

THE ADVOCATE

28th Annual School Law Conference Held

On June 7-9, 2007 the New Mexico School Boards Association and the Cuddy Law Firm hosted the 25th Annual School Law Conference for school board members, superintendents and school personnel from around the state. There were about 650 in attendance at the conference held at the Sheraton Old Town in Albuquerque, NM.

On Thursday evening the Cuddy Law Firm hosted a reception of the Board of Directors and law firm lawyers on behalf of retiring Executive Director Mack Mitchell. John Kennedy served as Master of Ceremonies and many people shared funny anecdotes about Mack's ten years of service to NMSBA. A special thanks goes to Cory Elson of the Cuddy Law Firm for planning the majority of the event. Also of note were the corporate sponsors of the event in addition to the Cuddy Law Firm, George K. Baum & Company and Hughes & Strumer Ltd.

At the Friday morning General Session, the Fall 2006/Spring 2007 Traveling Plaque Attendance Award were presented. These are given to the districts who had the greatest number of board members in attendance at those two region meetings. The districts receiving the awards were: Region I – a tie between Central & Dulce; Region II – Pojoaque; Region III – Cimarron; Region IV – Vaughn; Region V – Dora; Region VI – a four-way tie between Artesia, Dexter, Eunice and Loving; Region VII – Gadsden; and Region VIII Silver. When a tie occurs, the plaque is shared – half the year at one district and half at the other. In the case of the four-way tie, we had two plaques made.

A plaque of appreciation was given to both Tom Sullivan, Executive Director and Bud Mulcock, Government Relations of the NM Coalition of School Administrators in appreciation for their help during the 60-day 2007 legislative session on behalf of NM school children.

This year an early bird session was offered on Thursday entitled “*Board Basic Training: Developing a Strong Board-Superintendent Relationship*” presented by Frank Albeta. On Friday, the First General Session was on “*Crisis Response Plans*” which was quite timely and an unfortunate recurring theme from Columbine and the recent Virginia Tech shootings. The Second General Session was a resounding hit with a demonstration of “*How to Run An Effective Board Meeting*”. Three sets of breakout sessions were offered to attendees later that afternoon and another three sets of breakouts were offered on Saturday morning. Topics ranged from Construction Issues, Special Education IEPs, and Indian Education to Religion and Technology in schools. This conference offered a total of 11 possible training points.

NMSBA would like to thank the Cuddy Law Firm for developing the program content for the conference and to their staff for helping with the registration.

Thank you to these sponsors for their continued support of the public schools and educational associations in New Mexico: Casey Financial Consulting; Cuddy Law Firm; George K. Baum & Company Hughes & Strumer Ltd.; McCall, Parkhurst & Horton; RBC Capital Markets; and Zia Bus Sales, Inc.

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DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

By Joe Guillen

As your new Executive Director, I am proud and excited to advance the fine tradition and outstanding activities of the New Mexico School Boards Association. I wish to acknowledge the exceptional work of Mack Mitchell over the past ten years. He along with a very dedicated and competent staff of Carolyn Mole and Elizabeth Egelhoff brought programmatic and financial stability and success to our Association.



I also want to acknowledge and thank the NMSBA Board of Directors and the Executive Director Selection Committee for their trust and confidence in selecting me to lead the Association. My experience as a local school board member addressing issues such as student achievement, accountability, school finances, teacher improvement and community engagement will be of great benefit in my new role.

In addition, the knowledge gained by being actively involved with NMSBA and the National School Boards Association over the past ten years in areas such as school board advocacy, education reform, legislative lobbying and board training provide an excellent foundation for my new responsibilities.

With the guidance of our Executive Committee and Board of Directors we plan to build upon the quality service of the past while pursuing new initiatives for the future. The following are among those I propose to accomplish:

- o Continuously update our goals, objectives, mission statement and overall direction via comprehensive surveys and input from our members.
- o Consider providing additional services in the areas of direct policy development, government/public relations, superintendent search services, and others.
- o Expand our school board advocacy and legislative programs by developing a much needed accountability response, collaborating with key legislative and executive leaders throughout the year and promoting school board accomplishments.
- o Explore profit making opportunities for the Association as a means of keeping dues low and providing additional services to board members.
- o Expand and strengthen relationships and partnerships with key agencies and individuals striving to improve public schools.

We look forward to undertaking these and other initiatives over the next year. We will also ensure NMSBA is the lead advocate for school boards in New Mexico and continue to help board members develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to carry out their responsibilities effectively. It is extremely important that we focus our work in order to ensure that all our children are educated to their fullest potential.

Please keep in mind that NMSBA is here to support you and work with you. We hope you will contact us if we can help you in any way.

With all good wishes, Joe Guillen, Executive Director

THE ADVOCATE

The mission of *The Advocate* is to provide information to the members of the New Mexico School Boards Association.

Articles published in *The Advocate* represent the ideas or beliefs of the respective writers and are not necessarily the views of the NMSBA unless otherwise noted.

The Advocate is the official publication of the NMSBA and is published quarterly. *The Advocate* is supported by membership dues and is sent to all school board members and superintendents of its member districts as well as education stakeholders. Non-profit postage paid in Santa Fe, NM.

Letters to the Editor are welcome. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit article submissions for clarity and length. Deadlines falling on a holiday or weekend will be extended to the next business day. The deadline for submissions is 4 PM:

Winter Issue - December 10th
Spring Issue - March 10th
Summer Issue - June 10th
Fall Issue - September 10th

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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

By Lora Harlan

On Friday night, March 23, a Category 3 tornado hit Clovis. I was attending the Celebrating Educational Opportunities for Hispanic Students in Albuquerque that weekend. Many of you were able to attend this year because NMSBA was the host. Many families lost their homes, many others were damaged. Two elementary schools received slight damage. Yucca Junior High had 19 HVAC units torn from the roof and extensive damage to the roof of the auxiliary gym. The following week was spring break and all schools were open and ready to receive students on Monday a week later. The support from the Clovis community was outstanding. Everyone stepped up to the mark in a time of need.

I went home very early on Saturday morning knowing that our family businesses had been damaged. I could not comprehend the extent of what was being described.

Three months have now passed. The rebuild and repair is coming along. It is a process – a long, slow process. As I drove down the highway just a few weeks ago, I was stuck by the profoundness that the landscape had changed forever. The physical landscape no longer had the same look – trees, fences, and houses were missing. But our mental landscape also changed. It was no longer what happened to someone else in some other location. It was here, my home town. We go about getting life “back to normal” but our mental scenery has altered the way we do business.

Education and the way we do business have had several tornadoes over the past few years.

HB 212

High School Reform

NCLB

Public School Funding Formula Task Force looming ahead

The demographics of our student population

Each of these is changing our education world and altering the way we do business.

As local board members and supporters of our state association we need to be flexible, yet we must also realize that there are constant principles. We can change our methods - such as changes to bring higher student achievement that translates to graduates who can make a living in an every changing work environment, because students need the skills to adapt to a work market that is not even on the market today -yet, we stand by our principles of giving each student the opportunity to *succeed* in the world of tomorrow. In a new landscape.

