

THE 2010 WHOLE AGENDA



**The Connecticut Association
of Boards of Education
81 Wolcott Hill Road
Wethersfield, CT 06109
800-317-0033 or 860-571-7446
www.cabe.org**

Governance

• PUBLIC EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITY •

CABE believes that all citizens, including board members, the Governor, the Connecticut General Assembly, and the State Board of Education, must make public education a matter of the highest priority of public policy. The state must heed its constitutional mandate to provide a free and appropriate public education for all of Connecticut's children.

• LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION •

CABE believes that local governance of public education through locally elected or appointed community members strengthens the democratic process, provides accountability, and assures strong continuing public support for education.

CABE supports:

- a stronger linkage between local and regional boards of education, magnet schools and charter schools and the State Board of Education.
- a stronger linkage between vocational technical schools and their constituent local school districts.
- greater state flexibility encouraging interdistrict cooperation and regionalization enabling local and regional boards of education to pursue current educational opportunities more expeditiously.

CABE believes that the state and federal governments must recognize the wide differences among America's public school districts, including those that are rural or small, by funding the development of school improvement programs that reflect local needs and characteristics and avoid the "one best model" design.

• EDUCATION AS THE FIRST PRIORITY FOR CHILDREN •

CABE believes that public policy must assist children and their families in maintaining education as

the first priority for children amidst the mounting economic and social pressures of society.

CABE supports the maintenance of the state's traditional labor laws protections for children in order to preserve education as a child's first priority and therefore believes it is undesirable to expand legal employment for children of compulsory school age.

• CREATING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH ECONOMIC, RACIAL AND ETHNIC INTEGRATION •

CABE believes that each child must have equal access to effective free, public education and to the services of well-educated and skillful teachers.

CABE supports efforts by the State of Connecticut:

1. to address and solve the issues of social and economic isolation in the areas of housing, transportation, employment, access to health care and social services; and
2. to make the necessary funding available to urban, suburban and rural school districts across the state to develop and sustain integrated educational programs and exchanges that create educational excellence.

CABE urges urban, suburban and rural school districts:

1. to affirm that all children can learn and accept the challenge to educate each child to his/her fullest potential;
2. to enter into interdistrict partnerships which create integrated educational excellence and promote social, cultural, ethnic and racial exchange and interaction among diverse groups;
3. to continue their efforts to increase the recruitment of qualified individuals who reflect this state's diversity to the teaching profession and administration;
4. to make parents as well as the greater community full partners in the education of all children; and
5. to recognize their critical role in creating policies, providing training, and maintaining oversight to ensure that students, regardless of gender, race, creed, national origin, or sexual orientation have equal educational opportunities and are treated equitably in the classroom and in other school settings.

• MEANINGFUL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION •

CABE urges the State and Federal government to provide leadership to support comprehensive education reform which:

- Provides resources to insure that all children have access to an appropriate pre-school experience
- Encourages creative and critical thinking
- Supports efforts to attract and retain high quality teachers
- Supports state efforts to ensure that what is taught and what is tested are important, reasonable and challenging to every student
- Provides funding for the development of research based instruction in all areas of curriculum
- Supports efforts to focus on the social, emotional, physical and mental health of students

• FEDERAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL EDUCATION OPERATIONS •

CABE, directly and through its member district representatives, urges members of the federal legislative and executive branches to be mindful of the impact of their actions or lack of action upon local boards of education. Enactment of laws, reauthorizations, and regulation has immediate impact upon local operations. Delay or failure to act in response to valid requests for modification of laws or regulations causes material impact upon districts' ability to manage and cause unnecessary additional expense, a major concern in the current budget environment.

• PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE •

CABE believes that all public schools should provide a quality education for each student. CABE believes that in meeting local educational needs, locally developed policies and program options which give parents the opportunity to select public schools or programs for their children should be considered among a variety of possible educational strategies. However, CABE opposes federal or state efforts to mandate choice, including efforts to divert or limit funding intended for existing federal and state programs.

