

# NASB News Update--February 2012

## News from the Association, Around Nevada, and Across the Nation



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### Supporting Success for All Students through Local School Board Leadership



#### A Message from NASB's President



On January 28 in Reno at the Hyatt Place Hotel, NASB provided three workshops free-of-charge for members of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee. Other board members and superintendents were invited to attend to take advantage of this professional development opportunity. We welcomed two board members from Eureka and three superintendents for this training.

Randy Drake [General Counsel, Washoe County School District] provided an update on the latest information about the "Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act for Board Members." Erin Cranor [NASB Legislative Chair, Clark] shared an overview about "Social Media for School Board Members." Before the workshop, Ms. Cranor assisted a number of board members in establishing Twitter and Facebook accounts for their professional use. Sharla Hales [NASB Former President, Douglas] shared ideas for "Effective Board Agendas and Meetings That Focus on Student Achievement." Those in attendance earned one CPO unit for these workshops.

Ms. Hales centered her presentation around "Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards," based on a study from the Center for Public Education, published in 2011. These characteristics are critical for all of us across Nevada, because by incorporating them into our habits as board members, we can all become more effective at the important work of promoting learning and achievement for all children. This month's President's Message will focus on four of these characteristics and next month's Message will continue with the remainder.

#### **1. Effective school boards commit to high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision.**

This sounds so easy, doesn't it? But the underlying foundation of this characteristic requires that boards establish a collaborative process to set goals. Sometimes reaching consensus on our district goals is a rocky road.

It is up to us to lead the policy discussion about establishing student achievement as the central, core belief of the board. Sometimes it is challenging for us to agree upon non-negotiable goals that the superintendent and district staff must act upon. We must demonstrate the leadership to work with the superintendent in establishing a clear, concise vision statement that defines what raising student achievement means to the district. We need to involve the community, parents, students, and staff in developing that common vision. We need to be responsive to the needs of all students.

In high achieving districts, staff members could link the school board's goals to building-level goals for student learning and explain how the goals impacted classrooms. Ms. Hales cited the example of the Washoe County School District's vision statement that all staff members have embraced: "Every Child, by Name and Face, to Graduation." Does the staff in your district know what the board's vision is for your community's schools and students?"

#### **2. Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels.**

In high-achieving districts, poverty, lack of parental involvement, and other factors are described as factors to be overcome, not as excuses. Board members expect to see improvements in student achievement quickly as a result of initiatives. In addition, board members consistently express their beliefs in the learning ability of all children. "Sometimes people say the poor students have limits. I say all kids have limits. I believe we have not reached the limits of any of the kids in our system."

One of the most important policy decisions for boards to consider is that of establishing a human resources framework that reflects the board's commitment to raising student achievement, using strategic goals and success indicators. The work of the Teachers and Leaders Council may help each district in this regard.

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### **3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement.**

As boards, this is one of the most difficult aspects of our governance process. We must learn to focus on student achievement while spending comparatively little time on day-to-day operational issues. Research demonstrates that high-performing boards focus on establishing a vision supported by policies that target student achievement. Yet poor governance is characterized by factors such as micro-management by the board, confusion about the appropriate roles for the board member and superintendent, interpersonal conflict between board chair and superintendent, and board member disregard for the agenda process and the chain of command.

Case studies focused on fast-moving districts reveal that in these districts there is a consensus among board members and other leaders on the identification and implementation of improvement strategies. The board concentrated on decisions that supported improved student achievement rather than on the day-to-day operations of the district.

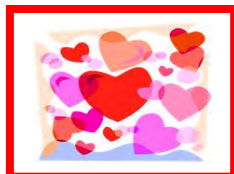
### **4. Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals.**

In high achieving districts, school board members could provide specific examples of how they connected and listened to the community. They were able to identify concrete ways that promoted this involvement. I challenge each of us to make a mental review of our listening quotient with community groups. As individual board members, we can still pursue our own issues; however, to be effective board members, we must place the board's vision and objectives center stage. When our individual interests and expectations distract from board-adopted achievement and instructional goals, we are not contributing to district success but may be working in opposition.

In February, I will begin visiting local school boards across Nevada while serving as NASB's President. One of my responsibilities is to identify ways that NASB can more effectively assist each local board and all of our State's 107 board members. Visiting your meetings will enable me to do just that. I look forward to seeing you later this year at your local board meetings.

*Carolyn Edwards*

NASB President  
702/799-1072



### **In Search of Civility**

In 2011 at one of NASB's professional development workshops, Wayne Carlson [Executive Director, POOL/PACT] shared a number of important concepts about positive governance, ethics for elected officials, and strategies for handling public comment. Mr. Carlson mentioned a publication from the Research Division of the National Association of Counties that focuses on the issue of "civility." What follows are several major points from that publication. This publication in its entirety has also been placed on the Association's website at [www.nvasb.org](http://www.nvasb.org) in the Support and Services section.

According to this publication, civility is much more than just behaving politely, but that is a good place to start. This behavior shows that the individual has a deep abiding respect for others and their opinions. Civility also requires maintenance of self-control especially in dialogues with others with whom we disagree.

