

NABSE



G•P•S
(GLIDEPATHS•POTENTIALITIES•SOLUTIONS)

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PREFACE

In 2020, after decades of obfuscation, denial and disregard, acknowledgment of historic disparities in access to opportunities in education, employment, housing, and healthcare for African Americans were unexpectedly laid bare. Ironically, last year’s “perfect storm” of pivotal events became an unparalleled opportunity for the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). The 48-year-old organization and its members not only weathered the turbulence of the times but has emerged to advocate more vociferously for the education of black learners in a COVID-19 world, going forward.

Dedicated historically to the education of all learners, but black learners in particular, NABSE has released two transformational publications simultaneously. These future-focused guidebooks frame and refresh anew eight traditional education issues from the unique lens of black educators.

The *Declaration of Education Imperatives for the 21st Century* and the *NABSE G•P•S (Glidepaths•Potentialities•Solutions)* are companion publications. The definitive *Declaration* highlights systemic issues impacting the schooling of black learners by illuminating them as education imperatives requiring urgent care. Specifically, achievement, assessment, compensation, curriculum, educator preparation, funding, governance and instruction are not only backlit, but linked to legislative possibilities that should become priorities.

Building upon the theoretical foundation of the *Declaration*, the *NABSE G•P•S (Glidepaths•Potentialities•Solutions)* is a conceptual pathfinder giving direction to NABSE members and affiliates, school districts, school boards, state education agencies, and highly motivated educators, parents and individuals who seek to resolve most, if not all, of the challenges outlined in the *Declaration*. Both short and long-range action plans are detailed in the *G•P•S* addressing the most compelling education imperatives and legislative priorities identified. “Glidepaths” are those imperatives and priorities targeted for immediate implementation in the 2021-22 academic year. “Potentialities” are envisioned for implementation in 2022 and beyond. “Solutions” are previews of new initiatives NABSE is refining to launch in the very near future.

Both the *Declaration* and the *G•P•S* culminate more than 15 months of dialogue, deliberation and collaboration between scores of NABSE members in the U.S. and portions of the African diaspora. This includes 14 ZoomUps convened in summer

and fall 2020. Coordinated by NABSE’s Legislative Priorities committee beginning January 2020, both publications reflect the impact and implications of COVID-19, as well as the disparities affecting predominantly black school communities and the educators committed to serving them.

Founded in 1973 by 16 of the first African American public school superintendents in the U.S., NABSE stands in the authenticity of its collective truth as African American educators and educators of African descent. NABSE is a professional organization comprised of superintendents, school board members, district administrators, curriculum directors, principals, counselors, teachers, professors, consultants, etc. As children, many of its members persisted in pursuit of their personal goals despite residence in communities that may not have welcomed them, attendance at schools not designed to nurture their aspirations, staffed by teachers untrained to comprehend the composition of their families, the contradictions in their lived experiences, or the bleaching of their history.

“Who, then, has greater authority to address the challenges of educating learners who look like us—indeed are us—than us? Who understands more clearly how to navigate systems replete with shortfalls, blind spots and low expectations? Who knows with certainty how long odds can be overcome and long shots can make their mark? Without question, we do!”

(“Memorandum of Transmittal” – *Declaration*, p.i)

May 2021

NABSE



G•P•S

GLIDEPATHS

Action Plans

for

2021-2022



Overview of Education Imperatives Collaborative Work

As NABSE approaches its 50th anniversary, it is in a strategic position to distinguish itself as the premiere voice for education policies and practices related to all learners, especially those of African descent. Looking back to our past, especially 2020, and looking forward to the future, NABSE will play a pivotal role in shaping the conversations, practices and policies that will guide this nation in fulfilling its obligation to provide equitable educational opportunities for our students. Guided by NABSE’s Big 6 National Priorities and the international education landscape, the Legislative Priorities Committee developed *The NABSE Declaration of Education Imperatives for the 21st Century*. Four 21st century collaboratives were created to continue the work for such a time as this. Our work is a continuation of the initiative that began with the establishment of the NABSE Legislative Priorities committee in November 2019.

Our Charge

The NABSE Education Imperatives Collaborative organized the 39 imperatives from the *Declaration* into one document as the starting point for our work. These imperatives are classified under 8 areas of focus: Achievement, Assessment, Compensation, Curriculum, Educator Preparation, Funding, Governance, and Instruction. *The NABSE Declaration of Education Imperatives for the 21st Century* lists 39 imperatives. Our collaborative added one more imperative, “Anti-Racist Policies” in response to the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021. Our charge was as follows:

1. Disaggregate imperatives into a rank ordered list
2. Identify most impactful levels of entry: Federal?/State?/Local?
3. Create Action Plans for the most urgent imperatives to be implemented in 2021-2022

Our Process

Our first task was to rank order the imperatives based on which ones we would implement during the 2021-2022 education calendar. We determined the most critical issues in education at this time. Urgency and timeliness were our guiding compass. As we approached our work from a consensus model of group decision-making our core values were collaboration, transparency, empowerment,

eliminating systemic racism, supporting personal/professional experiences, identifying and healing trauma, and creating a strong legacy for our children. Also, based on our presentation at the virtual NABSE conference on December 5, 2020, we adjusted the language and replaced African American with the more inclusive term “learners of African descent”. Our work included researching history, current issues in education, legislative and policy directives and international connectedness.

