



**nsba**  
National School Boards Association

# STATE OF THE **ASSOCIATION** 2019



# OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION

It was a remarkable year full of challenges, opportunities, new and bold initiatives, sorrow and successes.

We will never forget the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. February 14, 2018, was a terribly sad and awful day. Every student and educator deserves to learn and teach in a safe environment. Schools should be sanctuaries for learning. Much trust has been placed in school board members, and they take their role very seriously. Indeed, school boards have been working diligently and consistently for many years to address comprehensive school safety, and schools are among the safest and most nurturing places. NSBA provided testimony to the Federal Commission on School Safety and participated in a special “listening session” to ensure the voice of school boards would be heard and considered. We continue working with the U.S. Congress and the Trump administration so school boards have the support and resources they need to continue applying evidence-based solutions to ensure their students and schools are safe. Our efforts helped secure more than \$40 million in federal funds that school boards are using to install additional security measures, provide support before a crisis occurs—including improving access to mental health—and mitigate an incident.

The rapid pace of technological change creates opportunities, but it also presents challenges. Recognizing that school board members across the country are having to redefine what it means to be a good steward of community trust in a world filled with emerging cyberthreats to student data and district operations, we launched the Cyber Secure Schools initiative. Through our website and other platforms, NSBA offers insightful and practical information as well as real-world best practices that help school board members protect the personal information of students and employees and safeguard IT systems from disruption.

We believe all students should have access to an education that maximizes their individual potential. *All students*. Over the years, public schools have invested heavily to make numerous enhancements to support students with special needs who require individualized assistance. This includes employing new instructional approaches, intervening earlier with students and their families, retaining more special education specialists, providing a range of programs and services, and more. Regrettably, the federal government has failed to live up to its commitment in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). To support students who need extra help, NSBA launched a bold campaign to modernize and secure full funding of IDEA. NSBA’s campaign—

It's Time for a Great IDEA—will highlight the critical need for the federal government to meet its obligation, and we'll work with Congress to update this landmark law so that all students are provided the support they require.

For the first time in decades, there are now far more jobs available than there are interested or qualified workers to fill them—more than 7 million jobs as of January 2019—and the number is expected to double in the next five years. A significant contributor to this disconnect is the readiness of high school graduates to meet employers' hiring needs. Many employers in industries that drive the economy—such as aerospace, energy, health, hospitality, and retail—are finding that recent graduates are unprepared to succeed in the workforce because they lack foundational “soft skills.” Recognizing the need to address this issue, NSBA convened the leadership of major business and trade membership organizations to create the Commission to Close the Skills Gap. The Commission developed suggestions on what school districts can do to better prepare students for the world of work, and a report was released at NSBA's Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

The Commission's collaborative effort also served as the foundation for a new NSBA initiative—LifeReady Students—which seeks to help school boards to assist high school graduates in developing the skills important to succeed in most of life's endeavors. The initiative will promote six skills considered to be the most imperative for young people to master in preparation for employment, higher education, and that larger goal of “success in life.”

NSBA staff traveled to more than 18 states to work with our members. We made keynote presentations, helped initiate equity efforts, and collaborated to develop a specific training and board development transition plan. We continued to offer exceptional educational opportu-

nities through conferences and webinars. In addition to fostering growing participation in the Annual Conference, the Advocacy Institute, the Equity Symposium, the CUBE Annual Conference, and the COSA School Law Seminar, NSBA hosted the first Equity Symposium West in 2018. And, we created the *Federal Insider* podcast, which offers insights into Congress and the courts in an easy-to-access format.

Our advocacy efforts helped produce significant achievements including restored funding for school safety, increased investments in Title I, and passage of the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act. In our work with the Federal Commission on School Safety, we advanced important recommendations to allow local school districts to customize approaches that best fit their communities, provide more support for school resource officers, and improve school-based mental health and counseling.

NSBA weighed in on key legal cases and conveyed a key point of view in the *South Dakota v. Wayfair, Inc.* case, which creates an opening for potential funding streams for public schools. And, we produced valuable resources on breaking national issues including “Coercion, Conscience, and the First Amendment: A Legal Guide for Public Schools on the Regulation of Student and Employee Speech” and “Drugs, Substance Abuse, and Public Schools: A Legal Guide for School Leaders Amidst Evolving Social Norms” (the First Amendment and Medication guides, for short).

The past year was one we will never forget. Nor should we. Student safety was an important focus, but NSBA also made major strides in advocating for local governance, educational equity, and additional funding for public schools. There is more work to do to enhance student and school safety and advance other key issues in 2019 and future years. We are prepared to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.



## Message from Thomas J. Gentzel Executive Director and CEO

This year saw goals and plans that were mere seeds of ideas six years ago blossom and come to fruition. NSBA has truly taken our place as a national education leader in policy and in action, all while strengthening our partnerships with our state associations.

In the legislative, legal, and public arenas, NSBA shapes federal education policy, raises public awareness of critical issues such as school safety, and champions the mission of public education to prepare our nation's youth for the future.

At the same time, we serve and support state school boards associations by partnering and engaging with state leaders on issues of board training, education research, and state and federal advocacy.

We remain focused on our mission: advocacy, member service, and educational equity. Relations with the membership and other key stakeholders are strong. Other achievements in 2018:

- Worked to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.
- Created and convened the Commission to Close the Skills Gap to strengthen ties with the business community.
- Published the "Congressional Recess Guide," as well as guides on school safety and student walkouts.
- Created the framework for our school safety initiative, the NSBA Center for Safe Schools.
- Built the foundation for a multiyear IDEA reauthorization campaign.