George Washington, our nation's first president, had handwritten his 110 Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior by the time he was sixteen. These were based upon a set of rules composed by the French Jesuits in 1595. Each rule, from the first, "Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect, to those that are present," to the 49<sup>th</sup>, "Use no reproachful language against anyone neither curse nor revile," revolved around how one should behave in the presence of others and in conversation.



As board members and members of American society, we witness a lack of civility on a daily basis. It is missing in interactions that we have with business people, it is missing in social intercourse with peers and coworkers and, above all, it is missing in the discourse of our nation's political leaders.

As politics get more heated and proponents of "talk radio" get more outspoken, many other people have adopted the behavior that is ever present through the media and frequently played out at the national level. This outspokenness and lack of civility has also crept into the governing process at the local level.

Recently, student leaders from fourteen different colleges and universities issued a joint statement that they believe can help guide the public discourse of elected officials and their constituents. Convening at Allegheny College at the Center for Political Participants, these "Ten Tips to Improve Civility" were released during a national conference called "Pathway to Civility."

The tips include the following recommendations:

1. Listen to opposing views;
2. Seek shared values;
3. Acknowledge the legitimacy of opposing positions;

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4. Identify the problem at hand, focusing on it rather than on larger conflicts;
5. Avoid political caricatures, labels, and generalizations that may not truly present the views of your adversaries;
6. Accept that disagreement will exist without giving up your own convictions;
7. Clarify what is being said before attacking and/or responding;
8. Recognize the value of solutions beyond those offered by traditional political platforms;
9. Consider the consequences of what you say and do; and
10. Hold yourself personally accountable for your own political actions.

The New Jersey State League of Municipalities recently published a paper entitled "The Need for Civility in Local Government Dialogue." The paper is based on the premise that local public officials should display and demand public civility, public tolerance, and civil discourse all around them. The author states that when "our political leaders are rude to each other, it gives the public permission to do the same thing," As school board members have frequently seen, often members of the public are nastier to the public officials in meetings and discussions than the officials were with each other. Nonetheless, school board members and other elected officials must work and live closely with their constituents on a regular basis and see them at the supermarket, on the softball fields, and other local meeting places throughout the community.

This paper lists Ten Commandments of Public Civility. Among these very practical commandments are:

1. Thou shalt not rudely interrupt a colleague midsentence; nor "speak over" a colleague while she/he is speaking;
2. Thou shalt not assume that shrillness of tone is a substitute for substantive dialogue;
3. Thou shalt not resort to "zingers" designed solely to embarrass your target;
4. Thou shalt not allow legitimate critique of policy and practice to become a personal attack aimed at the person who devised the policy or implemented the practice;
5. Thou shalt always recognize that your colleagues are also elected, just as you were, and deserve the same level of respect for having run and won; and
6. Thou shalt not ridicule or belittle a colleague, or a member of the public, simply because she/he disagrees with you on an issue.

Many counties and other local governments have begun tackling the lack of civility at the local level. Some are adopting codes and ordinances on decorum in public meetings while others have adopted a set of core values for civility and



ethical behavior throughout the county.

The Institute for Local Government in Sacramento has also published a series called "Everyday Ethics for Local Officials," which includes guidance called "Promoting Civility at Public Meetings: Concepts and Practices."

In this case, the guidance was written in response to questions that have been raised by local elected officials. This discussion centers on the role that disagreement can play in a governmental setting and analyzes civility broadly.

This document contains some suggested guidelines that should be followed when conducting business in public, the first of which suggests that the elected official must "separate the people from the problem. Recognize that other thoughtful and caring people have very different views on how best to address their community's many complex problems." This discussion includes an observation from Dr. Martin Luther King about civility and its role in making governmental change:

*In a neighborhood dispute there may be stunts, rough words, and even hot insults, but when a whole people speaks to its government, the dialogue and the action must be on a level reflecting the worth of that people and the responsibility of that government.*

To access documents published by the Institute for Local Government in Sacramento, go to:

<http://www.ca-ilg.org/PublicEngagement>

"In Search of Civility" ends with a quotation from Lady Mary Wortley Montague, an English writer who died in 1762: ***Civility costs nothing, and buys everything.***

**NASB Board of Directors and  
Executive Committee  
Joint Meeting  
March 3, 2012—Reno,  
Hyatt Place Hotel**

## News from Washoe: The Chamber's Youth Leadership Program

Almost one hundred parents, students, school administrators, and chamber board members attended the Leadership Reno Sparks Youth Orientation meeting on Thursday, Jan.12, at Damonte Ranch High School. The youth leadership program, now in its 18th year, is patterned after the highly successful adult leadership program, which is now in its 28th year.

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The youth program is a collaboration of the Chamber, the Washoe County School District, and the Education Alliance.

This year's class is comprised of 43 diverse students from most of the region's high schools.

All students are in their junior year and have a minimum of a 3.0 GPA. Each student completed an extensive application and is chosen by a committee that evaluates the student's leadership potential, community contributions, and ideas for addressing community challenges.

In addition to the four full-day workshops, the class members will participate in extensive community projects, including volunteering at the Veteran's Guest House, providing for the basic needs of students and families at a Sierra Vista Elementary School and supporting the Positive Behavior Incentive Support (PBIS) program at Dunn Elementary School.