Once the first five imperatives were identified, the Collaborative created action plans using the template below:

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Imperative: List the complete imperative from the *Declaration*

Focus Area: One of the eight focus areas from the *Declaration*

Level/Point of Entry: Federal? / State? / Local? In what area(s) will implementation begin?

Core Message: Summarize the most important idea of the imperative

Process for Initial Engagement: What to do first to promote and implement the imperative

Level/Point of Entry Key Players: Stakeholders in federal, state and local capacities

NABSE Key Players: Engaging specific areas of the NABSE membership

Partners: Organizational/corporate stakeholders who traditionally partner with education organizations

Additional Partners: Stakeholders that do not fit in any other category

Allies: Non-Black people/organizations who support the scope of NABSE’s mission

Marketing/Media: Strategic promotion and media blasts

The Action Plans were developed to give the NABSE membership and our partners a suggested framework for promoting/implementing the beliefs and policies outlined in the imperatives.

The 35 remaining imperatives are in a time-sensitive rank order. This is a fluid list. With the ever-changing education ecosystem, the imperatives can be re-ordered to reflect the needs of the time and season. The Legislative Priorities Committee in conjunction with NABSE's leadership and membership will determine when and how to implement the next group of imperatives.



**NABSE Education Imperatives
ACTION PLANS
2021-2022**

1. **Educator Expertise** - NABSE supports having an education expert on the U.S. government's Coronavirus Task Force. Whenever there is a national education issue/discussion occurring, an educator from NABSE should be at the table. An experienced classroom teacher currently in the classroom is preferred.
 - **Focus Area:** Compensation (*Declaration*-p. 4)
 - **Level/Point of Entry:** Federal
 - **Core Message:** Representation
 - **Process for Initial Contact:** CDC Coronavirus Task Force, NABSE President's contacts
 - **Key Players:**
 - Federal: CDC Coronavirus Task Force, Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education, Congressional Black Caucus, U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pension, House Education and Labor committee
 - NABSE: President, Board Members, COVID 19 Braintrust, Governance Commission, Instruction and Instructional Support Commission, Affiliates
 - **Partners:**
 - Organizational/Corporate: Verizon, AT&T, textbook manufacturers
 - Additional Partners: public libraries
 - **Allies:** TBD
 - **Marketing/Media:** CNN, Fox News, Sirius radio stations, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

2. **COVID 19: Student Impact** - NABSE believes that the following conditions of COVID 19 will impact the ability of low wealth school districts to adequately serve all students: home evictions, the rise of homelessness, reduction in the amount of unemployment compensation, and serving special needs students virtually.

- **Focus Area:** Funding (*Declaration-p.9*)
- **Level/Point of Entry:** Federal
- **Core Message:** Resources needed
- **Process for Initial Contact:** Compile information for the NABSE COVID 19 portal on the NABSE website and create a resource section
- **Key Players:**
Federal: Secretary of the U. S. Department of Education, Congressional Black Caucus, CDC Coronavirus Task Force
NABSE: NABSE COVID 19 Braintrust, President, Board Members, Affiliates, Commissions: Administration, Instruction and Instructional Support, Governance, Superintendents, Parents, NABSE corporate sponsors
- **Partners:**
Organizational: Hospitals, housing organizations
Additional Partners: Community organizations
- **Allies:** Mayor's office, City Council, social services, professional sports teams/players
- **Marketing/Media:** NABSE website, major news outlets

3. **Social Emotional Learning** - NABSE believes Social Emotional Learning (SEL) should be the anchor to provide joyful and thriving learning experiences for students. Every school district should establish an SEL policy that requires educators to implement systems/structures to educate the whole child. By doing so, all students - especially students of color - will engage in environments that support their sense of belonging which values their assets as human beings.

- **Focus Area:** Achievement (*Declaration-p.2*)
- **Level/Point of Entry:** Local
- **Core Message:** Actualizing affirmative learning experiences
- **Process for Initial Contact:** Convene counselors, social workers, psychologists and other key teachers and staff to develop a series of workshops to present at staff meetings or/and professional development days.
- **Key Players:**
Local: Central office administration, building administrators, PTAs, School boards, building professional development, unions, education associations

NABSE: NABSE affiliate presidents, NABSE members on local school boards, NABSE members who are superintendents, central office administrators and principals, Instruction and Instructional Support, Parents and Retired Educator Commission members, NABSE corporate sponsors
- **Partners:**
Organizational/Corporate: hospitals, counseling services, grassroots youth organizations, libraries, churches, panhellenic organizations

Additional Partners: local theaters (customized artistic programming for students, staff and families)
- **Allies:** TBD
- **Marketing/Media:** district website, local news

4. **Equity** - NABSE believes equity should be the premise of everything we do as educators. Every school district should establish an equity policy that focuses on eliminating opportunity gaps, interrupting institutional bias and removing barriers to academic and social success for all students. Now more than ever, this recommendation is most relevant to ensure that schools disrupt all of the structures that impact students of color, most importantly, males of African descent.

