



ARKANSAS
SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Beliefs and Resolutions

*Approved by the
ASBA Delegate Assembly
December 7, 2011*

Fundamental Beliefs of the Arkansas School Boards Association

The public school boards of Arkansas, united in the Arkansas School Boards Association, believe that the maintenance and operation of a public school district is a partnership, a shared responsibility between the state and the local school district and its community. Throughout our nation's history, this arrangement has kept the schools close to the people, stimulated wholesome and creative flexibility within schools and adaptability to local needs, and worked toward equality of opportunity without imposing uniformity.

The Arkansas School Boards Association believes locally elected school boards are a profound expression of grassroots democracy and that local governance of public schools is fundamental to the continued success of public education. Adequately funded, student-centered public schools can provide a safe and supportive environment and a comprehensive education for all children that will prepare them for a lifetime of learning in a diverse, democratic society.

By focusing on student achievement and by actively engaging the community, Arkansas school boards provide leadership for academic success in our public schools. By providing a vision of excellence and equity for every child, Arkansas school boards will ensure performance-oriented schools that meet today's problems, as well as the challenges of the ever-changing future.

Championing excellence in public education through training, advocacy, and service for local school boards is the mission of the Arkansas School Boards Association.

Beliefs and Resolutions Proposed for the ASBA Delegate Assembly December 7, 2011

SECTION 1—DECLARATIONS OF APPRECIATION

The Arkansas School Boards Association extends its appreciation to:

1.1—Wayne Gibson for his many contributions on behalf of the association and for his leadership as ASBA President during 2011;

1.2—The members of the **ASBA Board of Directors** for their dedication, commitment and service to public education and for the time and commitment they have devoted to carrying out the mission of the Association;

1.3—The members of the **ASBA Risk Management Program Board of Directors** and each member of the **Board of Trustees of the ASBA Workers' Compensation Trust** for their oversight and leadership on behalf of Arkansas school boards;

1.4—The **ASBA Staff** for the day-to-day operations of the Association and commitment to providing needed services to its members;

1.5—Governor Mike Beebe for his vision and leadership and his commitment to the ongoing improvement of public education in Arkansas;

1.6—The **Arkansas General Assembly** for its diligence and commitment to improving education by providing increased funding for the public schools;

1.7—Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Commissioner of Education, for the leadership he provides to public education and his desire to boost the academic achievement of all Arkansas public school students;

1.8—The **State Board of Education** for its commitment to strengthen the public schools and to raise the academic achievement of Arkansas students;

1.9—The **ASBA Commercial Affiliate Members** for their continuing support of ASBA and its work;

1.10—Arkansas School Board Members who have taken advantage of a variety of training opportunities to broaden the skills and knowledge needed to effectively govern their school districts;

1.11—The **Arkansas Leadership Academy, its Partners and Staff**, under the leadership of **Dr. Debbie Davis**, director, for many and varied contributions to improving the educational leadership of Arkansas public schools through the Superintendent, Team, Teacher, and Master Principal Institutes, the School Support Program.

SECTION 2—CONTROL AND SUPPORT OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2.1 – Local Governance

ASBA believes in local, lay governance of and accountability for public education. ASBA believes it is the responsibility of locally elected school boards as agents of state government to:

- Create the district’s vision that is focused on students, excellence in education, and achievement through a collaborative process that involves staff, parents, community and students;
- Stay abreast of current education issues;
- Adopt and follow a code of ethical behavior;
- Enact, enforce, and obey school district policies;
- Oversee and monitor school district finances;
- Promote a constructive relationship with the community by seeking its input and engaging in meaningful dialogue when appropriate on significant issues;
- Conduct self-evaluations to ensure the board as well as its individual members follow ASBA’s Standards for Arkansas School Boards.

2.2—Goals for Education

ASBA believes that, in implementing goals for education at the federal, state, and local levels, policymakers should:

- Provide the highest quality education and an equitable educational opportunity for all children;
- Convince and remind all parents, guardians, and citizens of education’s critical importance to their communities, our state, and our nation’s success in today’s global economy, as well as our capacity to govern ourselves in a free, democratic society;
- Eliminate barriers to learning and employment by means of a state and national youth policy that coordinates services for youth at all government levels and enables schools to meet the needs of young people more effectively;
- Ensure an adequate supply of highly qualified and effective teachers and administrators, with special emphasis on increasing the number of ethnic minority educators;
- Integrate technology fully and appropriately into the learning process of all students;
- Provide sufficient training to teachers so they have the skills to incorporate technology into their classrooms and lesson plans;
- Ensure that all children in school receive the counseling, nursing, social work, and mental health services they need;
- Require funding of all mandated education programs, including IDEA and the No Child Left Behind Act;

2.3—Fiscal Adequacy

To discharge their responsibility properly, local school boards must have adequate funds to operate the public schools.

