

AASA Mission Statement

Updated February 2020

AASA, The School Superintendents Association advocates for equitable access for all students to the highest quality public education, and develops and supports school system leaders.

AASA Belief and Position Statements

100 Public Education

Public education is the cornerstone of American democracy and is the primary vehicle for preparing each generation of adult citizens to become informed, contributing members of a global democratic society.

- 100.1 Public Education is the Cornerstone of Democracy and a Civil Right
- 100.2 Getting Children Ready for Success in School
- 100.3 Vouchers and Tuition Tax Credits
- 100.4 Public School Choice and Charter Schools
- 100.5 School Finance Systems Focused on Transformational Success for All Students
- 100.6 Local Funding
- 100.7 Unfunded Mandates

200 Belonging, Equity and Diversity

School and District leaders have a responsibility to cultivate and nurture school/district cultures where diversity and belonging is valued and recognized by promoting policies and practices ensuring equity and access for all students and employees.

- 200.1 Equity for All
- 200.2 Overcoming Racial and Economic Isolation in Schools
- 200.3 Diversity
- 200.4 Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Intimidation
- 200.5 Verification of Citizenship and Legal Status of School Age Children

300 Learning Environments

Environments conducive to learning require that all variables that influence a student's ability to succeed should be addressed.

- 300.1 Advocates for Children
- 300.2 Appropriate Early Education Programs for All Children
- 300.3 SUPPORTING SCHOOLS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN
- 300.4 Safe and Secure Facilities
- 300.5 Technology
- 300.6 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- 300.7 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

400 Leadership

AASA believes ethical and effective school leadership in the superintendency, including the active promotion of the value of public education, is vital to the success of the public school system.

- 400.1 Licensure for Administrators
- 400.2 Portability of Professional Credentials
- 400.3 Professional Compensation
- 400.4 Highly Effective Teachers and Leaders
- 400.5 Health & Wellness
- 400.6 Leadership/Professional Development

500 Student Learning and Accountability

All public schools must provide a quality educational experience for each student, which necessitates a framework of rigorous academic standards infused with life and career skills, including critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, innovation and self-direction. A system of accountability, which clearly demonstrates, through multiple measures, the level of progress attained by students, is essential to fulfilling the mission of schools to increase student achievement and equip graduates with the skills required to be college and workforce ready.

- 500.1 Preparation for Living in an Interdependent Global Society
- 500.2 High School Completion
- 500.3 School and District Accountability and Assessment of Student Performance
- 500.4 Equity in Accountability
- 500.5 Supporting Students with Disabilities
- 500.6 Supporting Undocumented Students

600 Community Collaborative and Partnerships for Education

Building partnerships and supporting the education of all students is the responsibility of the entire community. Those partnerships and the contributions made by all stakeholder groups in the community contribute to the educational success and well-being of our children. Communities are responsible for the health, safety, welfare and education of each child. Schools are but one partner in the community, which includes many domains of public and private agencies. AASA urges and supports collaborative, community-wide programs and partnerships to deliver full services and programs to address the needs of the whole child. AASA supports quality community-wide programs and services designed to break the cycle of poverty and address the readiness and wellness needs of all children.

- 600.1 Communicating Effectively with the Public
- 600.2 Leaving Decisions Regarding Commercial Affiliations with Local School Districts
- 600.3 Parent Engagement Matters

100 PUBLIC EDUCATION

*(Scheduled Review: 2029)
(Updated: July 2023)*

Public education is the cornerstone of American democracy and is the primary vehicle for preparing each generation of adult citizens to become informed, contributing members of a global democratic society.

100.1 PUBLIC EDUCATION IS THE CORNERSTONE OF DEMOCRACY AND A CIVIL RIGHT

Public education is the cornerstone of democracy and a civil right.

AASA will aggressively defend against all actions that undermine public education such as vouchers, tax credits and charters that are not publicly accountable.

An effective public education system enables citizens of the United States to exercise the rights granted to them by the Constitution of the United States.

Every student has a right to be educated and that right should not be infringed upon for any reason, including but not limited to race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, identity, disability, or economic status.

100.2 GETTING CHILDREN READY FOR SUCCESS IN SCHOOL

Recognizing the critical role that families and early education plays in getting students ready for school, AASA resolves that every child must be provided with quality, comprehensive early childhood programming so that he/she can enter kindergarten ready to learn with the skills necessary to ensure success in school.