- **Focus Area:** Achievement (*Declaration-p.2*)
- **Level/Point of Entry:** Federal, Local
- **Core Message:** a local district equity policy with a focus on academic and social success for all students by eliminating opportunity gaps, interrupting institutional bias, and removing barriers.
- **Process for Initial Contact:**
 - Federal-Revisit the 2013 Equity and Excellence Commission Report and make recommendations in light of pandemic and post pandemic education. Highlight what has been accomplished, urgent priorities and new initiatives. Subsequent roll out to states and locals. Equity policies, equity task forces, equity programming in all districts.
 - Local-Request from local NABSE community member(s) to the local district school board for the establishment of a district equity policy. A draft position paper developed from the committee work of local NABSE affiliate presidents, NABSE members on local school boards, NABSE members who are superintendents, central office administrators and principals, teachers and community members beforehand would serve as a starting point for said district.
- **Key Players:**
 - Federal: Secretary of the U.S Department of Education, Congressional Black Caucus
 - Local: School board, superintendent, central office and building administration, teachers, parent teacher organization and community members
 - NABSE: Affiliates, NABSE members who are leaders in national education organizations, NABSE members on local school **boards**, NABSE members who are Superintendents, Central office administrators and principals, all NABSE commissions
- **Partners:**
 - Organizational/Corporate: parent/teacher organizations, community members, unions
 - Additional partners: TBD
- **Allies:** Local colleges and universities, Mayor's office, City Council

- **Marketing/Media:** District websites, community newspapers, Newsletters

5. **Culturally-Responsive Classrooms** - NABSE believes that all classrooms should be asset-based learning environments where students' strengths are the springboard for meeting daily objectives. Students' learning about their ancient and recent history and culture should be interwoven into daily instruction so that students feel seen, valued and empowered. The classroom should be a sanctuary for student dialogue and the free flow of ideas, as the student voice is heard loud and clear, is respected, celebrated and cherished.

- **Focus Area:** Instruction (*Declaration*-p.12)
- **Level/Point of Entry:** Local, State
- **Core Message:** Asset-based, cultural, ancient and recent historical framework for designing curriculum, classroom management, lesson planning, instruction, environment and motivation
- **Process for Initial Contact:** Position paper and/or meeting with NABSE affiliate presidents, NABSE members on local school boards, NABSE members who are superintendents, central office administrators and principals, Instruction and Instructional Support Commission members; possibly plan a cultural event kickoff followed by dynamic, creative, robust professional development. Include the State Board of Education to ensure buy in at the local level and to leverage support
- **Key Players:**
Local/State: Central office administration, building administrators, PTAs, school boards, building professional development teams, classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, intervention specialists, state boards of education.

NABSE: Affiliates; commissions: Instruction and Instructional Support, Administration, Superintendents, Retired Educators, Parents; NABSE corporate sponsors and NABSE vendors
- **Partners:**
 Organizational/Corporate: Libraries, community centers, churches, historical societies and African American museums, community business partners, panhellenic organizations

Additional Partners: Black professional organizations

- **Allies:** Mayor's office, city council, state education agencies and commissioners, Governor's office
- **Marketing/Media:** District websites, community newspapers, libraries, podcasts, local tv spots, local radio, social media



**NABSE Legislative Priorities
ACTION PLANS
2021-2022**

The NABSE Legislative Collaborative identified eight (8) priorities as the most important legislative action needed to mitigate the disparate and deleterious effects that inequity and COVID-19 are having on African American educators and learners, especially in underserved communities and school districts. The COVID-19 crisis has served to unmask higher vulnerabilities and exposure among people of color. For this reason, African American communities and other minorities are bearing the brunt of the current pandemic. A close look at data by different social identities (as class, gender, age, race, and medical history) shows minorities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The legislative recommendations listed below are a start to addressing systemic racism in our educational system and supporting equitable access to a quality education for disadvantaged students.

ACHIEVEMENT

Social Emotional Learning – NABSE supports legislative action to allocate school district funding to expand human capital with a focus on Social Emotional Learning to impact the needs of the whole child. (*Declaration - p.2*)

- The American Rescue Plan Act 2021 (H.R. 1319) that is currently approved in Congress and signed into law by President Biden, **COMPLETELY** corresponds with NABSE’s position to allocate funding to support Social Emotional Learning for students. In the approved (H.R. 1319) allocation, school districts must use at least 20% of their funding toward addressing students’ Social Emotional Learning needs and learning loss throughout summer programs, extended school days, extended school year programs or other intervention methods.
- Senate bill (S.R. 691) **ALIGNS** with NABSE’s position to provide funding that supports Social Emotional Learning. This bill was introduced in Congress by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT.) to allocate school district funding that expands human capital to focus on Social Emotional Learning; to impact the needs of the whole child and support evidenced-based programs that facilitate social and emotional learning as students face increasing anxiety; as the COVID-19 pandemic continues as a result of social distancing, fear of illness for themselves and peers, and uncertainty of the future for themselves and schooling.

- Other collaborative sponsors **PARTIALLY** supporting NABSE’s position to provide additional funding for Social Emotional Learning intervention and restorative supports are as follow: NAACP, National PTA and Dignity in Schools Coalition.