As you read this report, you'll learn more about the specific initiatives and achievements of the past year. We are leading the conversation on public education. We are firmly at the table, ensuring that all children have the resources they need to succeed in school, and serving our state associations in their role as advocates for the nation's 90,000 school board members and 50.7 million public schoolchildren.



## Message from Frank C. Pugh NSBA President 2018-2019

Upon reaching a milestone or major accomplishment, there is often little time to rest on our laurels before we are faced with the question of what comes next. We ask it of high school and college students nearing graduation. We ask it of our local boards after the passage of an important policy change. We ask it of our associations at the end of a productive and successful year.

At the start of my year as NSBA President, I envisioned the association growing stronger and becoming a more effective organization. And indeed, it has. So now comes the question of what comes next.

With a glance at this report, you'll be reminded of the association's many accomplishments this past year and given a glimpse of plans for the future. While we cannot underestimate nor can we foresee all the challenges and barriers that lie ahead, one thing seems clear: The public education landscape will continue to change, and with that change comes greater opportunity for innovation and creativity within NSBA, in state school boards associations, and in local districts and communities across the country.

Given my 28 years of experience as a board member for the Santa Rosa City Schools Board of Education, as past-president for the California School Boards Association, and as NSBA president this past year, I have to say I'm proud of the work that's been done to advance learning for every student, and I look forward to all that comes next.



## **Message from Beth Branham**

### **NSBA President 2019-2020**

This will be an exciting year for NSBA as we continue to build on the achievements and gains we have made in the past year.

Our public schools educate over 50 million children across the country, and as school board members and school leaders we all know what it takes to provide quality instruction, safe and supportive learning environments, transportation, food services, counseling and health services, and so much more, for every student, every day.

The great and extraordinary things that happen in our public schools occur because of our collective commitment and hard work. Each of us plays an important role in the successful outcomes of our local school boards and school boards associations, and in doing so each of us plays an important role in the success of students, their schools, and local communities.

I look forward to serving as your president, as we together strengthen our equity fight for the closure of deeply rooted opportunity and achievement gaps, ensure every student with disabilities gets the educational supports he or she needs, and prepare public school students in every state and local district across the nation to graduate from high school equipped to enter both college and the workplace.

Thank you for all you do through your board service to help create successful futures for America's public schoolchildren.







# FEDERAL ADVOCACY

As the Washington, D.C., office for our state associations, NSBA is committed to ensuring the voice and perspective of school boards are heard and recognized by members of Congress and the Trump administration. In pursuit of excellence and equity in public education, we advocate for federal policies that strengthen public schools and local governance. We also work to ensure that support for public education is a top priority for the nation. Our policy road map, which is set by our Delegate Assembly and captured in our “Advocacy Agenda,” covers a range of issues including student and school safety, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, school infrastructure and financing, nutrition, and career and technical education (CTE).

## **Engaging federal lawmakers**

The foundation of NSBA’s successful advocacy in the nation’s capital is a combination of robust intelligence gathering, perceptive analysis, sound planning, and strategic action that is well implemented. We build and continuously maintain relationships with policymakers, thought leaders, and other influential voices through an ongoing two-way dialogue. This is one reason why we enjoy a reputation as a source of insightful and credible information.

To advance our campaign to modernize and secure full funding for IDEA, protect the DACA program, advocate for resources for school infrastructure construction and financing, and address other important issues, NSBA seamlessly engaged members of the 115th Congress and started acquainting the new members of the 116th

Congress, in its first days, with NSBA and our views on key public education issues.

Shortly after the new Congress convened, NSBA launched the It’s Time for a Great IDEA campaign at a Capitol Hill media briefing during Advocacy Institute 2019. With a united voice and the fervor of nearly 800 school board members and state association leaders, the campaign to reauthorize and fully fund IDEA has quickly made an impact, as several members of Congress have announced their support for IDEA and the issue has emerged as a key topic for congressional hearings. At a time when chronic underfunding of IDEA by the federal government has left states and local school districts burdened with finding the resources to pay for needed services, NSBA is building important momentum to not only reauthorize IDEA, but to strengthen it to ensure that all students with disabilities achieve their full potential.

School board members who made their way to Capitol Hill also championed related priorities essential to student achievement and effective local governance in education. In meetings with members of Congress, they emphasized measures to strengthen school safety, sustain the Higher Education Act’s (HEA) investments in teacher preparation, address support for students and teachers covered by the DACA program, and provide resources for school infrastructure construction and financing.

Preceding the 116th Congress, NSBA met with U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and other key Trump administration officials to discuss priorities around reduc-

ing federal overreach and deregulation, ensuring recognition and support for local governance to lead the local educational agency (LEA) plan development, and stakeholder engagement as ESSA implementation continues.

### **Building and maintaining alliances**

The ongoing effort to build alliances continued as NSBA worked with the other “big six” school-based organizations—including the American Federation of Teachers; the National Education Association; AASA, the School Superintendents Association; the National Association of Elementary School Principals; the National Association of Secondary School Principals; and the National PTA—to influence top issues moving in Congress such as E-rate, rural education, and parent engagement through the Learning First Alliance.

In addition, NSBA continues working with other state and local government organizations to champion support for school infrastructure, school safety, an accurate count of children in the 2020 U.S. Census, and other issues of importance to our school districts.

NSBA also sent and signed on to more than two dozen letters to members of Congress to impact fiscal year 2018-19 appropriations, reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, proposals for HEA reauthorization that would have eliminated Title II investments in teacher preparation, and public service loan forgiveness.

