

2008-09 ASBSD Standing Positions

ASBSD Delegate Assembly

Standing positions are extensions of ASBSD's core beliefs, and act as broad-based guides to ASBSD's advocacy efforts. ASBSD standing positions, once adopted, continue as association policy until removed by the ASBSD Delegate Assembly.





Local Governance

School districts are governed by boards that, as elected leaders, must be responsive and accountable to local citizens. An informed, active citizenry is essential to our democratic and representative form of government.

Local boards, within guidelines established by state law, are vested with authority to make local education decisions. Local board members, as the elected representatives closest to the students, families and communities in which they live, are best positioned to understand student needs and identify effective solutions. A local school board cannot delegate statutory duties and responsibilities. State law must allow governance flexibility to ensure all school boards are positioned to meet the needs of their community and the changing public school environment.

School boards are accountable to students, citizens and staff for: providing education programs; striving for excellence; identifying needs; adopting clearly defined written policies; measuring program success; and interpreting and disseminating information to the public.

School boards function best in a non-partisan, broadly representative, team-spirited manner while putting district needs ahead of partisanship and special interest - be they political, racial, religious, geographic, economic, social, civic or any other form.

The board and superintendent, along with other key personnel, serve as a local governance leadership team that works together to effectively and efficiently operate a school district.

Notes:

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Modified and adopted by the 2007 ASBSD Delegate Assembly. Originally adopted by the 2006 Delegate Assembly.



Student Achievement

One of a local school board's core responsibilities is to adopt policies focused on improving student achievement and to support policy implementation and practice.

While students have diverse educational needs, every student, regardless of their differences, can achieve at high levels when the state, local school boards and communities establish high expectations for students and provide necessary resources and support. As community leaders, school board members focus on providing programs and working collaboratively with other agencies to secure necessary services.

Local school boards develop, adopt and oversee policies intended to benefit all students while working to eliminate gaps between low-achieving students and students performing at or above grade level. Achievement should be gauged using an accountability system based on multiple measures that are defensible, credible and diagnostically meaningful to a variety of stakeholders (students, parents, staff, community members and policymakers).

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Position revised by the ASBSD Delegate Assembly in 2008. Position originally adopted by the Delegate Assembly in 2007.



School District Reorganization

School district reorganization, resource sharing and cooperative arrangements are in the best interest of South Dakota's public school students when:

- Educational outcomes, measured in expanded educational opportunities with expectations for improved achievement, is the most important consideration; and
- Geographical issues are considered, including the amount of student travel time and allowing for continued community participation; and
- The state provides incentives to make reorganization financially feasible for school districts;
- Reorganization is voluntary – initiated and voted upon by the citizens of the school districts involved.

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School Finance

School finance decisions - whether at the local, state or federal level - should build the capacity of the public education system to expand learning opportunities for students. Positive school finance reform does not shift existing resources away from or between school districts. Policy makers at all levels should fulfill commitments and obligations to public schools before providing financial support to non-public schools.

South Dakota's public school students deserve a comprehensive school finance system. ASBSD supports a school finance system that:

- Provides adequate, equitable, predictable and timely funding;
- Provides equal opportunities to all students while addressing South Dakota's diverse student needs;
- Provides relief for enrollment fluctuations; and
- Is fair and equitable to all students and taxpayers irrespective of their school district of residence.

State funding must support local governance. Locally elected school boards should have authority and responsibility to prioritize and allocate funding to best meet student needs.

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School Choice

ASBSD supports school choice with accountability. South Dakota's parents and taxpayers deserve transparency in the use of public funds. Individuals or entities receiving tax dollars to support elementary and secondary education – including funds provided to charter schools or to individuals through vouchers or tax credits - should meet the same legislatively established standards and accountability requirements as public schools.

Education entities receiving public funds should uphold the promise of public education, ensuring equal access to a quality public education without charge for tuition. Public funds should support schools that operate as nonsectarian entities open to all students regardless of ethnicity, national origin, gender or disability. To ensure the safety of students and staff, publicly funded education entities must maintain appropriate health and safety standards.

South Dakota's public education system, through South Dakota's open enrollment laws, provides parents and students the choice to attend any of South Dakota's high quality public schools. Local school boards have the responsibility to respond to the needs of their community by authorizing innovative programs and initiatives designed to enhance student outcomes. Charter schools, whether traditionally structured or technologically driven, should only be established under the authority of local school boards.

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Technology in Education

Technology has an essential and expanding role in our global society. Emerging information and communication technologies will reshape how students learn and how they apply their knowledge, skills and abilities later in life.

Technology is a powerful, important tool to be used in combination with proven learning strategies to ensure a high-quality education. Virtual learning strategies, whether to provide remediation, enrichment or alternative scheduling, should be approved under the authority of local school boards.

South Dakota's public school students deserve school systems that leverage technology to promote meaningful, engaged learning. South Dakota's public school students must have equitable access to technology, including hardware, software, technologically literate educators and adequate technology support staff. The state has a role in ensuring equitable access to technology by providing adequate resources to support district-level technology plans.

South Dakota's public school system should embrace technology as a catalyst to improve learning through the collection, distribution and use of assessment data. School district staff need support, through high-quality, embedded professional development, to integrate technology into both instructional and planning time.

ASBSD supports technology initiatives focused on improved student outcomes and that reflect the need for ongoing support and renewal in the ever-changing technological landscape.

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School Facilities

A growing body of research has linked student achievement and behavior, as well as staff morale, to physical building conditions. Because school facilities are important educational tools, every child deserves a safe, technologically-ready school facility designed for student learning.

School infrastructure in South Dakota has historically been considered a local issue, with nearly all capital funding coming from local property taxes. Reliance on local property taxes to fund capital construction and improvements causes disparities in the local ability to generate capital revenue, creating an inequitable system that prevents some property-poor districts from updating or maintaining facilities.

The state has an important role to play in ensuring equity in the ability of school districts to provide adequate school facilities, but South Dakota is one of a handful of states that has yet to develop statewide policy to address school facility needs. ASBSD supports legislation that improves access to safe, health and adequate learning environments by financially assisting property-poor districts with capital projects.

In cases where local communities are able to fund capital projects, local school boards and communities are in the best position to make capital project decisions. Local school boards, as locally elected leaders representing the students, district and tax payers, must maintain the authority to raise or lower the capital outlay levy to meet the needs of the local district and community. ASBSD supports legislation that allows for a simple majority for a bond issue, rather than the 60 percent majority currently required.

ASBSD encourages local districts to construct energy-efficient school facilities, making use of green energy whenever practical. ASBSD supports state financial incentives that enable local districts to construct or update facilities to energy efficiency standards.

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School Wellness

ASBSD believes that wellness is related to students' overall well-being and their readiness to learn. A growing body of research links student wellness to positive academic results, affirming the importance role school wellness plays in student achievement.

Local school boards should work with community stakeholders to promote policies and practices that encourage and enable wellness, including healthy food choices, nutrition education, regular physical activity, and a coordinated approach to addressing health. Comprehensive local policy includes multiple aspects of student well-being, including drug resistance, suicide prevention, violence prevention and all forms of bullying.

ASBSD urges local school boards to adopt policy that promotes healthy lifestyles and student safety, but opposes state mandates, whether funded or unfunded, which would limit the authority of local school districts to design appropriate wellness programs that reflect school and community standards.

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