2.4—Leadership Team

ASBA supports the efforts of school boards to hire capable, competent chief administrators, whom they then support by entrusting to them the day-to-day operations of their school districts and by refraining from micro-managing those operations. It is the responsibility of school boards to create a shared vision with their community and their employees and then to ensure that their superintendent, or chief executive officer, works with them to achieve that vision.

2.5—Code of Ethics and Oath of Office

ASBA believes local school boards must conduct their business fairly and openly; comply with appropriate statutes; and adopt a Code of Ethics, mindfully incorporating its principles into all board activities.

ASBA believes that locally elected school board members should be ever mindful of the oath of office they have sworn to uphold: to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Arkansas, to refrain from being directly or indirectly interested in any contract made by the district except as may be permitted by law, and to faithfully discharge their duties as school directors in their local districts.

2.6—Accountability

ASBA believes that student needs and educational improvement should guide all the decisions made by local school boards. Those decisions should be based on continuous evaluations and should be consistent with state and local priorities and needs. To be effective, school boards, school employees, and school programs should be appropriately accountable to the citizens whose support—both tangible and intangible—is necessary for success.

2.7—Community Engagement

ASBA believes that the effectiveness of public schools is closely related to communities that are engaged and whose citizens are interested and involved in their schools. ASBA believes each local school board should pursue an active, well-defined program of school-community relations and citizen engagement and adopt such practices as part of their ongoing mission. Schools should encourage student involvement in programs that benefit the community.

2.8—Government Relations

ASBA believes in the democratic process and thereby understands the importance of effectively working and collaborating with lawmakers and other policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure sound public policy on matters pertaining to children and their education. ASBA encourages school board members to look at issues by asking themselves three questions—(1) Is it good for kids? (2) Will it help to build an education ethic in our state? and (3) Is everyone held appropriately accountable—and follow that up by taking an active role in advocating for children, for their local schools, and for public education. ASBA urges all school board members to become actively involved in the legislative process at both the state and federal levels. School boards should keep in touch with their legislators and members of Congress, informing them of their districts' successes, needs, and concerns.

2.9—School Board Member Professional Development

ASBA believes school board members must stay abreast of current developments and best practices in education by attending and participating in professional development opportunities to learn and demonstrate new skills and knowledge and to enhance their leadership role. Such opportunities include the many workshops, meetings, seminars, and conferences offered by the Arkansas School Boards Association, the National School Boards Association, and other organizations. Further, ASBA believes school board members should read and conduct the personal research necessary to make the best decisions for their schools and their communities. School boards also should inform their constituents of the need for and importance of professional development activities for school board members and all of the professionals who staff the schools.

2.10—Standards of Board Operations

School boards should function as nonpartisan, broadly representative, corporate bodies. Each member of a school board should let his or her consideration for the entire district take precedence over partisanship and special interests. Even when elected by zones, board members have the responsibility to consider the needs of all the children in their districts. Individual school boards are encouraged to adopt the Standards for Arkansas School Boards approved by the 2002 ASBA Delegate Assembly.

2.11—Written Policy

After consultation with groups affected, school boards should formulate and adopt written policies, know and follow those policies, and properly delegate implementation of those policies. Further, all policies should be reviewed on a routine basis.

2.12—Open Board Meetings and Public Information

School boards should conduct school district business in open session, except as otherwise provided by law, and use every possible means to inform the public of matters concerning the schools.

2.13—Parent, Business, and Community Involvement

School boards should make special efforts to promote the active participation of parents, business, and other community members in formulating a shared vision and participating in a mission that will benefit all students.

2.14—School Volunteers and Business Partnerships

School boards should encourage, acknowledge, and support business partnerships and the meaningful use of volunteers as ways of enriching the learning experiences of students while helping to build strong and vibrant school communities.

2.15—Board Self-Evaluation

School boards should conduct a regular self-evaluation and develop an action plan for continued improvement. A comprehensive program of continuing education should be part of that plan.

2.16—Board Mission Statement

School boards, in concert with the community and staff, should help to define and establish a shared vision, values, and purposes that drive the mission of the school system. That mission should be reviewed often to make certain the work is faithful to the vision and values.