A Note of Gratitude:

Mack Mitchell has served as our Executive Director for almost ten years. He retired on June 29. NMSBA has become a stronger, more respected organization under his leadership. From strategic planning to legislative prowess; from individual boards with our own agendas to a strong organization that works for the good of all students, Mack has led the charge. I personally will miss his wit, wisdom and candor. He knew when to speak and when to listen. Mack you have been a great friend and a great leader. I thank you.



‘Segregated’ schools hinder reading skills

Children in families with low incomes, who attend schools where the minority population exceeds 75 percent of the student enrollment, under-perform in reading, even after accounting for the quality of the literacy instruction, literary experiences at home, gender, race and other variables, according to a new study.

The majority of black and Hispanic children in the United States attend such “minority segregated” schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

The study, by the FPG Child Development Institute (FPG) and the School of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, examined reading development from kindergarten to third grade for 1,913 economically disadvantaged children. The children were part of the Children from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Kindergarten Cohort, a nationally representative sample of more than 22,000 children enrolled in approximately 1,000 kindergarten programs.

“Good instruction is essential, but it’s not enough,” said Kirsten Kainz, an investigator at FPG, senior research associate in the School of Education and author of the study. “Most current reading instruction initiatives and policies are aimed at improving classroom instruction,” Kainz said. “This research shows that characteristics of the child, the home, the classroom and the school influence reading development, and that maximally effective reading policy should address all four systems simultaneously.”

Kainz and her colleagues found that classroom and

school characteristics had a larger affect on low-income students’ long-term reading abilities than the method of instruction or a child’s background, such as the parents’ employment patterns or size of the household.

The study also showed that the percentage of struggling readers in a classroom negatively influenced every student’s reading performance, erasing any benefits of comprehensive literacy instruction. Children attending kindergarten classrooms with higher percentages of students reading below grade level demonstrated constrained performance in reading at the end of kindergarten. The same was true for children in first grade.

Children were assessed in basic reading skills, vocabulary and comprehension. Researchers then considered how four levels of variables – child, family, classroom and school – affected reading skills. Data was collected as part of a national survey via telephone interviews and written questionnaires with caregivers, teachers and administrators.

“These findings support policies that promote comprehensive reading instruction, but indicate that just as much attention needs to be paid to ensuring that schools are integrated and to reducing classroom concentrations of children reading below grade level,” said Lynne Vernon-Feagans, a fellow at FPG and co-author of the study.

♦ Source: FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

NSBA Publishes Adolescent Literacy Guide for School Boards

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has published a new guidebook for school boards on the issue of adolescent literacy. The guidebook, *The Next Chapter: A School Board Guide to Improving Adolescent Literacy*, was funded through a grant from Carnegie Corporation of New York and is a resource for local school boards to clarify and support district efforts to improve reading and writing among middle and high school students.

The guide presents eight strategies for school board action as well as guiding questions, background research, examples of best practices and an extensive list of resources for further information.

The eight strategies are: identifying students’ literacy needs; making adolescent literacy a priority in each school district; making time for literacy; supporting strong

professional development; looking for and supporting literacy leaders; aligning school districts’ resources to support what works; keeping track of what’s happening; and bringing in the community.

The guidebook draws upon several key research and practice resources, including *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*; *The Key Work of School Boards*; *Targeting Student Learning: The School Board’s Role as Policymaker*; and the Iowa Association of School Boards’ *Lighthouse Study*.

The publication will be available by mid-July for a free download on the NSBA website, www.nsba.org and for purchase from the NSBA bookstore at 800-706-6722.

♦ Source: NSBA website

NMSBA NEWS

The NMSBA website is a resource for your use

NMSBA's website is www.nmsba.org. You can find:

Conference Information –lists tentative agenda, registration, and maps to the hotel for upcoming conferences. This is posted on the website about two months prior to each conference. Pictures are posted after conferences.

Events Calendar - lists dates and locations of region meetings, state and national conferences.

Resource Center –lists answers to frequently requested materials, publications such as Open Meetings Act, Board Member Orientation booklet, and a link to the Public Education Department regulations.

Organizational Structure – lists board of directors, Resolution committee members, and Public Education Commission member information.

Educator Placement – links to NM regional educator placement service for those looking to post or find employment in education.

Legislative Update – current legislative information. The national NCLB Act information is there as well as a link to “Thomas” the US Congress site where you can look up current legislation and see what bills are currently being acted on. During the state legislative session, there are links and daily updates posted there as well.

NMCSA & CES – links to other NM educator websites and the NM public schools.

Publications – links to PDFs of previous Newsletters or other current items of interest to NM Board Members, such as forms.

Subscription Policy Service

NMSBA offers districts the option of a Subscription Policy Service. The service offers policy development by a consultant/lawyer and provides up-to-date Policy Service Advisories. For further information or clarification, contact Joe Guillen, Executive Director of NMSBA via e-mail at jguillen@nmsba.org or by phone at the NMSBA office, (505) 983-5041.

Board Book Offers Districts Paperless Meetings

There is a logo link with tutorial available from the NMSBA homepage. Board Book is an electronic means to have Paperless Board Meetings and is now being offered through a partnership between NMSBA and the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) to New Mexico school districts.

Training Reports

Following the June School Law Conference, training reports with each board member's training hours to-date were mailed to the Presidents and Superintendents. Over 33 hours of training have been offered since September 2006 through NMSBA conference and meetings.

NM law mandates that each board member earn at least five hours of training each year. The training year is September 1 through August 31st. In September, the final reports are e-mailed to the Public Education Department's Office of Accountability and the names and training points are added to each district's school report card for the public.

If you have questions about training, please contact Elizabeth Egelhoff.

NMSBA REGIONS & 2007 FALL MEETINGS

Region I

Wednesday, October 3 in Dulce

Aztec, Bloomfield, Central, Dulce, Farmington, Gallup, Zuni

Region II

Thursday, October 11 in Espanola

Chama Valley, Espanola, Jemez Mountain, Los Alamos, Mesa Vista, Pecos, Penasco, Pojoaque Valley, Questa, Santa Fe, Taos

Region III

Monday, October 15 in Des Moines

Cimarron, Clayton, Des Moines, Las Vegas City, Las Vegas West, Maxwell, Mora, Mosquero, Raton, Roy, Santa Rosa, Springer, Wagon Mound

Region IV

Wednesday, October 10 in Albuquerque

Albuquerque, Belen, Bernalillo, Grants-Cibola, Cuba, Estancia, Jemez Valley, Los Lunas, Magdalena, Moriarty, Mountainair, Quemado, Rio Rancho, Socorro, Vaughn

Region V

Tuesday, September 18 in Dora

Clovis, Dora, Elida, Floyd, Fort Sumner, Grady, House, Logan, Melrose, Portales, San Jon, Texico, Tucumcari

Region VI

Monday, September 24 in Artesia

Artesia, Carlsbad, Dexter, Eunice, Hagerman, Hobbs, Jal, Lake Arthur, Loving, Lovington, Roswell, Tatum

Region VII

Tuesday, October 23 in T or C

Alamogordo, Capitan, Carrizozo, Cloudcroft, Corona, Gadsden, Hatch Valley, Hondo Valley, Las Cruces, Ruidoso, T or C, Tularosa

Region VIII

Wednesday, November 7 in TBD

Animas, Cobre, Deming, Lordsburg, Reserve, Silver City

**Indicates a change from previously published information*

Call for Topics & Talent

NMSBA ANNUAL CONVENTION December 7-8, 2007 Embassy Suites Hotel, ABQ

The NMSBA Annual Convention will offer a variety of programs to help school board members become more effective in their leadership roles.