COMPENSATION

Recruitment Incentives – NABSE supports legislative action to allocate funding to support school districts in establishing compensation structures that include incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified educators to serve in high needs districts. (*Declaration - p.4*)

- There is currently one bill in congress that **COMPLETELY** corresponds with NABSE’s position to establish a Recruitment Incentive. (S.2367) introduced by Senator Tina Smith (D-MN), co-sponsors Sen. Doug Jones (D-AL) and Sen. Robert Casey Jr. (D-PA) to allocate funding to support school districts in establishing compensation structures that include incentives to recruit and retain highly qualified educators to serve in high needs districts.
- Studies show that both teacher recruitment and retention policies must be designed to more effectively retain teachers of color if diversity in the teaching profession is to be sustained.

African American Educator Pipeline – NABSE supports legislative action to establish a pipeline to recruit and train future African American educators who commit to teach in a high need school district.

- There is currently **NO** bill in Congress to support NABSE’s position to establish an African American Educator Pipeline. In an effort to prepare African American students for lives of high achievement, our schools need a teaching corps that is highly effective as well as racially and ethnically diverse. Research has shown that Black students who have had one Black teacher during elementary schools are more likely to graduate high school and consider college. Black students with Black teachers also experience less exclusionary discipline and fewer office referrals, a crucial break in the school-to-prison pipeline, a disturbing trend in which school-discipline interactions possibly lead to interactions with the criminal justice system. Without vigorous policy innovations and public investment, the demographic gap will only widen to the detriment of children’s education. Considering that less than 7% of educators in the United States are African Americans, NABSE’s vision of establishing a pipeline to recruit and train future African American educators will allow minority students to benefit

from shared cultural experiences and also mitigate implicit bias in education.

- The National Center for Teachers Residencies' (NCTR) Black Education Initiative **COMPLETELY** aligns with NABSE's position to establish an African American Educator Pipeline. This organization has received a five-year, \$20-million grant from Ballmer Group to recruit, prepare, and retain Black teachers through a national network of teacher residency programs. This funding allows the organization to invest in residency programs that are redesigning teacher preparation practices to serve African American educators.
- The White House Initiative on Education Excellence for African Americans **COMPLETELY** aligns with NABSE's position to establish an African American Educator Pipeline and recommends that President Biden's administration appoint a NABSE representative to this advisory committee. This initiative strengthens the nation's capacity to provide high quality education while increasing opportunities to close the educational achievement gap for African Americans.

E-Rate – NABSE supports legislative action to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to implement emergency measures to make changes to E-rate programs to allow high need African American school districts to buy Wi-Fi hot spots and equip existing devices with Wi-Fi capability to ensure all K-12 students have adequate home internet connectivity, if their school closes due to COVID.

- There is currently **NO** bill in Congress to mandate broadband access nationwide into the homes of school aged students. At the end of March 2020, the research on distance learning found that nine million students in the U.S. did not have access to both internet and a device to use as schools transitioned to remote learning. The pre-existing disparities in access to internet connection by a shift to remote learning during the pandemic has exposed the digital divide. Congress recently approved (H.R. 1319) – The American Rescue Plan Act 2021 – which was signed into law by President Joe Biden. This bill includes \$7 billion to create an Emergency Connectivity Fund through E-Rate; which subsidizes internet access for schools and libraries. Reportedly, schools that participate will be able use the new money to help students and teachers access the internet at home. The FCC has argued that its statutory authority is limited to only schools and libraries. NABSE requests Congress to immediately change the restrictive language and appropriate funding to mandate home broadband access for all students. Closing the national digital divide is going to take a herculean effort before

the start of the new school year. Schools in underserved districts cannot take on the task of connecting their students, homes, and communities by themselves. This is why Congress should prioritize the needs of students and mandate broadband access. Internet access should become a public utility so that all consumers have equal access to the same high-quality service. NABSE advocates that this service must be free for families with school-age children.

FUNDING

Needs-based Federal Funding – NABSE supports legislative action that mandates states to distribute any new federal funds through a formula that further leverages equity by taking student and district needs into account. These needs-based funding factors should include a district’s relative wealth, student educational needs (low-income, English language learners and special education), and/or how badly COVID-19 has impacted each state and district. (*Declaration - p.9*)

- There are currently two bills in Congress that **COMPLETELY** correspond with NABSE’s position on Needs-Based Federal Funding: (S.4831) – Learning Opportunity and Achievement Act – a bill introduced by Mazie Hirono (D-HI) and co-sponsors Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Senator Corey Booker (D-NJ), Senator Robert Casey (D-PA), and Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI); and (HR.7617) introduced by Representative Peter Visciosky (D-IN) to advance legislative action to encourage states to allocate federal funds through a formula that further leverages equity by taking student and district needs into account (i.e., district’s relative wealth, student educational needs low-income, English language learners, and special education), and/or how badly COVID-19 has impacted each state and district.
- Other collaborative sponsors **PARTIALLY** supporting NABSE’s position for Needs-based Federal Funding are as follows: US Department of Treasury Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI), NEA Recommendations for (H.R. 7617- Amendment #219), (S. 4831) Learning Opportunity Achievement Act, and National PTA Substantial Funding.

