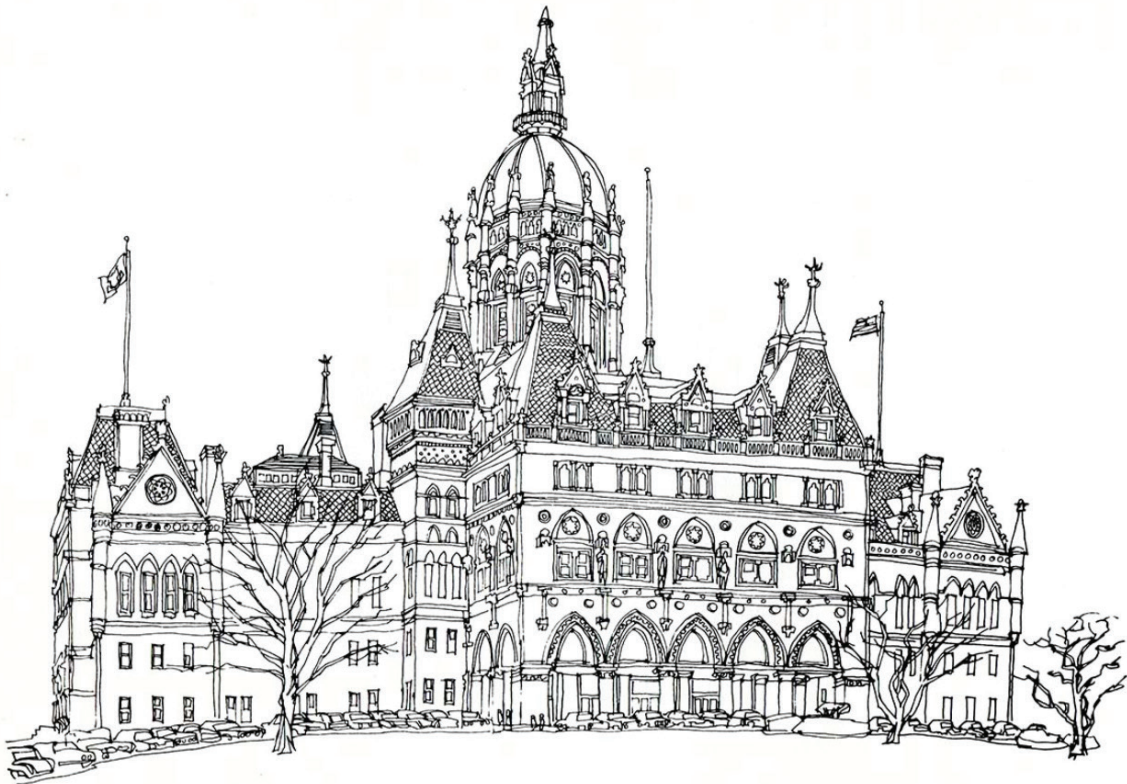


THE 2026 WHOLE AGENDA



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

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Governance

■ PUBLIC EDUCATION AS A PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITY

CABE believes that all citizens, including board members, the Governor, the Connecticut General Assembly, and the State Board of Education, must make public education a matter of the highest priority of public policy. The state must heed its constitutional mandate under Article Eighth of the Constitution of Connecticut to provide a free and appropriate public education for all of Connecticut's children.

CABE believes that public policy must assist children and their families in maintaining education as a matter of highest priority for children amidst the continuing economic and social pressures of society.

■ LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

CABE believes that local governance of public education through locally elected or appointed community members strengthens the democratic process, provides accountability, and assures strong continuing public support for education.

CABE believes that the state and federal governments must recognize the wide differences among America's public school districts, including those that are urban or suburban, rural or small, by funding the development of school improvement programs that reflect local needs and characteristics.

■ CREATING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE THROUGH ECONOMIC, RACIAL AND ETHNIC INTEGRATION

CABE believes that each child must have equal access to effective free, public education and to the services of well-educated and skillful teachers. Boards of education, working with state and local leaders and community members, can play a key role in ending systemic racism.