Any program allowing parents to choose schools must assure that:

- (A) the plan does not foster racial, social, or economic segregation or segregation of children with disabilities;
- (B) financial and other administrative issues, such as transportation concerns, and the costs for special education and expelled students are addressed;
- (C) the plan is not part of a federal or state voucher or tuition tax credit program to finance non-public education;
- (D) students be required to make at least a one-year commitment to a school of choice to afford stability of school management;
- (E) interdistrict transfers must have the consent of both school districts; and
- (F) urban districts are encouraged to develop programs to attract suburban students.

• COORDINATION OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES •

CABE urges the Governor, state, local, and federal government to support the goal of creating inter-agency partnerships to connect children and families with comprehensive services.

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards to develop a process for structuring voluntary interagency partnerships. Interagency collaboration for services such as special education, counseling, health, nutrition, family support, juvenile delinquency and other comprehensive services must focus on the total needs of the child.

• VIOLENCE, DRUG, TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL USE •

CABE supports efforts on the local, state and federal level to eliminate illegal drug, tobacco and alcohol use among students, staff, and others in the school environment, and to reduce violence in our communities.

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards:

1. to address the issue of violence affecting children through school board policies, parent education programs, peer mediation, student assistance teams, and the school district curriculum;
2. to review, update and strictly enforce policies making it clear that the sale, use, or possession of illegal drugs, tobacco and alcohol will not be tolerated;

3. to review and realistically strengthen programs for teaching the effects and risks of alcohol, tobacco and drug use, including performance enhancing substances, and the value of sound personal health;
4. to provide training for staff in the symptoms of drug and alcohol use, research on the causes and effects of drug tobacco and alcohol abuse, and the school district's policies and procedures regarding alcohol, tobacco and drugs;
5. to work cooperatively with public and private service agencies and law enforcement agencies to address the problems of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse;
6. to work cooperatively with public and private agencies to provide constructive extended school programs that enable students to be supervised and positively engaged during after-school hours.

CABE urges the State of Connecticut:

1. to vigorously enforce the laws concerning the sale, use and possession of illegal drugs and the sale of alcohol and tobacco to minors;
2. to commit adequate resources and create a functioning network of public and private agencies to address the problems of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse;
3. to allow more flexibility in the design and delivery of programs.
4. to gather baseline data on student drug use and;
5. to commit resources to support constructive extended day programs for appropriate grade levels.

CABE urges the federal government:

1. to aggressively enforce the law in order to halt the flow of illegal drugs into the United States; and
2. to commit adequate federal resources to state and local programs that address the problems of violence and drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse.

• STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND ASSESSMENT •

CABE urges all Connecticut boards of education to provide strong leadership to raise student achievement, and to create a school climate that fosters academic and personal development.

CABE urges boards of education, the State Board of Education and the General Assembly to recognize the broad range of attributes that contribute to student success, including but not limited to academic achievement, critical thinking, community service and integrity.

CABE urges the state and federal government to provide resources to support high quality professional development for all certified staff.

CABE urges the state to create and fund a system designed to share successful curricula and/or programs enhancing student achievement among school districts using the State Department of Education and Regional Education Service Centers.

CABE supports student assessment programs that enhance individual student achievement and are part of a planned program for meeting educational objectives. CABE is opposed to a federal testing program. CABE also supports efforts to improve the assessment of education.

CABE urges the State Department of Education to provide boards of education with explanatory and instructional materials one full year prior to implementing any new or revised statewide assessments.

CABE urges school boards to affirm their commitment to the improvement of student learning and to:

- Openly evaluate data on student achievement indicators;
- Discuss processes that affect the instructional program;
- Examine the impact of the district's course of study on learning;
- Review/revise district goals to focus on student progress;
- Strive to find methods to remove barriers to learning;
- Inform district staff, students, parents, and the community about student achievement in the schools;
- Promote an excitement for learning.

