CABE 2019-2020 Annual Report

A summary was published in the September CABE Journal.

Our Purpose

CABE is the only statewide organization that advocates for school board leadership in Connecticut. We are dedicated to strengthening public education through advocacy, professional development and service to our member boards of education. High-quality education for all Connecticut children begins with effective school board leadership. CABE is committed to ensuring that the future of public education remains bright.

In order to best serve our members, our entire 2019-20 Annual Report, including the first eight-and-a-half months can be found on the CABE website at https://www.cabe.org/page.cfm?p=976.

Below are highlights from the activities, programs and services the Association provided from mid-March through the end of June, a time like no other for our members and your Association:

Mid-March, the State ordered offices closed due to the contagious nature of the disease and the concern of its spread, that resulted in a devastating impact on citizens in Connecticut and across the country. CABE closed the office shortly after a successful March 11 Day-on-the-Hill and is only now reopening.

However, even as Staff began to work remotely, we realized that our continued support of school districts was critical if school boards were to be effective in helping their communities through this unprecedented crisis. While our members were struggling to provide high-quality education to students through long-distance learning, we realized the importance of maintaining and even increasing activities for our members.

One of the first decisions the Board and Staff made was to open up our services, programs and other activities to all school districts, whether or not they were 2019-20 members of the Association. We realized that the importance of ensuring that ALL districts had the advantages of being able to receive relevant communications, network with other Boards and obtain up-to-date analysis of the guidelines and other information promulgated by the State.

While we discontinued this provision of membership benefits to nonmembers on July 15, we were delighted that a number of the nonmember boards are expected to rejoin the Association.
We took a number of other steps to help Boards and Superintendents during the crisis:

- Board Chair Check-Ins and Updates, which occurred every week for at least an hour since March 20. These gave Staff a chance to provide updates and Chairs a chance to discuss issues with each other, including their successes and challenges. Among the “guest speakers”:
  - Ellington Board Member Michael Purcaro
  - Newtown Chair Michelle Embree-Ku
  - Learn from Home Taskforce Chairs Superintendents Paul Freeman (Guilford) and Nathan Quesnel (East Hartford)
  - President of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities President Michael Freda (North Haven)
  - CT CAS/CIAC Executive Director Glenn Lungarini
  - CT School Counselors Association Executive Director Michelle Catucci; and,
  - SDE Bureau of Special Education Consultant Jocelyn Mackey.

- Other webinars, that were open for ALL Board members and Superintendents, with Education Commissioner Miguel Cardona and his Cabinet; “Dear School Boards, Your Students and Staff of Color Are Not Okay,” with Dr. Martha Brackeen-Harris; “Announcement of Return to School Plans for 2020-21”; and, Review of Guidelines from the State of Connecticut
- Provision of emails from the State Department of Education to All Board Chairs and Board Members
- Analyses of Executive Orders and Guidelines from the State
- Development of policies and regulations concerning response to the pandemic, including on Board Meetings during the lockdown; masks; distance learning plans and other subjects; and,
- Additional use of the CABE Board Chair listserv to give Chairs the opportunity to ask questions and network with other Chairs.

In addition, Staff continued to provide individual workshops, and provided support to ALL districts which solicited our services.

During this period, the CABE Board of Directors reached out to Board Members and decided to freeze dues for the FIFTH year in a row and made it possible for non-members to become Trial Members after being out go the Association for three, rather than four years.

With school districts under continued and, in some cases, increased budget pressure, the CABE Board of Directors and Staff continued to strengthen our work in four core areas: advocacy, policy, professional development, and communications. CABE’s first-ever Strategic Plan had been adopted by the Board in February and its direction continues to inform our work.

Your Association continues to be affected from pressure on school district finances and the loss of funding from the State for some of our most important programs. However, your Board decided that continuing these programs remains a priority for the Association so that they are continuing.

Please feel free to reach out to members of our Board or Staff with any questions or comments.

Following is a summary of work for the pre-COVID-19 shutdown, 2019-2020.

### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

What was formerly called the Diversity Committee, now the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee released the Cabe Equity Toolkit, which is focused on helping Boards hold the difficult conversations on race and equity in their districts. President Donald Harris appointed Windsor Board Chair Leonard Lockwood as chair of the committee and Cabe also hired Dr. Martha Brackeen-Harris as a consultant for our work in this area. Expect webinars and other opportunities for board members to learn more about racial and equity issues as we move forward.
CABE’s positions on a broad range of local, state and federal issues are adopted each year at the Delegate Assembly. The State Relations Committee then develops CABE’s Legislative Priorities, and Board Members and Staff implement the advocacy agenda. CABE was involved in numerous discussions with legislative leaders and the Governor’s office, and partnered with many other organizations to promote public education. CABE advocacy work this year included:

- Breakfast meetings with legislators throughout the state where board members illustrated the local impact of issues to be debated in the General Assembly;
- Tracking and testifying on bills;
- Held a successful Day on the Hill and heard from the education committee leadership.

CABE was involved in State Department of Education briefings along with other educational partners on the potential need for changes in educating students.

**Federal Relations Program**

At the federal level, prior to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, CABE lobbied the Congressional delegation, on bridging the digital divide in learning and the need for technology resources and accessibility; on full funding for IDEA, and on recruiting, retaining, and securing great teachers. With information from their local districts and input from the National School Boards Association (NSBA) members also lead conversations on creating a healthy and safe school environment; issues promoting educational equity and policies that enhance the well-being of all students and fighting for public education investments to better prepare students with twenty-first century life skills.

**Amicus Curiae**

CABE filed a brief in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals at the request of the Trumbull Board of Education in D.S. V Trumbull Board of Education. The brief, prepared by CABE and filed on behalf of the National School Boards Association, the New York State School Boards Association and CABE, involved the number and type of independent educational evaluations a school district must pay for when the parent disagrees with the results of the district’s initial evaluation. In this case the parents sought evaluations for disabilities when there had not yet been a district evaluation. Oral arguments were held via telephone in May and a decision is pending.

**Legal and Labor Relations**

2019-20 again offered a myriad of opportunities for CABE attorneys and support staff to work with boards of education and superintendents in support of their commitment to the success of all students. Requests for advice and information arriving shortly before a board of education meeting received a quick response by phone or email.

Among the topics addressed were board governance, Freedom of Information Act requirements, labor relations, school governance council roles, special education, legal issues and legislative issues. We also facilitated board retreats and self-evaluation sessions.

CABE’s attorneys made presentations at state and national conferences, including the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), and the NSBA Council of School Attorneys (COSA).

Staff was frequently called upon by the media, including Channels 3, 8, 61, WTIC, WNPR, WSHU, the Hartford Courant, New London Day, New Haven Register, and CT Mirror to address legal issues.

**Collective Bargaining and Labor Relations**

In addition to workshops for individual boards of education, CABE provided customized support to several member districts in addressing specific labor relations issues involving non-certified staff, as well as contract analysis and negotiation preparation support.

Efforts to collect contract data for certified and non-certified staff as well as superintendents continued.
**Policy**

**Policy Highlights Issues**

Twenty-seven issues of the email newsletter, Policy Highlights, were distributed on an every-other-week basis to board members and superintendents, highlighting current educational topics with policy implications. Throughout, the major focus remained on issues pertaining to student achievement, especially as impacted by the pandemic-caused school closures. This represented the nineteenth year of this newsletter.

**Policy Requests and/or Samples**

Approximately 650 requests for policy information and/or sample policies from member districts were addressed, usually on the same day the request was received. The website-based Core Policy Manual continues to receive a great number of “hits” for sample policies in addition to the district manuals that have been placed online through the CABE Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S.). Approximately one hundred new or revised policies were made a part of the policy resource files.