CABE supports efforts by the State of Connecticut to:

1. address and solve the issues of social and economic isolation in the areas of housing, transportation, employment, access to health care and social services; and
2. make the necessary funding available to urban, suburban and rural school districts across the state to develop and sustain:
 - community conversations to build understanding and support for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.
 - integrated educational programs and exchanges that create educational excellence; and
 - infrastructure that supports safe and healthy environments for learning.
3. promote the development of academic pathways, instructional activities, extracurricular opportunities, and field experiences that provide a richer awareness of cultural and racial diversity, including but not limited to:
 - review of curriculum in grades K-12 through the lens of multicultural and diverse perspectives.
 - the elimination of Indigenous Americans as mascots.

CABE urges all boards of education to:

1. affirm that all children can learn and accept the challenge to educate each child to his/her fullest potential;
2. enter into interdistrict partnerships which create integrated educational excellence and promote social, cultural, ethnic and racial exchange and interaction among diverse groups;
3. facilitate culturally responsive teaching and supervision that promotes understanding of and respect for the many diverse cultures which strengthen our democratic society;
4. continue their efforts to increase the recruitment of qualified individuals who reflect this state's diversity to the teaching profession and administration;
5. make parents as well as the greater community full partners in the education of all children; and
6. recognize their critical role in creating policies, providing training, and maintaining oversight to ensure that students have equal educational opportunities and are treated equitably as provided by the laws of the State of Connecticut, including but not limited to, §10-15c and §46a-58, regardless of, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, alienage, sexual orientation or disability, gender identity or expression.

■ PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

CABE believes that all public schools should provide a quality education for each student. CABE believes that in meeting local educational needs, locally developed policies and program options which give parents the opportunity to select public schools or

programs for their children should be considered among a variety of possible educational strategies. However, CABE opposes federal or state efforts to mandate choice, including efforts to divert or limit funding intended for existing federal and state programs.

Any program allowing parents to choose schools must assure that:

1. the plan does not foster racial, social, or economic segregation or segregation of children with disabilities;
2. financial and other administrative issues, such as transportation concerns, and the costs for special education and expelled students are addressed;
3. the plan is not part of a federal or state voucher or tuition tax credit program to finance nonpublic education;
4. students be required to make at least a one- year commitment to a school of choice to afford stability of school management;
5. interdistrict transfers must have the consent of both school districts;
6. urban districts are encouraged to develop programs to attract suburban students;
7. student academic achievement must be monitored in all schools receiving public funds; and
8. budgets be made public.

■ CIVILITY

CABE urges public officials at all levels of government to model civil discourse in their deliberations, allowing for the thoughtful, beneficial, and productive exchange of ideas and perspectives.

CABE urges school boards to provide opportunities for students to develop their skills in conflict resolution and

consensus building, and for school board members to model these skills in their own conduct.

■ ANTI-HATE SPEECH

CABE believes that all students deserve to learn in an environment that is safe, affirming, and free of bias and discrimination. CABE denounces the use of words or images that harass and directly attack individuals or groups based on race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender or gender expression, disability, or any other aspect of identity.

CABE believes that when students or adults use explicit hate language at school, it is the responsibility of the school district to actively respond to these incidents.

CABE urges boards to create and foster school climates where differences are appreciated and not used to ridicule, single out, intimidate, disrespect, or exclude different groups. We recognize that these actions can have a negative impact on the educational experience that we provide for each child.

■ SCHOOL CLIMATE, CULTURE, SAFETY AND SECURITY

CABE urges all school boards to:

1. address the influence of violence affecting children using school board policies, parent education programs, peer mediation, student assistance teams, and the school district curriculum to maintain an environment that fosters learning and growth.
2. review and maintain safety plans that address prevention, preparedness, mitigation and emergency response and recovery.
3. maintain policies that reinforce positive school climate.

CABE supports state efforts to study and recommend:

1. best practices for reducing school based arrests for all students.
2. best practices for addressing the higher incidence of school based arrests for students of color.
3. training for staff and students on deescalation techniques and cultural sensitivity.
4. a uniform reporting system for school based arrests so all districts are reporting numbers the same way.