Education Stabilization Fund Increase – NABSE believes that the federal government should allocate significant increases in the *Education Stabilization Fund* to distribute to states, allocated by formula; and target high-need African American school districts to fill budget gaps caused by declining state revenues due to the COVID-19 national emergency. (NOTE: CARES ACT funding was a one-time allocation)

- There is one bill currently approved in Congress and signed into law by President Biden that **APPEARS** to correspond with NABSE’s position to increase in Education Stabilization: (H.R. 1319). The American Rescue Plan Act 2021 – allocates \$130 billion dollars for K-12 schools. However, although a significant amount of the additional funding is targeted for distribution through the federal Title I formula for funding schools and districts with concentrated poverty; the equitable distribution of funding to minority and underserved school districts that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 is yet to be determined.

GOVERNANCE

Virtual Learning Implication – Policies are needed to address the impact and implication of virtual learning upon educational staff, including certified/licensed teachers, academic intervention specialists, paraprofessionals, special education aides, secretaries, etc. Issues to be considered include salary increases, hazard pay and professional development training on virtual learning curriculum that have proven successful and increased achievement among K-12 populations. *(Declaration - p.11)*

- NABSE supports legislation (H.R. 8715) introduced by Rep. Donald Payne (D-NJ). The Pandemic Planning and Response for School Act of 2020 urges legislative action to address the impact and implication of virtual learning upon educational staff. Issues to be considered include salary increases, hazard pay and professional development training on virtual learning curriculum that has proven successful and increased achievement among K-12 populations.
- African American educators are confronting a professional future in which virtual learning will play an increased role in student learning. As instructional activities are delivered virtually, a critical challenge for minority educators will be ongoing professional development to continue supporting the creation of instructional environments that are culturally responsive and committed to equity and inclusion.
- NABSE supports Public Acts 257 and 166, signed into law by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in the state of Michigan, which **COMPLETELY** offer “Hazard Pay” to school employees who work during the pandemic. The goal of the money is to recognize the additional time spent outside of normal working hours, hazardous conditions, and additional costs school support staff have incurred or experienced to provide services to students during the period of school closure as a result of the COVID-19. In addition, many schools in high poverty, low-income communities have struggled to fill vacancies during the pandemic,

because many teachers have opted not to return to classrooms that they deem dangerous. This discrepancy has caused some teachers to weigh the risk of entering school buildings during the pandemic compared with the salary they earn. NABSE proposes to introduce “hazard pay” as an incentive to encourage school employees to return back to the classroom.

Coronavirus Funding – Continual funding to schools to purchase appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) will be critical throughout the duration of the national coronavirus pandemic.

- There is one bill currently approved in Congress and signed into law by President Biden that **COMPLETELY** corresponds with NABSE’s position to provide continual funding for schools to purchase additional PPE: (H.R. 1319). The American Rescue Plan Act 2021 (H.R. 1319) includes appropriation of additional funding for K-12 schools’ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that supports the schools in safely opening during the national coronavirus pandemic.

NABSE



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POTENTIALITIES

Action Plans

for

2022 and Beyond



NABSE Education Imperatives
[Rank ordered as of April 1, 2021]

(Subject to change as K-12 education landscape evolves)

1. **Educator Expertise** - NABSE supports having an education expert on the U.S. government's Coronavirus Task Force. Whenever there is a national education issue/discussion occurring, an educator from NABSE should be at the table. An experienced teacher currently in the classroom is preferred. *(Declaration-p.4 -Compensation)*
2. **COVID 19: Student Impact** - NABSE believes that the following conditions of COVID 19 will impact the ability of low wealth school districts to adequately serve all students: home evictions; the rise of homelessness, reduction in the amount of unemployment compensation, and serving special needs students virtually. *(Declaration-p. 9 -Funding)*
3. **Social Emotional Learning** - NABSE believes Social Emotional Learning (SEL) should be the anchor to provide joyful and thriving learning experiences for students. Every school district should establish an SEL policy that requires educators to implement systems/structures to educate the whole child. By doing so, all students - especially learners of African descent-will engage in environments that support their sense of belonging which values their assets as human beings. *(Declaration-p. 2 -Achievement)*
4. **Equity** - NABSE believes equity should be the premise of everything we do as educators. Every school district should establish an equity policy that focuses on eliminating opportunity gaps, interrupting institutional bias and removing barriers to academic and social success for all students. Now more than ever, this recommendation is most relevant to ensure that schools disrupt all of the structures that impact learners of African descent; most importantly, males of African descent. *(Declaration-p. 2 -Achievement)*
5. **Culturally Responsive Classrooms** - NABSE believes that all classrooms should be asset-based learning environments where students' strengths are the springboard for meeting daily objectives. Students' learning about their history and culture should be interwoven into daily instruction so that students feel seen, valued and empowered. The classroom should be a sanctuary for student dialogue and the free flow of ideas, as the student voice

is heard loud and clear, is respected, celebrated and cherished. (*Declaration-p.12 -Instruction*)

