

CABE 2020-2021 Annual Report

A summary was published in the September, 2021 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.

Since the beginning of July 2020 through our fiscal year, your Association worked hard to provide information, analysis and webinars keyed to the needs of our members.

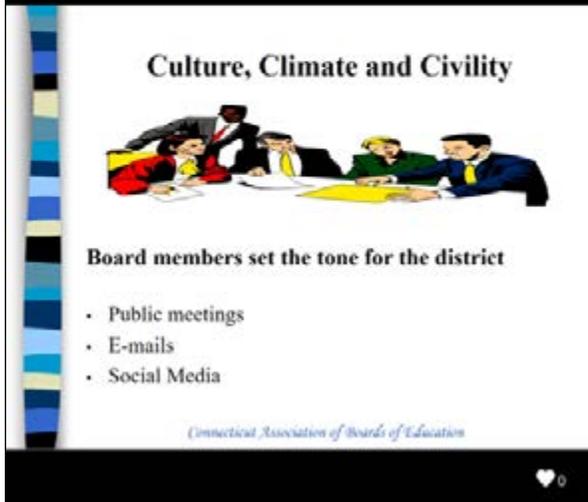
The CABE office, which had been closed immediately following our *Day on the Hill* in 2020, reopened in September. We have implemented safety precautions, including not permitting outsiders into the office and wearing masks in common areas.

While this is a report that normally ends on June 30, we are happy to report that our first in-person Leadership Conference took place on August 5 and attracted more than 90 participants, who sat at socially-distanced tables and most wore masks. No concerns about safety were raised. We believe this is a good omen for our other in-person events, such as our one-day CABE/CAPSS Annual Convention on November 12.

As Staff worked mostly remotely last year, we realized that continued support of school districts was critical if they and their superintendents were to be effective in helping their communities through this crisis. While our members were struggling to provide high-quality education to students through remote, hybrid and in-person learning, and sometimes a combination of all methods, we realized the importance of maintaining and even increasing learning opportunities for our members.

After having opened up all of our services, programs and other activities to all school districts in the Spring of 2020 whether or not they were 2019-2020 members of the Association, we saw 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. We are happy to report that seven of the non-members became at least trial members during 2020. That brings our membership to 155 out of 169 school boards, one of the highest percentages in memory.





We continued a number of steps to help Boards and Superintendents during the crisis:

- Board Chair Check-Ins and Updates continued, but went from weekly to monthly at this time as the urgency faded somewhat. These give Staff a chance to provide updates and Chairs a chance to discuss issues with each other, including their successes and challenges. When appropriate, we have a speaker address the Chairs.
- Webinars on issues such as returning to school in the Fall of 2020; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Leaders in Action; Communities in Schools on returning to school;
- Sending informative mailings from the State Department of Education (SDE) to Board Chairs and Board Members;
- Development of policies, regulations and other information concerning responses to the pandemic, including on Board Meetings during the lock down; masks; and other subjects to respond to the Legislature's adoption of bills; and,
- Additional use of the CABE Board Chair *listserv* to give Chairs the opportunity to ask questions of one another and network with other Chairs.

In addition, Staff continued to provide individual workshops and support to ALL districts which solicited our services, whether virtually or in-person, depending on their needs.

For the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the CABE Board of Directors reached out to Board Members and decided to freeze dues for the FIFTH year in a row.

ADVOCACY

Supporting School Boards at the Legislature, State Board, and Congress

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 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:

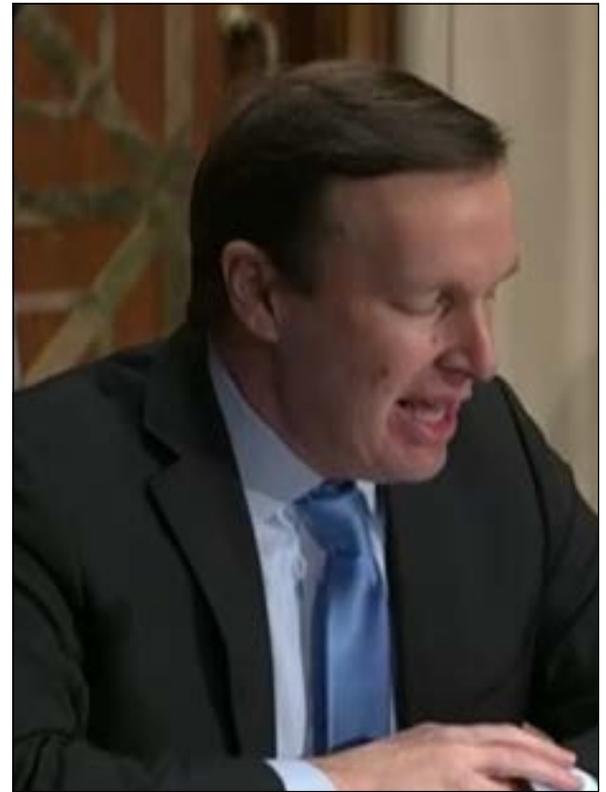
- Participating in virtual breakfast meetings with legislators throughout the state where board members illustrated the local impact of issues debated in the General Assembly.
- Advocated and testified on legislation on our members' behalf. CABE tracked approximately 60 bills and testified or offered testimony on many of those bills. CABE's School Board leaders were supported by Staff in delivering testimony in the virtual environment.
- In addition to weekly *Advocacy Highlights*, CABE provided