CABE supports state efforts to study and identify:

1. possible grant funding to support accelerated reductions in school based arrests.
2. restorative practices and institute behavioral health supports as foundational and proactive protocols that promote a healthy and collaborative learning environment with the added intentional purpose of minimizing if not eliminating the need for school based arrest.
3. the effects of childhood poverty including instability of housing, food, security and how it affects school climate, challenging behaviors and student achievement.

CABE urges the state and federal government to provide greater and sustained resources for locally determined programs that are critical to school safety, including emergency preparedness and response training, school resource officers, school counseling, and access to mental health services.

■ STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND ASSESSMENT

1. CABE urges boards of education to affirm their commitment to the improvement of student learning to:
 - Openly evaluate data on student achievement indicators;
 - Review/revise district goals to focus on academic and personal development and;
 - Strive to find methods to remove barriers to learning and fosters an excitement for learning.
2. CABE urges boards of education, the State Board of Education and the General Assembly to recognize the broad range of attributes that contribute to student success, including but not limited to academic achievement, critical thinking, community service and integrity.
3. CABE urges the General Assembly to create and fund a system designed to share successful curricula and/or programs enhancing student achievement among school districts using the State Department of Education and Regional Education Service Centers.
4. CABE supports efforts to improve student assessment programs that enhance individual student achievement and are part of a planned program for meeting educational objectives. CABE is opposed to a federal testing program.
5. CABE urges the State Department of Education to provide boards of education with explanatory and instructional materials one full year prior to implementing any new or revised statewide assessments.
6. CABE urges the State Department of Education to increase support and

funding for educational programs supporting the arts.

7. CABE calls on the Governor, General Assembly and State Board of Education and administrators to reexamine public school accountability systems in this state, and to develop a multifaceted assessment system, which:
 - does not require extensive standardized testing;
 - more accurately reflects the broad range of student learning; and
 - is used to support students and improve schools.
8. CABE urges Congress to limit the mandate for student testing to grades 4, 6, 8 and 10 or 11 in the areas of English language arts and mathematics.

■ DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP PROGRAM & ONLINE SAFETY EDUCATION

CABE urges state and federal governments to:

1. recognize both the benefits and risks of digital access and to take proactive steps to recommend digital citizenship resources including, AI awareness, in all grade levels for both students and parents. CABE supports the ongoing study and pilot program by the Connecticut State Department of Education to assess the benefits and drawbacks of AI for student and teacher use and encourages the general assembly to utilize its findings when determining the requirements for digital citizenship education.
2. convene an AI Steering Committee to meet quarterly and review advancements in AI to understand their impact on schools, learning, and overall child development. The committee should be appropriately

funded to enable engagement with guest speakers, academics, medical professionals, and other leaders in the field who can present new research and insights into the technology to best guide how schools should position themselves for optimal learning and student safety.

■ PARENT/FAMILY/SCHOOL INVOLVEMENT POLICY

CABE urges school boards to develop Parent/Family/School Involvement Policy statements recognizing that a child's education is a responsibility shared by the school and the family. Such statements could include:

1. Establishing effective two-way communication with all parents, respecting the diversity and differing needs of families.
2. Developing strategies and programmatic structures at schools to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education.
3. Providing support and coordination for school staff and parents to implement and sustain appropriate parent involvement from Prek-12.
4. Utilizing schools to connect students and families with community resources that provide educational enrichment and support.

■ CHILD NEGLECT

CABE supports efforts by appropriate state authorities along with municipalities and school districts to identify and prevent the abuse and neglect of children and youth.

■ EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION LINKING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

CABE supports:

1. continued efforts by the General Assembly to appropriate sufficient funding to make early care and education programs available to all children in need;
2. local school board flexibility to design, develop and implement early childhood education programs to increase the likelihood of children's school success and decrease special education costs; and
3. state and federal incentive grants, including technical and financial assistance to districts that offer early childhood education programs, full or extended day kindergarten and programs providing for identification of preschool students with special needs and parental involvement programs.