6. **Anti-Racist Policies**-NABSE desires that districts and states commit to holding themselves accountable to measure and monitor the scope, depth and breadth of current antiracist policies they have adopted or may adopt in the future. NABSE’s intent is to disrupt inequitable practices by assisting schools and districts to examine biases and create inclusive multicultural school environments for children and adults. NABSE aims to promote racial social equity as a core value in the decision-making processes of curriculum development, teaching, and disciplinary practices. (*Declaration-p. 11 -Governance*)
7. **Academic Success** - NABSE believes academic success goes beyond a basic level of proficiency in content areas and includes richness in fluency with academic language (including numeracy), Bi-literacy, AP courses and foreign languages. Essential components of academic success include the following: African American teachers, Social Emotional Learning and equity. (*Declaration – p. 2 -Achievement*)
8. **African American History**-NABSE believes that ancient and recent history, culture and contributions of African Americans and people of African descent should be taught to all students, including non-African Americans, in all schools. The timeline should include the significance of Africans in the ancient world and their meaningful contributions throughout the history of the world. The enslavement of Africans in the United States and the Americas should find its place on the timeline and should not be the point of entry. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)
9. **African American Teachers** - NABSE believes hiring of African American teachers increases the opportunities for student success, especially for learners of African descent. (*Declaration-p. 2 -Achievement*)
10. **Collaboration** – NABSE supports maintaining collaborative relationships with the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) and other governance-based groups that directly impact educational policy. (*Declaration-p. 11 -Governance*)
11. **Curriculum Resources/Textbooks** - NABSE believes that all textbooks, digital instructional materials and curriculum resources should be up-to-date, culturally relevant and standards-based. (*Declaration- p.12 -Instruction*)

12. **21st Century learning skills** - NABSE believes that 21st century learning skills (collaboration, computational thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking and digital literacy) are essential components of effective schooling for all students. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)
13. **Virtual classrooms/Remote Teaching** - NABSE believes that all teachers should be able to provide instruction in an online learning environment that allows for live interaction between students and teachers. A remote shared learning space employs the use of videoconferencing, online whiteboards, shared screen capabilities, participation controls, breakout rooms and instant messaging tools. The teacher serves as the moderator who guides the learning process and supports group activities and discussions. (*Declaration-p.12 - Instruction*)
14. **Income Disparities** - NABSE believes that wide disparity exists among populations with higher incomes who are able to access technology and can ensure that education continues during remote learning. (*Declaration-p. 9 - Funding*)
15. **COVID 19: Inequities** - NABSE believes that since the COVID-19 crisis has exposed and exacerbated inequities in the schools and communities serving learners of African descent, policymakers, advocates, and other stakeholders must do more to rebuild a stronger and more equitable system. (*Declaration-p. 9 -Funding*)
16. **Professional development** - NABSE believes that all educators must receive relevant, meaningful, and on-going training in the critical areas of pedagogy, content knowledge and best practices, diversity, technology, communication, and assessment. (*Declaration-p.12 -Instruction*)
17. **Content Knowledge** - NABSE believes that oral and written communication skills, including reading comprehension, along with computational skills formulate the basic foundation upon which effective schooling is built. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)
18. **Rigor** - NABSE believes that all students must be provided instruction, learning experiences, and educational expectations that are academically, intellectually, and personally challenging. (*Declaration-p.12 -Instruction*)
19. **Arts Education** - NABSE believes that visual and performing arts should be included as invaluable components of comprehensive education at all levels. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)

20. **Financial Literacy** - NABSE believes that understanding how money is made, spent and saved, as well as the ability to use financial resources to make decisions including how to generate, invest, spend and save money is essential for all learners. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)
21. **Entrepreneurship Education** - NABSE supports the inclusion of entrepreneurship education designed to stimulate and motivate vision and creativity to establish businesses that brand and market products and services directly to consumers. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)
22. **Environmental Education** - NABSE believes that the study of ecological systems, the conservation of natural resources including air, land, and water, as well as the preservation of plants, natural habitats and the protection of animals are essential to sustain human life on planet earth. (*Declaration-p.6 -Curriculum*)
23. **Classroom management** - NABSE believes that all teachers should possess an array of skills and techniques that are employed in classrooms to keep students organized, engaged, creative, focused, attentive, on task and academically productive in order to maximize student learning. (*Declaration-p.12 -Instruction*)
24. **Inclusion** - NABSE believes that students who are differently-abled should have opportunities to learn alongside their peers in general education classrooms. Inclusive classrooms are welcoming and support the diverse academic, social, emotional, and communication needs of all students. (*Declaration-p.12 -Instruction*)
25. **Resource Needs** - NABSE believes that If a state school finance system is to provide equal educational opportunity for educators and learners of African descent, that system must provide sufficiently higher resources in higher need/higher poverty districts than in lower need settings. (*Declaration-p. 9 -Funding*)
26. **Underinvestment Inequities** - NABSE believes that educators of learners of African descent experience the worst effects of underinvestment in education, which create inequities in access, quality, and compensation for teachers. (*Declaration-p.4 -Compensation*)
27. **Funding Priorities** - NABSE subscribes to the concept that to equitably meet the educational, social and emotional needs of learners of African descent, federal and state governments must make a significant financial

investment in funding that prioritizes equitable access of resources, and funding to advantage the educators of learners of African descent. (*Declaration-p. 9 -Funding*)