- legislative updates for board members at key points in the session.
- On March 17, 2021, CAFE held its first virtual Day on the Hill and heard from the Education Committee leadership. Board members' questions and comments helped legislators in crafting bills for final Committee consideration.
 - CAFE was involved in SDE briefings along with other educational partners on the changes in educating students. As Executive Orders were being drafted by the State Department of Education and the Governor's office, CAFE was sought out to assist, and influenced the orders with a reflection of local needs. The balance of one-size-does-not-fit-all versus creating a uniform solution was a constant consideration.



Federal Relations Program

At the federal level, CAFE lobbied our Congressional delegation on bridging the digital divide in learning and the need for technology resources and accessibility; on full funding for IDEA; on recruiting, retaining, and supporting diverse educators; and on school infrastructure. With information from their local districts and input from the National School Boards Association, members also led conversations on creating a healthy and safe environment; issues promoting educational diversity, equity inclusion, and policies that enhance the well-being of all students; and fighting for public education investments to better prepare students with 21st Century life skills.



Legal and Labor Relations

2020-2021 again offered a myriad of opportunities for CAFE 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 school board meetings received a quick response by phone or email. In the Board Chair Check-Ins and Updates to address pandemic issues, legal and labor relations questions were addressed.

Over the course of the year, legal staff delivered numerous in-district professional development sessions, both in person and virtually. Among the topics addressed were board governance; Freedom of Information Act requirements; school governance council roles; special education; legal issues; and, legislative issues. We also facilitated board retreats and self-evaluation sessions.

CAFE's attorneys made presentations at the state and national conferences, including the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the National School Boards Association.

Efforts to collect contract data for certified and non-certified staff as well as Superintendents continue.

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.





Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

CABE's *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee*, with the help of **Dr. Martha Brackeen-Harris**, has had a busy year working with individual school Boards; providing webinars; surveying our members; and preparing to establish affinity groups for our members. With many issues facing our school Boards and Superintendents, CABE will continue to provide advice, information and other support.

CABE Search Services

As part of CABE's ongoing effort to provide local boards of education with the resources they need to carry out their most important responsibilities, we continue to strengthen our *Search Services* program. **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* has conducted 11 successful searches:

Superintendent of Schools for **Shelton, Westbrook, Watertown, Scotland, Lebanon, Salem, Groton, Wallingford**; Headmaster for **Gilbert School**; and Principal for **Scotland and Columbia**.

This year CABE *Search Services* sent out 13 proposals to Boards of Education looking to hire key personnel.

Board Chair Listserv

Since the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Board Chair *listserv* has been a vital link to keep Board Chairs informed and able to communicate with each other and CABE staff. Topics of discussion and sometimes-friendly debate have included the usual topics such as special education, budget processes, and budget development. In particular, chairs have been able to keep up to date on COVID-19-related topics such as mask wearing, meetings in public versus remote and, up-to-date guidance on the Governor's regulations; and feedback to SDE guidance and directives.

We also offer a separate e-mail list for board chairs of Alliance Districts so that they can share information specific to their needs and also provide a *listserv* to help superintendent administrative professionals that is extremely popular.

Individual Board Workshops

CABE staff continues to regularly meet with Boards of Education (largely through online meetings since the beginning of COVID-19 restrictions). Staff facilitates customized workshops from basic roles and responsibilities; the superintendent search process; goal setting; FOI; legislative updates; and full-day board retreats.



Lighthouse Project

We anticipate a resurgence of *Lighthouse* training as we are in the process of making it easier to get the basics of the research without the time commitment that our training required in the past. We also are working on a way to better focus on diversity, equity and inclusion in our work. Through *Lighthouse* training, CABE has helped a number of districts improve student achievement through more effective board leadership. Our *Lighthouse* trainers have worked with 8 other states and over 20 Connecticut school districts.

We are now in Phase 3 of our project. *Lighthouse 3* has restructured the training to cut the total number of workshops and we are now offering individual *Lighthouse* modules, such as “Community Engagement” and “Using Data” to districts who do not opt for full *Lighthouse* training.