CABE urges school boards to:

1. institute programs for parents which can increase their knowledge of children's social, physical, mental and psychological development, and ultimately increase the likelihood of children's school success, and to encourage parents to take advantage of school services for young children;
2. identify and remove impediments to parental involvement; and
3. review their kindergarten and readiness programs to assure that such programs are designed to provide each child with learning tasks appropriate to the child's developmental level.

■ DRUG, TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL USE

CABE supports efforts on the local, state and federal level to eliminate and address the problems of the inappropriate, unauthorized, illegal use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol and other substances in the school environment.

CABE vigorously supports education about the recreational use of marijuana/cannabis and its negative impact on children, their education and development.

CABE urges all school boards to:

1. work cooperatively with public and private agencies and law enforcement agencies to address the problems of drugs, tobacco, alcohol and other substances;
2. work cooperatively with public and private agencies to provide student-guided extended day school programs for appropriate grade levels during after school hours; and
3. conduct student drug, tobacco, alcohol, and substance use assessment on an ongoing basis.

CABE urges the State of Connecticut to:

1. vigorously enforce the laws concerning the sale, use and possession of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances to minors;
2. commit adequate resources and create a functioning network of public and private agencies to address the problems of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances;
3. allow more flexibility in the design and delivery of curriculum to address the use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other substances; and
4. commit resources to support student-guided extended day programs for appropriate grade levels.

CABE urges the federal government to:

1. aggressively enforce the laws in order to halt the flow of illegal drugs into the United States; and
2. commit adequate federal resources to state and local programs that address the problems of drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse.

■ STUDENT SUCCESS

CABE urges local and regional boards of education to:

1. develop innovative, developmentally appropriate curriculum which emphasizes the acquisition of essential skills for all students; and
2. maintain creative school programs, and performance standards for at risk students that develop lifelong learners. Such programs should emphasize essential skills combined with work related projects, work-study programs, school to career, apprenticeships and other alternative program approaches.
3. hold leaders accountable for the necessary funding for arts education and STEM education.

CABE urges the General Assembly to provide the funding and the flexibility necessary to promote student engagement and absenteeism reduction, dropout prevention and student retention.

CABE urges the State Board of Education and the General Assembly to support, through technical assistance and funding, early intervention programs developed by local school districts that involve the interagency coordination of services to students who are habitual truants or at risk of becoming truants.

■ TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND CAREER HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEM

CABE supports a state technical education and career high school system that:

1. ensures both student academic success, and trade/technology mastery;
2. instills a desire for lifelong learning;
3. prepares students for post-secondary education, apprenticeships, and immediate productive employment; and
4. responds to employers' and industries' current and emerging global workforce needs and expectations through business/school partnerships.

■ PROGRAMS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE ENGLISH LEARNERS

CABE urges:

1. the State Department of Education to encourage locally initiated, innovative alternative approaches to educating students who are English learners with the specific goal of attaining English proficiency as rapidly as possible; and
2. the General Assembly to appropriate adequate funding to assist school boards in providing the most effective programs which educate students who are English learners.

■ PUBLIC SCHOOL DESEGREGATION INITIATIVES

CABE urges the General Assembly to develop a task force to study the effectiveness of the racial imbalance law.

■ HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATION

CABE urges each local school district to utilize a developmentally appropriate curriculum which deals with issues affecting family life, child and human growth and development, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ), to involve the community in this process, including appropriate public and private agencies, and to promote the positive wellbeing of students. Vital health and social issues should be integrated into existing academic subject areas.

■ SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

CABE urges the General Assembly, the State Department of Education and local and regional boards of education to strengthen the support for social and emotional learning through professional development for educators as well as resources for students and parents.

■ LOCAL PROGRAM POLICY DECISIONS

CABE supports the local development of course content requirements, staff resources, and allocations promoting effective and efficient practices that:

1. grow out of local goals and specific local learning objectives based upon local student needs; and
2. result from local policy decisions regarding program, staffing and resource priorities.

■ LOCAL AUTHORITY OVER CURRICULUM PROGRAMS UNDER CGS §10-220(e)

CABE urges state government to refrain from mandating that local boards of education adopt commercial or state-developed curriculum programs in abrogation of CGS §10-220(e). Circumstances deemed by the state to warrant an abrogation of CGS §10-220(e) should be rare and, when deemed important enough to abrogate local authority over curriculum, should be exercised through voluntary incentive programs and not through mandates.