### **Accomplishments to build on**

The second session of the 115th Congress was a productive period for NSBA’s federal advocacy efforts. The accomplishments included:

- Securing bipartisan support for the passage of the Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence Act of 2018. The law funds school security improvements and invests in prevention programs to stop school violence before it happens

through grants from the U.S. Department of Justice to train students, school personnel and law enforcement to identify signs of violence and intervene to prevent harm. This law also funds technology and equipment to improve school security;

- Advancing the national dialogue on school safety through a special listening session with state association leaders and Dr. Mitchell “Mick” Zais, Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.
- Galvanizing a record level of grassroots support to defeat proposals in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate that would have diverted more than \$450 million from the Impact Aid program available to districts educating federally connected students (those whose parents are enlisted in the Armed Forces and those who reside on tribal trust lands);
- Helping restore more than \$40 million in funding for school safety that was proposed for elimination in the FY2019 budget for the U.S. Department of Education;
- Helping secure more than \$300 million in increased investments for Title I programs, IDEA, the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, and Title IV Student Support and Academic Enrichment grants for FY2019; and
- Securing regulatory reforms to school meal programs related to the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010, including promulgation of a final rule providing flexibility for milk, whole grains, and sodium requirements and a rule through the U.S. Department of Agriculture that provides flexibility to school districts with student enrollments of 2,500 or lower. (The new rule allows flexibility for hiring school food authority managers, amending some of the professional hiring standards for school nutrition programs that were



mandated by HRFKA.)

### **Securing CTE reauthorization**

It was rewarding to see Congress pass, in bipartisan fashion, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act given the importance of CTE. The multiyear advocacy effort to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act produced a modernized CTE that fosters innovation, strengthens curricula, and forges meaningful partnerships among our school districts, institutions of higher education, and businesses. These are concepts we championed in NSBA’s Center for Public Education research series on

*Career and Technical Education: Building New Pathways into the Labor Market and Apprenticeship: Linking School to 21st Century Skills.*

### **Summer recess is grassroots time**

The congressional annual summer recess is the ideal time for constituents who can’t trek to Washington, D.C., to meet with their members of Congress to raise awareness of key issues and discuss new policy ideas. To take advantage of the opportunity, NSBA produced another “Congressional Summer Recess Guide” for state associations. The guide outlines key issues and features tips for meeting with legislators, working with community



Sight words  
live out people  
who work

5. white
6. bike
7. dime
8. hide
9. ice
10. kite

use

allies to build coalitions, using social media, and creating effective messaging.

### **National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC)**

Working in coordination with NSBA, NSBAC mobilized state-based government affairs staff and public education supporters to elevate and support NSBA's priorities before Congress and the Trump administration by:

- Generating more than 12,000 messages and calls to Congress and the Trump administration urging support for public education by keeping public funds in public schools, investing in critical programs, and voicing support for DACA;
- Securing enthusiastic grassroots participation in the 50 states and the District of Columbia; and
- Capturing the support of tens of thousands of public school advocates by expanding NSBA's outreach and effectiveness on Capitol Hill and beyond the Beltway through various social media platforms.

With the launch of the It's Time for a Great IDEA campaign, NSBAC is providing the resources school board members need to encourage their federal and state counterparts to support a modernized law that places the success of our students first.

### **Center for Public Education (CPE)**

The research arm of NSBA supports the association's advocacy priorities by collecting, examining, and sharing data and research in key areas including equity,

special education, school choice, CTE, and a range of other issues. With an eye toward elevating awareness about the skills gap and taking a look at teachers' perceptions, CPE produced three reports this year that spurred conversation and encouraged new looks at trends and ideas on these subjects:

- "A New Look at Apprenticeship: Linking School to 21st Century Skills" examines apprenticeships, finding them to be an effective, key element in helping students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to be successful after high school graduation.
- "Out of the Loop: Rural Education in the U.S." finds that barriers to success—including poverty, isolation and inequities—are exacerbated for rural students by the lack of attention to the unique needs of this considerable student population.
- "How Teachers in the U.S. and Finland See Their Jobs" compares education practices in the two countries such as teacher preparation, how teachers spend their time, teacher autonomy, and evaluation that may help explain overall student achievement.

CPE helped frame important public policy debates by publishing data-driven, research-based blogs on NSBA's website and in articles in the *American School Board Journal (ASBJ)*. CPE also actively collaborated with other education research groups as a thought partner and reviewer, and to disseminate knowledge and ideas.



# LEGAL ADVOCACY

Legal Advocacy brings the local public school board perspective to a national audience as an established and credible influencer. Working with our state school boards associations and the NSBA Council of School Attorneys (COSA), we advocate in the U.S. Supreme Court and in appellate courts across the country through our nationally recognized amicus curiae (friend of the court) efforts. And, while NSBA's legal voice is highly regarded and regularly cited by the Supreme Court, that powerful voice extends beyond the courtroom to the court of public opinion and into the halls of Congress and federal regulators.

NSBA's unique position in the world of public education as a representative of elected officials whose sole interest is the education of our children has allowed it to articulate perspectives and offer views that influence the national discourse, impact policy, and provide weight to judicial consideration. Last year, NSBA exercised our legal voice on a range of important issues from state sales tax revenue to the education of undocumented youth, from proposed procedures for sexual harassment complaints to the importance of an accurate Census count for public schools.

NSBA's legal team continued to produce a number of highly informative legal guides to help state associations and their local school boards navigate the waters of timely rising issues.

## Legal briefs impacting key legal cases

*South Dakota v. Wayfair Inc.* (U.S. Supreme Court) — An amicus brief filed by NSBA and other groups representing public entities in a case deciding whether states may require out-of-state online retailers with no physical presence in the state to collect sales tax on transactions with consumers who reside in the state. (In June 2018, the Court decided that states could require collection of sales tax, opening potential funding streams for public schools.)

