities in their design and evaluation;
- optimize each student's school experience by ensuring all alternatives and innovations address students' diverse learning needs, including those of students with disabilities and English learners;
- comply with federal and state protections and civil rights statutes and regulations, including provisions regarding students with disabilities who are served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- engage in rigorous evaluation of innovations and alternatives, removing ineffective models and working to scale proven, effective practices and models.

### **E. Digital Learning**

State boards of education should lead the integration of digital learning tools in teaching and learning by:

- establishing criteria or guidelines for the integration of digital learning tools and processes that ensure alignment to state standards and the state's vision for education ;
- provide access in areas with limited resources such as rural schools;
- support an effective broadband internet infrastructure to close the connectivity gap among areas with limited access.
- empowering teachers through customized professional learning and capacity building to integrate digital learning tools effectively into classroom instruction and learning;
- encouraging flexible use of instructional and competency-based approaches and their differentiation to meet the individualized needs of all students, including access by students with disabilities and students in rural areas;
- advancing policies and programs that prepare students for digital environment of postsecondary education and the workforce.

## **F. Educator Effectiveness**

State boards of education should lead the following efforts to incentivize strategies and innovations to prepare, recruit, and retain high-quality teachers and other education leaders, including those serving in early childhood programs and in rural areas:

- encourage local boards and district administrators to foster innovation in recruitment and retention strategies and scale proven practices;
- collaborate with postsecondary institutions, districts, and schools to strengthen the preparation of aspiring teachers by focusing on high-quality, evidence-and practice based preparation grounded in student learning that addresses trauma informed strategies, social and emotional learning, and classroom management;
- advocate for and support the expansion of high-quality residency and proven induction strategies;
- support a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of the student population;
- develop and implement guidelines for relevant, engaging professional learning for teachers and other education leaders;
- support professional learning that is data-informed, research-based, extended in duration, relevant to state priority areas, and deeply connected to the day-to-day work of teaching and learning.