• HIGH SCHOOL COMPETENCY •

CABE urges local and regional boards of education:

1. to develop innovative curriculum which emphasizes the acquisition of essential skills for all elementary school students and

2. to develop and maintain creative secondary school programs, and performance standards for at risk students that develop lifelong learners. Such programs should emphasize essential skills combined with work related projects, work study programs, school to career, apprenticeships and other alternative program approaches that stress essential skills and practical applications.

CABE urges state education policy makers to provide the funding and the flexibility necessary for local and regional school systems to address the needs of students such as with appropriate increases in funding for drop out prevention and student retention. CABE urges the retention of the right of school boards to deny programs for individuals pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 10 233d(e). (Student Expulsion)

• TRUANCY •

CABE urges the Governor's office, the State Board of Education and the Connecticut General Assembly to support, through technical assistance and funding, early intervention programs developed by local school districts that involve the interagency coordination of services to students who are habitual truants or at risk of becoming truants.

• IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION MANDATE •

CABE urges the legislature to modify existing in-school suspension legislation to: require local districts to establish effective in-school suspension policies, require the State Department of Education to review and revise reporting requirements for suspension, require districts to establish comprehensive student discipline policies that would integrate in school and out of school sanctions with an overall program of progressive student discipline.

• ATHLETIC ELIGIBILITY •

CABE urges school principals to continue to work together to determine student athletic eligibility, and for the legislature to refrain from involvement in eligibility issues.

• PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY •

CABE urges:

1. that the State Department of Education encourage locally initiated, innovative alternative approaches to educating limited English speaking students with the specific goal of attaining English proficiency as rapidly as possible; and
2. that the state appropriate adequate funding to assist school boards in providing the most effective programs which educate limited English proficient students.

• MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION •

CABE urges all boards of education to facilitate culturally responsive teaching and supervision that promotes understanding of and respect for the many diverse cultures which strengthen our democratic society.

• EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN •

CABE urges local and regional boards of education to review their kindergarten and readiness programs to assure that such programs are designed to provide each child with learning tasks appropriate to the child's developmental level.

CABE urges boards of education to encourage parents to take advantage of school services for young children.

• EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION LINKING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT •

CABE supports:

1. continued efforts by the General Assembly to appropriate sufficient funding to make early care and education programs available to all children in need, not just those in priority school districts or priority schools;
2. joint efforts by the State Department of Education and other public and private child and family service agencies to promote and encourage a wide range of public and private provider pre school programs and services to co exist and prosper statewide;
3. local school board flexibility to design, develop and implement early childhood education pro-

grams to increase the likelihood of children's school success and decrease special education costs;

4. state and federal incentive grants, including technical and financial assistance to districts that offer early childhood education programs, full or extended day kindergartens and programs providing for identification of pre school students with special needs; and
5. federal, state and municipal initiatives for private industry, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and school systems, to develop high-quality facilities to provide daytime child care, in addition to those that already exist.

CABE urges local districts to institute programs for parents which can increase their knowledge of children's social, physical, mental and psychological development, and ultimately increase the likelihood of children's school success. CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to provide incentive grants and on-going matching funding for this essential program.

CABE urges preschool providers to explore discipline alternatives to expulsion.

• PARENT/FAMILY/SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT POLICY •

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards to develop Parent/Family/School Involvement Policy statements recognizing that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and the family; such statements could include:

- a. Involving parents as partners in school governance.
- b. Establishing effective two-way communication with all parents, respecting the diversity and differing needs of families.
- c. Developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.
- d. Providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from K-12.
- e. Utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

• FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION •

CABE urges each local school district to develop a curriculum which deals with issues affecting family life and human growth and development, and to involve the community in this process. AIDS awareness and other vital health and social issues should be integrated into existing academic subject areas.

CABE encourages school districts to provide education in child care and development to all students sometime before they graduate from high school.