We want to hear from **you** - the school board members - about what topics you need more information on in order to be effective board members.

Those members who want to give presentations toward their Master Board Member Certification should also submit topic ideas and let us know that they are MBM candidates.

We are open to suggestions for student talent as well.

Please e-mail your suggestions to the NMSBA Executive Director - Joe Guillen, at jguillen@nmsba.org with the following information:

Program Topic

-or-

Student Talent

(Individual or Group Name & Contact Information)

Suggested Presenter

Your Name

Your School District

Daytime Phone #

Your e-mail Address

School boards passing NCLB resolutions

Nationally, more than 320 local school boards have now passed a resolution urging their Representative to support and co-sponsor an NSBA-backed bill (H.R. 648) to improve the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Those from New Mexico who have submitted a resolution to NSBA are: Albuquerque, Central, Cimarron, Clovis, Cobre, Mora, Mountainair, Rio Rancho and Santa Fe. If your board is not on this list, it needs to be. With widespread agreement that NCLB as currently constructed is not working for students, schools, or districts, Congress needs to hear from local school leaders *now* that the law must be re-worked, and sooner not later.

Read more about the Act at the NMSBA website (www.nmsba.org) under "Legislative Update". You can also download a sample resolution. The greater the support for the more than 40-plus provisions to improve NCLB in H.R. 648, the greater the influence school boards will have with the education committees drafting the reauthorization bill. After your board passes the resolution, send a copy to your member of Congress, to your local media, to NSBA's Kathleen Branch (kbranch@nsba.org), Federal Networks Advocate and to NMSBA (nmsba1@nm.net). One of the areas within NCLB where NSBA has made recommendations is that of supplemental education services or tutoring, an issue getting national attention.

♦ Source: NSBA Board Buzz

SAVE THE DATE!

Celebrating Educational Opportunities:
Addressing the Needs of Multicultural Students
"Courageous Conversations"
April 25-27, 2008

The Fairmont Hotel at (408) 998-1900
170 South Market Street, San Jose, CA 95113

Call for Model Program Submissions

The Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas school boards associations are seeking programs to share at the conference. Submissions should be made in one of the following categories: Community/Parent Involvement; Language and Achievement; Use of Technology; and Data-Driven Analysis and Accountability. The model program form will be available in late July from the CSBA homepage.

Deadline for Model Program submissions is December 7, 2007.

Call for Student Panelists

During CEOHS, there will be a Student Panel presentation with one student from each of the four participating states. During the panel discussion each student will share their educational goals, successes and some obstacles they have overcome. Contact your state association to find out more about nominating a student from your district to represent your state! The representatives will be: Arizona - female graduate college student; California - male high school student; **New Mexico - male undergraduate college student**; and Texas - female young professional.

Hosted by the California School Boards Association
www.CSBA.org

***Besieged: School Boards and the Future of Education Politics* by William Howell, Editor and published by the Brookings Institution Press, 2005**

School boards are fighting for their survival. Today almost everything they do is subject to increasing regulation – by city councils, state boards of education, state legislatures, and the state and federal courts. As recent mayoral and state takeovers in some cities make abundantly clear, school boards that do not fulfill the expectations of excellence defined by other political players may be stripped of what few independent powers they still retain.

In *Besieged*, the editor, William G. Howell, an assistant professor of government at Harvard University utilizes the input from a group of renowned scholars, relying on careful case studies and quantitative analysis, systematically examines this and other issues, assembling new evidence on the powers of school boards, their operations, and most important, the politics that surround them.

***The Perfect Board* by Calvin K. Clemons and published by Synergy Books**

New to the school board or know someone who is? This little book – though directed primarily to nonprofit boards of directors – can be handy information to the basics of board service. With 49 short chapters framed in a fictional account of a new board member, *The Perfect Board* delivers not perfections but a kind of Cliffs Notes approach to board service.

Along with quick takes on conflicts of interest, meeting attendance, rules of order, and the like, the author Calvin Clemons – who has been in association management for almost three decades - offers sound advice on matters of ethics and public service.

Advice to note:

- ♦ “If the bylaws are ‘silent’ on how to achieve diversity, the board has to do whatever it can to open the doors and involve as many different people as possible from a variety of professional backgrounds.”
- ♦ “By respecting others’ time and views, you open yourself up to receiving respect from your peers.”
- ♦ “If you see a wrong, it is your obligation to something about it. You must do something today... not tomorrow or next month.”

♦ Source: *American School Boards Journal*

Farewell from Mack...

As all of you know by now, I am retiring from the position of Executive Director of the New Mexico School Boards Association. My last working day was June 29th. I was in the office chugging along and helping Joe Guillen get his feet on the ground concerning his new position as the Executive Director. I have been happy with Joe’s work getting ready to take over and feel like he will do a fine job.

Many of you have asked what my plans are for the future. I have been told by many of you that you can’t believe that I will just quit working and go play golf. Well, you are correct. The closer I got to being “retired,” the more nervous I became with the prospect of entertaining myself every day. My wife, Sara, tells me that only boring people get bored, so I guess now I know where I fit in the scheme of things because I do get bored. I am also not real good at entertaining myself. Therefore, I have accepted an offer from the National School Boards Association to work for them. I wanted to do something different, so I have accepted a sales position with them. I will be selling affiliate memberships to the NSBA to local school districts in the Western Region (New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma). As you can see, there are nine states in the Western Region and I will be selling to all the local school districts in those states IF they are a member of their state association. You can only join the affiliate program of NSBA if you are a member of your state association.

I will be going to the state conventions of all nine states and visiting with superintendents and board members from many districts showing them why being an affiliate is a great idea. You are probably on my list right now if you are not currently a member. So much for that.

My final words in the *Advocate* will be to say how much I have appreciated working with the board members and superintendents of New Mexico. Everyone has treated me very well. The officers of the Association and its Board of Directors have just been EXCEPTIONAL in all their dealing with me and the other staff members of the Association. I am leaving with a wonderfully warm feeling about NMSBA. I know that we have come a long way in the last 9+ years and everyone had a part to play in what happened. I want to say a big, “Thank you” to all of you, but I want to thank Carolyn and Elizabeth. They have kept the Association lights and incense burning while I was running all over the state trying to help local boards (or whatever I was doing).