*Vidal v. Nielsen* (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit) — An amicus brief filed by NSBA and other public education groups urging the Second Circuit to uphold the lower court's nationwide preliminary injunction ordering the U.S. government to resume processing renewal requests under the DACA program.

*Regents of University of California v. U.S. Department of Homeland Security* (U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit) — An amicus brief filed by NSBA and other public education groups, similar to that of *Vidal v. Nielsen*, urging the Ninth Circuit to affirm the lower court's preliminary injunction ordering the U.S. government to continue the DACA program. (In November 2018, the Ninth Circuit issued an order affirming the lower court's injunction prohibiting the U.S. government from ending DACA.)

*Kisor v. Wilkie* (U.S. Supreme Court) — An amicus brief filed by NSBA and other state and local government groups in a case where the Court will decide whether to overrule its precedent requiring deference to administrative agencies' interpretations of their own ambiguous regulations.

*Township of Millburn v. Palardy* (U.S. Supreme Court) — An amicus brief filed by NSBA and the association representing municipal lawyers urging the Court to accept a case that would clarify the standard to be applied when a public employee alleges discrimination based on association with a union.

### **Raising NSBA's legal voice through regulatory comments**

"Grants to Charter Management Organizations" (U.S. Department of Education) — NSBA's public comments on proposed rules noted that federal assistance should support local programs that promote improved student achievement.

"Contributions in Exchange for State or Local Tax Credits" (Internal Revenue Service) — NSBA filed public comments supporting the end of a tax shelter allowing federal taxpayers get a state tax credit for a contribution to a scholarship program, plus a federal tax deduction for a charitable contribution.

"Public Charge" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security) — NSBA issued public comments noting the likely harm to public school students and their families under a proposed expansion of the definition of "public charge" as used in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

"Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance" (U.S. Department of Education) — NSBA filed public comments to the Education Department's proposed rule providing extensive procedural requirements for processing sexual harassment claims. NSBA

noted that the new procedures are a poor fit for, and will significantly burden, K-12 schools.

### **Adding key perspective on school safety**

Last year, as society continued to struggle with how to keep schools and students safe, policymakers and thought leaders turned to NSBA for needed perspective and ideas. Two opportunities stood out:

Federal Commission on School Safety (FCSS) — NSBA testified by invitation twice before the FCSS, specifically addressing student discipline and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Commission — NSBA testified about student information disclosures under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act before this state-level commission.

In addition, at the NSBA Summer Leadership Seminar, we and our member state school boards associations offered statements on key school safety concerns for local school boards, and on federal support for such efforts, to U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Zais. The compilation of NSBA's and state school boards associations' statements provides a rich resource of insights from the field, including local stories, priorities, programs, concerns, and recommendations.

### **Legal guides on raising issues**

An important goal of NSBA's legal advocacy effort is to provide school attorneys and their school boards with the information they need to navigate the complex legal issues of the day. Valuable legal guides published or updated in 2018 include:

"Drugs, Substance Abuse, and Public Schools: A Legal Guide for School Leaders Amidst Evolving Social Norms" gives school leaders the legal framework for crucial questions arising in the area of drug use and abuse in schools. The guide, presented in Q&A format,



addresses student medications, marijuana, tobacco and e-cigarettes, student rights, student educational performance, and student privacy.

“Coercion, Conscience, and the First Amendment: A Legal Guide for Public Schools on the Regulation of Student and Employee Speech” was released in January 2018 and updated with a supplement in February 2018 (“Navigating Student Walkouts and Mass Protests”).

### **Council of School Attorneys (COSA)**

The mission of COSA, which has grown to more than 3,200 members, is to support school attorneys in their representation of school boards and in their legal advocacy on behalf of public education. To that end, COSA works to create opportunities for professional development and to provide technical information and practical assistance to school attorneys. In addition, COSA regularly presents school law updates at state school boards association conferences as well as at the Advocacy Institute, the Equity Symposium, and CUBE conferences.

Among COSA’s 2018 highlights:

- COSA members received a monthly *Inquiry & Analysis* newsletter, including in-depth issue discussions, information on legal seminars, and important action alerts on timely legal matters.
- COSA school law resources—a treasure trove of relevant articles, papers, and discussion threads—got a new, dedicated online home for the COSA community on NSBA Connect. Now, members have all of

COSA’s highly specialized school law materials in one place, including *Legal Clips*—COSA’s definitive compilation and analytical summary of key court cases, “hot button” legal issues, and news stories.

- The spring School Law Seminar was held in conjunction with NSBA’s 2018 annual conference in San Antonio. It included programming on religious speech in schools, employment issues for women educators, Supreme Court Rulings from the Lone Star State and their relevance today, recording devices in schools, and more.
- After the fall School Law Practice Seminar scheduled to take place in Charleston, South Carolina, was cancelled due to Hurricane Michael, COSA hosted a five-hour online symposium featuring compelling topics and speakers who would have presented there: the national school law docket, advising schools in the age of school shootings, open records and FERPA in the digital era, minimizing the risk of cybercrime, and client confidentiality.
- School law webinars offer invaluable professional development opportunities and Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit for school lawyers. These programs are presented by school law practitioners for school law practitioners and target their professional needs. Webinars offered this year examined legal issues surrounding independent educational evaluations under IDEA, Uber/Lyft/self-driving cars, conducting investigations in the age of #MeToo, and many more.



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# PUBLIC ADVOCACY

For NSBA to lead the charge in turning back escalating pressures on public education and asserting an ever-greater role in federal policymaking, it is important that the organization “get the word out” in ways that help build a sense of public urgency about the issues that matter most.

