

Education association helps schools pursue equity

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By **The Day Editorial Board** (/apps/pbcs.dll/personalia?ID=editorialboard)

The **Connecticut Association of Boards of Education** (<https://www.cabe.org/page.cfm?p=1>) recognizes a need to embrace diversity so that the folks making policy and teaching reflect the diversity of the students in the seats. It starts at the top with the school boards, notes the nonprofit organization that represents the interests of boards across Connecticut.

According to CABE, only a small number of board members in Connecticut are of color, about 12% African American, 4% Latino, the latter number particularly alarming given the state's expanding Latino population.

In **Norwich** (<https://www.norwichpublicschools.org/departments/board-of-education>) and **New London** (https://www.newlondon.org/our_district/board_of_education), diverse boards of education do reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of those communities, but not so in **Groton** (<https://www.grotonschools.org/aboutus/board-of-education>). We agree with CABE's observation that local political parties should strive to attract more people of color to run for school boards.

In a recently published "Equity Toolkit for Connecticut Boards of Education," the association not only lays out succinctly why diversity is important, but also provides practical steps how school systems can start working toward that goal.

The toolkit defines equity as "giving students what they need to be successful, academically and socially. To reach equity, students will need to 'see themselves' in their curriculum and instructional materials."

Its lofty, meritorious goal is to reach a point "when there are no systematic disparities in academic outcomes based upon race, ethnicity, gender, economic status, or zip code." The state remains far away from that destination, but getting their begins, as CABE recognizes in quoting the vision statement of the State Board of Education, with the "core principle that, with the right supports and rich learning opportunities, every student will meet high academic standards, regardless of a child's life circumstances."

Credit the organization, whose association represents school boards controlled by both Republicans and Democrats, with tackling a subject which, unfortunately, gets dragged into the political culture wars. CABE has long advocated for recruiting great teachers, but also ones who, through minority recruitment efforts, reflect student diversity.

The "Equity Toolkit" outlines how to begin "community conversations" that allow people from diverse backgrounds to speak openly about how well, or not, they think students are being served and families supported. The aim is to "engage members of the community who are not typically involved in conversations about excellence in education," helping all better understand how the needs of students can be met, and how parents can contribute.

This worthy effort by CABE deserves consideration by local school boards.

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