



Annual Report

2022-2023

As we reflect on the work of the past year, we are pleased to share the *CABE Annual Report for 2022-2023*. This report encapsulates CABE's commitment to driving excellence in public education and ensuring the success of all of Connecticut's students. We are privileged to collaborate with dedicated school boards, superintendents, educators, and supportive partners who share our passion for supporting public education.

Building strong partnerships in support of public schools and communicating with the public about the role of school boards have been major priorities.

The following pages offer an overview of the initiatives, achievements, and collaborative endeavors that have been undertaken by your Association and the educational community at large. We invite you to explore the strides we have collectively taken in shaping the future of public education in Connecticut.

ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS

At CABE, our dedication to supporting school boards through effective advocacy remains unwavering. In the year 2022-2023, we continued to champion education issues at the local, state, and federal levels.

State Relations: CABE's commitment to local advocacy led us to adopt positions on a range of issues at our Delegate Assembly in November. Guided by the State Relations Committee, we developed Legislative Priorities. This year, we engaged in conversations with legislative leaders and the Governor's office, advocating for public education.

CABE state advocacy work this year included:

- Participating in breakfast meetings with legislators throughout the state where board members illustrated the local impact of issues.
- Tracking approximately 64 bills and testifying or offering testimony on funding, reading programs, and indoor air quality and HVAC, to name some of the issues. In addition to weekly Advocacy Highlights, CABE provided webinar updates on the Governor's Budget and the Appropriation Committee's Budget and bills voted out of the Education Committee.
- CABE Day on the Hill, including hearing from the education committee leadership. Board members' questions and comments helped legislators in crafting bills.
- Briefings with the State Department of Education along with other educational partners. The balance of one size does not fit all as it weighs with creating a uniform solution was a constant consideration.

Federal Relations Program

CABE's federal advocacy focused on closing the digital divide in learning, pursuing full funding for IDEA, and recruiting diverse educators. In collaboration with local districts and input from the National School Boards Association, we addressed creating safe environments, promoting educational equity, and enhancing student well-being. Our goal: to equip students with essential 21st-Century life skills.

LEGAL AND LABOR RELATIONS

CABE's Legal and Labor Relations Department continued to support boards of education and superintendents. We offered prompt responses to legal inquiries, ensuring smooth board operations.

Requests for Legal Information

Department staff responded to a variety of questions from board members, superintendents, and superintendents' administrative professionals. These questions sought information for issues that involved district policies and bylaws, state and federal law, new legislation, town charters, contracts, and Robert's Rules, among others.

The topics of questions are wide-ranging, and department staff are always eager to assist districts by providing detailed but practical information. The most frequent topic is of compliance with Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Specifically, questions related to board meeting requirements, including questions regarding agendas, quorums, minutes, voting, motions, "non-meetings," and executive sessions.

In addition to FOIA-related questions, the Department received questions on a variety of other topics. As a sampling, questions have dealt with: the limits of boards of education and superintendent authority; board member conduct; residency; employee leave; remote learning; the relationship between boards of education and local governmental entities; superintendent contract provisions; and board member conflicts of interest, among many others.

Workshops and Presentations

Department staff presented on a variety of topics throughout the year, at both CABE-hosted workshops and webinars and outside events and board meetings. Additionally, CABE is central in hosting the meetings of the Connecticut School Attorneys Council, with both CABE attorneys currently serving as officers of the Council.

The Department organized CABE's Legal Issues and Collective Bargaining workshops. The Legal Issues workshop was held in October 2022 and included a presentation from a CABE attorney as well as an attorney each from Shipman & Goodwin and Pullman & Comley. The Collective Bargaining workshop was held in May 2023 and included presentations from four attorneys from the firms Shipman & Goodwin, Zangari Cohn Cuthbertson Duhl & Grello, and Kainen, Escalera & McHale. The workshops were well-received by board members and superintendents.

Department staff also presented workshops on school governance councils for Hartford and Waterbury and presented at the 2023 NSBA Conference.

Lastly, department staff presented at a variety of CABE-hosted events and single-topic webinars, including Roles and Responsibilities, Parliamentary Procedure, the CABE/CAPSS Convention, the Legislative Update, and workshops for Superintendents' Administrative Professionals.

Collective Bargaining and Superintendent Contract Data Collection

Department staff collects two types of data throughout the year, information on collectively bargained contracts and superintendent contracts. This information is then released to any member district who so requests it.

The superintendent contract data was typically requested when a district was either about to hire a new superintendent or issue a new contract for the current superintendent. The data consists of salary, annuity, and any additional compensation details. The data can be organized by DRG, as it is useful for members to see the salaries of superintendents in districts within the same socio-economic category.

Department staff also compile collectively bargained contract information for teachers and administrators. The information consists of several data points, including step increases, increments, health insurance, and other details that were bargained for during negotiations.

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 Consultants Paul Gagliarducci and Jack Reynolds 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 sent out eight proposals to Boards of Education looking to hire key personnel which led to CABE Search Services conducting and completing six successful searches.

2022-2023 CABE Searches

Superintendent of Schools: Canterbury, East Hartford, Granby, New Milford, and Woodbridge
Middle School Principal: Preston

POLICY

Tailored Policy Solutions: We delivered customized policy manual services to districts, ensuring compliance and alignment with best practices. Our website-based Core Policy Manual and Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S.) facilitated easy access to sample policies and resources.