2.17—Strategic Planning

School boards should use a strategic planning process to reach mutual agreement in setting, revising, and achieving their districts' goals.

2.18—Board-Superintendent Relationships

Each local school board and superintendent should devote appropriate time and energy to developing productive, cooperative working relationships and to developing a climate where everyone works cooperatively so education can flourish.

2.19—Superintendent Evaluation

Each local school board, in concert with its superintendent, should develop an instrument to evaluate the work of the superintendent. By law, the board must evaluate the superintendent at least annually or no less often than prior to any extension of his or her employment contract.

2.20—Equal Rights

ASBA supports equal rights for all persons regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, immigration status, socio-economic status, or disability. All local school boards should review their policies to guarantee equal opportunity for both staff and students. School boards should recognize the value of diversity, continue to promote equality, and eliminate procedures that limit equal opportunities for students and staff.

2.21—Teacher Education and Licensing

School boards should encourage continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and school administration. ASBA supports efforts to effectively train highly qualified teachers in a manner that is aligned with the state's education standards. ASBA supports renewable teacher licensing and rigorous standards for achieving and maintaining licensing based on an objective assessment of subject knowledge, student academic growth, classroom management and instructional techniques, interaction with peers, and ongoing, focused and strategic professional development.

2.22—Teacher Evaluation

ASBA supports the Teacher Excellence and Support System, created by Act 1209 of 2011. The law sets up a process designed to provide meaningful teacher evaluation, set the parameters for evaluators to follow, and create consistency throughout the state.

2.23—Teacher Recruitment, Retention, and Salaries

ASBA supports efforts to develop a comprehensive approach to teacher recruitment in the state. ASBA encourages cooperative and coordinated efforts among the private and non-profit sectors, state government agencies, colleges and universities, and public schools to: (1) identify and encourage first-rate students to enter the teaching profession; (2) ensure that the teaching profession is attractive both economically and personally, and (3) increase the number of minority students entering the teaching profession. ASBA strongly supports efforts to ensure that Arkansas teacher salaries are competitive with those within the region, as well as efforts to more effectively retain high quality educators for Arkansas public schools.

2.24—Professional Teaching Standards

ASBA supports voluntary national certification for teachers and principals and encourages national, state, and local officials to support individuals seeking these distinctions and to reward their successful accomplishments.

SECTION 3—GENERAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

3.1—Federal funding for Public Education

Full funding of federal education programs is an essential step in improving educational opportunities for all children. ASBA believes education funding should be of the highest federal priority to ensure that our nation's students have the opportunity to meet the challenge of world-class standards and responsible citizenship through these principles:

- Improving equity in educational opportunity by making schools with significant poverty indices a high priority for increased federal aid;
- Increasing federal special education aid to meet Congress's obligation to fund 40 percent of the cost of educating children under the requirements of the federal law and supporting the placement of IDEA within mandatory spending portions of the budget to ensure that, over a period of time, the obligation will be met as a federal budgetary priority;
- Supporting programs with colleges and other post-secondary institutions to license teachers in accordance with the NCLB Act provision for teacher qualification;
- Ensuring that school districts with immigrant or Limited English Proficient/English Language Learners (LEP/ELL) are provided with the necessary resources to provide for those students as they make the transition into our society;
- Maintaining educational technology funding programs to help districts that lack local resources to acquire the infrastructure, hardware, software, and staff training necessary to provide a technology-rich instructional environment;
- Providing funding to meet school infrastructure needs to improve the safety and health of all students and to improve the quality of the learning environment, and
- Funding of all federal mandates, including the No Child Left Behind Act and IDEA.

3.2—Use of Public Funds

Local boards for both regular and charter public schools have the responsibility, by the authority granted in law, to ensure that public funds are used to produce the highest possible educational attainment of students.

3.3—Non-Public Education; Vouchers and Tax Credits

Funds raised by general taxation for educational purposes should be administered by public officials and should not be used to support any privately operated schools. ASBA opposes any measures that would subsidize elementary or secondary private schools through tax credits, scholarships, and/or vouchers for the parents or guardians of children enrolled in such schools. ASBA recognizes and upholds the right of any group to establish and maintain schools so long as they are financed by their own supporters and not with public school funds.

3.4—Labor Negotiations Legislation

ASBA opposes any federal or state legislation that requires collective bargaining or mandates binding arbitration between school boards and school employees.