My final words to Board members is this: Respect each other and your superintendent and treat everyone with a professional attitude. Given the concern that I have heard about some local boards in the state (and you know who I am talking about), local board members cannot afford to behave in any other manner. I know that you all have the children’s best interests at heart and want what is best for them. What is best for them is for their school board to get along and work as a team for them.



Open Meetings Act

10-15-1. Formation of public policy; procedures for open meetings; exceptions and procedures for closed meetings.

A. In recognition of the fact that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate, it is declared to be public policy of this state that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the affair of government and the official acts of those officers and employees who represent them. The formation of public policy or the conduct of business by vote shall not be conducted in closed meeting. All meetings of any public body except the legislature and the courts shall be public meetings, and all persons so desiring shall be permitted to attend and listen to the deliberations and proceedings. Reasonable efforts shall be made to accommodate the use of audio and video recording devices.

B. All meetings of a quorum of members of any board, commission, administrative adjudicatory body or other policymaking body of any state agency, any agency or authority of any county, municipality, district or any political subdivision, held for the purpose of formulating public policy, including the development of personnel policy, rules, regulations or ordinances, discussing public business or for the purpose of taking any action within the authority of or the delegated authority of any board, commission or other policymaking body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times, except as otherwise provided in the constitution of New Mexico or the Open Meetings Act [this article]. No public meeting once convened that is otherwise required to be open pursuant to the Open Meetings Act shall be closed or dissolved into small groups or committees for the purpose of permitting the closing of the meeting.

C. If otherwise allowed by law or rule of the public body, a member of a public body may participate in a meeting of the public body by means of a conference telephone or other similar communications equipment when it is otherwise difficult or impossible for the member to attend the meeting in person, provided that each member participating by conference telephone can be identified when speaking, all participants are able to hear

each other at the same time and members of the public attending the meeting are able to hear any member of the public body who speaks during the meeting.

D. Any meetings at which the discussion or adoption of any proposed resolution, rule, regulation or formal action occurs and at which a majority or quorum of the body is in attendance, and any closed meetings, shall be held only after reasonable notice to the public. The affected body shall determine at least annually in a public meeting what notice for a public meeting is reasonable when applied to that body. That notice shall include broadcast stations licensed by the federal communications commission and newspapers of general circulation that have provided a written request for such notice.

E. A public body may recess and reconvene a meeting to a day subsequent to that stated in the meeting notice if, prior to recessing, the public body specifies the date, time and place for continuation of the meeting and, immediately following the recessed meeting, posts notice of the date, time and place for the reconvened meeting on or near the door of the place where the original meeting was held and in at least one other location appropriate to provide public notice of the continuation of the meeting. Only matters appearing on the agenda of the original meeting may be discussed at the reconvened meeting.

F. Meeting notices shall include an agenda containing a list of specific items of business to be discussed or transacted at the meeting or information on how the public may obtain a copy of such an agenda. Except in the case of an emergency, the agenda shall be available to the public at least twenty-four hours prior to the meeting. Except for emergency matters, a public body shall take action only on items appearing on the agenda. For purposes of this subsection, an "emergency" refers to unforeseen circumstances that, if not addressed immediately by the public body, will likely result in injury or damage to persons or property or substantial financial loss to the public body.

G. The board, commission or other policymaking body shall keep written

minutes of all its meetings. The minutes shall include, at a minimum, the date, time and place of the meeting, the names of members in attendance and those absent, the substance of the proposals considered and a record of any decisions and votes taken that show how each member voted. All minutes are open to public inspection. Draft minutes shall be prepared within ten working days after the meeting and shall be approved, amended or disapproved at the next meeting where a quorum is present. Minutes shall not become official until approved by the policymaking body.

H. The provisions of Subsections A, B and G of this section do not apply to:

(1) meetings pertaining to issuance, suspension, renewal or revocation of a license, except that a hearing at which evidence is offered or rebutted shall be open. All final actions on the issuance, suspension, renewal or revocation of a license shall be taken at an open meeting;

(2) limited personnel matters; provided that for purposes of the Open Meetings Act, "limited personnel matters" means the discussion of hiring, promotion, demotion, dismissal, assignment or resignation of or the investigation or consideration of complaints or charges against any individual public employee; provided further that this subsection is not to be construed as to exempt final actions on personnel from being taken at open public meetings, nor does it preclude an aggrieved public employee from demanding a public hearing. Judicial candidates interviewed by any commission shall have the right to demand an open interview;

(3) deliberations by a public body in connection with an administrative adjudicatory proceeding. For purposes of this paragraph, an "administrative adjudicatory proceeding" means a proceeding brought by or against a person before a public body in which individual legal rights, duties or privileges are required by law to be determined by the public body after an opportunity for a trial-type hearing. Except as otherwise provided in this section, the actual administrative adjudicatory proceeding at which evidence is offered or rebutted and any final action taken as a result of the proceeding shall occur in an open meeting;

(4) the discussion of personally identifiable information about any individual student, unless the student, his parent or guardian requests otherwise;

(5) meetings for the discussion of bargaining strategy preliminary to collective bargaining negotiations between the policymaking body and a bargaining unit representing the employees of that policymaking body and collective bargaining sessions at which the policymaking body and the representatives of the collective bargaining unit are present;

(6) that portion of meetings at which a decision concerning purchases in an amount exceeding two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) that can be made only from one source and that portion of meetings at which the contents of competitive sealed proposals solicited pursuant to the Procurement Code [13-1-28 to 13-1-117 and 13-1-118 to 13-1-199 NMSA 1978] are discussed during the contract negotiation process. The actual approval of purchase of the item or final action regarding the selection of a contractor shall be made in an open meeting;

(7) meetings subject to the attorney-client privilege pertaining to threatened or pending litigation in which the public body is or may become a participant;

(8) meetings for the discussion of the purchase, acquisition or disposal of real property or water rights by the public body;

(9) those portions of meetings of committees or boards of public hospitals that receive less than fifty percent of their operating budget from direct public funds and appropriations where strategic and long-range business plans are discussed; and

(10) that portion of a meeting of the gaming control board dealing with information made confidential pursuant to the provisions of the Gaming Control Act [60-2E-1 to 60-2E-60 NMSA 1978].

I. If any meeting is closed pursuant to the exclusions contained in Subsection H of this section, the closure:

(1) if made in an open meeting, shall be approved by a majority vote of a quorum of the policymaking body; the authority for the closure and the subject to be discussed shall be stated with reasonable specificity in the motion calling for the vote on a closed meeting; the vote shall be taken in an open meeting; and the vote of each individual member shall be recorded in the minutes. Only those subjects announced or voted upon prior to closure

by the policymaking body may be discussed in a closed meeting; and

(2) if called for when the policymaking body is not in an open meeting, shall not be held until public notice, appropriate under the circumstances, stating the specific provision of the law authorizing the closed meeting and stating with reasonable specificity the subject to be discussed is given to the members and to the general public.