■ GOVERNMENT REGULATION AND DATA ACQUISITION

CABE urges the:

1. state and federal governments to reduce the number and complexity of regulations directed at education, including the administrative burden with implementing laws;
2. state and federal governments to focus on data that is needed to improve student performance and to continue to simplify data collection, eliminate duplication and unnecessary data collection; and
3. state board of education to formally adopt regulations when rules are needed to enforce the statutes and to refrain from applying guidelines as regulations or incorporating guidelines by reference into regulations.

■ DUTIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENTS

CABE urges the Connecticut General Assembly to amend Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-157(a) to make it clear that the attendance of the superintendent as chief executive

officer of the board of education is appropriate in executive session.

■ FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

CABE urges the:

1. establishment of a formalized process, including input from local public agencies, for proposing candidates for membership on the Freedom of Information Commission;
2. modification of the Connecticut Freedom of Information law to more clearly define the individuals' reasonable expectation of privacy and its balance with the public's right to know; and
3. General Assembly to continue to support release of detailed student performance data to parents and guardians as part of the regular education process while it acts to protect against inappropriate use of content and disclosure to others.

■ CERTIFIED EDUCATOR SHORTAGES

CABE urges school boards, higher education institutions, the State Department of Education and the General Assembly to continue to take action to expand the pool of qualified educators for Connecticut's public schools, particularly in areas where shortages have been identified.

CABE supports expanding the alternate route to certification programs, apprenticeship programs, enhancing professional development opportunities, reciprocity between states, encouraging students at an early age to consider the teaching profession and actively recruiting underrepresented groups.

■ CONNECTICUT STATE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT

CABE opposes modification of state statutes to restrict the definition of “salary” for purposes of calculating teachers’ retirement benefits.

CABE urges the:

1. General Assembly to avoid adopting costly changes to the Teacher Retirement Act that shift the burden from the state to the local level and to maintain its responsibility for the Teacher Retirement System;
2. General Assembly to provide greater flexibility to adequately compensate retired educators serving in interim or part-time positions; and
3. Teacher’s Retirement Board to include performance based pay for purposes of teacher’s retirement, in order to preserve more options in compensation systems.

■ EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The improvement of instruction relies heavily on the continued or increased competency of existing staff members, especially in periods of stable or declining enrollments. Therefore, CABE supports:

1. local and regional boards of education developing high quality professional development programs for school district staff, alone or in cooperation with other school boards, agencies, or institutions; and
2. teacher preparation institutions and universities upgrading and expanding professional development programs and graduate programs for teachers and administrators.

■ EDUCATOR EVALUATION AND SUPPORT

CABE urges the:

1. State Department of Education through the Educator Evaluation and Support Council (EES) to implement the Educator Evaluation and Support guidelines.
2. State Department of Education and General Assembly to support a strong teacher induction and performance program to improve the retention of new teachers in Connecticut.

■ TEACHER AND ADMINISTRATOR SALARY SYSTEMS

CABE supports the:

- development by boards of education of teacher and administrator salary systems that are based upon performance skills and knowledge, competence, and levels of responsibility.
- maintenance of teacher and administrator salaries that are competitive with the salaries of persons of comparable skill, quality, educational background, and professional responsibility.

■ THE LEGISLATIVE – SCHOOL BOARD PARTNERSHIP

CABE urges school boards to provide legislators with objective analysis of proposed legislation so that municipal impact is accurate in fiscal notes.

CABE urges the General Assembly to exercise restraint when addressing education issues that impact local operations. Overly prescriptive law or regulation inhibits local capacity to innovate and best serve its public.

■ SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CABE supports a state requirement for an orientation and ongoing professional development for all school board members.

CABE urges boards of education to:

1. develop a policy requiring professional development for new and experienced board members.
2. examine and discuss annually the roles of the board and the superintendent in order to maintain a strong and effective partnership.
3. provide for adequate professional development programs for all school board members and candidates, including participation by all members in area, state and national programs and compliance with orientation for new school board members. Professional development should include the roles and responsibilities of boards, and skills needed to resolve issues in a nonpartisan manner.

