



Contact



Calendar



Facebook



Twitter



Staff



Partners



Publications



Videos



Awards

[Return to Headlines](#)

School Board Advocate: April 25, 2016

Volume 27, Number 6



In this issue:

- Everything old is new again
- NSBA: On the road with CASB's board president
- CASB at the Capitol
- Dome dealings



Everything old is new again

Colorado is known as an environmentally friendly state. Coloradans are among the top recyclers in the country, and this trait certainly seems to apply to the General Assembly. With little or no money available to work with, legislators have found themselves rehashing ideas defeated by previous legislatures and waiting for the session to end on May 11.

Sometimes, old bills find new life, as is the case with a bill on student data privacy. Stay tuned on that one.

Other times, it is the same song, different verse. This year, two new charter school bills are adding some fireworks under the golden dome. **Sen. Owen Hill**, R-Colorado Springs, is sponsoring bills sure to fire the passions of those both for and against charter schools. [Senate Bill 16-187](#) – Measures Affecting Charter Schools – would require school districts to drastically overhaul they way they work with their charter schools. [Senate Bill 16-188](#) – Access to Resources for Charter Schools – would force

districts to share mill levy money with charters, even if the charter did not exist when the mill levy was approved.

Both bills were heard in the Senate Education Committee last week. CASB was ably represented by **Linda Van Matre** of Academy District 20, **Carrie Warren-Gully** of Littleton Public Schools, **Ron Mitchell** of Jefferson County Public Schools and **Greg Piotraschke** of School District 27J. There was spirited debate for and against both bills. After a hearing of more than five hours, the committee sent the bills to the full Senate.

CASB members have clearly stated their opinion about charter schools, with resolutions approved at the Delegate Assembly. Most CASB members would agree that charter schools don't have enough funding, but the exact same thing could be said about every one of the 178 school districts in Colorado. With the negative factor in excess of \$830 million, school boards have seen firsthand the effect of ongoing budget cuts on K-12 classrooms in Colorado. The answer to this problem is not for the legislature to force districts to break promises made in mill levy elections, but instead to once and for all to fix the systemic problems with the state budget.



On the road with CASB's board president

By JulieMarie A. Shepherd Macklin, Ph.D.
CASB Board President

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) held its annual conference earlier this month in Boston. This 76th annual convening drew more than 6,000 school board members from across the United States, Canada and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Colorado was well represented, with approximately 50 board members from across the state in attendance. As school board leaders, it is critical that we take time to perfect our craft of governance, build our knowledge and skills and refocus on student achievement. Professional-development opportunities such as NSBA's annual conference allow for just that. The four days were packed full between the national delegate assembly, keynote sessions, breakout sessions and networking time. I wanted to share a few reflections from my time in Boston.

The conference themes played off our historic location in Boston: **Revolutionize** Board Leadership, **Strengthen** Community Engagement, **Champion** Student Achievement and **Declare** Excellence in Public Education.

Revolutionize: A hot topic of discussion throughout the conference was the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the current phase of rulemaking.

While there is much debate and many details left to be finalized, a main point of discussion was the role that local school boards can and should play. I know many of you were active in the reauthorization process, contacting your congressional and senate leaders and staying up-to-date as the language moved through the legislative process. Even though these efforts were successful in getting a new bill signed, our work is not done.

The direction in ESSA suggests a return of decision-making at the local level. Now comes the work of defining what "local" means. The policy team of NSBA stressed that the spirit and intent of the legislation is that local means local school boards in local communities, not states. NSBA challenged us to think of this as the new frontier – a revolution for locally elected board members, the chance to reclaim our position as the decision-makers and voice for public education.

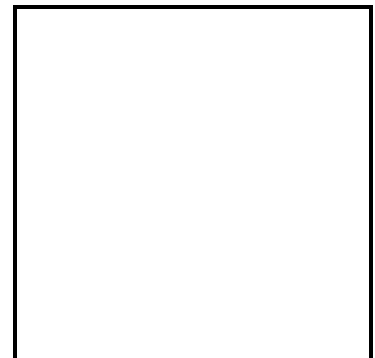
Part of this revolution includes a paradigm shift. In Colorado, we often talk about our work in terms of local control. However, the idea of *local governance* was discussed at NSBA. This resonates with me, as it captures the nature of what we are elected to do – we are chosen by our local communities to lead, to govern. And ESSA calls on local school boards, not state legislatures or governors, to do exactly that.

The cautionary word, of course, was to "be careful what we wish for." For decades, we have been asking for a return of authority and governance to locally elected boards. Now that charge rests at our feet. I hope you will join me in taking on this task. We must be thoughtful, intentional and outcome-oriented as we move ahead in these uncharted waters. Our students and communities are depending on us.