• LOCAL PROGRAM POLICY DECISIONS •

CABE supports the local development of specific subject area requirements, course content requirements, and staff and resource requirements that:

1. grow out of local goals and specific local learning objectives;
2. result from local policy decisions regarding program, staffing and resource priorities;
3. result from local policy decisions regarding effective and efficient practices including the use of appropriate technology; and
4. are based upon local student needs.

• STUDENT TIME ON TASK •

CABE urges all Connecticut school boards to study how available time is used and to explore a variety of options for increasing the amount of time that students are actively engaged in learning.

• YEAR-ROUND USE OF FACILITIES •

CABE urges local districts to examine the advantages and disadvantages of year-round use of school facilities and restructuring of school calendars.

• TEACHER TENURE •

CABE urges the state legislature to modify the teacher tenure law to provide for initial tenure after 50 months of teaching, to make tenure renewable on a five year basis, and to provide for the dismissal of teachers who fail to promote student achievement or fail to engage in activities to pursue professional growth and development.

CABE urges the legislature to repeal the portion of 10-151(c) of the General Statutes that entitles teachers who have not attained tenure to a hearing con-

cerning non-renewal, except if the reason for such non-renewal is either elimination of position or loss of position to another teacher, and provides that the local or regional board of education shall rescind a non-renewal decision only if the board finds such decision to be arbitrary and capricious.

CABE urges the state legislature to amend the teacher tenure act to allow school boards the ability to address staff reduction forced by budgetary constraints through modified reduction in staffing. The modification to the present system of tenure would allow local school districts to reduce staffing levels not solely through the current seniority system exclusively, but through a blended reduction throughout the seniority system, such that staffing cuts do not fall entirely upon the most junior educators.

CABE urges boards of education to utilize the Connecticut Teaching Competencies in their process to evaluate teachers.

• JOINT PURCHASE OF INSURANCE •

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to adopt legislation to specifically permit two or more municipalities to join together as a single entity to obtain employee health insurance.

• GOVERNMENT REGULATION AND DATA ACQUISITION •

CABE urges:

1. the state and federal governments to reduce the number and complexity of regulations directed at education, including the paperwork burden associated with implementing education laws;
2. the State Department of Education to continue existing efforts to simplify its data collection forms, eliminate duplication and unnecessary data collection and promote appropriate use of data and
3. the state and federal governments focus on data that is needed to improve student performance.

• FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT •

CABE urges:

1. the establishment of a formalized process, including input from local public agencies, for

proposing candidates for membership on the Freedom of Information Commission;

2. the modification of the Connecticut Freedom of Information law to more clearly define the individuals' reasonable expectation of privacy and its balance with the public's right to know.
3. that the Freedom of Information Commission act within the intent of the statutory provisions regarding their jurisdiction.
4. the legislature continue to support release of detailed student performance data to parents and guardians as part of the regular education process while it acts to protect against inappropriate disclosure to others.
5. the legislature act to protect against inappropriate use of content from student data bases.

• BEGINNING TEACHERS •

CABE urges the State Department of Education and state legislature to support a strong teacher induction program to improve the retention of new teachers in Connecticut, including providing all beginning teachers with a paid mentor for their first two years. The state provided stipend should respect the work required in the position and the quality of individuals needed in that position.

• CERTIFIED EDUCATOR SHORTAGES •

CABE urges school boards, higher education institutions, the State Department of Education and the state legislature to take action to expand the pool of qualified educators for Connecticut's public schools, particularly in areas where shortages have been identified. Among the actions to be considered should be expanding the alternate route to certification programs, enhancing professional development opportunities, expanding reciprocity between states, reducing bureaucracy for educators certified in other states, encouraging students at an early age to consider the teaching profession and actively recruiting underrepresented groups.

• CONNECTICUT STATE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT •

CABE opposes further modifications of state statutes to restrict the definition of "salary" for purposes of calculating teachers' retirement benefits. CABE urges the State of Connecticut to avoid adopting costly changes to the Teacher Retirement Act that

shift the burden from the state to the local level and to maintain its responsibility for the Teacher Retirement System.

