

## PRESIDENT COMMENTARY

## I Am Honored to Serve You

**Donald Harris**  
PRESIDENT, CABE

I would like to thank the members of the Association for putting their faith and trust in me as the President of CABE. I am proud to be able to serve the many board of education members who work passionately to make the future brighter for the children of the state of Connecticut.

To begin, I thought I should tell you a bit about myself. I was born and raised in Hartford and moved to Bloomfield to begin my sophomore year in high school 60 years ago. When I was elected to the Bloomfield Board of Education, I became a second-generation school board member to my father who also served on the Bloomfield Board of Education from 1967 to 1975.

I graduated with a B.S. degree in Physical Education from Springfield College in 1967. My first teaching assignment was in my alma mater, Bloomfield High, where I served in several roles, including that of a teacher, coach, athletic director, vice principal and finally as Principal until my retirement in 2006.

Living a life of service to my community meant that after my retirement I was not finished. While starting a new career as a real estate agent, I also served as a Deacon at the Union Baptist Church. I was approached about running for the Town Council and was elected to serve as Deputy Mayor of Bloomfield from 2007-2011. I was elected to the Bloomfield Board of Education in 2011 where I have been privileged to serve as Board Chair ever since.

In 2011, I became a member of the CREC Board of Directors where I've served as a member and Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer. I have served in a variety of capacities at CABE, as well. I served on the Board of Directors, the CABE Executive Committee, Federal

Relations Chair, First Vice-President and chaired the CABE Diversity Committee. In 2017, Gov. Dannel Malloy appointed me to serve on the Connecticut State Board of Education.

I believe that my experiences will allow me to serve CABE well. Having classroom, administrative and leadership experience has given me insight on how to continue to move CABE forward to the next step.

CABE, like many other not-for-profit organizations, is struggling to best serve our membership at a time when resources are harder to get. It is a priority of mine to work hard to make sure that CABE is appreciated, trusted and the first place someone calls when they need help regarding school governance. We plan to do a better job of telling our story, so I am going to work with the Board and CABE staff on a process of strengthening our communications. It is important that our communities see the importance of boards of education and equally important that boards of education recognize the importance of CABE. That enhanced visibility will be one of my goals over the next two years.

Of course, the best way to ensure relevance is strategic planning and I believe it is time for CABE to participate in that process. I will be encouraging the Association to undergo that process to ensure a sound, healthy organization as we face future challenges. We anticipate broad data collection from as many members (and non-members) as we can to ensure that CABE truly meets the expectations of boards of education across the state.

In my time at CABE I have regularly encouraged CABE and the boards we represent to be more inclusive. As I go across the state, I have seen many boards of education, who often represent a diverse student population, with few, if any, minority groups represented on the board. This is not a new situation on the CABE Board of Directors, and while we have all



recognized the problem and worked to fix it, we must have a concerted effort to take strong action to diversify our board. The work has not gone fast enough, yet I anticipate that CABE's Diversity Committee will place renewed energy to this serious initiative. As President, I will do all I can to encourage that.

Just as CABE has always encouraged boards of education to perform an annual self-evaluation, I will encourage the CABE board to likewise, evaluate itself. The best boards challenge themselves and hold themselves to a high standard of performance. We have excellent people serving on the CABE Board, but I think we can find ways to be more effective as a leadership team. Evaluating the Board of Directors can help us in this endeavor.

Finally, CABE has been an effective spokesperson for Connecticut boards of education for more than 100 years. I envision the long-term health of boards of education in general as being dependent on a healthy state Association. Our job as board members is to work collaboratively with our Superintendents to provide quality educational opportunities for ALL the children in the State of Connecticut. It is my goal, with the help of the CABE board and staff to work with all boards of education to value being a part of an organization created to support Connecticut's public schools.

I will look to you, board of education members from across the State, to help me in this effort.

to excel.

The Board also discussed a draft computer science plan and the recent legislative and credential changes that have grown the computer science field. It was June of 2018 when the State Board of Education adopted standards, and this plan is the implementation necessary for putting them in place across the state-recognizing the different stages/needs of each district.



**Mission:** To assist local and regional boards of education in providing high quality education for all Connecticut children through effective leadership.

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

## Board of Directors

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## CABE Area Breakfasts

**CABE Area 1/EdAdvance**  
December 12 • 7:30 AM  
Partnership Learning Academy  
77 Main Street, Terryville  
(across from Town Hall)

**CABE Area 5/EdAdvance**  
January 9 • Time: TBD  
Location: TBD

**CABE Area 2/CREC**  
February 20 • 8:00 AM  
State Capitol, Hartford

## SUPPORTING BOES

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report card. This assessment is not given to all students in each state, it is a sampling of students. Connecticut continues to lead the national public school student averages. It was noted, Connecticut's need students is now over 50%. That includes English learners, low income and disabled. While those percentages have grown, the scores of Connecticut's students continue