NSBA pursues an integrated, multitiered communications strategy to help frame policy issues, shape public opinion, and bolster the association’s reputation. During the past 12 months, we generated coverage that resulted in tens of millions of people reading about and sharing the association’s point of view on issues including CTE, educational equity, IDEA, privacy, school discipline, and student and school safety. NSBA also successfully generated publicity for the first Equity Symposium West, promoted CPE’s research, and announced the Cyber Secure Schools initiative.

NSBA’s media work was successful on multiple levels. Coverage came from leading national media organizations including ABC’s *Good Morning America*, The Associated Press, *the New York Times*, and *All Things Considered* on National Public Radio; top public policy and education publications including *Politico*, *The Hill*, and *Education Week*; prominent digital platforms includ-

ing NPR Education; and local media outlets across the country. The extensive coverage helped increase awareness and frame the debate on key issues down to the constituent level that is most important to members of Congress.

Social media continues to be an important tool for NSBA and our members. As a thought leadership platform, LinkedIn is an inexpensive means to reach key audiences and influencers with inspiring commentary and stimulating stories about important issues affecting public schools, public school governance, and students. Our social media channels continue to grow and are better aligned with our mission. Indeed, NSBA’s Twitter name was changed to @NSBAPublicEd, which directly reflects our focus.

The clarity and impact of NSBA’s communications work is well known among leading industry groups. As a result of innovative approaches and creativity, NSBA received 10 awards this year for communications and marketing efforts ranging from video and print to campaigns. The awards included:

- A Hermes Award for a video celebrating the Council of Urban Boards of Education’s (CUBE’s) 50th anniversary;

- A Communicator Award for the NSBAC's Public Schools 1st Campaign; and
- An Award of Excellence from the National School Public Relations Association for *Why We Do What We Do*, a video about school board members commitment and passion for what they do for their students.

### **Employing on-demand technology to inform leaders on the go**

NSBA's ability to communicate with our members and council participants in an informative and convenient manner is important in our fast-moving society. With that in mind, NSBA launched the *Federal Insider* podcast, which is an exclusive benefit to participants in National Connection, CUBE, and COSA. Through *Federal Insider*, NSBA shares key perspectives on the current legal and legislative news affecting school boards around the country. It is "inside the Beltway" education information in a straightforward and easy-to-understand format. Several episodes featured experts in federal public policy and members of the media including Cara Brumfield, senior policy analyst at Georgetown University's Economic Security and Opportunity Initiative; Kimberly Hefling, senior education writer at Politico; and Cristina Jimenez, executive director and co-founder of United We Dream.

### **Serving as a thought leader for public education**

NSBA further enhanced our reputation as a thought leader in public education through a consistent and layered mix of social media, public appearances, columns in *ASBJ*, and inclusion of NSBA's point of view in articles in the mainstream media. Among the highlights:

- At the Annual Conference in San Antonio, NSBA brought together school board leaders and safety experts to discuss the challenges and opportunities

facing public education to ensure that students and staff are safe and secure when they enter school. The participants had a robust engagement with members of the media about the need for sustained resources to develop and implement locally determined programs, emergency preparedness and response training, school counseling, and expanded mental health services.

- At a press event in the Rayburn House Office Building, NSBA launched our campaign calling on Congress to modernize and fully fund IDEA. The call for congressional action was supported by Rep. John Katko of New York.
- NSBA created the Commission to Close the Skills Gap, comprised of leading business and trade associations, with the objectives of identifying the skills most needed outside of regular academic skills to be successfully employed, and developing recommendations for school districts to consider to assist high school graduates in developing skills to succeed in life.
- Two speaking engagements stood out among the opportunities to engage opinion influencers. NSBA Executive Director and CEO Thomas J. Gentzel provided commentary on new research at a congressional briefing on vouchers, sponsored by The Civil Rights Project in the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies. He also served as a panelist at a press conference hosted by the National Superintendents Roundtable in connection with a report on Common Core and National Assessment of Educational Progress Benchmarks at the National Press Club.
- An opinion piece on the DACA program by Thomas J. Gentzel was published in *The Hill*, which is read by more federal policymakers than any other publication.

- *Equity Matters*, a video that shines a spotlight on the importance of educational equity, was unveiled at NSBA's Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado. The video amplifies the work of NSBA's Board of Directors to develop a definition of educational equity.

### **Covering innovation, trends and challenges facing public schools and public school leaders**

As the leading source of information on K-12 public education leadership, *ASBJ* devoted its energies to a series of articles on such topics as students' response to recent school shootings, the academic benefits of including literature by women and people of color on classroom reading lists, teaching history in turbulent times, districts using mindfulness and meditation to help students and staff deal with mental health issues, planning for graduates to succeed, and the looming teacher crisis.

The October 2018 mega-issue of *ASBJ* was sent to a larger audience, including every superintendent and board president in the country. The multimedia edition put a spotlight on a district that has put equity and unconscious bias training into action. The feature article, "What Lies Beneath," focuses on implicit bias in teachers and administrators and how that bias can thwart plans for delivering an equitable education. *ASBJ* editors traveled to the Parkway School District in Missouri to chronicle the experiences of a group of teachers going through the district's equity training. The story was enhanced through videos, photos, and graphics to give readers a full and deep experience of the people, places, and programs highlighted in print. It can be found at [www.asbjsocialjustice.org](http://www.asbjsocialjustice.org).

The April 2019 issue of *ASBJ* unveiled this year's winners of the Magna Awards. The recognition program continues to honor school districts' efforts to address equity and remove barriers to achievement for vulnerable or underserved students based on race, ethnicity, gender,

special needs, geography, or socioeconomic status. The three Grand Prize-winning districts taught the Magna Awards' Master Class session at NSBA's Annual Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Our publications staff, in collaboration with the marketing, business development, and National Connection teams, completed a full year of publishing the e-newsletter, *ASBJ Brief*. The newsletter is designed to help readers navigate their role as school leaders in today's education world.