CABE urges the Teacher's Retirement Board to include performance based pay for purposes of teacher's retirement, in order to preserve more options in compensation systems.

• PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS •

CABE supports maintenance of State Board of Education authority over teacher certification standards and teacher preparation program approval.

CABE supports continued action to assure that teacher preparation program standards are raised and that students in teacher preparation programs are required to complete a strong academic program, graduating with an academic major.

• TEACHER SALARY SYSTEMS •

CABE supports the development by local and regional boards of education of teacher salary systems that are based upon performance skills and knowledge, competence, and levels of responsibility. CABE supports the maintenance of teacher salaries that are competitive with the salaries of persons of comparable skill, quality, educational background, and professional responsibility.

• SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT •

CABE urges boards of education to develop a policy requiring professional development for new and experienced board members.

CABE encourages local school boards to provide for adequate professional development programs for all school board members and candidates, including participation by all members in area, state and national programs and orientation for new school board members. Professional development should include the roles and responsibilities of boards, and skills needed to resolve issues in a nonpartisan manner.

CABE urges boards of education to examine and discuss annually the roles of the board and the superintendent in order to maintain a strong and effective partnership in the educational process.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION ETHICS •

CABE urges boards of education to incorporate codes of ethics and conflict of interest provisions in their Bylaws.

CABE urges the General Assembly to refrain from imposing financial disclosure provisions for volunteer elected officials.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION SERVICE •

CABE urges local political parties to seek candidates who are committed to student achievement and representative of the entire community.

CABE urges employers to support the civic involvement of their employees who serve as school board members.

• STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES •

CABE urges the State Board of Education to formally adopt regulations when rules are needed to enforce the statutes, and to refrain from applying guidelines as regulations or incorporating guidelines by reference into regulations.

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to refrain from circumventing the regulatory development process through legislation requiring adherence to guidelines.

• IMPACT OF LAWS AND REGULATIONS •

Before any education laws/policies are enacted by the legislature or regulations are adopted by the Connecticut Department of Education, a local impact study shall be required. The proposed laws/policies/regulations shall be subject to a public hearing with the results of the Impact Study available to the public prior to the scheduled hearing. The local impact study shall include costs and benefits of such law/policy/regulation. Board of education members and school administrators shall have the opportunity to provide input. Such input should be documented.

• REVAILING WAGES FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS •

CABE urges the legislature to raise the dollar threshold for projects subject to the prevailing wage mandate.

• PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY OF CONTRACTORS WORKING ON PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS •

CABE urges the General Assembly to hold contractors accountable for their performance on publicly funded building projects by adopting the Department of Public Works recommendation that maximum retainage on a project be increased from 2.5% to 10% (as it used to be).

• REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER (RESC) DUTIES DIRECTED BY THE STATE •

CABE urges the Legislature to continue to utilize the RESCs for statewide programs but in so doing to fund them adequately and refrain from mandating additional duties for the Regional Education Service Centers which would compromise their governance structure, funding process, or compete with time and resources needed for programs expected by the local districts.

• VENDING MACHINE REVENUE •

CABE urges the amendment of Section 10-303 of the Connecticut General Statutes, removing the exclusive authority of the Board of Education and Services for the Blind to operate vending machines in school buildings.

• DISTRIBUTION OF INFORMATION CONCERNING REFERENDA •

CABE supports the amendment of Section 9-369 of the general statutes to clearly allow prior to a referendum:

- communications to employees or contractors concerning the effect of the proposal
- expenditures of public funds to communicate information to the community concerning the effect of the proposal. In addition, if the court overturns a decision by the Elections Enforcement Commission in which a violation had

been found by the Commission the Commission shall pay all legal fees, costs and expenses of such person or persons.