Connecticut *Lighthouse* trainers have also provided professional development to other state associations as they join the program.

Finance and Support

CABE has continued to ensure its resources are consistent with meeting the needs of our members.

Unemployment Cost Control

Our *Unemployment Cost Control Program* membership totaled 22 districts in 2020-21. This program, which is administered by Corporate Cost Control, offers consultation, claims processing and full administration of all unemployment compensation claims for a district.

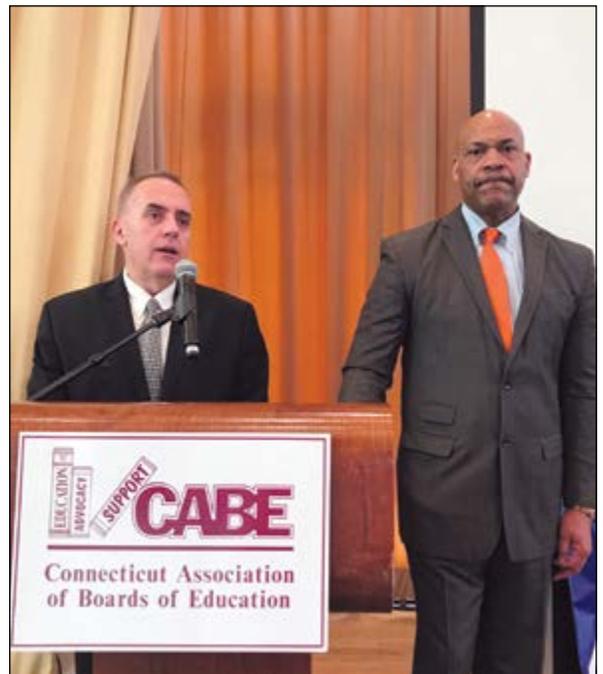
Business Travel Insurance

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.

POLICY

Policy Highlights

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 pandemic-related issues. This represented the twentieth 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 on line through the CABE *Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S.)*. Approximately 120 new or revised policies were made a part of the policy resource files.

Customized Policy Manuals

Twenty-seven 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. One district entered into a contract for customized policy manual development. The development of a new manual was completed for one district. The pandemic situation continued to impact the completion of several projects that were close to completion and severely limited local district interest in starting new policy projects.

Policy Update Service

One-hundred-one districts subscribed to the *Policy Update Service* publication. Subscribing districts received four mailings, both 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 staff development, student attendance, remote learning, graduation requirements, safety and security, social and emotional learning, school mascots, fundraising, Title IX, telework, continuous improvement procedures, board member code of conduct and behavior, employee free speech, confronting racism, and student health issues.

The CABE *Policy Reference Core Manual*, the *Core Manual*, containing approximately 450 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

Three districts had audits completed of their existing policy manuals. The impact of the pandemic on school districts severely limited district interest in this service after many years in which policy audits were the most frequently used service by Boards. This service provides the district with a report on the strengths and weaknesses of their existing manual with recommendations to how to correct manual deficiencies. Audits often result in additional policy projects with the



local district. Districts also utilize the audit report to independently rectify the issues noted in the report, using CABE's policy resources.

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 crowdfunding, mascots, Title IX, responding to hate speech, pandemic-related policies, continuous improvement, board member development, SROs, special education, employee amenities, graduation requirements, grading, student health services, safe school climate, social and emotional learning, parental involvement, food services, staff development, and remote learning.

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

Forty-eight 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.

Enhancements were made to the *C.O.P.S.* program to enable districts to translate its policies into a multitude of languages and to make the program ADA compliant and accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The COVID-19 health emergency continued to place significant demands and restrictions on the Policy Department, but the challenges have been successful met, albeit working differently in a hybrid situation.



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* – 580 likes, 687 followers.

 **Twitter:** @CTAssocBdsofEd – 1,700 followers.

 **YouTube:** <http://bit.ly/2oYSjyy> – 22 subscribers.

Webinars

CABE has continued using webinars to provide timely information to more board members, providing more than 30 webinars this year. Some of these are presented live and others are recorded and placed on the CABE website for review at our members' convenience.



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF BOARDS OF EDUCATION

**Names Matter:
Continuing the Conversation**

Presenter:
Dr. Martha Brackeen-Harris, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Consultant, CABE, mbrackeenharris@yahoo.com

Facilitator:
Robert Rader, Executive Director, CABE, rrader@cabe.org



Participation in our webinars in 2020-2021 was approximately 1,760. Webinar topics included: negotiations, legal issues, leadership, effective board meetings, lobbying 101, and the “wrap up” of what happened at the 2021 Connecticut Legislative Session. Additionally, we did two webinars for superintendents’ administrative professionals this year.

To see our growing selection of Webinars, visit our website and click on Podcast/webinars on our Professional Development tab.