**Customized Policy Services**

Thirty-one districts were under contract for Customized Policy Services during the year for the review and development of new district policy manuals or updates to selected portions of the manual. Two districts entered into contracts for customized policy manual development. The pandemic situation halted the completion of several projects that were close to completion and halted local district interest in starting new projects.

**Policy Update Service**

One-hundred and three districts subscribed to the Policy Update Service publication. Subscribing districts received four mailings, hard copy and electronically, which reflected timely policy issues, including the need for new and/or revised policy topics based upon legislative action, judicial rulings or contemporary policy issues, especially in the areas of remote/on-line learning, succession planning, child abuse reporting, esports, technology, social and emotional learning, student health and wellness, homeless students, minority teacher recruitment, parent organizations and safety and security.

**The CABE Policy Reference Core Manual**

The CABE Policy Reference Core Manual, the Core Manual, containing approximately 630 sample policies and regulations, was continuously revised throughout the year. Moreover, new policy topics were added. It is easily “searchable” and remains accessible for CABE members on the CABE website in a multi-searchable user-friendly format. Board members remained frequent users of this resource.

**Policy Audit Service**

Seven districts had audits completed of their existing policy manuals. The pandemic-caused school closures abruptly halted district interest in this service after three consecutive years in which the highest number done in a year was attained. This service provides the district with a report on the strengths and weaknesses of their existing manual with recommendations to how to update the manual. This remains the most popular of the policy services offered.

**Custom Policy Update Service**

Sixteen districts subscribed to the Custom Policy Update Service. In this service, CABE assumes the responsibility for updating the district’s existing policy manual. Major focus was placed on providing needed policies, administrative regulations and information. Topics included safety and security, sexual assault and sexual harassment, minority teacher recruitment, homeless students, social and emotional learning, trauma-informed schools and esports.

**Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S)**

Forty-five districts subscribed to the Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S.). Districts appreciate that their manuals are easily accessible and searchable online, in a multiple of ways, and are kept current through CABE.
Professional Development

Strengthening Board of Education Leadership

Webinars/Virtual Learning
CABE has continued using webinars to provide timely information to more people. Some of these are presented live and others are recorded and placed on the CABE website for review at our members’ convenience. CABE’s Summer Leadership Conference was presented as a virtual conference over six days, two of which were delayed by Tropical Storm Isaias. To see our growing selection of Webinars, visit our website and click on Podcast/webinars from our Professional Development tab.

Leadership Institute
CABE’s Leadership Institute graduated its 16th class, having now served over 140 participants. The participants were very enthusiastic about their experiences and will urge their colleagues to enroll. Participants met for four-hour sessions, including a webinar. To the request of the graduates, CABE also provides a program for alumni held in conjunction with CABE’s Summer Leadership Institute. This year the alumni program was held virtually.

Board Member Academy
Throughout the past year, CABE has continued its commitment to be the NUMBER ONE Connecticut provider of professional development, by providing high-quality training for local and regional school board members across Connecticut.

To encourage board members’ participation in professional development, CABE’s Board Member Academy provides points for service, leading to two awards: Certified Board of Education Member (CBEM), which requires 20 credits and Master Board of Education Member (MBEM), which requires 20 additional credits. In 2019-20, two board members reached the MBEM level and 28 reached the CBEM level.

Statewide Workshops
Attendance at our workshops in 2019-20 was approximately 449. Workshop topics included: negotiations, legal issues, leadership, effective board meetings, lobbying 101, board chair roundtable, big 5 roundtable. Because of the COVID-19 virus, several CABE workshops including collective bargaining and the wrap up of the 2020 Connecticut General Assembly were not held. Additionally, we did two workshops (one in-person and one virtually) for superintendents’ administrative professionals this year.

CABE/CAPSS Convention
The Convention, Every Student, Every Story, was held on November 15 and 16, 2019. Attendance at the Convention was 506 board members, superintendents, business managers, administrators, education officials and invited guests.

General session speakers included Derrick Gay, Sea Tea Improv, George Couros and a Student Panel.