J. Following completion of any closed meeting, the minutes of the open meeting that was closed or the minutes of the next open meeting if the closed meeting was separately scheduled shall state that the matters discussed in the closed meeting were limited only to those specified in the motion for closure or in the notice of the separate closed meeting. This statement shall be approved by the public body under Subsection G of this section as part of the minutes.

History: 1953 Comp., § 5-6-23, enacted by Laws 1974, ch. 91, § 1; 1979, ch. 366, § 1; 1989, ch. 299, § 1; 1993, ch. 262, § 1; 1997, ch. 190, § 65.

10-15-1.1. Short Title. Chapter 10, Article 15 NMSA 1978 may be cited as the “Open Meetings Act”.

History: 1978 Comp., § 10-15-1.1, enacted by Laws 1979, ch. 366, § 2; 1989, ch. 299, § 2.

10-15-2. State legislature; meetings.

A. All meetings of a quorum of members of any committee or policymaking body of the state legislature held for the purpose of discussing public business or for the purpose of taking any action within the authority of or the delegated authority of such committee or body are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times.

B. The provisions of Subsection A of this section shall not apply to matters relating to personnel, or matters adjudicatory in nature, or any bill, resolution or other legislative matter not yet presented to either house of the legislature or general appropriation bills.

C. For the purposes of this section, “meeting” means a gathering of the members called by the presiding officer of a standing committee.

History: 1953 Comp., § 5-6-24, enacted by Laws 1974, ch. 91, § 2.

10-15-3. Invalid actions; standing.

A. No resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance or action of any board, commission, committee or other policymaking body shall be valid unless

taken or made at a meeting held in accordance with the requirements of Section 10-15-1 NMSA 1978. Every resolution, rule, regulation, ordinance or action of any board, commission, committee or other policymaking body shall be presumed to have been taken or made at a meeting held in accordance with the requirements of Section 10-15-1 NMSA 1978.

B. All provisions of the Open Meetings Act [this article] shall be enforced by the attorney general or by the district attorney in the county of jurisdiction. However, nothing in that act shall prevent an individual from independently applying for enforcement through the district courts, provided that the individual first provides written notice of the claimed violation to the public body and that the public body has denied or not acted on the claim within fifteen days of receiving it. A public meeting held to address a claimed violation of the Open Meetings Act shall include a summary of comments made at the meeting at which the claimed violation occurred.

C. The district courts of this state shall have jurisdiction, upon the application of any person to enforce the purpose of the Open Meetings Act, by injunction, mandamus or other appropriate order. The court shall award costs and reasonable attorney fees to any person who is successful in bringing a court action to enforce the provisions of the Open Meetings Act. If the prevailing party in a legal action brought under this section is a public body defendant, it shall be awarded court costs. A public body defendant that prevails in a court action brought under this section shall be awarded its reasonable attorney fees from the plaintiff if the plaintiff brought the action without sufficient information and belief that good grounds supported it.

D. No section of the Open Meetings Act shall be construed to preclude other remedies or rights not relating to the question of open meetings.

History: 1953 Comp., § 5-6-25, enacted by Laws 1974, ch. 91, § 3; 1989, ch. 299, § 3; 1993, ch. 262, § 2; 1997, ch. 148, § 1.

10-15-4. Penalty.

Any person violating any of the provisions of Section 10-15-1 or 10-15-2 NMSA 1978 is guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500) for each offense.

History: 1953 Comp., § 5-6-26, enacted by Laws 1974, ch. 91, § 4; 1989, ch. 299, § 4.

District challenged by immigration raid

Immigration raids at many employers businesses are causing an unexpected new problem for public schools. More accustomed to gun scares, suspicious intruders, and tornado warnings, school administrators find themselves having to orchestrate a response to a new kind of crisis. Just before the Swift & Co. meatpacking plant in Grand Island, Nebraska, was raided in December, Grand Island School District Superintendent Steve Joel got a call from the police chief saying “something big” was about to happen. Mr. Joel realized what that meant: Dozens of Swift workers were about to be rounded up in an immigration raid. What would happen to their children, students in his district? Would some seniors ever be able to graduate? Numerous school districts near the raided Swift plants made plans on the fly. In Marshalltown, Iowa, teachers put children on buses home and hoped there was someone to receive them. In Worthington, Minnesota, schools were flooded with calls from frantic relatives. Many administrators found themselves calling Swift in an attempt to ascertain the fate of some students’ parents. In the aftermath of the highly publicized raids, some schools are making new contingency plans. Mr. Joel has been on the road to share his experience with other school administrators. “This is one more crisis you must be mentally and organizationally prepared for,” he says. Superintendent Robin Stevens of Schuyler, a town 90 miles northeast of Grand Island that is home to a large Cargill Inc. packing plant, says his staff has devised a strategy, which includes a chain of command to ensure effective communication among staff as well as a united message for students’ families and the community.

In the years preceding the raid, Mr. Joel and his staff worked hard to win the support and trust of the Hispanic population, which sometimes viewed schools with the same suspicion felt for other U.S. institutions. Mr. Joel hired bilingual staff and co-founded a multicultural coalition that includes hospitals, churches, and businesses. Less than 20 minutes after learning of the raid, he issued an “urgent” email informing administrators about a major immigration operation that would have “significant impact on many students.” Children might go home to find one or both parents gone, or might not be picked up from school at all, it noted. Schools tried to notify their pupils without generating a panic. Every principal enlisted teachers, social workers, and guidance counselors who could work through the night. Some schools were designated as shelters. Elementary schools received specific directives to ensure that every student be released only to relatives or a person that a child could identify. Mr. Joel worried that his “hard-gained trust was about to go down the tubes.” While immigration agents usually leave schools alone, there is no rule barring them from picking up parents during morning drop-off. Mr. Joel says he got assurances from authorities

that his schools wouldn’t be touched. With details trickling in from the plant and fear gripping Hispanic neighborhoods, he called a 10 a.m. news conference. “The schools will be a safe haven and we will guarantee that,” he said. His remarks helped generate charitable donations from local service groups and private citizens wanting to help. Some were distrustful. “How can you tell us that children will be safe when their parents are no longer here,” shouted an angry Latina community leader. Undeterred, Mr. Joel reiterated his message on Spanish-language radio and TV, in fliers sent home with children, and in a simultaneous phone message transmitted to Spanish-speaking homes. By the third day, attendance levels were close to normal. Over the winter holiday break, school officials were dispatched to homes where at least one parent was still missing, delivering brown bags stuffed with tortilla chips, beans, rice, and other staples. Inside the bag, a note in Spanish and English cited a hotline to call “if you have any questions or need help after the Swift raid.” According to Kerri Nazareus, who coordinated the response, “it was a way to get in the door and make sure the kids were safe.”

The crisis taught Joel and the district many lessons:

1) Concentrate on what is best for the children and stay out of the politics of the situation. Joel says, “When you use the word ‘kids’, it is really tough for someone to mount an offensive.”

2) Designate one person to speak for the district and be up front about what you say.