In a new project, the publications staff conducted two focus groups at CUBE's annual conference and at Equity Symposium with school board members to find out the kinds of challenges they face and the issues and topics that would be useful for them to read about in upcoming issues of *ASBJ*.

### **Marketing events and ideas**

Our marketing and design team continued to push the creative boundaries to develop compelling strategies and materials designed to enhance NSBA's advocacy initiatives, raise awareness about new publications and resource materials, attract sponsorships, and boost participation at conferences.

We completed a refreshed visual identity and comprehensive branding architecture for our products, services, and events with the intention of developing a stronger, contemporary, and more cohesive brand presence. The updated look impacts all of the association's assets including websites, brochures, email, stationary, signage, and videos.

The new look enhances NSBA's presence at events, especially at the Annual Conference. The new booth in the exhibit hall offers lounge seating and an excellent venue for hosting intimate information sessions, provides complimentary headshot photography, and features lots of video—all of which draw increased traffic and support for NSBA initiatives.



With the relaunch of National Connection as NatCon came a popular new benefit—the *Federal Insider* podcast. Season 1 consisted of 14 episodes, driving nearly 9,000 listening sessions. After a strong first season, it is now an exclusive benefit for NatCon participants and members of CUBE and COSA, who must now log in to access programming. *ASBJ Brief*, which replaced National Connection Newsbytes, is another popular benefit. The bimonthly e-newsletter offers readers quick access to thought-provoking articles from *ASBJ* and other leading industry sources.

NSBA launched integrated marketing campaigns for the

2018 Annual Conference, the CUBE Annual Conference, the Equity Symposium West, the COSA School Law Seminar, and the COSA School Law Practice Seminar. Campaign components included new targeted print pieces and digital advertising tools to build awareness of the events. We also integrated video into more marketing and business development and programs. Our new promotional video “shorts” helped grow brand awareness and engagement for BuyBoard. Finally, the successful launch of the new Cyber Secure Schools microsite in June attracted repeat visits from public school leaders across the country.



# MEMBER SERVICES

Our Equity and Member Services team provides programs and services to NSBA's federation of 49 state associations and the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands, representing more than 90,000 school board officials across the United States. We are dedicated to serving our state association members and, through them, school boards, so they can increase their capacity to make local governance and public schools even better.

Providing state associations with programming and technical support that promotes equity in public schools is a fundamental aspect of NSBA's work. NSBA's deep commitment to ensuring that school leaders are equipped to support and advocate for the unique needs of the more than 50 million public schoolchildren drives us to draw attention to the most pressing issues in education.

NSBA worked for the past 12 months to build on the equity definition drafted by our Board of Directors. Now, working with and through the state associations and with the benefit of a grant from the Learning First Alliance, we are excited to be creating a wide range of new equity-based programming and content.

Inspired by a conversation with the Missouri School Boards' Association and its Center for Education Safety, NSBA took on a yearlong charge to develop a school safety platform to ensure the association is properly at the forefront of school safety and what that entails today. The initiative—the NSBA Center for Safe Schools—was created with input from state association executive directors. The Center, which was launched at the Annual Conference in Philadelphia, will offer webinars and other resources to support and promote school safety, from the security of the physical school building to the social and emotional learning of children.

NSBA staff travelled to 18 states, including multiple visits to some states, to provide keynote speeches, presentations, training, and other valued services and resources. Some of this year's highlights include:

## **Thought leadership and convenings**

NSBA hosted three successful major convenings of school board members and other leaders in 2018, and began 2019 with record attendance at the annual Equity Symposium in Washington, D.C.

Equity Symposium 2019 — An audience of more than 450 education leaders, educators, and public school advocates from across the country traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the fourth Equity Symposium, a one-day conference focused on identifying and eradicating discriminatory practices, prejudices, and beliefs in education policy. Attendees explored the impact of housing segregation on school segregation, opportunities for partnering with the corporate community to produce outcomes for students, and social-emotional learning and the role school districts must play to support the whole child.

Equity Symposium West — The first time event sold out quickly. With 100+ registrants, delved into the issue of digital equity in public schools and included site visits to schools in the Clark County School District in Nevada. Speakers included STEM experts, school administrators, and various digital equity strategists. Apple was a key sponsor and content contributor. The daylong session closed with a keynote by Dr. Luvelle Brown, superintendent of Ithaca City School District (New York).

The 51st CUBE Annual Conference — Attendance at this popular event increases every year. In 2018, more than 525 registered guests, including 75 corporate sponsor attendees, participated in this sold-out event in Las Vegas, Nevada. Sessions included “Engaging Parents as Partners Through Academic Parent-Teacher Teams,” “How to Create a 21st Century Safe School,” “Perspectives and Experiences of Women of Color in the Superintendency,” and “Ensuring the Success of Male Students of Color Across Educational Sectors.” Keynote speakers included Bakari Sellers, Adan Gonzalez, and Dr. Bryant Marks.

In addition to hosting these stand-alone conferences, Equity and Member Services staff supported equity programming at the NSBA Annual Conference, which

included sessions on technology and equity, teacher diversity, and trauma-informed schools. We also worked with *ASBJ* to launch an equity column in the magazine, and we continued to provide guidance in support of the equity definition adopted by the NSBA board in December 2017.