3.5—Support for Students

ASBA supports federal, state, and local efforts to strengthen and provide additional funds to programs that aid students. Such programs or interventions include, but are not limited to, early childhood and pre-kindergarten programs, after-school and summer programs, enrichment programs, and those that address school dropouts; credit recovery; child abuse; alcohol and drug abuse; suicide prevention; teenage pregnancy; communicable diseases; and violence.

3.6—Bilingual Educators

ASBA supports adequately funding opportunities for teachers to become fluent in languages other than English in order to effectively educate the growing number of non-English speaking students and to communicate with the parents of those students.

3.7—Federal Role in Education

ASBA supports limiting educational regulations, but opposes budget cuts in categorical education programs. ASBA also opposes federal legislation that would result in local school districts having less discretion over how

federal funds are used at the local level. Furthermore, all federal regulations and requirements for states and local schools should be fully funded prior to mandating implementation.

3.8—Child Nutrition Programs

ASBA supports child nutrition programs, including free- and reduced-school lunch and breakfast programs and other special nutrition programs presently provided through the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Arkansas Departments of Human Services and Education. ASBA urges continued funding of school nutrition programs at maximum entitlement levels.

3.9—Rural Education

ASBA urges the government—state and federal—to study the impact that federal policy, including farm policy, has on education programs and the financing of rural school systems. ASBA urges that this impact be considered as part of the federal policymaking process.

3.10—Early Childhood Education

Understanding the importance to a student's long-term success, ASBA supports developmentally appropriate, quality three- and four-year-old pre-kindergarten programs, especially for children whose parents are at or below 200 percent of the poverty level.

3.11—Safe Schools

Students must have a safe place to learn that is free of abuse, violence, weapons, alcohol, tobacco products, and other drugs. ASBA recommends that school officials develop appropriate programs and cooperative relationships with parents and law enforcement, the judiciary, and other community agencies and organizations to prevent and reduce crime. ASBA supports enforcement of these standards and additional funding to help make schools safe and healthy places for students and staff.

3.12— Common Core Standards

ASBA supports the state's commitment to the Common Core State Standards. ASBA strongly encourages the ADE and the General Assembly to help ensure the Standards' successful implementation by providing adequate resources, both monetary and support personnel, to enable both teachers and students to be properly prepared. ASBA further strongly encourages the ADE to pursue waivers from current No Child Left Behind requirements to better pave the way for successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

3.13—Coordinated School Health

ASBA supports initiatives that encourage schools, agencies and the community to work together efficiently and seamlessly to provide needed services for children and their families. A coordinated approach to school health improves students' wellness and their capacity to learn.

3.14—Educating the Whole Child

ASBA believes the goals of education need to be greater than students' test scores. There is a difference between the performance of a student on a test and the same student's ability to be a functioning, contributing, thriving participant in society. Partnering with the community to provide students an engaging, well-rounded education that develops the whole child should be the paramount goal of public education. ASBA applauds the efforts of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) to promote the education of the Whole Child.

3.15—Funding of Public Schools

ASBA urges the Governor, the General Assembly, and the State Board of Education to support a budget that provides for delivery of an equitable and adequate public school system for all Arkansas schoolchildren.

3.16—Legislation/Constitutional Amendments/Initiated Acts That Would Reduce or Abolish Revenue for Public Schools

ASBA opposes legislation and constitutional amendments that would abolish or reduce revenue for public schools without providing a reasonable and effective method for replacing those revenues.

ASBA opposes any efforts to repeal or lessen the security of the Educational Adequacy Fund and its assurance of providing adequate funding to the public schools of Arkansas (Act 108 of 2004).

ASBA opposes constitutional amendments, initiated acts, or legislation that would adversely affect the state's ability to adequately fund public schools.

ASBA supports a fair and equitable tax system that provides a stable and mixed stream of revenue to support public schools. Whereas property taxes account for approximately 30 percent of total school district funding, and whereas Arkansas enjoys one of the lowest property taxes in the country, ASBA opposes across-the-board efforts to reduce or abolish property taxes.

3.17—Unfunded Mandates

ASBA opposes any federal or state mandates or State Board of Education rules that would require unfunded expenditures by local school districts. ASBA may support, without reservations, only those bills clearly stating that proposed legislation will be required of school districts only to the extent to which they are fully funded.

3.18—School Transportation Systems

ASBA strongly encourages the General Assembly to establish and maintain a system to fund transportation for local public schools that is fair to all districts.