Finance

• PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION •

In order to insure that public funds are used for public education and to improve public education, CABE urges all citizens and particularly all school board members to:

1. oppose the implementation of voucher systems as methods of financing non public education with public funds; and
2. oppose tax credits for expenditures for tuition or living expenses at private elementary and secondary schools.

• FUNDING MANDATORY PROGRAMS •

CABE supports the concept of full state and federal funding on a current basis for any mandated programs.

• THE FEDERAL ROLE IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION •

CABE urges the federal government to recognize education as a state and local function, while identifying, promoting and supporting the national interest in public education.

CABE supports a program of federal support for elementary and secondary public education that provides increased flexibility and funds that go directly to the local level.

• UNFUNDED MANDATES •

CABE will pursue the passage of legislation making state mandates on local Boards of Education unenforceable unless said mandates are fully funded by the state legislature.

• THE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM •

The increased burden of the cost of public education, largely as a result of mandates imposed on public school systems by state government, requires a more equitable sharing by state and local funding sources. Therefore, state legislation should recognize:

1. the responsibility of the state government to provide an equitable share of total local school expenses;
2. the need for the state to distribute funds on an equitable basis with the primary responsibility for local expenditure determination to remain with the local school board;
3. that local school districts should develop, with state assistance, procedures to ensure fiscal accountability and efficiency and the most effective use of tax dollars;
4. the need to restructure the state spending cap so all federal education funds flow to school districts;
5. the state responsibility to fund court-ordered programs.

CABE supports:

1. use of the most current audited data in any school finance formula;
2. continued exploration of more accurate methods of measuring the wealth of each town, the cost of appropriately educating each child including those children who are economically disadvantaged or have other special needs, the costs associated with participation in public school choice programs, magnet schools and charter schools, and the unique cost burdens borne by poor rural and poor urban school districts;
3. monitoring of the effectiveness of school finance programs to ensure that towns spend an appropriate amount for the education of each student in order to provide substantially equal advantages taking into account differences in local costs based on relevant economic and educational factors and on course offerings of special interest in diverse Connecticut communities;
4. state funding for education provided directly to local and regional boards of education;
5. the creation of a more consistent manner of reporting and calculating per pupil expenditure;
6. reducing the cost of special education to LEAs and requiring the State to pay its fair share of the costs directly to boards of education;

7. funding for gifted and talented programs;
8. the differential in the cost of operating a secondary only regional school district be factored into the ECS Formula and transportation formula and that the MER be applied separately to schools in K-6 or K-8 districts with designated or regional high schools;
9. full state funding for participation in regional vocational-agricultural programs, including transportation costs;
10. financial incentives for school districts operating full or extended day kindergarten programs, after school and summer remedial programs;
11. adequate support for adult vocational education programs.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGETS •

CABE supports legislation to:

1. provide boards of education the authority to create "Special Revenue Funds" to account for the proceeds of specific revenue sources;
2. allow a board of education surplus of up to 1% of the budget to carry-over to the next fiscal year.

• TAX REFORM •

CABE supports comprehensive tax reform in Connecticut that:

1. is balanced and fair and will produce the revenues necessary to support quality public education and other needed public services;
2. reduces reliance on the local property tax, sales tax or other regressive forms of taxation; and
3. assures that distribution of the tax burden is based upon the ability to pay.

CABE opposes a state legislative cap on local property taxes.

• MAGNET SCHOOL FUNDING •

CABE urges the legislature to develop and implement a dynamic and equitable magnet school funding formula tied to actual year-to-year expenditure demands (including transportation) that would minimize a negative financial impact on local school board budgets.

• FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS •

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to maintain support for school construction grants.

CABE supports updating the existing formula covering eligible overall square footage per student to take into consideration space needs such as for cafeterias/kitchens, media centers, reduced class sizes, teaching practices, technology.

CABE urges the State Department of Education to set up a process for reducing the cycle time while continuously accepting and processing applications for reimbursement. Said projects are to be under the supervision of a Connecticut licensed engineer or architect and primary responsibility for compliance with health and safety codes for those projects will be left to local fire marshals.