For children to be ready to attend school, steps must be taken to account for non-school factors that affect student achievement. Therefore, AASA strongly supports the enactment and funding of universal healthcare for all children as well as school/community partnerships that can provide comprehensive services and programs that promote and sustain children's health.

100.3 VOUCHERS AND TUITION TAX CREDITS

AASA believes public education is a public good and as such opposes policies and financial incentives that divert public funding away from public schools.

AASA absolutely opposes undermining universal equal educational opportunity for all, supports the separation of church and state in public school funding, and opposes increasing the segregation of America's children by diverting public funds in support of vouchers and related initiatives.

AASA supports the application of public school academic accountability standards and regulatory requirements to all non-public schools receiving public funds as well as guaranteeing a level playing field, non-discrimination and unconditional enrollment for all children.

AASA opposes vouchers and all forms of tuition tax credits for private or sectarian schools.

100.4 PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

AASA supports public school choice, which includes non-discrimination and unconditional enrollment for all children. Common regulations and accountability should apply to all schools receiving public funding.

AASA supports charter schools that operate under the governance of local public school boards.

The manner in which charter schools are financed must be standardized and aligned so that their creation does not have an adverse effect on the quality of existing public schools.

100.5 SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEMS FOCUSED ON TRANSFORMATIONAL SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

AASA supports creating stable, equitable, predictable and adequate funding for schools based on local, state and federal revenues that will meet the challenges of equitable opportunity and provide the funding base needed to support a system which leads to success for all students.

AASA supports legislation and litigation at the federal and state level that results in increased student achievement while looking to the future.

100.6 LOCAL FUNDING

AASA encourages and endorses the efforts of local administrators and boards of education to challenge funding systems that result in inequitable and inadequate funding.

100.7 UNFUNDED MANDATES

Federal and state mandates must be fully funded.

200 BELONGING, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

*(Scheduled Review: 2030)
(Updated: February 2024)*

School and District leaders have a responsibility to cultivate and nurture school/district cultures where diversity and belonging is valued and recognized by promoting policies and practices ensuring equity and access for all students and employees.

200.1 EQUITY FOR ALL

AASA promotes equity, access and excellence for all students, educators, staff members and administrators by implementing continuous strategic improvement and research-supported effective practices.

AASA advocates for policies that address the unique needs, strengths, gifts and identities of all children, including the unique needs of persistently underserved children while supporting all students regardless of circumstances. AASA supports educational experiences that foster a respect for diversity and an understanding of individual differences and cultures in a safe and orderly environment, and therefore, opposes the use of corporal punishment in our nation's schools. AASA supports engaging families and community members to promote student success with programs that sustain effective collaboration.

200.2 OVERCOMING RACIAL AND ECONOMIC ISOLATION IN SCHOOLS

School leaders have a moral and ethical responsibility to provide affirmative leadership that overcomes racial and economic obstacles for the school community and to advocate for integrated, high-quality schools. School leaders must work with other organizations and agencies to promote economic security and full social participation to best prepare students for a multi-ethnic society.

200.3 DIVERSITY

AASA is committed to being a diverse and inclusive organization and our actions and publications will reflect, model and promote leadership diversity in this organization and our profession and enriches learning and outcomes for all.

200.4 BULLYING, HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION AND INTIMIDATION

AASA strongly encourages communities, leaders and school districts to work collaboratively to prevent, recognize and address all forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination and intimidation by treating others with respect and dignity.

AASA advocates for schools that are safe and productive learning environments, free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and intimidation, in which the structures and practices promote students' positive social emotional and behavioral development.

AASA believes that schools must be learning environments free of religious discrimination and intolerance, and that all students, regardless of faith, have a right to practice their religion, express their faith, and engage in educational discourse about religion.

200.5 VERIFICATION OF CITIZENSHIP AND LEGAL STATUS OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

All children are entitled to a free and appropriate public education.

300 LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

*(Scheduled Review: 2031)
(Updated: February 2025)*

Environments conducive to learning require that all variables that influence a student's ability to succeed should be addressed.

300.1 ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

AASA is an advocate for the health and well-being of our nation's children. Children have a right to live and learn in a safe and nurturing environment. Research demonstrates that learning is enhanced when children feel safe and have their physical, mental and social and emotional needs met in a healthy school environment.