Strengthen: It is my belief that we can and must always be evaluating and improving our efforts to engage communities and families. I also know that community engagement looks different in different communities. However I came away from NSBA with a few ideas that could strengthen community engagement practices in any given community.

One session I attended discussed the notion of a *wise crowd*. The theory has its roots in economics and psychology, but at its core, it applies to gathering information from groups and can be applied to our community engagement work. The four primary components of a wise crowd include:

- **Diversity of opinion:** Each person in the group should represent differing perspectives and opinions.



- **Independence:** There should not be a dominating voice in the room, but rather people maintain their own opinions regardless of the opinions of those around them.
- **Decentralization:** Group members have a specialized voice and have ownership over a specific knowledge base or skill set.
- **Aggregation:** The group has an agreed upon mechanism for converting individual judgments and preference into a collective decision.

A wise crowd is better than a single mind or an *unwise crowd*, I suppose. This session got me thinking about how we pull together community groups, how we solicit feedback about tax questions, or even how we structure accountability committees. While there is not a one-size-fits-all for community engagement, I do believe information gathered from a wise crowd can be a helpful place to start.

Champion: Throughout my time at NSBA, I was continually reminded that student achievement must occupy the majority of time and space in our work. From highlighting best and promising practices to discussing school turnaround work, student achievement was at the core of what successful boards talked about. Specific ways to be that champion for student achievement can include defining what student achievement or, more generally, student success means to your community; building the topic into agendas and superintendent evaluations on a regular basis; reviewing achievement data as a board; and taking that conversation to your community.

Declare: Much of the conference focused on providing school board leaders with the skills and tools necessary to not only improve their governance, but also to reclaim and refocus the national conversation about public education. I found Dan Rather's keynote remarks to be especially inspiring. He challenged us to reframe our thinking, which in turn will help move the needle away from the "failing schools" rhetoric we are often faced with. Drawing on lessons from what Rather identified as strong school systems (Finland and Singapore), he encouraged us to reevaluate the teaching profession – how we both recruit and train prospective teachers and how we retain teachers; carefully consider the frequency of standardized testing; and assess the alignment of resources and needs. His closing declaration to the room full of school board leaders was: "We cannot waiver, hesitate or get distracted because the work we do is too important."

I always come home from professional conferences feeling both exhausted and renewed at the same time. This time, I also came home with a great sense of pride, as I felt that in many areas, we are ahead of the curve! Knowing the good and innovative work so many of you are leading in your local communities and the commitment we all share to advancing student achievement – it is encouraging. It was an honor to walk across the stage at the Sunday morning general session, representing our great state and all of you!



JulieMarie A. Shepherd Macklin with former TV newsman Dan Rather, who was keynote speaker at the NSBA conference.



CASB at the Capitol

School board members from across the state have been a frequent sight at the Capitol this legislative session. CASB's Days at the Capitol were again a huge success this year. You, as an elected school board member and a voter in your community, have a huge impact on legislators. You are the education subject matter experts, and you play a vital role in CASB's advocacy efforts.

Some of our members traveled a great distance to attend. The "Road Warrior" award goes to **Sherri Wright** of Montezuma-Cortez RE-1. Sherri traveled more than 760 miles round trip from CASB Region 12 to attend. A close runner-up was the board and superintendent team from West End RE-2 – board members **Tony Lobato**, **Freddie Smith** and **Stan Galley** and Superintendent **Mike Epright** – which saddled up the Suburban and drove 680 miles to speak with their senators and representatives.

The advocacy team would like to extend a big THANK YOU to all who attended this year's Days at the Capitol. We look forward to even better attendance next year.



Dome dealings

They call it the "Long Bill" because it outlines the entire budget for Colorado government. However, [House Bill 16-1405](#) hasn't taken long to work its way through both houses. Introduced on March 28, the bill has sailed through the House and Senate and is awaiting final tweaks in a conference committee.

School finance was on a similar path but bogged down in the Senate as other bills took center stage. The Senate Education Committee will take up HB 1405 – The School Finance Act – this week, and we don't anticipate any major changes.

The Colorado General Assembly must complete its work by May 11. Due to a fairly light calendar of issues so far, legislators find themselves in a rush to finish the work they have been putting off. So if you happen by the Capitol late some evening and see the lights blazing, it is your government at work.

Address **Colorado Association of School Boards**
2253 S. Oneida St., Ste. 300
Denver, CO 80224

Phone
303-832-1000 or 800-530-8430

Fax
303-832-1086

Advancing excellence in public education through effective leadership by locally elected boards of education.

[Site Map](#)

[Terms of Use](#) [Questions or Feedback?](#) [Blackboard Web Community Manager Privacy Policy \(Updated\)](#)

Copyright © 2002-2019 Blackboard, Inc. All rights reserved.