3) Watch out for the “crazies” who grab onto any highly publicized story. Not long after the raid, Joel received a “summons” from an anti-immigrant group in North Dakota, which said (wrongly) that he was violating the U.S. Constitution by educating children whose parents might be illegal. The police chief got a similar message, and neither one followed up.

♦Source: NSBA School Board News, April 2007 and NSBA Legal Briefs June, 2007

Need forms or past issues of the NMSBA Newsletter? You can go to the NMSBA website at www.nmsba.org. Under “Publications” there are forms and past newsletters in pdf format.

US House Committee Approves Increase in Education Funding

In June, the House Appropriations Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee voted to increase funding for education programs in fiscal year 2008 (FY08). The bill provides \$151.5 billion in discretionary spending for the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. This represents an increase of \$6.9 billion, or 4.8 percent, over fiscal year 2007 (FY07) and \$10.6 billion more than President George W. Bush's FY08 budget request.

Under the subcommittee's bill, Department of Education funding will total \$61.7 billion, a \$4.2 billion, or 7.4 percent, increase over FY07 and \$5.5 billion, or 9.8 percent, more than the president's budget. Programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (No Child Left Behind) would see the largest increase: \$2.0 billion, or 8.4 percent, above FY07, including \$1.9 billion for Title I grants to schools. Additional education funding highlights include:

- Even Start—increase of \$16.7 million, 20.3 percent
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (After-School Centers)—increase of \$125 million, 12.7 percent
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B grants—increase of \$174.5 million, 1.6 percent, maintaining the federal contribution at 17.2 percent of the per pupil expenditure
- English Language Acquisition—increase of \$105.6 million, 15.8 percent
- Reading First—decrease of \$629.2 million, 61.1 percent
- Pell Grants—maximum grant increase from \$4,310 to \$4,700.

For the first time since the program was authorized in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, the Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) received funding in a House appropriations bill. Under the subcommittee's bill, PIRCs would receive \$39.6 million, the same amount the program received in FY07. The PTA sent a letter to House and Senate appropriators seeking an increase in funding for PIRCs. A second letter was sent the following week, signed by nearly 60 national, state, and local organizations in support of increased PIRC funding.

The full House Appropriations Committee is scheduled to meet to consider the subcommittee bill. Also the full House will debate four appropriations bills and the committee will consider another six. House leaders are seeking to have 11 of their 12 appropriations bills passed by July 4th. The Senate is expected to begin work on two of its appropriations bills, though the Senate leadership has indicated that the full Senate will not vote on any bills until after the July 4 break. No date has been set for the Senate to start work on funding for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

♦ Source: June, 2007 PTA Legislative News

“Bong Hits” Student Freedom of Speech Case decided

The Supreme Court handed down its ruling in the “Bong Hits 4 Jesus” case, *Morse v. Frederick*. Ruling in favor of the Juneau, Alaska School District and its principal, Deborah Morse, the court found that Joseph Frederick's free speech rights were not violated when the principal took down his 14-foot banner which read, “Bong Hits 4 Jesus.” The decision also puts to rest the question of whether Principal Morse was personally liable for damages for allegedly violating a student's free speech rights during an off-campus, school-sanctioned, school-related event – the court found that she wasn't liable. The court cited two key points in its ruling: student freedom of speech is not co-extensive with the rights of adults; and schools are different and can regulate pro-drug messages.

♦ Source: NSBA FedLines

Supreme Court Limits School Diversity Plans

The U.S. Supreme Court restricted the consideration of race to achieve diversity in the student bodies of two public school districts – Jefferson County, Kentucky and Seattle, Washington. The justices 5-to-4 decision has implications for schools nationwide with similar integration plans. The Court indicated that its prior cases evaluating racial classifications in the school context recognized two interests that qualify as sufficiently compelling to justify race-based classifications: remedying the effects of past intentional discrimination, which was at issue here, and the “interest in diversity in higher education”, which was upheld in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003). The Kentucky and Washington plans lost because they employed race as the only component in the diversity plans and “failed to show that they considered methods other than explicit racial classifications to achieve their stated goals.” Public opinion studies indicate a clear racial divide on this subject. Whites are somewhat more likely than blacks and Latinos to say integrated schools are better for kids but are less likely to say the government should ensure integration.

♦ Source: Public Agenda Online and NSBA Legal Clips, June 2007

Reminder:

NMSBA Resolutions deadline - August 20

**NMSBA Executive Board Nominations
deadline - September 17**

“No Child Left Behind” Letters Project

There is a national movement among churches to take action to address the 10 moral concerns of NCLB which encourages churchgoers to write to their elected officials.

Ten Moral Concerns About “No Child Left Behind”

Moral Concern #1: The Act sets impossibly high standards

Moral Concern #2: Ignores the fact that every child is unique

Moral Concern #3: Identifies schools as “failing schools” and this marks children

Moral Concern #4: Ignores children with disabilities

Moral Concern #5: Requires English language learners to take tests in English before learning the language

Moral Concern #6: Blames schools and teachers for challenges beyond their control

Moral Concern #7: Obscures the role of the humanities, arts, and child development

Moral Concern #8: Operates through sanctions, penalizing the most impoverished schools

Moral Concern #9: Exacerbates racial and economic segregation

Moral Concern #10: Holds poorest schools accountable without funding reforms

The No Child Left Behind Act is a federal law passed in 2001 that purports to address educational inequity. Now several years into No Child Left Behind’s implementation, as its hundreds of sequential regulations have begun to be triggered, it is becoming clear that the law is leaving behind more children than it is saving. The children being abandoned are our nation’s most vulnerable children—children of color and poor children in America’s big cities and remote rural areas—the very children the law claims it will rescue.

That is why persons of faith and conscience are demanding of our elected officials that together we address what we believe to be the ten moral concerns in the law’s implementation.

Below are explanations of each of the ten moral concerns as outlined by the National Council of Churches Committee on Public Education and Literacy.

Moral Concern #1: **The No Child Left Behind Act sets an impossibly high bar that every single student will be proficient in reading and math by 2014.** We fear that this law will discredit public education...” While it is a civic responsibility to insist that schools do a better job of educating every child, we must also recognize that undermining support for public schooling threatens our democracy. As Congress prepares to debate the reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2007, please share with your representative and senators your personal stories about how the law is impacting a

school you know — or a particular child or teacher — or your community.

Moral Concern #2: **The No Child Left Behind Act has neither acknowledged where children start the school year nor celebrated their individual accomplishments.** A school where the mean eighth grade math score for any one subgroup grows from a third to a sixth grade level has been labeled a “in need of improvement” (a label of failure) even though the students have made significant progress. The law has not acknowledged that every child is unique and that thresholds are merely benchmarks set by human beings. Now, four years into implementation, the Department of Education has stated it will begin experimenting with permitting 10 states to measure student growth. Too many children will continue to be labeled failures even though they are making strides.