### **Connecting with school leaders around the country**

NSBA provided technical assistance, engagement, and training around the country during the year including:

- Partnering with Missouri School Boards’ Association to provide an eight-month training and board development transition plan for the City of St. Louis Public Schools.
- Collaborating with a team of urban school board leaders at the AASA conference in Nashville, Tennessee, to conduct a two-day session for school superintendents in the 3rd Cohort of the Howard University-AASA Urban Superintendents Academy.
- Providing support and insight for other state associations establishing equity-specific programming.
- Serving, through NSBA’s chief equity and member services officer, as keynote speaker and workshop presenter in a variety of venues including state associations, education organizations, and corporations.
- Participating in a national convening hosted by the National Louisiana Urban League on Equity in ESSA in New Orleans, Louisiana, as well as in the annual conference of the Council of Great City Schools in Baltimore, Maryland. In both New Orleans and Baltimore, equity staff made valuable connections with like-minded organizations working on educational equity. Equity staff also participated in a convening organized by the McCain Leadership Institute on sex trafficking, which focused on identification and prevention strategies.



## National Connection (NatCon)

National Connection, NatCon for short, is a separate but additional resource for school district leadership teams. As the leading national executive information and networking program for school board leaders and senior school district staff, NatCon complements the work of the state associations by providing content that is targeted, relevant, and easy to access so participants can become more informed about national trends in public education. It is designed to further complement the work of the state associations by offering a national perspective with a virtual community for sharing insights, tools, and best practices. In 2018, the program was represented at events in California, Illinois, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and AASA's annual conference.

Over the course of the year, the NatCon program gained 17 new districts; saw readership of the National Connection Daily, the morning education news, increase; and added key new benefits including discounted fees for the CUBE Conference and Equity Meetings as well as access to the Federal Insider podcast. Allison Schafer, legal counsel/director of policy of the North Carolina School Boards Association, represented the National Affiliation of Superintendent Searchers (NASS) on the AASA webinar, "How to Work Effectively with School Boards and Search Firms to Advance Your Career."

NatCon and CUBE members kept the networking lounge buzzing during the 2018 NSBA annual conference, while the 16 sessions hosted by the NatCon team were packed. One of the popular sessions featured the Guilford County Schools (North Carolina) 2018 winner of the \$10,000 award from the annual NSBA and Kennedy Center recognition. Among the six experiential visits, the changing world of work was highlighted with visits to Dell's corporate headquarters, a

Toyota plant, and the Culinary Institute of America. After a positive response to a small rural roundtable in San Antonio, Texas the NatCon program has added an additional focus for the 2019 conference and is exploring ways to better serve its rural districts.

NSBA completed the transition of our former Technology Leadership Network program into NatCon and continues to be recognized by other associations and industry leaders as a national leader in innovation. In the past 12 months:

- NSBA was invited to partner on Driving K-12 Innovation, a global research project that will release three reports to identify the hurdles, accelerators, and tech-enablers to innovation.
- The annual "Digital District Survey," conducted jointly with the Center for Digital Education to identify exemplary use of technology by local school boards, produced district honorees from 19 states.
- Innovation was further emphasized during the ED Tech Luncheon in San Antonio with international visionary Will Richardson addressing school transformation.
- NatCon staff, with the help of a national panel of reviewers, selected six start-up companies for the 6th annual Technology Innovation Showcase including Align Us, Inc., EdPrivacy by Education Framework, FilterEd by GrayEd Solutions, MathBRIX, Muzology, LLC, and PAIRIN.
- K-12 innovation was featured during site visits held in conjunction with NSBA meetings in Texas at the Round Rock, Austin, and Northside Districts; and in the Clark County Schools in Nevada.
- NSBA participated in the National Collaborative for Digital Equity, a group helping district leaders



convene their communities to support the digital age economy with new access to funds through the banking community as a result of changes to federal regulations.

- NSBA launched the Cyber Secure Schools Initiative to help school districts enhance their IT systems and operational practices to protect the personal information of students and employees. The Cyber Secure web page provides a Knowledge Center, Tools & Incidents, and Cyber Career Information in addition to housing the archived monthly Cyber Chats.
- As a part of National Cyber Security Awareness Month, NSBA collaborated with the K-12 National Advisory Council to develop a series of recommendations for school board members.
- “Today’s School Boards and Their Priorities for Tomorrow,” a national survey conducted in collaboration with K12 Insight, was released during the NSBA annual conference as an update to the “Circa 2010,” a study that examined attitudes and demographics among America’s school board members. Additional regional analysis was provided to state association executive directors at their Summer Institute.



# OPERATIONS

NSBA continued to make great strides in ensuring our future financial health in 2018. Cash increased year over year by \$1.23M and we ended the year with a \$3.5M surplus.

Areas of growth in 2018 included a significant revenue increase from the Annual Conference in San Antonio, as the event attracted 300 more registrants than in the prior year and 27 new sponsors. In fact, corporate sponsors provided more than \$500,000 for NSBA programming at the conference.

To support our equity work, NSBA partnered with a San Antonio food bank and several conference sponsors to organize a community service project for conference attendees. Participants packed 12,000 pounds of food to help “fight hunger and feed hope” in the local community.

Technological improvements continue to be a priority for NSBA. At a time when cyberattacks are increasing, NSBA implemented improved security measures to

ensure our files and business information are safe, and that staff is able to work remotely through cloud access and with the safety of multi-factor authentication security. In addition, a new association management system is in the implementation phase. The new system will enable us to better serve our membership, enhance our marketing programs, and generate significant annual cost savings. Sharepoint, a collaboration tool, is being deployed to add security functionality and streamline our digital files.

NSBA also continued to invest in dedicated staff. In addition to professional development training, staff participated in a poverty simulation to gain a better understanding of what many children and families living near the poverty line endure each month. We also re-energized our core values with a training series to continue to enhance the NSBA working environment. Lastly, a management training series was conducted for new and seasoned managers.