First adopted: 1996

300.2 APPROPRIATE EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR ALL CHILDREN

A high percentage of a child's development and learning occurs before age 5. All children should enter school ready to learn, and every adult in the community must assume a measure of responsibility for the education, welfare and safety of each child. AASA believes that communities should offer developmentally appropriate early educational programs, including social and emotional supports, for all children from birth. The future success of all children requires such an investment in quality education programs.

First Adopted: 1995

300.3 SUPPORTING SCHOOLS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN

Schools that are aligned around systems leadership will accelerate movement toward college, career and post-secondary readiness. Superintendents should place a greater emphasis on systems leadership to meet the challenges of a global society.

Decisions should be made by educators at the local level who best understand the needs of their students and who can design equitable educational programs to meet their needs.

All students and families should be provided a strong support system to include advocacy and for equitable access to funding, resources and opportunity.

First Adopted: 2005

300.4 SAFE AND SECURE FACILITIES

AASA recognizes the important role of school facilities in creating an appropriate learning and working environment. AASA believes that facilities must not only be conducive to learn and to work, but must also provide a safe place to learn.

Schools and educational facilities support the health of the children and adults who work and learn in them.

AASA believes that school district, in coordination with the broader educational community, have an obligation to support robust cybersecurity practices to best secure the data of students and staff in their district. School environments must be safe and secure for all students and staff. To this end we support the coordination of, and communication between existing federal and state criminal background databases. Furthermore, a national database of criminal offenses, which includes sexual offenders and child predators, should be maintained so that school districts can access for criminal background checks.

First Adopted: 1998

300.5 TECHNOLOGY

AASA believes that its commitment to equity must include access to a variety of technological hardware, software, bandwidth and connectivity for all students regardless of socio-economic status, gender and/or race.

AASA recognizes that the importance and risks technology and the use/misuse of it plays in the education of our nation's youth. We strongly endorse federal, state and local efforts to guarantee funding for the support, maintenance and upgrading of technology which will provide all students universal access to the technological tools which will ensure state-of-the-art global connectivity and fully integrate technology into the instructional program. One part of this effort should include the expansion of E-rate to support increased connectivity.

AASA recognizes the importance of the use of multiple technologies to enhance learning environments and to create new learning opportunities for students and educators. Multiple technologies need to be used by schools to break down barriers among classrooms, schools, states and countries.

AASA recognizes the value of full state of the art, anywhere, anytime connectivity for all students, staff and educators to create a continuous learning environment. AASA acknowledges that learning happens outside the traditional classroom setting and the technology must support this.

AASA believes that all teachers and administrators must be prepared to use technology as a tool to enhance learning and model the understanding of and use of technology.

AASA supports increased research for educational technology and ensuring that the latest developments in technology are used effectively within schools.

AASA, as an organization, must be recognized as a leader to ensure the complete benefit of technology, including hardware, software, access and content.

AASA supports federal policy focused on providing digital equity to all students, with a particular focus on efforts to help address the homework gap and those with marginal access to technology.

AASA supports equitable access to affordable broadband for schools and libraries to best support student access to learning.

First Adopted: 1996

300.6 INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)

The education of children with disabilities demonstrates a national commitment to equitable educational opportunity for all children, regardless of ability. Congress must honor its commitment to fund 40% of the additional cost associated with educating students with disabilities as promised in the 1997 and 2004 reauthorizations of IDEA). Congress must fulfill its obligation to fully fund IDEA to the promised 40% level through mandatory funding and allowing for maximum local flexibility.

AASA urges the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMMS) to reimburse districts for medical services to Medicaid eligible students.

First Adopted: 2003

300.7 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA)

AASA believes that a high-quality public education is a basic civil right for all children. Equal access to educational opportunities is a cornerstone of American democracy. State and local school system leaders are dedicated to helping students reach high levels of learning and to prepare students to be active participants in a global society.

AASA believes the primary responsibility for determining educational methods and strategies resides at the state and local levels, consistent with the 1979 U.S. Department of Education Organization Act. States have a constitutional responsibility to establish, fund and support public education. Local school districts have a responsibility to ensure student learning in the context of their state's constitutional requirements for education.