Moral Concern #3: **Because the Act ranks schools according to test score thresholds of children in every demographic subgroup, a “failing group of children” will know when they are the ones who made their school a “failing” school.** They risk being shamed among their peers, by their teachers and by their community. The No Child Left Behind Act has renamed this group of children the school’s “problem group.” In some schools educators have felt pressured to counsel students who lag far behind into alternative programs so they won’t be tested. This has increased the dropout rate.

Moral Concern #4: **The No Child Left Behind Act requires children in special education to pass tests designed for children without disabilities.**

Moral Concern #5: **The No Child Left Behind Act requires English language learners to take tests in English before they learn English.** It calls their school a failure because they have not yet mastered academic English.

Moral Concern #6: **The No Child Left Behind Act blames schools and teachers for many challenges that are neither of their making nor within their capacity to change.** The test score focus obscures the importance of the quality of the relationship between the child and teacher. Sincere, often heroic efforts of teachers are made invisible. While the goals of the law are important—to proclaim that every child can learn, to challenge every child to dream of a bright future, and to prepare all children to contribute to society—educators also need financial and community support to accomplish these goals.

Moral Concern #7: The relentless focus on testing basic skills in the No Child Left Behind Act obscures the role of the humanities, the arts, and child and adolescent development. While education should cover basic skills in reading and math, the educational process should aspire to far more. We believe education should help all children develop their gifts and realize their promise—intellectually physically, socially, and ethically. The No Child Left Behind Act treats children as products to be tested, measured and made more uniform.

Moral Concern #8: Because the No Child Left Behind Act operates through sanctions, it takes federal Title I funding away from educational programming in already overstressed schools and uses these funds to bus students to other schools or to pay for private tutoring firms. A “failing” school district may not be permitted to create its own public tutoring program, but it is expected to create the capacity to regulate private firms that provide tutoring for its students. One of the sanctions provided is to close or reconstitute the “failing” school or to make it into a charter school, but in many places charter schools are *unregulated*.

Moral Concern #9: The No Child Left Behind Act exacerbates racial and economic segregation in metropolitan areas by rating homogeneous, wealthier school districts as excellent, while labeling urban districts with far more subgroups and more complex demands made by the law as “in need of improvement.” Such labeling of schools and districts encourages families with means to move to wealthy, homogeneous school districts.

Moral Concern #10: The No Child Left Behind Act makes demands on states and school districts without fully funding reforms that would build capacity to close achievement gaps. The late Senator Paul Wellstone wrote, “It is simply negligent to force children to pass a test and expect that the poorest children, who face every disadvantage, will be able to do as well as those who have every advantage. When we do this, we hold children responsible for our own inaction and unwillingness to live up to our own promises and our own obligations.” To enable schools to comply with the law’s regulations and to create conditions that will raise achievement, society will need to increase federal funding for the schools that serve our nation’s most vulnerable children and to keep Title I funds focused on instruction rather than on transportation and school choice.

♦ Source: Faithful America: Voices for Children; www.faithfulamerica.org

Seven ethical ways to resolve conflict

Conflicts are inevitable, but the more we know about human nature, the better we will be at resolving conflicts and the better the outcome might be for both parties. We know that different people have different priorities and different styles in dealing with situations that may occur, but in general, human beings have certain characteristics that are very similar – even across gender, racial and socio-economic lines. These natural human characteristics include:

- ♦ People loved to be agreed with
- ♦ People hate to be disagreed with
- ♦ People like other people who agree with them
- ♦ People dislike other people who disagree with them
- ♦ People who are good at resolving conflicts look for some point of agreement and use good people skills to see a different point of view

So we know when we disagree with people, we are likely to raise resentment. Therefore, it might be a good idea to strengthen our soft-skills – or our people skills – when dealing with conflict or potential conflicts. If we find a tense situation and we raise our voice, the other party is likely to respond in kind. This will usually escalate the situation quickly. Understanding this human nature is one of the first and most important steps in anger management. Below are seven additional tips for avoiding and ultimately managing and resolving conflicts.

- 1) Be proactive instead of reactive.
- 2) Be slow to anger, especially over petty issues.
- 3) Instead of telling people they are wrong, point out mistakes indirectly.
- 4) Look for some type of common ground as soon as possible.
- 5) If you find that you are in the wrong, admit it.
- 6) Admit one of your own poor decisions before pointing out a similar error by others.
- 7) Mend fences whenever possible.

♦ Source: Written by Doug Staneart, CEO of the Leader’s Institute Team Building and Employee Development Training. Reprinted from the *Alabama School Boards* magazine April/May 2007.

Do we have your updates???

If your Superintendent or Admin. Assistant changes during the year, or you have address, phone number or e-mail changes, please let the NMSBA staff know so that we can update our records. The directory was mailed in June based on information collected in April and March, but many changes have already occurred due to retirements and appointments.

Do You Have SunWise School Programs?

Skin cancer, while largely preventable, is the most common form of cancer in the United States, with more than one million cases reported annually. The Arizona Department of Health Services began the SunWise school program in January 2003 for elementary public schools in Arizona. The program encourages elementary schools to adopt sun-safe policies and promote sun-safe educational programs to educate children about sun safety and to encourage life-long sun-safe behaviors.

Here are some steps that everyone can take to help prevent damage to their skin from UV radiation... especially children:

Limit exposure to midday sun – between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. the sun’s rays are the hottest. Whenever possible, limit exposure to the sun during these hours.

Seek shade – The Arizona School districts make trees an important part of every playground. Find shady areas under trees or near buildings for relief from the sun.

Always use sunscreen – Use a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 and re-apply every hour when working or playing outdoors.

Wear a hat – A hat with a wide brim offers good sun protection to your eyes, ears, face and the back of your neck – areas particularly prone to overexposure to the sun.

Cover up – Wearing loose-fitting, light weight fabric that covers arms and legs helps block the sun’s rays.

Wear sunglasses – Wearing sunglasses that block 99-100% UVA and UVB protection will greatly reduce exposure that can lead to cataracts and other eye damage.

Although many of the sun’s effects do not appear until later in life, recent medical research shows that it is very important to protect children and young adults from overexposure to UV radiation.

♦ *Source: Environmental Protection Agency. For more information on the Arizona Department of Health’s SunWise program, go to www.azdhs.gov/phs/sunwise*

Federal study critiques abstinence only sex education

A study released in April by the U.S. Department of Education is critical of federally sponsored abstinence-only sex education programs, suggesting they aren’t effective at impacting student behavior.

The report, which was ordered by Congress, concludes that students who took part in sexual abstinence programs were just as likely to have sex as those who did not.

The report will fuel critics of federal abstinence programs, who say the government is squandering the \$176

million spent on abstinence programming because the programs are not working.

“Members of Congress need to listen to what the evidence tells us,” William Smith, vice president for public policy at the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States told CNN. “This report should give a clear signal to members of Congress that the program should be changed to support programs that work, or it should end when it expires at the end of June,” Smith said.

Supporters of abstinence programming say the public should not draw sweeping conclusions from the study because it is the first data available. The study reinforces the concept that abstinence messages must be repeated to truly affect behavior, supporters of the program said after the report was released.