28. **COVID 19: States Impact** - NABSE believes that COVID-19 has impacted different states in different ways, depending upon how reliant the schools are on state revenue. This is because some states have statewide property taxes, while other states use local property taxes in their statewide funding formula. In the short run, those with statewide taxes will be more vulnerable to major decreases than those with local property taxes. (*Declaration-p. 9 -Funding*)
29. **COVID 19: Revenue Impact** - NABSE believes that wealthy districts with high levels of local property tax revenue will be less impacted by the pandemic. Low-wealth districts that have a greater reliance on state revenue will be hit particularly hard by this pandemic. (*Declaration-p. 9 -Funding*)
30. **Allocations** - NABSE supports the need to reform fiscal resource allocations that respond to *equity vs equal*; and address all the key ingredients of funding and guarantees of access by the intended recipients. (*Declaration-p.4 - Compensation*)
31. **Gaming Revenues** - NABSE supports revenues from casinos, lotteries, and other forms of gaming being utilized to increase revenue to help poor school districts as opposed to taxation. (*Declaration-p.4 -Compensation*)
32. **Tax Incentives** - NABSE supports incentives for companies and businesses to locate in impoverished communities to generate additional revenue from taxes and create job opportunities. (*Declaration-p.4 -Compensation*)
33. **Strategic area field placement** -NABSE believes that there must be a requirement for pre- service and alternative certification candidates/teachers to participate in high-quality field placements or residencies in low-performing schools in urban areas. These placements should be under the mentorship of a highly effective teacher of learners of African descent in the actual classroom and community setting. (*Declaration-p.8 -Educator Preparation*)
34. **Routes to Certification** - NABSE believes that current state certification rules and policies preclude teachers of African descent from licensure due to a heavy emphasis on testing. Therefore, there must be a hybrid of traditional and innovative, less test-dependent routes that will lead to certification or licensure. (*Declaration-p.8 -Educator Preparation*)

35. **Teacher Residency Program** - NABSE supports the establishment of its own “Teacher Residency” program, partnering with colleges and universities throughout the country, that focus on selective recruiting with intensive hands-on preparation and ongoing support for new teachers in high-need urban school districts. Many new teachers are unprepared for the realities of teaching in high-need schools. *(Declaration-p.4 -Compensation)*
36. **Student Outcomes & Teacher Capacity** - NABSE supports high stakes assessments being used as a tool for improving outcomes for students, and to improve teachers' capacity in the areas of pedagogy and content. *(Declaration-p.3 -Assessment)*
37. **Assessment Questions** - NABSE believes the development of high stakes assessment questions should take cultural differences and language exposure into account. *(Declaration-p.3 -Assessment)*
38. **Compensation Incentives** - NABSE believes compensation structures for educators of African descent should include incentives for more challenging positions in the same field, similar to what occurs in the private sector. (i.e., Service members in the military may receive special pay for working in unique conditions or in an imminent danger position. In the medical field, the National Health Service Corps (NHSC) provides up to \$50,000 in loan repayment and tuition and living expenses to physicians who in return, work for two years in underserved areas. Retention programs in the nursing sector include loan repayment contracts, retention bonuses, and workplace amenities such as flexible scheduling, or site childcare, and mentoring opportunities). Too few school districts offer sufficient financial incentives for positions that will be more difficult to staff because the condition or nature of the job is more challenging. *(Declaration-p.4 -Compensation)*
39. **Mastery Beyond Academics** - NABSE supports policies that will require pre-service and alternative certification candidates to master not only academic content, but are also held accountable for mastering trauma-informed methodologies, social-emotional learning tenets, and social justice curricula to meet the needs of learners of African descent better. *(Declaration-p.8 -Educator Preparation)*
40. **Charter Schools** - NABSE believes that no public funds from any source should be used to support charter schools. Such schools should be privately funded. *(Declaration-p. 11 -Governance)*



NABSE Legislative Priorities (2022-2023 & Beyond)

The NABSE Legislative Collaborative identified eleven (11) priorities to be addressed during 2022-2023 and beyond. These priorities are equally as important as the priorities that were identified for the 2021-2022 year; however, addressing the policies surrounding COVID during the 2021-2022 year is paramount to ensure all schools can open responsibly and safely. Often, schools with economically disadvantaged, minority populations are statistically more likely to be under-resourced, outdated, and operate in facilities possibly hazardous to the health of students and staff. In addition, higher poverty districts have less local revenue than low-poverty districts to fund for capital construction costs of addressing school repairs. The list of priorities identified below advocates the need for increased investments in education as well as fairer and more transparent funding policies at the federal, state and local levels to make sure that capital projects, programs, and overall spending are equitable in low wealth minority schools.