Customized Policy Manuals

Ten 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. CABE policy staff provides individual support to help districts adopt an updated manual.

Policy Update Service

Ninety-four districts subscribed to the *Policy Update Service* publication. Subscribing districts received four mailings, 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.

Policy Reference Core Manual

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

One district had an audit completed of their existing policy manual. This service provided the district with a report on the strengths and weaknesses of their existing manual with recommendations on how to correct manual deficiencies. Audits often result in additional policy projects with the local district.

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. A major focus was placed on providing needed policies, administrative regulations, and information.

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

Forty-seven districts subscribe to the *Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S.)*. District manuals are easily accessible, searchable, ADA and Section 504 compliant, and have the ability to translate into multiple languages. Revisions and additions made by the District are posted to the online manual through CABE.

Strengthening Policies: CABE's dedication to continuous improvement was evident in the consistent updates to the CABE Policy Reference Core Manual as well as Policy Highlights, and responses to policy and sample requests. We expanded the resource, incorporating new policy topics and ensuring accessibility for board members.

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. The major focus remained on issues about student achievement. This represented the twenty-second year of this newsletter.

Policy Requests and/or Samples

Approximately 356 requests for policy information and/or sample policies from member districts were addressed. 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 online through the CABE *Connecticut Online Policy Service (C.O.P.S.)*.

FINANCE AND SUPPORT

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

Unemployment Cost Control

Our Unemployment Cost Control Program membership totaled 21 districts in 2022-23. This program, which is administered by Corporate Cost Control, offers consultation, claims processing, and full administration of all unemployment compensation claims for participating districts.

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.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Engaging Professional Development: Our Convention, workshops, and webinars served as platforms for professional growth and networking. Hundreds of attendees participated, engaging in discussions on crucial educational topics.

The 2022 CABE/CAPSS Convention had 491 participants, which brought us close to pre-pandemic numbers. In the General Sessions, Convention participants heard from Dr. Nii Addy, students Kruti Dharsandiya and Melinda Lu, and Dr. Craig Hlavac. Participants also had the opportunity to participate in over 30 workshops and interact with 50 companies that do business with school districts that were represented in the Exhibit Hall.

Over 400 board members, superintendents, and other educational leaders participated in CABE in-person workshops which included Legal Issues and Collective Bargaining which are detailed in the Legal and Labor Relations section of this report, Summer Leadership Conference, Fall and Spring Meetings for Superintendents' Administrative Professionals, Legislative Wrap Up, Delegate Assembly, and CABE Area Breakfasts.

Additionally, nearly 500 board members, superintendents, and other educational leaders participated in CABE virtual programming including:

- Board's Role in Communications
- Roles and Responsibilities of Board Members
- Parliamentary Procedure for Boards of Education
- Board's Role in Advocacy
- Reading Curriculum Legislation
- Governor's Budget Briefing
- African American Black and Puerto Rican Latino Course of Study
- Preparing for CABE's Lobbying Day
- Education Committee – Joint Favorable
- As Book Bans Escalate, Here Is What You Need to Know
- Appropriations Committee
- Learning More About Becoming a Board of Education Candidate

CABE has continued to host regular Board Chair Check-Ins which began as a resource for Board Chairs during the pandemic and continues to provide timely information, support, and networking for Board Chairs.

Individual Board Workshops

CABE staff continues to regularly meet with boards of education at their request to provide professional development. Staff continued to facilitate customized workshops on basic roles and responsibilities, the superintendent search process, goal setting, FOI, legislative updates, and board retreats for 52 boards. In particular, we have been very busy helping boards transition back to being more goal and policy-oriented, as we continue to move to a post-COVID landscape.

COMMUNICATIONS

Digital Outreach

Social Media

Our presence on social media platforms enabled us to connect with a wide audience. We maintained active engagement on platforms like X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and, most recently, LinkedIn facilitating meaningful conversations. Our most engaging campaigns this year were #ISUPPORTMYCTPUBLICSCHOOLS (February) and Board of Education Appreciation Month (March).

We currently have 1,848 followers on X (formerly known as Twitter), 728 likes and 856 followers on Facebook, and 95 followers on LinkedIn.

Listserves

Board Chairs: this is a vital link for board chairs to be informed and communicate with each other and CABE staff. Topics of discussion have included special education, budget processes, budget development, and meeting management.

Alliance District Board Chairs: We also offer a separate e-mail listserv for board chairs of Alliance Districts so that they can share information specific to their needs.

Superintendents' Administrative Professionals: support superintendents' administrative professionals which is extremely popular.

CABE Journal

CABE provided 11 issues of the CABE Journal, with a circulation of approximately 2,100, of which six were published both digitally and in print and the remaining five were digital only.

Media Relations

Staff was frequently called upon by the media, including Channels 3, 8, 61, WTIC, WNPR, the Hartford Courant, New London Day, Meriden Record-Journal, New Haven Register, and CT Mirror to address legal, legislative, and public policy issues.

CONCLUSION

As we reflect on the achievements of 2022-2023, CABE remains dedicated to fostering educational excellence, advocating for effective policies, and providing valuable support to our members. We are grateful to the education leaders, board members, and partners for their continued commitment to advancing public education in Connecticut.

08/25/23