

2015-18 NSBA Strategic Plan

August 2015

OVERVIEW

The National School Boards Association has a response to perhaps the most important question for any organization: Why are we here? In our case, the answer is to be the premier advocate for public education in America and to support and assist our member state associations. This focus on advocacy and member service has been the hallmark of NSBA's recent work and it provides a strong foundation for our work going forward.

This Strategic Plan is both a continuation of this direction, as well as a commitment to moving the association to an even greater role in impacting the landscape of public education. It recognizes the successes we have enjoyed as well as the challenges we face. And, it acknowledges that NSBA must continue to strengthen its financial position and internal capacity in order to achieve the ambitious goals that are being established.

In 2015, the NSBA Board of Directors made development of this plan a priority. To prepare for this important process, board members read the book, *21 Trends for the 21st Century* by Gary Marx, reviewed a background paper on issues that will impact public education in the coming years, and also reviewed the results of a survey of state association presidents and executive directors conducted in May. A full day at the June 2015 meeting in Tulsa, OK was devoted to discussing this information, reaffirming NSBA's mission and direction as well as brainstorming strategic goals, with the understanding that their input would be used to develop the Strategic Plan presented to the board in August 2015. The session was facilitated by Bruce Nilson, a Certified Management Consultant, with extensive experience in facilitating strategic planning for both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations who has previously worked with NSBA.

This Strategic Plan summarizes the work done by the board and describes NSBA's intended direction and over the next three years. Specific steps to achieve the goals will be outlined using measurable objectives in an Implementation Plan to be developed by the Executive Director once the Strategic Plan has been approved by the board. The Executive Director and leadership team will report to the Board of Directors on NSBA's progress throughout the duration of this planning cycle.

RECENT MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NSBA's focus on advocacy and member service has been producing several significant results in the past several years. These include:

- Growing impact on policymaking in the U.S. Congress, as evidenced by NSBA's success in securing provisions we favor – and in blocking those we oppose – in key legislation.
- Expanding the Federal Relations Network from fewer than 4,000 to more than 53,000 members in just two years.
- Adopting annual Advocacy Agendas based on actions of the Delegate Assembly.
- Protecting federal funding for critical programs.
- Influencing court decisions in numerous cases affecting school districts through the filing of amicus briefs, which produced a number of favorable decisions, including several by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Actively pushing-back against federal intrusion in local school operations.
- Serving as a key resource for policymakers and the news media on education issues.
- Providing active assistance and support to member state associations as they address major legislative issues.
- Implementing the National School Boards Action Center (NSBAC) as an effective tool in promoting NSBA's legislative agenda and in expanding school boards' advocacy voice.
- Conducting the "Stand Up for Public Schools" campaign, which has garnered the active support and collaboration of three-quarters of the state associations.
- Redesigning the NSBA website and the *American School Board Journal*.
- Expanding NSBA's social media presence.
- Redesigning the former National Affiliate program into National Connection, a joint venture with state associations.
- Updating and revising the *Key Work of School Boards*, NSBA's seminal resource on school governance.
- Developing "Leading the Change" toolkit to assist school officials in improving academic achievement in persistently under-performing schools.
- Strengthening NSBA's financial position by adopting and implementing a "Glide Path Plan" to fully fund the association's unfunded pension liability and by developing new revenue sources.
- Upgrading NSBA's internal technology and business practices, to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of operations.
- Enhancing relations and communications with the membership.
- Reinventing the NSBA Delegate Assembly process to allow greater stakeholder participation and making other governance changes to the association.

These are a sampling of the achievements of the past several years. In fact, more than 95% of the former 2012-15 Strategic Plan had been implemented at the time this new plan was developed. That creates extraordinary momentum for NSBA in implementing this new plan.

MISSION STATEMENT

Working with and through our state associations, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board governance.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Given the challenges facing public education and efforts to restrict – or in some cases, even eliminate – the governance role of school boards, the need for a strong and effective National School Boards Association never has been greater. Our efforts to be the premier advocate for public education in America, through our work in the legislative, legal and public arenas, are directly impacting public policy. The focus on serving member state associations and, through them, school boards, is increasing capacity to make local governance and the public education system even better.

Advocacy and member service establish a trajectory that will continue to define NSBA's work in the coming years. This will involve: leading the national conversation about public education; confronting those who would seek to privatize or otherwise undermine the nation's system of public schools; proposing our own plans to ensure that all students everywhere have access to a great public education where they live; and providing the services and support state school boards associations need to enhance the effectiveness of local school boards. And, to make all this possible, NSBA will make as a continuing priority the strengthening of its financial position and internal capacity.

2015-18 GOALS

NSBA will be taking many actions over the next several years to achieve its strategic direction and to fulfill its mission. A number of essential goals, in four major categories, provide the foundation for these efforts.

Advocating for Public Education

- Expand advocacy efforts in the Congress and federal agencies by further increasing NSBA's capacity to interact with policymakers and to advance our own proposals.
- Expand advocacy efforts in the courts, including through a proactive litigation initiative.
- Expand public advocacy efforts through the "Stand Up 4 Public Schools" campaign and proactive outreach to the news media.
- Exposing critics of public education through a research-based effort that challenges inaccurate statements and sheds light on how adversary groups are organized and funded.

Leading the Conversation

- Provide resources and support to ensure equity and access for all students.
- Redefine "student success" beyond mere performance on standardized tests so the public schools are known to be a place that maximizes students' potential.
- Promote the appropriate roles for the federal, state and local levels of governance in public education.
- Be a thought leader on education issues by engaging interested groups and policymakers in examining and gaining consensus about ways to strengthen public education.

Serving State Associations

- Identify and deliver needed services to state associations.
- Strengthen membership ties.

Achieving Financial Stability

- Further diversify revenue streams.
- Systematically build reserves.
- Implement the Glide Path Plan to address the association's unfunded pension liability.

IMPLEMENTATION

In adopting this Strategic Plan, the NSBA Board of Directors provides a roadmap for the continued growth and development of the association. Achieving the strategic direction and the goals enumerated in this plan will require specific action steps, which will be developed annually by the Executive Director in the form of an Implementation Plan consistent with the annual budget and staffing plan. All these materials will be published for the benefit of the membership and others, and our progress reported on a continuing basis. NSBA welcomes feedback and suggestions as we work to accomplish the ambitious yet vital outcomes we envision.