A decorative graphic on the left side of the page, consisting of two overlapping triangles. The top triangle is red and points downwards, while the bottom triangle is light blue and points upwards. They meet at a central point, creating a white space between them.

# A LOOK AHEAD

NSBA will continue to lead the effort to strengthen public education and local school governance. Our new initiatives, such as our IDEA campaign and the NSBA Center for Safe Schools, will expand in 2019-2020 and subsequent years. We will provide new tools to help state school boards associations achieve their goals. Our vigorous advocacy will continue to work to inspire and lead a thoughtful dialogue and to advocate for policies that truly enhance learning opportunities. And, our business development and marketing efforts will remain on their respective strategic paths. Among the key programs, events, and resources we will create and initiate to carry NSBA's mission forward in the coming year are:

NSBA will build on the progress we achieved in 2018 on the vital issue of equity. We will take the next step to strengthen our equity agenda and will develop more content, toolkits, and white papers on a variety of equity-related topics. We will continue our engagement with school leaders through small-group working sessions so we can continue to provide guidance and technical assistance as well as establish partnerships with like-minded organizations, whenever possible. NSBA will enhance our position as a thought leader by publishing a white paper on trauma, and by producing additional content related to student discipline. We will embrace the challenge of bringing more people together for meaningful

conversations on significant topics at the Equity Symposium, and we look forward to an even more dynamic CUBE Annual Conference.

Fresh off its successful launch during Advocacy Institute 2019, the IDEA campaign will continue to ratchet up the pressure on Congress to fulfill its commitment to ensure all children in the United States have equal access to public education. Our activities will include working to secure a congressional hearing, hosting a thought leadership event, engineering media coverage, leveraging our social media platforms, and facilitating alliances to expand the campaign's reach.

With the creation of the Commission to Close the Skills Gap, NSBA took an important first step to raise awareness about workforce staffing issues, especially the readiness of high school graduates to meet employers' hiring needs. Moving forward, the potential opportunities are exciting as we continue to build deeper and more meaningful relationships among the public education community, the school board community, and the business community. It all begins with LifeReady Students, an initiative that encourages school boards to consider implementing the recommendations made by NSBA's Commission and to look closely at what the district is doing to ensure that every child has the opportunity to be ready for life.

NSBA will initiate the Women's Leadership Networking Forum to facilitate participation among more women in public education governance and district leadership. The Forum will feature "listening" events, professional development resources, and other materials—created with support from outside partners or foundations—that will serve as the basis for workshops at NSBA's and other organization's conferences and webinars.

NSBA will continue to be an active participant in the courts, presenting the perspective of school boards in legal cases that will impact public education. Amicus briefs will be filed in:

- *Department of Commerce v. United States District Court for the Southern District of New York* (U.S. Supreme Court) — NSBA will file an amicus brief in a case determining whether it is constitutional for a citizenship question to be added to the U.S. Census questionnaire. It is crucial that the Census result in an accurate count of "all people" in the United States, as required by the Constitution. NSBA will advocate against policy decisions that will result in undercounting, which will negatively affect funding streams that flow to public schools.
- *Fort Bend v. Davis* (U.S. Supreme Court) — NSBA will join other state and local government groups in an amicus brief in a case asking whether a public employee's failure to exhaust administrative remedies before filing an employment discrimination claim in federal court bars the court from deciding that claim.
- *CD v. Natick Public School District* (U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit) — NSBA will file an amicus brief in a case to determine whether a school

district offered a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment under IDEA.

To help school board members stay apprised of the issues that affect public school districts, our *Federal Insider* podcast will continue to offer in-depth and timely analysis and insights into key legal and legislative issues in seasons 2 and 3.

NSBA's website is being refreshed and will be launched during the summer. The site will be more mobile-friendly, and it will enable us to pursue opportunities offered by advanced technology.

In July, NSBA will publish the second edition of our renowned book, *Becoming a Better Board Member*.

The opportunity for states to co-brand select NSBA print and digital publications helps facilitate NSBA's advocacy for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership. Co-branding provides our members with tools they can use to enhance awareness and engagement among local school board members on national educational priorities.

NatCon will continue touring the country, revisiting many states and adding new destinations including Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, and Washington.



# About NSBA

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) is the leading advocate for public education. For more than 75 years, we have been leading the effort to support and enhance public education. We are succeeding in creating the best possible environment in which students can realize their dreams.

NSBA is a federation of 49 state associations and the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands, representing their more than 90,000 school board officials. These local officials govern more than 13,600 local school districts serving more than 50 million public school students. Working with and through our state associations, and serving as their Washington, D.C., office, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board governance.

We believe public education is America's most vital institution. It is a civil right necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people, and all children deserve equal access to an education that allows them to reach their potential.

In pursuit of these beliefs, NSBA and our members will continue to lead the national conversation about public education, advocate for public policies that ensure all students everywhere have access to a great public education where they live, create a better understanding of the importance of school boards and the benefits of local governance, and enhance the effectiveness of school boards.

NSBA and our members utilize our resources including the Council of School Attorneys (COSA), the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE), the National Black Council of School Board Members (NBC), the National Hispanic Council of School Board Members (NHC), the National American Indian/Alaska Native Council of School Board Members (AIAN), the Conference of State Association Legislative Staff (CSALS), the Federal Relations Network (FRN), the Friends of Public Education Network (FPE), the National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC), the Center for Public Education (CPE), National Connection, and a robust and continuous media program to fulfill our mission.

NSBA is a not-for-profit organization. The public policy agenda is determined by a 150-member Delegate Assembly made up of local school board members who represent their state associations of school boards. The Board of Directors translates this policy into action. Programs and services are administered by the NSBA Executive Director and CEO and by professional staff. NSBA is headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area.

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