3.19—Home Schools

ASBA encourages the legislature to continue to examine home school legislation and enact reasonable accountability measures to ensure that home schooling not become the refuge of students who would otherwise be considered school dropouts.

3.20—Technology

ASBA supports initiatives that advance the application and integration of technology into teaching and learning. ASBA strongly encourages measures that would improve teacher training in technology and greater access to technology by those students unlikely to have computers in their homes. The rapidly expanding role of technology in education necessitates significantly greater bandwidth be available to schools. ASBA supports efforts to create bandwidth statewide, sufficient to allow schools to greatly expand the role of technology in public education. ASBA supports efforts to remove statutes and ADE Rules that hinder districts' ability to change their education program delivery to adopt and adapt new technologies.

3.21—Distance Learning

ASBA supports the creation of distance learning policies, guidelines, and teacher licensure rules that allow maximum flexibility to schools to use telecommunications technology for student instruction, training educators and others, distance learning, and data transmission.

3.22—School Report Cards

ASBA encourages school boards to determine and implement ways to communicate simply and honestly to parents and the community the findings of the annually issued school report cards, including the academic progress and health of its students.

3.23—Facilities Partnership Program

ASBA believes flexibility needs to be built into the Facilities Partnership Program between the state and local school districts that reflects districts' inherent difficulty in foreseeing their exact growth/decline and the state's need to budget for the Program.

3.24—School Day/School Year

ASBA believes that districts presently are required to provide and accomplish more in each school day and school year than can be fully accomplished in the time allotted. Therefore, ASBA opposes any additional requirements to the daily or annual schedule without adding additional time to the length of the school day or school year. Further, ASBA opposes any effort to move the school year's starting date to later in the year. ASBA supports lengthening the school year, school day, or both to better enable teachers and schools the time necessary to successfully educate students.

3.25—More than Adequate

ASBA commends the Arkansas General Assembly for its commitment to improving the funding and other resources for public education and encourages the General Assembly to strive for continuous improvement. We request that the General Assembly strive to provide all Arkansas children with more than an "adequate" education so that our students may truly excel.

3.26—No Child Left Behind

ASBA believes that NCLB has cast a much needed light on the achievement disparity between different groups of students. We believe, however, that the overall effect of NCLB has stifled the ability of districts to provide a well-rounded education.

The failure of Congress to reauthorize NCLB is significantly adversely affecting Arkansas's ability to implement the Common Core State Standards—to the detriment of both students and teachers. ASBA urges Congress to quickly reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (formerly known as NCLB) with provisions that support rather than punish teachers and schools and that lessens the federal role in public education.

3.27—Military Families

ASBA supports America's military families, whose frequent relocation requires children of these families to transfer schools and establish new peer relationships. ASBA encourages school districts to provide assistance in acclimating military family children within the fabric of the school community while helping these students achieve expected academic performance levels.

3.28—School Election Dates

School board member zones do not align with the boundaries of other state and local officials or with county lines. Moving the annual school board election to coincide with any general election will cause county election officials significant difficulties and result in both ballot construction issues and voting machine complications that would result in voter confusion. Moving the annual school board election to coincide with any general election would cause significant issues regarding election cost allocation with the likely result that election costs would significantly increase for schools. Therefore, ASBA opposes efforts to move the date of the annual school board election to any date that coincides with a general election.

SECTION 4—A CONTINUING RESOLUTION

4.1—To Enable the ASBA Board of Directors to Act in the Absence of Official Delegate Assembly Guidance

WHEREAS the Bylaws of the Arkansas School Boards Association (ASBA) require approval of the Delegate Assembly prior to the Association's taking an official position on any issue or proposed law; and

WHEREAS the ASBA Delegate Assembly meets only once per year; and

WHEREAS the Association needs some discretion to take official positions on issues of importance throughout the year as those issues may arise; and

WHEREAS the Board of Directors meets throughout the year and will be able to respond more quickly than the Delegate Assembly when issues arise upon which the taking of an official position by ASBA could serve the interests of school boards and school districts in this State;

BE IT, THEREFORE, RESOLVED that the Arkansas School Boards Association Board of Directors is granted the continuing authority by virtue of the Beliefs and Resolutions of the ASBA Delegate Assembly to approve adopting official positions on matters of interest to school boards and school districts and that such approval may be given by a simple majority vote of the ASBA Board of Directors at either a regular or special meeting or by canvassing each member of the Board.