AASA believes the role of the federal government in education is to help ensure equal opportunities to learn for each child by assisting states and school districts in their efforts to develop capacity, by providing leadership and by providing resources. The federal government should supplement and support rather than dictate state efforts in education.

AASA members know that the devastating effects of poverty have a significant impact on student achievement. While school systems do address the effects of poverty, they cannot eliminate the causes of poverty. Federal efforts to improve student achievement should coordinate with other relevant systems, such as healthcare, housing and judicial systems, to alleviate the fundamental inequities that perpetuate poverty.

AASA believes that states and school systems should not be required to spend state and local funds to implement federal program mandates.

AASA believes ESEA should provide coherent goals, assumptions and methods to improve learning for all students, especially for historically disadvantaged students. These goals, assumptions and methods should be based on evidence gained from research and practice.

First Adopted: 2008

400 LEADERSHIP

(Scheduled Review: 2032)

(Updated: February 2026)

AASA believes ethical and effective school leadership in the superintendency, including the active promotion of the value of public education, is vital to the success of the public school system.

400.1 LICENSURE FOR ADMINISTRATORS

For the preparation, appointment and promotion of school leaders, only graduate or doctoral degrees and licensures, endorsements or certificates in educational administration, supervision and leadership issued by approved state licensing agencies through accredited colleges and universities or AASA should be recognized.

400.2 PORTABILITY OF PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS

AASA supports licensure reciprocity to encourage the free flow of professional leadership.

Every state should provide educators with a means to transfer from state to state with experience and licensure intact. AASA supports complete mobility within public education for educators.

400.3 PROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION

AASA believes the stability and longevity of effective educational leaders are essential for improving outcomes for students.

Professional compensation for superintendents and school administrators should be a local decision that is consistent with educational preparation, performance, position and responsibility.

Educational leaders' effectiveness is enhanced by multi-year employment contracts which attract and retain high quality leadership for the public schools.

400.4 HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Attracting and retaining highly effective pre-service teachers, teachers, principals, district administrators and superintendents from all backgrounds should become a primary goal for all stakeholders including our professional organizations, our state legislators, the federal government and the business community.

AASA supports efforts to provide incentives designed to encourage highly effective teachers and administrators to enter rural, high-poverty or low-performing schools and school districts.

400.5 HEALTH & WELLNESS

The members of AASA are the leaders of the nation's schools and should promote behaviors that support the physical, mental and behavioral health and wellness of their students, staff and communities.

We prioritize evidence-informed health and safety policies and practices that safeguard student and staff well-being.

400.6 LEADERSHIP/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AASA supports effective ongoing professional development and coaching for educators, administrators and boards of education. Furthermore, AASA supports efforts to attract promising educational leaders to enter administration.

500 STUDENT LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

*(Scheduled Review: 2027)
(Updated: February 2020)*

All public schools must provide a quality educational experience for each student, which necessitates a framework of rigorous academic standards infused with life and career skills including critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, innovation and self-direction. A system of accountability, which clearly demonstrates, through multiple measures, the level of progress attained by students, is essential to fulfilling the mission of schools to increase student achievement and equip graduates with the skills required to be college and workforce ready.

500.1 PREPARATION FOR LIVING IN AN INTERDEPENDENT GLOBAL SOCIETY

All students must be prepared to live and work in an ever-changing, interdependent global environment. To be fully equipped for worldwide challenges and opportunities, all students should have broad-based educational opportunities to include: learning multiple languages; having exposure to the history, culture and context of all regions of the world; learning how to collaboratively solve problems and interact with peoples of different cultures and different lands; and developing empathy for human differences, commonalities, backgrounds and cultures. It is critical that teacher and administrative/leadership programs include international cultural skills and knowledge that will allow educators to be prepared to teach and lead students to be successful in a global society.

500.2 HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION

Our nation's secondary schools must prepare students for a highly technical, global economy in which they are engaged and productive as citizens and as members of the workforce. Without a high school diploma, post high school choices for students are limited. Earning a high school diploma enables students to select from optional pathways including post-secondary technical training, college/university entrance and/or entry into the world of work.

Educational advancements and improvements are rooted in the larger context of community support and pre-K-16 programming. Transformations must include (1) a high set of expectations and standards with a rigorous core curriculum, (2) a repertoire of differentiated instructional strategies that engage students in real life applications, (3) an environment that fosters positive relationships between all members of the school community, and (4) a collaborative professional learning community that focuses on improving teaching and learning for every child.