Labor Relations

• TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR EVALUATION •

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to reestablish separate and categorical funding to support efforts to improve procedures for teacher evaluation and professional development and to develop career incentive programs for instructional personnel.

CABE supports local and regional board of education authority over the local teacher and administrator evaluation process.

CABE urges boards of education to review and strengthen their policies and practices for hiring and evaluating teachers and administrators and to seek assistance as appropriate from the public and private sector in developing their evaluation process.

CABE urges the State Department of Education to continue to provide technical and financial support for these local efforts.

CABE urges the State Board of Education to include student input as a component of the State Teacher Evaluation Guidelines.

• TEACHER NEGOTIATION ACT •

As long as compulsory binding arbitration remains as the dispute resolution process under the Teacher Negotiations Act, CABE supports additional modifications of the Act to allow boards of education to carry out their management responsibilities, including the following:

1. There shall be no presumption by arbitrators in favor of retaining contract provisions or continuing past employment practices.
2. Arbitrators shall give the highest priority to the educational interests of the state as such interests related to the children of the school district.
3. Arbitrators shall give priority consideration to the public interest and the financial capability of the town or towns in the school district. The consideration of financial capability shall include the town's capability as measured by its history of tax increases, personal income trends, declines in state and federal revenues, and the financial impact of state and federal mandates.
4. Establish a requirement that neutral arbitrators participate in training sessions.

CABE opposes granting teachers and administrators the opportunity to strike.

• TEACHER TERMINATION HEARINGS •

CABE urges the state legislature to allow the suspension of tenured teachers without pay prior to the completion of the termination hearing process and to modify the laws governing teacher termination to streamline and simplify the process.

• TENURE SYSTEM •

CABE urges the state legislature to amend the Teacher Tenure Act to allow school boards the ability to address staff reduction forced by budgetary constraints through modified reduction in staffing. The modification to the present system of tenure would allow local school districts to reduce staffing levels not solely through the current seniority system exclusively, but through a blended reduction throughout the seniority system, such that staffing cuts do not fall entirely upon the most junior educators.

• IMPACT NEGOTIATION •

CABE supports the ability of local school boards to change job descriptions unilaterally without the necessity of negotiating the impact of the changes with individual unions.

• UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION •

CABE supports the repeal of federal legislation allowing states to grant unemployment compensation to school district employees during vacations and the summer months.

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to refrain from extending such benefits to school district employees.

CABE supports modification of state statute to specifically provide that notice of intent to layoff at a future point in time, given in compliance with any legal or contractual mandate, shall not give rise to a right to collect unemployment benefits.

• MANDATED BENEFITS •

CABE supports the repeal of Section 10-156 and 10-156a of the Connecticut General Statutes. These issues belong in negotiated contracts.

Special Education

• CLARIFICATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS AND REGULATIONS •

CABE urges the simplification and clarification of state and federal special education laws and regulations in order to more efficiently and effectively deliver special education programs to those students who require them.

• FEDERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES •

CABE urges the federal government to revise and modify due process for students with disabilities. Specifically, CABE recognizes the need to improve on current due process proceedings to make them

more effective and expeditious for the purpose of providing students with disabilities with an appropriate educational program.

CABE supports the following changes to special education law and regulations:

That the issue(s) in dispute at a due process hearing be limited to matters pertaining

- (1) to a proposed IEP;
- (2) to the existing IEP; or
- (3) to any IEP from the current school year or the school year immediately preceding the current year.

That the hearing officer be authorized and/or required to append to his/her final decision and order a statement detailing the issue on which the respective parties have prevailed, in whole or in part, and summarizing the approximate amount of hearing time spent on each issue.