BoardBook

CABE worked with 20 districts to migrate their meeting data to a new platform, *BoardBook*, which is a product of the **Texas Association of School Boards** and the **Nebraska Association of School Boards**. We felt it very important to ensure our providers understood the work of our members.

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; and,
- To help member boards get the message out on the good programs in their district.

This work is done in conjunction with **Baldwin Media**.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Strengthening Board of Education Leadership

Board Member Academy

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

By offering professional development, the *CABE Journal* and other publications, CABE presents board members and administrators with many ways to increase their knowledge and skills.

Board Member Academy Certification

To encourage board members’ participation in professional

development, CAFE's *Board Member Academy* provides points for service, leading to two awards: Certificated Board of Education Member (CBEM), which requires 20 credits and Master Board of Education Member (MBEM), which requires 20 additional credits. In 2020-21, one board member reached the MBEM level and five reached the CBEM level.

The Academy addresses the continuing educational needs of school board members by focusing on core areas of Board responsibilities.

CABE/CAPSS Convention

Because of the COVID-19 crisis the CABE/CAPSS Convention was not held in 2020.

Superintendents' Secretaries and Administrative Assistants

Since October, 2015, CAFE has provided professional development twice a year for superintendents' secretaries. Between the two virtual programs in 2020-21, we had 88 participants who were superintendents' administrative professionals or otherwise provided support in Central Office.

OTHER SERVICES:

The Critical Work of Boards of Education Publications

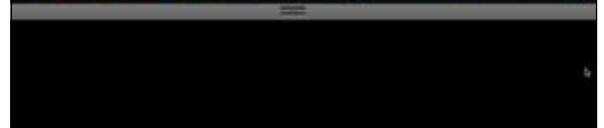
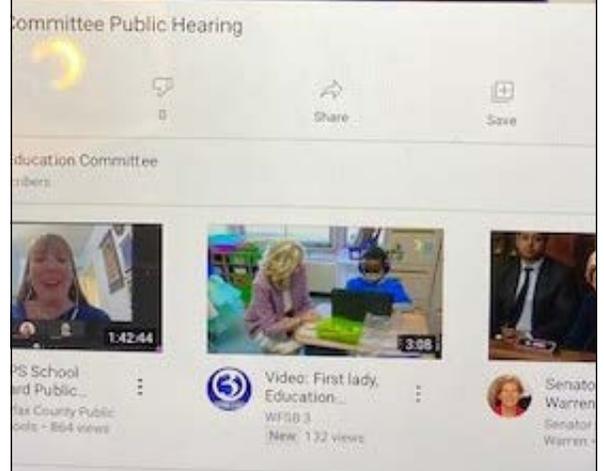
The *CABE Journal* was published 12 times this year, rather than the usual 11, in both paper and electronic forms. The extra issue last summer was important as districts were making critical decisions about returning to school. The *Journal's* primary audience is school board members, superintendents 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.

CABE Board Recognition Awards

CABE Board Leadership Award Level One: In 2020-21, nine 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 2020-21, 16 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.



**A New Year: A Lot Has Changed;
A Lot Hasn't –
What Can We do?**

Presenters:
Dr. Martha Brackeen-Harris, Consultant, CABE,
mbrackeenharris@yahoo.com

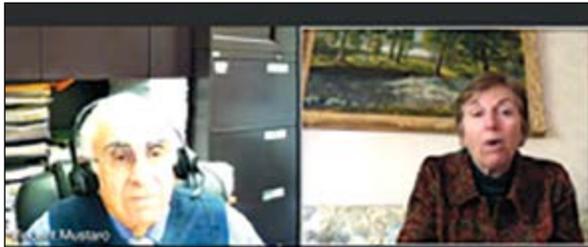


Bonnie B. Carney Awards of Excellence for Educational Communications

This year CAFE presented 20 Awards of Excellence in Educational Communications and 16 Honorable Mentions.

Student Leadership Awards

The CAFE Student Leadership Awards program continues to be very popular, with 401 students from 102 CAFE 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.



AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Business Affiliates

CAFE 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 23 partners in 2020-2021. Membership consisted of 2 Valedictorians, 2 Salutatorians, 1 High Honors, 4 Honor Roll, and 14 Scholars.



Education Affiliates

This program helps provide education-related organizations with a closer relationship with CAFE. In 2020-2021, we had 17 Education Affiliates.

A current list of Business and Education Affiliate members can be found on page three of every *CAFE Journal*.



HERE FOR YOU

While 2020-2021 was a difficult year, CAFE's Board of Directors and Staff look forward to helping Boards and Superintendents with renewed energy, focus, and commitment.

We hope it is a healthy, successful year for all Board Members, Superintendents, school staff and CAFE's many affiliates and friends!