■ BOARD OF EDUCATION ETHICS

CABE urges boards of education to incorporate codes of ethics and conflict of interest provisions in their Bylaws.

CABE urges the General Assembly to refrain from imposing financial disclosure provisions for volunteer elected officials.

■ BOARD OF EDUCATION SERVICE

CABE urges local political parties to seek school board candidates who are committed to student achievement and representative of the entire community.

CABE urges employers to support the civic involvement of their employees who serve as school board members.

■ PREVAILING WAGES FOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

CABE urges the General Assembly to raise the dollar threshold for projects subject to the prevailing wage mandate.

■ PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY OF CONTRACTORS WORKING ON PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

CABE urges the General Assembly to hold contractors accountable for their performance on publicly funded building projects by adopting the Department of Administrative Services recommendation that maximum retainage on a project be increased from 2.5 percent to the previous level of 10 percent.

Finance

■ PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

In order to ensure that public funds are used for public education and to improve public education, CABE urges all citizens and particularly all school board members to:

1. oppose the implementation of voucher systems as methods of financing non-public education with public funds; and
2. oppose tax credits for expenditures for tuition or living expenses at private elementary and secondary schools.

■ THE FEDERAL ROLE IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

CABE urges the federal government to recognize education as a state and local function, while identifying, promoting and supporting the national interest in public education.

CABE supports a program of federal support for elementary and secondary public education that provides increased flexibility and funds that go directly to the local level and financial support for all federal mandates.

■ THE SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM

The increased burden of the cost of public education, largely as a result of mandates imposed on public school systems by state government, requires a more equitable sharing by state and local funding sources. Therefore, state legislation should recognize:

1. the responsibility of the state government to provide an equitable share of total local school expenses;

2. the primary responsibility for local expenditure determination to remain with the local school board;
3. that local school districts should develop, with state assistance, procedures to ensure fiscal accountability and efficiency and the most effective use of tax dollars;
4. the need to restructure the state spending cap so all federal education funds flow to school districts;
5. the state responsibility to fund court-ordered programs; and
6. the need for financial incentives to foster interdistrict and/or regional interdistrict cooperation.

CABE supports:

1. continued exploration of more accurate methods of measuring the wealth of each town, the cost of appropriately educating each child - including those children who are economically disadvantaged or have other special needs, the costs associated with participation in public school choice programs, magnet schools and charter schools, and the unique cost burdens borne by poor rural and poor urban school districts;
2. monitoring of the effectiveness of school finance programs to ensure that towns spend an appropriate amount for the education of each student in order to provide substantially equal advantages taking into account differences in local costs based on relevant economic and educational factors and on course offerings of special interest in diverse Connecticut communities;
3. state funding for education provided directly to local and regional boards of education;

4. the creation of a more consistent manner of reporting and calculating per pupil expenditure and use of the most current audited data in any school finance formula;
5. reducing the cost of special education to LEAs and requiring the State to pay its fair share of the costs directly to boards of education;
6. funding for gifted and talented programs;
7. the differential in the cost of operating a secondary only regional school district be factored into the ECS Formula and that the MBR be applied separately to schools in K-6 or districts with designated or regional high schools;
8. financial incentives for school districts operating extended day kindergarten programs, after school and summer remedial programs;
9. adequate support for adult vocational education programs;
10. restoration of the transportation grant;
11. maintaining full ECS funding to all districts including Alliance Districts, and creating separate grants outside of ECS for Alliance District reform efforts;
12. additional state funding for School Based Health Clinics;
13. continued state financial and technical support to Alliance Districts while removing designation for districts who have shown continued improvement;
14. a built-in annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) or inflation-indexing factor for the school share of ECS and /or alliance allocations that reflects actual cost increases in public education operations (for example, linked to the consumer

price index for educational services or a state-determined education cost index); transparent methodology and documentation showing how the inflation or COLA factor is determined, published annually and incorporated into district allocation notifications; and

15. establish a “trigger” law that would release a reserve of state funding to make school districts whole on any reduction made to federal title program funds relative to the 2024-25 school year calculations.