Workshops included: Roles and Responsibilities of Board of Education Members and Superintendents of Schools; A Meeting with the State Board of Education and Commissioner of Education and Leveraging Portrait of a Student for District Improvement.

Approximately 56 exhibitors of education-related goods and services participated in the exhibit hall.

Superintendents’ Secretaries and Administrative Assistants
Since October 2015, CABE has provided professional development twice a year for superintendents’ secretaries. Between the two programs one in-person and one virtual in 2019-20, we had 112 participants who were superintendents’ secretaries or otherwise provided support in Central Office. Pursuant to their request, we have an active listserv where they share ideas and suggestions.

CABE Board Recognition Awards
• CABE Board Leadership Award Level One
  In 2019-20, 11 boards of education received the Board Leadership Award for their work on their leadership skills. Boards need to fulfill 22 of 34 Level One criteria to earn this Award.

• CABE Board of Distinction Award Level Two
  In 2019-20, 19 boards of education received the Board of Distinction Award. This Award was granted to boards who have achieved Level One at least twice in the prior four years and meet the eligibility criteria.
Awards of Excellence for Educational Communications
This year CABE presented 41 Awards of Excellence in Educational Communications and 32 Honorable Mentions.

Student Leadership Awards
The CABE Student Leadership Awards program continues to be very popular, with 346 students from 91 CABE member school districts earning the award. This program enables each high school and middle school in member districts to nominate two students to be honored for their leadership qualities.

Communications

E-Services: Providing Up-to-Date Information to Boards of Education Communications and Technology

The Association continues to work on improving communications with our membership through social media. You may follow us on:
- Facebook – Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
  527 people like our page, a 24% increase.
- Twitter – CTAssocBdsofEd
  1,312 followers, a 28% increase.
  We currently have 17 subscribers.

Media Assistance for Member Districts
CABE continues to offer this service to members who need the services of communications experts:
- To improve internal communications with political leaders, parents, students, and taxpayers.
- For member boards to get help in times of crisis communications.
- To learn about timing your message to rally support for your budget.
- To help member boards get the message out on the good programs in their district.

This work is done in conjunction with Baldwin Media.

Publications

The CABE Journal was published eleven times this year, in both paper and electronic forms. The Journal’s primary audience is school board members, superintendents and district administrators throughout the state. The Journal is also sent to state and federal legislators, other education organizations (local and national) and others who have an interest in keeping up-to-date with education issues in our state.

The Model Student Parent/Guardian Handbook was revised to reflect current issues and legislative changes.
Other Services

**CABE Search Services**

Mary Broderick, Senior Search Consultant and Associate Consultant Paul Gagliarducci are uniquely qualified to assist boards in recruiting and retaining key personnel such as superintendents, principals and other critical members of your district staff.

This year CABE Search Services conducted two successful search, for Superintendent of Schools for East Granby and a high school principal for Woodbridge.

**Affiliate Membership Program**

- **Business Affiliates**
  CABE invites private sector companies, institutions and firms with an interest in public education, to become our partners and to show their support. The program had 21 partners in 2019-20. **Membership consisted of 2 Valedictorian, 2 Salutatorian, 1 High Honors, 3 Honor Roll and 13 Scholar Members.**

- **Education Affiliates**
  This program helps provide education-related organizations with a closer relationship with CABE. **In 2019-20, we had 17 Education Affiliates.**

A current list of Business and Education Affiliate members can be found on page 3 of every CABE Journal.

**Unemployment Cost Control**

Our Unemployment Cost Control Program membership totaled **21 districts** in 2019-20. This program, which is administered by Corporate Cost Control, offers consultation, claims processing and full administration of all unemployment compensation claims for the district.

**Business Travel Insurance**

CABE contracts to provide Business Travel Insurance to all school board members whose boards are CABE members. This policy provides $25,000 of Accidental Death coverage and is free of charge to CABE members. Coverage is for any school board member traveling on school board business.

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**Our Vision**

CABE is passionate about strengthening public education through high-performing, transformative local school board/superintendent leadership teams that inspire success for each child.