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CABE's Policy Service Working for YOU!

By Robert Mitchell, President, CABE

In my last few columns, I've spoken about the need for board members to serve as advocates for our public schools. I've shown you how you can work to support public education in Connecticut and encourage you to continue to do so.

I will periodically use this column to highlight what CABE provides to its membership. This month, I want to talk about how the CABE staff supports you, Connecticut's Boards of Education, on a daily basis.

School boards govern through Policy. CABE is a key source of support to boards' work in policy. CABE's Policy Department staff has over 90 years of combined experience in education policy and governance and are a valuable asset to CABE's membership.

CABE staff responds daily to questions about policy and policy implications. Vincent Mustaro, CABE's Senior Staff Associate for Policy Services is a former superintendent who not only knows policy in and out, but understands how to ensure your policy will be operational as well.

CABE keeps a large database of over 1,000 existing policies from around the state and makes them available to board members looking for samples. Working on a new policy? A phone call or e-mail to CABE's Policy Department can generate examples of other district's policies on that topic (or any other).

CABE also provides the *Connecticut Reference Manual of School Board Policies, Regulations and Bylaws*. This manual contains more than 450 examples of policies, regulations and bylaws that are mandated, recommended or optional. These are referenced by Connecticut statutes, regulations of the State Board of Education, relevant legal cases and federal statutes and regulations.

The Core manual is available to members via the CABE website at no cost. A CD with copies of all files is also available for a fee. The online version is searchable. This allows you to research policies and best practices as you review your existing policies.

You also have an opportunity to participate in C.O.P.S. – Connecticut Online Policy Service. This low-cost, for-fee service allows your district to put its manual online, making it easier for you, your staff and the community to access your policy manual. C.O.P.S. is searchable and allows you to give access to anyone of a complete, totally up-to-date copy of your policies and regulations. Not only do you have access to all of your policies online, but those of any other C.O.P.S. subscriber.

CABE Policy Services also offers the Policy Update Service, which includes a quarterly mailing that incorporates changes to policies driven by changes in State and Federal laws, as well as changes due to legal decisions. At the end of every Legislative session, the Policy Department reviews every piece of education legislation and makes changes to recommended policies. While there is a fee for this service, all boards benefit from the research that goes into this publication, as all recommended policies are updated when laws change.

Two other for-fee services are available for those districts who need a thorough review of their policy manual. The Policy Audit Service is a complete review of your existing policy manual, including a complete review of every policy and regulation with analysis as to what is current and what is out of date. A report with a full recommendation as to where work needs to be done to bring policies into compliance is provided to the district. For those districts that don't have the resources to do a complete revision to their policy manual, there is the CABE Customized Policy Service which completely review and updates your entire manual.

Policy is how the board governs the district and knowing that strong support in that crucial area is only a phone call or e-mail away is reassuring to me as a Board Chair. I encourage you to think of CABE when questions arise.

To reach the CABE Policy Department, contact Vin Mustaro at vmustaro@cabe.org or 860-571-7446.