■ PROMOTING STATEWIDE POLICY AND FUNDING FOR MINORITY TEACHER RECRUITMENT

CABE urges the Legislature to:

1. relieve the Alliance school districts from the compounding impact of the fiscal obligations of the language of CGS 10-156gg, the Minority Candidate Certification, Retention or Residency Year Program.
2. provide funding to enable districts to take advantage of opportunities to engage in educator workforce development progress designed to increase educator diversity.

■ PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

CABE urges the General Assembly to ensure that the primary sources of local district funding are protected from erosion in state budgets which maintain grant funding at least at existing levels and avoid imposition of mandates or state tax shifting which might result in the transfer of state obligations to local property taxes.

CABE supports the:

1. concept of full state and federal funding on a current basis for any mandated programs.

2. passage of legislation making state mandates on boards of education unenforceable unless fully funded.

■ **MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT (MBR)**

CABE urges the General Assembly to remove the statutory reduction in the MBR and encourages the Commissioner of Education to adjust the MBR in situations when a local or regional board of education seeks relief from the MBR due to significant enrollment changes.

■ **PROMOTING EFFICIENCIES AMONG AND BETWEEN DISTRICTS**

CABE urges the General Assembly to remove barriers and implement incentives through which neighboring local educational agencies can develop initiatives to sustain quality of programs and services while entering into mutually beneficial agreements to share and reduce costs.

CABE urges the State Department of Education to substantially support (financially and administratively) cooperative efforts among districts. This support needs to be strategic, long term, and sustainable to realize true regionalism results.

■ **TAX REFORM**

CABE supports comprehensive tax reform in Connecticut that:

1. is balanced and fair and will produce the revenues necessary to support quality public education and other needed public services;
2. reduces reliance on the local property tax, sales tax or other regressive forms of taxation; and

3. assures that distribution of the tax burden is based upon the ability to pay.

CABE opposes a state legislative cap on local property taxes.

■ **MAGNET SCHOOL, CHOICE AND CHARTER FUNDING**

CABE urges the General Assembly to:

1. Identify adequate funding for Open Choice receiving districts to encourage the voluntary efforts of participating districts.
2. Ensure that any charter school funding plan does not compromise local district funding and includes reimbursement to the local school district for any costs associated with ELL supports, special education supports, nursing and health services, transportation and any other expenditures from the school district budget.
3. Provide a comprehensive magnet school funding formula applicable statewide for both host and interdistrict schools, sending and receiving districts.

■ **FUNDING FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

CABE urges the General Assembly to:

1. maintain support for school construction grants;
2. increase the school construction grant percentage for new construction equal to the current percentage for renovation as new; and
3. eliminate any space standard reduction percentage when factors beyond the control of the district cause lower than projected enrollment.

CABE supports updating the existing formula covering eligible overall square footage per student to take into consideration space needs such as for cafeterias/kitchens, media centers, reduced class sizes, teaching practices, and technology.

Labor Relations

■ TEACHER NEGOTIATION ACT

As long as compulsory binding arbitration remains as the dispute resolution process under the Teacher Negotiations Act, CABE supports additional modifications of the Act to allow boards of education to carry out their management responsibilities, including the following:

1. There shall be no presumption by arbitrators in favor of retaining contract provisions or continuing past employment practices.
2. Arbitrators shall give the highest priority to the educational interests of the state as such interests relate to the children of the school district.
3. Arbitrators shall give priority consideration to the public interest and the financial capability of the town or towns in the school district. The consideration of financial capability shall include the town's capability as measured by its history of tax increases, personal income trends, declines in state and federal revenues, and the financial impact of state and federal mandates.
4. Establish a requirement that neutral arbitrators participate in training sessions.

CABE opposes granting teachers and administrators the opportunity to strike.

CABE supports the retention of the teacher evaluation process as a permissive subject of bargaining.

Special Education

■ TEACHER TERMINATION HEARINGS

CABE urges the General Assembly to allow the suspension of tenured teachers without pay prior to the completion of the termination hearing process.

