



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, Inc.

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CABE's Legal and Negotiations Services: Impacting the Work of Local School Districts

By Robert Mitchell, President, CABE

This month, I will focus on yet another CABE department - the Legal and Negotiations Services.

Legal Service

CABE's Legal Department is a great asset to the Association. In a world governed by numerous and sometimes confusing laws derived from an assortment of sources (Federal laws, state laws and judicial rulings, to name a few), it helps to have a source that can help a board of education maneuver through a sometimes tangled mess.

Our team of legal experts serves the membership in a variety of ways. First and foremost, they keep an eye on any legal matters affecting public education, following legislation, court cases and legal findings. When something that will impact public education happens, staff makes sure our membership finds out about it.

CABE attorneys respond to hundreds of phone calls and e-mails each year, providing individualized legal and research assistance to member boards of education and superintendents on a broad range of topics including:

- questions of compliance with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on issues such as properly noticing executive sessions, allowable topics for executive sessions, multi-agency meetings, bargaining committee meetings, teacher evaluations, email communications, special and emergency meetings, and exemptions for records covered by Federal privacy law;
- teacher termination due process;
- superintendent evaluations;
- human resources practices;
- Robert's Rules of parliamentary procedure;
- board and superintendent roles and responsibilities;
- filling of board vacancies;
- records retention;
- expulsion proceedings; and
- Alternative Education programs.

In addition to responding to requests for legal and operational information, CABE staff:

- provides support to School Governance Councils;
- facilitates board self-evaluations;

- conducts workshops for individual districts, central office administrative staff, and the full membership;
- participates in *amicus curiae* (friend-of-the-court) briefs in cases of statewide and national significance;
- presents at the NSBA Annual Conference and at legal workshops offered by Connecticut School Attorneys Council member firms; and
- writes on legal matters of interest for *The CABA Journal*.

Many times a phone call to CABA attorneys can save you from a much bigger problem down the road.

Negotiations Service

CABA attorneys and staff collect and review contract settlements, interest arbitration and grievance arbitration awards and provide all member districts with analyses of collective bargaining trends and emerging employee relations topics for all school district employees, including superintendents, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and custodians. This data is kept up to date in a database to provide timely information which can be indispensable during contract negotiations.

These services are of great value to CABA's member districts, and yet another reason why I believe it is in every school board's best interest to be an active member of CABA!