“This report confirms that these interventions are not vaccines. You can’t expect one dose in middle school to be proactive all throughout the youth’s high school career,” Harry Wilson, the commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau at the Administration for Children and Families, told CNN.

To view the full Mathematica Policy Research Inc. report, go to www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/impactabstinence.pdf

♦ *Source: Associated School Boards of South Dakota, May 2007 issue*

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State leaders are taking aim at the dropout ‘epidemic’

State leaders hope new initiatives to better align high school programs with the needs of employers will provide more incentives to students to stay and graduate. Several innovative state initiatives were showcased at a recent conference on dropout prevention in Washington, D.C., earlier in May sponsored by the National Governors Association (NGA). Speaking at the “National Summit on America’s Silent Epidemic,” governors from North Carolina, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire described their states’ programs and urged K-12 officials to work with higher education representatives to determine the skills high school students should learn before receiving a diploma. The governors and other speakers at the summit also stressed the need for a more accurate account of the dropout problem.

U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings told the summit participants that, as part of its recommendations on revising the No Child Left Behind Act, the administration is proposing that all states be required to report their graduation rates, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, by 2012. That will help policymakers “see clearly who’s dropping out and report it as part of their accountability plans.” Spellings said that “15 percent of the nation’s high schools produce more than half of our dropouts,” and those schools tend to be in lower-income, urban areas.

All 50 governors signed the NGA’s Graduation Counts Compact, which calls for a common formula for measuring graduation rates and identifying dropouts, and more than 34 governors have committed to an agenda that calls for all students to be “college-ready.”

Gov. Mike Easley of North Carolina spoke about the need for a seamless education system covering preschool through college. Such a P-16 system would not only improve high school education, but would show students the skills that will be crucial for the work force and that they will need a higher education if they expect to get a well-paying job. North Carolina has experimented with smaller, more personalized schools and career-oriented classes, including a five-year program that allows high school students to earn both a diploma and an associates degree or college credits. “Kids have to see the relevance between the courses they take and the jobs they want,” said Easley, a Democrat.

New Hampshire has a P-16 Council, consisting of college professors as well as K-12 educators, to determine the skills high school graduates should have before entering college, said the state’s Democratic governor, John Lynch. “It’s not enough to complain that students aren’t ready, [higher education officials] need to be involved in what we want to see,” said Lynch. It’s a matter of self-interest for the colleges, said Rhode Island Gov. Donald Carcieri, a Republican.

Manufacturers spend a great deal of time finding good raw materials, and colleges should have a say in the preparation of the high school students who may later attend their schools. Easley compared the national graduation rate, which is roughly 70 percent, to shopping at K-Mart: “If the store’s manager sees 30 percent of customers leaving without buying, he’ll likely change the inventory.”

Rhode Island’s greatest challenge is in its urban areas, and an influx of English language learners in recent years has complicated efforts to improve learning. Carcieri said the state’s priority is aligning the state standards to meet college and work-ready goals. Once the new standards are in place, “we won’t give a diploma unless a student meets that standard,” he said. “The worst thing is to give a youngster a piece of paper that doesn’t mean a lot.”

New Hampshire, however, is using statewide dropout data — showing wide disparities among communities — to target funds and other resources to towns with the highest dropout rates. Its programs include alternative education, career-technical education, and internships for high school students and night-school classes for teenagers and adults who had already left school. Lynch is also trying to repeal a 1903 compulsory attendance law that allows students to drop out beginning at age 16. He advocates a new law to require all students to stay in school until they turn 18. “The kids who drop out at age 16 do not have the opportunity to have a good job and life,” he said. “I want to send a strong message that we are not going to give up on our kids and they are not going to give up on themselves.”

♦ *Source: NSBA School News by Joetta Sack-Min, May 2007*

You’re a good man, Charlie Saylor

Charles J. “Chuck” Saylor was recently installed as President-Elect in the national PTA. This is the first time a father has served in a national position as President-Elect or President. Since 1897, the PTA, which was once known as the National Congress of Mothers, has seen a long line of women serve as national presidents. Chuck, is a father of four. Saylor remarked, “This event should prove to men across the country that their participation in schools is valued, welcomed, and needed. Times are different from 30 years ago. Today both parents work, and participation of all adults is needed now more than ever. I want to share my positive experiences with men in hopes of encouraging them to get involved in their child’s education.” Saylor has been a PTA member for more than 15 years and is actively involved in his school community as a school board member for the Greenville (South Carolina) School District.

♦ *Source: NSBA BoardBuzz, July 2007*

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Leader's Retreat
July 20-21, 2007
The Lodge
Cloudfcroft, NM

Annual Convention
December 7-8, 2007
Embassy Suites
Albuquerque, NM

Board Institute
January 18-19, 2008
Eldorado Hotel
Santa Fe, NM

Information will be available on the NMSBA website.
Go to www.nmsba.org, and from the homepage choose "Conference Information"

Tidbits...

Where can teens hang out? A growing epidemic...

An Essex County, New Jersey library, among many others nationally are shutting their doors not only from lack of city funding but also due to an increasing social problem - unsupervised teens with no where else to go. This library closes its doors during afterschool hours due to unruly behavior from teen patrons. And we're not just talking about speaking above a whisper in the reading room, either. Apparently a band of wild middle schoolers has taken to fighting, vandalizing, and generally making a nuisance of themselves after school, so the public library has taken the drastic measure of closing between 2:45 and 5 p.m. - the library equivalent of "If you can't play nice, then you can't play at all." But that's actually the heart of the problem: the kids don't have a place to play. An article in the *New York Times* notes " Librarians and other experts say the growing conflicts are the result of an increase in the number of latchkey children, a decrease in civility among young people and a dearth of 'third places'—neither home nor school—where kids can be kids."

"We don't consider the world as safe a place as it used to be, and we don't encourage children to run around, hang around and be free," said Judy Nelson, president of the Young Adult Library Services Association, part of the American Library Association. "So you have parents telling their kids that the library is a good place to go." Rowland Bennett, who served as the director of the Maplewood Memorial Library for 30 years and is now president of the local school board, said libraries had become "the child care center by necessity." ♦ *Source: Board Buzz*

School collects on Algebra book lost 30 years ago...

Talk about getting a bad mark on your "permanent record". Jeff Rolson of Superior, Wisconsin who is in his 40s, recently stopped by Superior Senior High School to get a copy of his transcript, which he needed to enroll in an apprenticeship program. That's when the 1977 graduate was told that he had two outstanding debts - \$7.95 for a missing algebra book and \$5 for an unpaid physical education fee.

The school's secretary refused to release the transcript until Rolson paid up, but before he handed over the long-owed money he asked her, "Do you realize this was 30 years ago?" Although he was out \$12.95, he said he was glad the school did not charge interest on his debts. He did catch a small break - the school secretary forgot to charge him the \$2 fee for the copy of his transcript - and he didn't have to go to the Principal's office. ♦ *Source - Associated Press*

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