That the hearing officer should be granted the same powers the Federal Courts have to reduce attorney fees if the parent unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the controversy, if the award unreasonably exceeds the hourly rate prevailing in the community, if the time and legal services furnished were excessive considering the nature of the action, or if the attorney representing the parent did not provide the school with a description of the problem relating to the proposed placement change and a proposed resolution. This should be done to insure a more equitable distribution of the financial responsibilities of the due process procedure.

That boards of education be granted more flexibility in the expulsion of special education students involved in criminal activities. Specifically, the federal government should not block states and local and regional boards of education from applying the same disciplinary standards to all students who commit the most serious offenses. If non-disabled students are expelled for certain actions, schools should be allowed to treat students with disabilities in the same manner.

That clarification of the relationship between Section 504 requirements and IDEA be provided.

That IDEA be amended to alleviate the burden placed on school districts with non resident private school students eligible for special education identification and services.

• SPECIAL EDUCATION EQUITY, SERVICE AND PLACEMENT RESPONSIBILITY •

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to:

1. lower the ceiling on local responsibility for special education costs to three times the district's average per pupil expenditure and fully fund this reimbursement grant;
2. limit the funding responsibility of local and regional boards of education for special education placements to the cost of instructional programs with health related service costs and costs exceeding the ceiling absorbed by the state;
3. allow payment of reimbursable special education expenses to pass directly to the school district and in the current year;
4. provide a funding adjustment in situations where special education children move mid-year.

• LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT •

CABE encourages the State Department of Education, Higher Education, the Connecticut General Assembly, and each local and regional board of education:

1. To consider the needs of the entire class of students when placement decisions are made.
2. To examine a variety of placement options to insure that each special education student is placed in the least restrictive environment.
3. To provide pre-service and in-service staff development and sufficient resources for all staff to enable them to provide appropriate support to special education students.

• SPECIAL EDUCATION DUE PROCESS •

CABE urges the Legislature to:

1. Review the method for selection and qualification of due process hearing officers with a view toward increasing the level of professionalism and impartiality.
2. Increase available funding to attract qualified candidates and adequately compensate them for their service.
3. Provide for appellate review of due process decisions.

CERTIFICATION

• CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR ALL CERTIFIED PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES •

The improvement of instruction relies heavily on the continued or increased competency of existing staff members, especially in periods of stable or declining enrollments. Therefore, CABE supports:

1. local and regional boards of education developing high quality professional development programs for school district staff, alone or in cooperation with other school boards, agencies, or institutions;
2. teacher preparation institutions and universities upgrading and expanding continuing education programs and graduate programs for teachers and administrators;
3. Connecticut certification requirements including continuing education as part of periodic re-certification for all certified public school personnel;
4. the State Board of Education seeking funding to support local professional development plans and to help school districts provide professional development programs required by law as part of the periodic re-certification for all certified public school personnel;
5. the State Department of Education reducing the amount of information boards of education must compile and the length of time these documents must be maintained regarding CEUs; and
6. the maintenance of high quality, rigorous programs to improve professional practice by all CEU providers.

• ALTERNATE ROUTES TO TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR CERTIFICATION •

CABE supports the alternate route to teacher and administrator certification, which increases flexibility in the manner in which academically able college graduates, including professionals seeking mid career change, may enter the teaching force.

• CERTIFICATION RECIPROCIY •

CABE urges the Commissioner of Education to establish a committee to review certification reciprocity from certified candidates possessing appropriate certification from other states.

Since 1938, CAFE has been the collective voice of more than 1,300 board of education members across the State. As CAFE has grown, so has our prominence as leaders in shaping public education programs - helping Connecticut prepare for the increasingly competitive 21st century.

The following positions reflect the commitment of board of education members to promote public participation through local lay control of public education, to promote equal opportunity and a high quality education for all Connecticut's public school children and increase public awareness of education issues.



The distinctive line drawing of the Capitol building which appears on the cover was graciously donated to CAFE by the late Richard Welling, a talented Hartford artist. The artwork is a particularly appropriate piece for our 2009 Whole Agenda. We are delighted to be able to feature a work by this very talented artist.