



The State of the Association: Pandemic Year

Executive Director and CEO Anna Maria Chávez
reviews 2020 at NSBA's Delegate Assembly

I WANT TO TALK TO YOU TODAY ABOUT WHAT

the NSBA team and I have been doing over the last year, but, more importantly, I want to talk to you about our plan for NSBA's future.

Last year, as school buildings and offices were shuttered as the pandemic raged across the U.S. and the world, NSBA announced the cancellation of its annual conference.

We quickly shifted to virtual meetings because we knew that school leaders needed more than ever to be connected to their peers across the country. NSBA's Center for Safe Schools held its inaugural School Safety Summit via Zoom. The Council of Urban Boards of Education's annual meeting was online, as was the Council of School Attorneys' fall law seminar.

The momentum from these events continued in 2021, with more than 2,000 people registering for our Equity Symposium in February 2021.

State and school district budgets were hit hard by businesses closing in the spring and summer. Our federal advocacy team worked to get \$13.2 billion in emergency funding to schools through the federal CARES Act. They advocated for legislation to eliminate

the Homework Gap, so more children gain the high-speed internet access at home essential for distance learning—a problem worsened by the pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic, NSBA has asked for at least \$200 billion for K-12 public schools, including \$175 billion for states, \$13 billion for IDEA, and \$12 billion for Title I. We also requested an additional \$12 billion in dedicated funding to close the Homework Gap through the E-Rate program.

In total, the series of relief bills passed by Congress get very close to these funding levels. In my conversation with new U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, I've stressed how important it is that the Education Department work quickly to get the funding out to the states.

I've been very pleased with the responsiveness we've seen from the Biden administration. In addition to the conversation I mentioned with Secretary Cardona, we had a series of meetings with the Biden-Harris transition team prior to the inauguration. We also held meetings about the guidance on school reopening that the Education Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released in February. In those meetings, I stressed that

additional funding and resources from the federal government must be a critical component in any reopening decision—local schools and states cannot do it on their own.

NSBA's Legal Advocacy team issued five legal guides in 2020 for school leaders to make sense of quickly moving legal topics affecting public schools. NSBA filed nine "friend of the court" amicus briefs in 2020 and was joined by 19 state associations and 24 external partners ranging from AASA, the superintendents association, to the National Education Association and beyond.

In one important case, NSBA joined with the South Carolina School Boards Association to challenge the governor's use of federal stimulus funds for a private school voucher program. Our amicus brief, which was cited by a South Carolina supreme court justice herself during oral argument, helped the court understand the federal legal framework governing CARES Act funds. It led to a victory that ensured those dollars serve the neediest students as intended by Congress.

This spring, NSBA filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in *Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L.* The brief urges the U.S. Supreme Court to overrule a troubling lower court decision that would limit public school officials' ability to address on-line student speech that originates off-campus.

The pandemic was not the only crisis we faced in 2020. In May, the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer sparked protests for racial justice all over the country. In response, NSBA quickly convened an all-staff meeting so employees could come together and begin the business of healing.

That meeting led to the formation of DIRE (Dismantling Institutional Racism in Education). Formally launched by NSBA in June, the DIRE initiative addresses the continued racial disparities in school systems. It is dedicated to understanding and recognizing the root causes of barriers to equitable educational outcomes for each child. It supports NSBA staff, the board of directors, and state association members with tools, training, and information so school boards can remove barriers to underserved students.

Through our communications efforts, we received extensive national media coverage for NSBA and our state associations. In total, we reached more than 1 billion people through coverage in the Associated Press, CBS, the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, Telemundo, and "Good Morning America."

We partnered with Bella+Canvas and Serena Williams to ensure that 4 million masks were made available to students via state associations through the Masks for Kids campaign. And we're excited about new corporate and nonprofit partnerships, including a new partnership with United Way.

In 2020, we recommitted to our members. That journey began with our Strategic Learning initiative. It includes more than 100 individuals, including board members, federation members, and NSBA staff, in conversations about member needs and how NSBA could more effectively serve them.

Out of this process came our Key Strategic Priorities. These priorities will inform advocacy, communications, and budgeting, as well as governance, products, programs, and services—all with the goal of making us more responsive to members.