A high school's graduation rate must be calculated with flexibility to allow the time each student needs to complete high school; that graduation rate must be calculated in a manner consistent with the provisions of IDEA. An accurate data system must be implemented that provides a common definition of dropout rate and the flexibility to compute graduation rates in three, four, five, or six years, and to include high school equivalency exam or other alternative performance pathways. This approach is similar to data collected for college graduation rates and should be required in order to calculate state and national graduation rates.

500.3 SCHOOL AND DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Children live in a highly mobile and globally oriented world; therefore, AASA supports the establishment of a set of quality learning standards and outcomes matched to high standards for student performance. The accountability and assessment standards should require students to demonstrate mastery of core academic skills and life and career skills.

AASA supports accountability for student learning using assessments based upon multiple measures that are reliable and valid. The use of valid, reliable assessments, whether developed locally, nationally or

internationally, must be utilized for reporting progress to students and to parents/guardians, in order to measure performance of schools and districts, and to report results to the general public. These assessments should promote student performance and monitor growth, promote learning and drive improvement in schools.

AASA supports staff accountability for curriculum content, certification, professional training and student achievement.

500.4 EQUITY IN ACCOUNTABILITY

AASA supports the application of any public school accountability systems for all educational institutions receiving state or federal funding including, but not limited to: virtual schools, charter schools, independent schools and home school placements.

500.5 SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

(First Adopted: February 2020)

To be successful students with disabilities must have early access to a continuum of coordinated supports and services, well-trained educators, high-quality instruction, and advanced and inclusive learning opportunities. Special education is not a place—it is a service, and districts should strive to educate students with disabilities in safe, physically and developmentally appropriate learning environments in their neighborhood school and fully integrate them into the culture of the school. Districts must have strong partnerships with parents and communities to ensure students with disabilities are well supported inside and outside of school.

The lack of federal funding to support students with disabilities greatly hinders the ability of districts to be more successful in educating students with disabilities, but AASA believes district leaders must continue to prioritize increasing achievement for students with disabilities and ensuring they are college, career and life ready.

500.6 SUPPORTING UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

(First Adopted: February 2020)

AASA supports the provision of education to all students who enter our schools regardless of immigration status. District leaders have a responsibility to ensure learning environments are safe, welcoming places for all students and not potential sites of immigration enforcement. Federal policy must ensure all students are fully capable of taking advantage of school offerings and the federal programs they qualify for without fear of retribution from immigration enforcement.

600 COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE AND PARTNERSHIPS FOR EDUCATION *(Scheduled Review: 2028)*
(Updated: February 2023)

Building partnerships and supporting the education of all students is the responsibility of the entire community. Those partnerships and the contributions made by all stakeholder groups in the community contribute to the educational success and well-being of our children. Communities are responsible for the health, safety, welfare and education of each child. Schools are but one partner in the community, which includes many domains of public and private agencies. AASA urges and supports collaborative, community-wide programs and partnerships to deliver full services and programs to address the needs of the whole child. AASA supports quality community-wide programs and services designed to break the cycle of poverty and address the readiness and wellness needs of all children.

600.1 COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY WITH THE PUBLIC

The future of public education depends on effective communication and relationship building. Developing long-term relationships with faculty, staff, parents/guardians and the community requires regular, honest and open communication to help build understanding of, advocacy for, and commitment to the mission of the school district.

600.2 LEAVING DECISIONS REGARDING COMMERCIAL AFFILIATIONS WITH LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

AASA urges local school boards to protect student health and well-being when establishing commercial partnerships, including exclusive sales agreements. AASA supports leaving decisions regarding commercial affiliations with school districts to the local boards of education and opposes state and federal legislation that limit such arrangements.

600.3 PARENT ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

(First Adopted: February 2023)

Parents are their children's first and most important educators, which is why effective family engagement at the state and local level is one of the key determinants of student and school success. As superintendents who serve at the pleasure of school boards selected by parents, families and community members, it is critical that every child and family who walks through our doors on a daily basis feels welcome and supported in our buildings and classrooms. We know an educational environment that connects and engages families will ensure greater success for all students. Every family should have the opportunity to be an active participant in their child's educational experience and connect directly with their child's professional educators, while working in concert with, school staff and administrators to maximize their child's success.