■ IMPACT NEGOTIATION

CABE supports the ability of local school boards to change job descriptions unilaterally without the necessity of negotiating the impact of the changes with individual unions.

■ UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

CABE supports the repeal of federal legislation allowing states to grant unemployment compensation to school district employees during vacations and the summer months.

CABE urges the General Assembly to refrain from extending such benefits to school district employees.

CABE supports modification of state statute to specifically provide that notice of intent to layoff at a future point in time, given in compliance with any legal or contractual mandate, shall not give rise to a right to collect unemployment benefits.

■ MANDATED BENEFITS

CABE supports the repeal of statutorily mandated duty-free lunch periods and sick leave. These issues should be negotiated at the local level.

■ FEDERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES

CABE urges the federal government to revise and modify due process for students with disabilities. Specifically, CABE recognizes the need to improve on current due process proceedings to make them more effective and expeditious for the purpose of providing students with disabilities with an appropriate educational program.

CABE supports the following changes to special education law and regulations:

That the issue(s) in dispute at a due process hearing be limited to matters pertaining to a proposed IEP; the existing IEP; or any IEP from the current school year or the school year immediately preceding the current year.

That the hearing officer be:

1. authorized and/or required to append to his/her final decision and order a statement detailing the issue on which the respective parties have prevailed, in whole or in part, and summarizing the approximate amount of hearing time spent on each issue.
2. granted the same powers the Federal Courts have to reduce attorney fees if the parent/guardian unreasonably protracted the final resolution of the controversy, if the award unreasonably exceeds the hourly rate prevailing in the community, if the time and legal services furnished were excessive considering the nature of the action, or if the attorney representing the parent/guardian did not provide the school with a description of the

problem relating to the proposed placement change and a proposed resolution. This should be done to insure a more equitable distribution of the financial responsibilities of the due process procedure.

That boards of education be granted more flexibility in the expulsion of special education students involved in criminal activities. Specifically, the federal government should not block states and local and regional boards of education from applying the same disciplinary standards to all students who commit the most serious offenses.

That clarification of the relationship between Section 504 requirements and IDEA be provided.

That IDEA be amended to alleviate the burden placed on school districts with nonresident private school students eligible for special education identification and services.

■ PLACEMENTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

CABE urges the General Assembly to provide:

1. for the full cost for educating students placed in private and public educational programs through DCF for children in their custody.
2. that DCF pay the full cost for special education for students attending local school districts.

■ SPECIAL EDUCATION EXCESS COST GRANT

CABE urges the General Assembly to fully fund the Excess Cost Reimbursement Grant for all costs in excess of the 3.5 times the district's average per pupil expenditure.

■ LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

CABE encourages the State Department of Education, institutions of Higher Education, the General Assembly, and each local and regional board of education to:

1. consider the needs of the entire class of students when placement decisions are made.
2. examine a variety of placement options to insure that students with special needs be placed in the least restrictive environment.
3. provide pre-service and in-service staff development and sufficient resources for all staff to enable them to provide appropriate support to students with special needs.

■ SPECIAL EDUCATION DUE PROCESS

CABE urges the General Assembly to:

1. Review the method for selection and qualification of due process hearing officers with a view toward increasing the level of professionalism and impartiality.
2. Increase available funding to attract qualified candidates and adequately compensate them for their service.
3. Provide for appellate review of due process decisions.
4. Assign the burden of proof to the party that initiated the special education hearing.

Since 1938, CAFE has been the collective voice of more than 1,300 board of education members across the State. As CAFE has grown, so has our prominence as leaders in shaping public education programs — helping Connecticut prepare for the increasingly competitive 21st Century.

These positions reflect the commitment of board of education members to promote public participation through local lay control of public education, to promote equal opportunity and a high quality education for all Connecticut's public school children and increase public awareness of education issues.



The distinctive line drawing of the Capitol building which appears on the cover was graciously donated to CAFE by the late Richard Welling, a talented Hartford artist. The artwork is a particularly appropriate piece for our 2026 Whole Agenda. We are delighted to be able to feature a work by this very talented artist.