As part of this process, we will build on NSBA's rich, 81-year legacy while transforming the organization with purpose and conviction to ensure its strength and longevity. We want members to understand the value of NSBA as a federation that they can't afford to leave. We want to increase NSBA's relevance in the education community, with the federal government, and on a national scale.

This year is a critical leadership opportunity for each of you and our federation. We must spend the next 10 years pulling together to ensure our 90,000 school board members get the support and resources they deserve to help the 51 million students who just experienced the worst pandemic in 100 years.

It will be hard. But together, we can create a resilient, relevant, and impactful federation for the next 80 years. We will not let you down. We will work at this every day. We will make mistakes, but we will always remember that you invested in us and our joint future. And we will be forever grateful.

I hope that years from now, 2020 will be a marker not just for the pandemic but also as a turning point for our federation.

Transformational change is hard, but, in the words of President John F. Kennedy, "Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future."

After the extremely difficult 2020 that everyone experienced, I'm very excited for 2021 and the future of our federation.



NSBA's Decision-Making Body

NSBA's Executive Director and CEO Anna Maria Chávez delivered the State of the Association 2020 to NSBA's Delegate Assembly (DA) on April 7, a day before NSBA's 2021 Online Experience.

What is NSBA's DA?

The DA is NSBA's legislature. It adopts its own rules of procedure, appoints committees, and hears and acts upon reports. It meets at least once each year, during NSBA's Annual Conference. The NSBA's board president and executive director serve as president and secretary of the assembly.

As the plenary governing body, DA authorizes the NSBA board of directors to act as the policy-making body of NSBA in the period between meetings. In discharging that responsibility, the board of directors must act consistently with the NSBA Constitution and the resolutions enacted by DA.

What does the DA do?

The powers of the DA are specified by Article V of NSBA's Constitution and Bylaws and give delegates a share

in the ultimate responsibility for the governance of NSBA. Delegates elect the officers of NSBA and the members of its board of directors, adopt amendments to NSBA's Beliefs and Policies and Constitution and Bylaws, and adopt NSBA's resolutions for the coming year.

The work begins with the hearing conducted by the Committee on Policies and Resolutions. At the hearing, the committee may receive new proposed resolutions and changes to previously proposed resolutions. Here, the authors of proposed resolutions rejected by the committee in its earlier review may now have an opportunity to argue their case and perhaps persuade the committee to reverse itself.

What are in-person meetings like?

The in-person meeting operates very much like a political convention, with delegates and alternates seated in groups under signs bearing the name of their state. The NSBA president presides over the meeting, assisted by the executive director and the parliamentarian. NSBA board members

also attend as do the members of other committees reporting to the Delegate Assembly. The entire proceedings are reported by a certified court reporter.

Pandemic travel restrictions require the DA move online in 2020. This year, the DA meets twice: online in April and in person in August.

Who can participate in DA?

Each state school board association member may select two voting delegates for a term of one year. Most states appoint alternates as well. Frequently the president of the state association is selected as a delegate.

Each state school board association member selects its delegates according to its own procedures. The only requirement is that a delegate be a school board member and not an employee of a state association.

Members of NSBA's board of directors serve as ex officio non-voting delegates if they have not been selected as voting delegates from their state. An ex officio delegate has the right to participate in floor debate but has no voting rights.



Viola M. Garcia, NSBA's 2021-22 President and member of the Aldine Independent School Board, Aldine, Texas

How long were you a delegate?

As a Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) officer, I was an NSBA Delegate from 2009 to 2013.

Can you describe the experience of being a delegate?

The experience of being a delegate is empowering and leaves one with a sense of responsibility to listen and understand varied perspectives on any given issue. At the conclusion of the assembly, one has a strong sense of unity and cohesion with a collective body that provides a strong voice across the federation. A handbook is provided to delegates so they can prepare and plan to approve or reject proposed recommendations. The most fulfilling aspect of these actions is

when we find consensus on unifying issues such as opposition to public funds going to private schools, support for adequate funding for IDEA and special needs students, school safety, and equity.

Can you describe a memorable vote, decision, or other action taken at DA that you participated in?

