

BELIEFS & POLICIES

of the National School Boards Association (excerpts)

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The public school boards of America, united in their school boards associations and members into the National School Boards Association and its National Affiliates, believe that education is a civil right and is necessary to the dignity and freedom of the American people. Further, the public school boards believe that all students should have equal access to an education that maximizes their individual potential.

NSBA's Vision for Public Education

The National School Boards Association believes local school boards are the nation's preeminent expression of grassroots democracy and that this form of governance of the public schools is fundamental to the continued success of public education. Adequately funded, student-centered public schools will provide, in a safe and supportive environment, a comprehensive education for the whole child and will prepare all of America's children for a lifetime of learning in a diverse, democratic society and an interdependent global economy. By focusing on raising student achievement and by actively engaging the community, school boards will provide leadership for academic success in the nation's public schools. America's school boards, by creating a vision of excellence and equity for every child, will provide performance-oriented schools that meet today's problems as well as the challenges of tomorrow.

Article I—Control and Support of Public Schools

Section 1—State and Local Governance of Education

1.5 Interagency Collaboration for Student Services

State and local governments should develop programs and adopt youth policies that coordinate the delivery of services to students such as counseling, health, nutrition, family support, and juvenile justice. These services must be coordinated and focus on the total needs of the child.

ARTICLE II—Responsibilities of Local School Boards

Section 3—Commitment to Diversity and Equity

3.1 Diversity and Equity

School boards should strive to recognize the special needs and strengths of every student and provide access to a high-quality education in a safe and supportive environment. Moreover, NSBA urges education professionals and decision makers at all levels of government to realize the educational benefits of learning in racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse settings, to commit to equity and excellence for all students, and to support the needs of English-language learners.

3.2 Non-Discrimination

NSBA believes that school boards should ensure that students and school staff are not subjected to discrimination on the basis of socioeconomic status, race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

Article IV—The Educational Program

Section 1—Desired Learning Outcomes

1.1 Comprehensive Education of Children

NSBA recognizes the importance of the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children and encourages local school boards to adopt policies or pass resolutions toward that end.

1.2 Access to Educational Opportunities

Public schools should provide equitable access and ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, English proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability.

Section 2—Maintaining a Safe and Supportive School Climate

NSBA believes that students must have safe and supportive climates and learning environments that support their opportunities to learn and that are free of abuse, violence, bullying, weapons, and harmful substances including alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. NSBA urges federal, state, and local governments, as well as parents, business and the community, to cooperate fully with local school boards to eliminate violence, weapons, and harmful substances in schools and to ensure safe, crime-free schools. NSBA urges local school boards to incorporate into their policies and practices approaches that encourage and strengthen positive student attitudes in, and relationship to, school.

2.2 School Climate Assessment

NSBA recognizes the importance of a positive school climate in raising student achievement. To that end, NSBA urges school boards to assess the school climate and establish goals for its improvement.

2.3 Student Conduct and Due Process Policies

School boards should enact and implement written policies that set rigorous standards for student conduct to maintain an optimal learning environment. Written policies on student and parental rights and responsibilities should be established that are in accord with federal and state laws and establish due process procedures for the administration of these policies.

2.4 Elimination of Violence and Disruptive Behavior

NSBA supports state and local school board efforts to become more proactive in the elimination of violence and disruptive behavior at school and school-sponsored events. Such behavior, in addition to physical violence, includes “bullying,” verbal disrespect of fellow students and teachers, and other forms of harassment which contribute to fear, low self-esteem, and lower academic achievement.

2.10 Racial, Ethnic, and Sexual Harassment

NSBA believes that all public school districts should adopt and enforce policies stating that racial, ethnic, and sexual harassment against students or employees will not be tolerated and that appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken against offenders. Such policies should include an effective complaint mechanism. Districts should institute in-service programs to train all school personnel, including volunteers to recognize and prevent racial, ethnic, and sexual harassment against employees and students. Districts should investigate complaints, initiate education programs for students, and institute programs to eliminate racial, ethnic, and sexual harassment.

Section 3—Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

3.2 Challenging and Appropriate Curriculum Materials

NSBA encourages local school boards to adopt policies that take into account research findings when making decisions on curriculum and instructional practice. Curricular offerings should consider students’ diverse needs, ability, and cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The effectiveness of the curriculum must be evaluated in terms of educational outcomes.

3.3 Controversial Issues

NSBA urges local school districts to present a balance of factual materials relating to any controversial issue. Appropriate policies for the evaluation, selection, use, and removal of instructional materials should be developed, including a process for handling complaints.

Section 5—The Public School: A Community Responsibility

5.5 Coordinated School Health Programs

NSBA encourages local school boards to recognize that health and learning are integrally linked and that schools are a critical link in community-wide efforts to promote life-long health and prevent health-risk behaviors. NSBA also encourages school boards to collaborate with community partners to maximize resources for achieving a coordinated school health program.