The students will be organizing drives for monetary contributions and in-kind donations.

The first workshop for the Youth Leadership program will be held on Thursday, January 26, 2012, at the AGC building on Mill Street in Reno, Nevada. Dean Whellams of Q&D Construction will lead the class members in a full-day, high-energy team building and communications program, which previous participants have described as "fantastic!"

The second program focused on law enforcement will be conducted at the Washoe County Sheriff's Office.

Session three is on communication in the media, and the final program, "Life After High School," will include a graduation dinner and celebration.

*[From the Washoe County School District, January 27, 2012]*

## News from Clark: Union Questions School District's Budget Balancing Scenario

The local teachers union contended Thursday that Clark County School District's budget balancing scenario of 1,000 teacher layoffs to save \$39 million if wage freezes aren't enacted is misleading. The school district has the money in its coffers to balance the budget without teacher pay freezes, Clark County Education Association President Ruben Murillo said. He spoke to 100 picketing teachers at Thursday's School Board meeting.

The district already has heard this claim from the union in arbitration, and it's completely false, spokeswoman Amanda Fulkerson said. But the union asserts the money is there, according to an analysis of the district's finances by union-hired accountant Beth Kohn-Cole. The accountant identified \$16 million in federal money remaining from the Education Jobs Fund.

"That money is there, replied Fulkerson, but the allocation expires June 13 and can't be used for recurring expenses, such as teacher salaries."

The district needs \$39 million for this school year and another \$39 million for 2012-13. The union also said the district has set aside \$10 million to \$27.5 million for positions it never filled. That money already has been reallocated to other places so that the district can "stay afloat," Fulkerson said. As for the \$11.6 million in the Food Service's fund that the union said is sitting unused, Fulkerson said that money is paying for food services' expenses.

An arbitrator will decide whether the accountant's analysis—which the union hasn't released—is valid. The parties moved to arbitration after the union called an end to negotiations and declared impasse in August.

*[From the Las Vegas Review Journal, January 26, 2012]*

### **Plan to Join NASB for the Certified Public Official Workshop**

#### **Presenting Three Required Modules—**

**#2: Budgets: Revenue Sources, Projections, and Forecasts**

**#6: Interviewing and Media Relations**

**#7: Employment Law: Keeping Your Agency Out of Court**

**Reno—Hyatt Place Hotel**

**Beginning March 2 at 430pm and Ending March 3 at 1230pm**

**Deadline for Registration: February 20, 2012**

**For room reservations, please call Christina Ugalde, Hyatt Place Hotel 775/325-3883  
Reduced Room Rate Code G-NAS3 Available until February 10, 2012**

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**ATTENTION ALL BOARD MEMBERS:**  
**Spend ten minutes providing your input**  
**on Nevada's ESEA Waiver Application:**  
<http://research.zarca.com/k/SsXRUYsVVsPsPsP>  
**The Survey will remain active until 5pm**  
**on February 6, 2012.**

### In National News: USDA School Nutrition Regs Add Major Costs for Food Services

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) final rules for nutrition standards for the school lunch and breakfast programs still fail to provide adequate funding for schools, according to the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

The USDA estimates that the new rules will cost schools an additional \$3.2 billion to implement, a more than 50 percent decrease from its initial \$6.7 billion estimate. However, NSBA is concerned that the new estimate is based on faulty accounting.

"Much of the reduction is derived by delaying implementation of some of the costliest standards, including changes to the School Breakfast Program, whole grain requirements, and sodium targets," said NSBA Executive Director Anne L. Bryant in a written statement. "Even so, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that less than half of the \$3.2 billion cost will be covered by the performance-based reimbursement rate increase of 6 cents per lunch."

The new standards, part of the 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, require schools to offer more whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and lower-fat meat and protein options and restrict foods that are high in sodium, fat, or sugar.

NSBA supports community-led moves to bring more nutritious and locally grown foods to school cafeterias and has highlighted many examples of schools that have done so through its conferences, publications, and awards programs.

The increased costs from a federal mandate will only add to schools' and communities' budget problems, though, Bryant added. "By splitting the difference, a 35-cent increase per lunch for a family with two children adds up to \$125.00 in the first year alone," she said, citing USDA estimates that show 1.6 million school-age children come from households with incomes just higher than the above

eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, which is a household income of 185 to 200 percent of poverty level or \$43,500 to \$44,700 for a family of four. "The few dollars a week more a family would have to pay could price those meals out of reach," Bryant said.

The USDA reported that it received an "unprecedented" 132,000 public comments on the proposed standards. First Lady Michelle Obama promoted the changes as part of her "Let's Move!" campaign to help students and families eat healthier meals and exercise.

NSBA has continuously advocated for more funding to support the new requirements, noting that the additional costs come at a time when schools are being forced to lay off teachers and other staff and cut programs. Last year NSBA supported report language passed by the House as part of the agriculture appropriations bill that directed the USDA to propose new rules that do not create unfunded mandates for school districts.

*[From the National School Boards Association, January 31, 2012]*

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