One of the most memorable votes that I recall was when the majority of the delegates voted against the recommended nominee of the Nominations Committee in a contested position for a regional director. After brief speeches by the two nominees, the delegates instead chose to select the nominee submitted by written petition of a state school board association. This was determined

after three minutes speeches by the nominees with no other review of supporting documents.

Can you talk about the importance of participating in DA?

The DA is the representative decision-making body of NSBA. Votes taken by the delegates lead to collective action that represents the association's mission. Delegates provide critical direction to the association, particularly in legislative, legal, and public advocacy positions, as well as changes or amendments to the Constitution and bylaws and policies, beliefs, and resolutions of the association. Participation in DA ensures that the association reflects the interests of its members, the state school board associations.



Janine Bay Teske, member of the NSBA Board of Directors and member of the Teton County School Board, Jackson, Wyoming

How long have you been a delegate?

My state association has the president-elect and president serve as delegates. Since I have served in those positions twice, I have served as a delegate for four years. As an NSBA regional director, I served as a co-chair for Policy and Resolutions Committee.

Can you describe the experience of being a delegate?

To attend the DA and listen to the views of others on the various resolutions and bylaw changes is exciting. It also provides the opportunity to share your state association's views on the issues.

Can you describe a memorable vote, decision, or other action taken at DA that you participated in?

Probably the most memorable votes were around including LGBT issues into resolutions. There were

certainly many strong viewpoints on the issue. Another memorable decision was around climate change, also with strong viewpoints around the issue.

Can you talk about the importance of participating in DA?

DA is the opportunity for state association delegates to help shape the advocacy agenda and modifications to the constitution and bylaws.



Devin Sheehan, member of NSBA's board of directors and member of the Holyoke Public School Board, Massachusetts

How long have you been a delegate?

I served as a delegate for three years to the NSBA Delegate Assembly representing Massachusetts. This year I am serving the DA as the chair of the Resolutions Committee.

What do you do to prepare?

It is important to read through all of the resolutions and talk with the other members of your state association leadership. Come up with questions about the resolutions and make notations if you want to offer any amendments. Prior to the pandemic, NSBA offered in-person question and answer sessions about the resolutions. We shifted that to the DA microsite.

Can you describe the experience of being a delegate?

It is really a great experience. You not only get to meet people from across the nation, but you also have a key role in crafting the advocacy agenda for NSBA. I had the opportunity to see as an NSBA board member how the organization works to advocate for the resolutions the DA supports.

Can you describe a memorable vote, decision, or other action taken at DA that you participated in?

We have done some great things in DA. We have voted to support expanded school nutrition and lunch programs, increased E-rate funding, and protecting the rights

of some of our most vulnerable students. In 2017, the DA, with over two-thirds of its members, voted to include gender identity in our beliefs. This was a proud time for NSBA since we were able to be leaders in protecting our students. It was a big step in supporting the LGBTQ community, and we joined many other national education organizations in doing this.

Can you talk about the importance of participating in DA?

This is how member associations have their voices heard in crafting the national policy message of the NSBA. It is also a time when people can work together to craft a positive message to move NSBA forward.



Charles Saylor, Immediate Past President of the South Carolina School Boards Association and member of the Greenville County School Board

How long have you been a delegate?

This is my third year.

Can you describe a memorable vote, decision, or other action taken at DA that you participated in?

The most memorable was a conversation over climate change, which is an ongoing conversation. Some pushed us to recognize climate change; they wanted us to use climate change as an advocacy point. There was a larger group that did not believe it was that needed and

wanted to focus on things like school safety and funding. Being involved in those conversations and in these decisions, you need to make sure you honor the passion and knowledge being given. At the end of the day, the majority comes out on top. That's the beauty of the process. If you don't get a good decision, come back as often as you need to find common ground.

Can you talk about the importance of participating in DA?

If you are passionate about seeing

our association succeed and giving the students we serve the future they deserve, this is part of the process. This is an important part of the decision-making process for our association. When we go to congress and to our legislators at the state level, we can say this is a position that has been taken up by our association and approved. This is not one person's point of view but thousands. It lends to our credibility on the Hill, with businesses, and in the public eye.