ACHIEVEMENT

Equity Plan – NABSE supports legislative action to establish an equity policy in every school district to ensure educators disrupt and dismantle racist systems in schools that prevent students of color from thriving in school and in life. *(Declaration – p.2)*

Literacy & Numeracy Standards – NABSE supports legislative action requiring school districts to infuse literacy and numeracy standards in all academic subjects. *(Declaration – p.2)*

ASSESSMENT

Certification Impact – NABSE advocates amending existing state laws to adjust the impact Career and Technology Education (CTE) industry-standard certifications have on state and federal accountability. *(Declaration – p.3)*

CTE Hiring & Classrooms – NABSE supports appropriating additional funding toward hiring and retaining skilled CTE educators; equip classrooms to deliver high-quality programs that meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. *(Declaration – p.3)*

COMPENSATION

Competitive Compensation – NABSE believes that the federal government should allocate competitive compensation packages for African American educators. A substantial body of research validates the conclusion that low teacher salaries affect the quality of those who choose to enter the teaching professions, and whether they stay once they get in. There is a large and rapidly growing “teacher pay gap”, and efforts to address teacher shortages should also attend to the deterioration in pay and working conditions for teachers in high-poverty schools. *(Declaration – p.4)*

CURRICULUM

Anti-racism Policies and Procedures for K-12 and Higher Education – NABSE urges that anti-racism must be institutionalized in educational policies and practices of all schools. These policies and procedures should include, yet not be limited to, equal access to advanced coursework, equal and just consideration in disciplinary matters, and an unbiased approach to identifying and supporting special needs students. The disproportionate misidentification of Black students as special needs must be explored as a critical issue that needs a systemic remedy. Anti-racist initiatives must be advanced as an assault on microaggression, implicit bias and stereotypes. Identifying, reducing and eliminating educator bias must be a top priority. *(Declaration – p.6)*

Digital Literacy: A high school graduation requirement for all students – NABSE advocates that all state education agencies be required to mandate teaching of the ability to find, evaluate and compose clear information through writing and other mediums using various digital tools and platforms as a requirement to earn a diploma from all high schools. *(Declaration – p.6)*

FUNDING

Needs-based State & Federal Funding – NABSE believes legislation must encourage federal and state governments to invest more in students who have greater needs. School districts that serve low income and non-white students tend to have a lower tax base than the affluent districts. *(Declaration – p.9)*

Funding Program – NABSE supports legislative action to retain and continue levels of federal funding for programs such as My Brother’s Keeper, Community Schools and Receivership. As soon as students overcome low performance, the resources are eliminated. Funding and resources should be ongoing. *(Declaration – p.10)*

GOVERNANCE

Funding Inequity – NABSE believes inequities in K-12 governance policy structures indicate unfair practices in the funding of school districts exist, and the

dissemination of total funds/grants to various school districts servicing students of color must be resolved. There is longstanding research data and information available to substantiate these inequities. (*Declaration – p.11*)

INSTRUCTION

Cross-Cultural Communication Policies and Procedures for K-12 – NABSE requests that all state education agencies mandate the adoption of policies and procedures for faculty and staff at all K-12 schools that facilitate establishment and maintenance of a non-judgmental atmosphere where the verbal and or written exchange of thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, aspirations and/or ideas between two or more persons from different ethnic backgrounds is accommodated routinely. Further, identifying, reducing and eliminating educator bias must be a top priority. Therefore, said policies and procedures should include, yet not be limited to, equal access to advanced coursework, equal and just consideration in disciplinary matters for all students, and an unbiased approach to identifying and supporting special needs students. Anti-racist initiatives must be advanced as an assault on microaggression, implicit bias and stereotypes. (*Declaration - p.12*)

NABSE



G•P•S

SOLUTIONS

New NABSE Initiatives



NABSE Leadership Academy

The NABSE Leadership Academy will serve as the vehicle to build the capacity of leaders around equity, instruction and social emotional learning best practices.

“All students, and especially students of color, need to be in learning environments that reinforce their sense of academic belonging and send constant signals that they are valued for all their assets and deserving of investment and rigor...As schools and systems continue to invest in social and emotional development, it is critical that leaders apply a racial equity lens as they consider both opportunities and challenges.” (ASPEN Institute 2017)

The aforementioned quote will serve as the foundation of designing the NABSE Leadership Academy. Traditionally, educators are equipped with skills to establish a strong instructional climate in the classroom and in school. However, when engaging the millennial learner, research suggests establishing relational trust and focusing on their social and emotional needs are pivotal to yield student achievement (CASEL 2019). In an effort to ensure educators and school districts address the needs of the whole child, the NABSE Leadership Academy will build educator capacity with a lens on social emotional learning and equity.

Goals

The NABSE Leadership Academy will build educator capacity around the following:

- Educational Leadership in the 21st Century
- Instructional Leadership in the Era of Virtual/Hybrid Learning
- Equity & Social Emotional Learning Leadership Practices
- Preparation of Leadership Roles (Assistant Principal, Principal, District Leadership)

Leadership Academy Design

Organizational/Curricular Structure The NABSE Leadership Academy is a two-week intensive program that supports the continuous improvement of existing and

aspiring leaders in education. Depending on guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) related to COVID-19 safety measures, it is intended for coursework to be presented in a hybrid model, with online asynchronous and in-person synchronous learning opportunities. We are exploring the idea of using a cohort approach, where participants will have some choice sessions with peers within their same professional growth path (i.e., school-based, district-level, etc.). There will also be collaborative learning where participants will have unparalleled networking opportunities allowing them to build strong professional relationships with leaders across the nation. The core curriculum is focused on supporting participants in deepening their knowledge of best practices in school and/or district leadership within the larger contexts of social justice, culture, class, race, and social-emotional needs of K-12 learners while sharpening their skills toward delivering measurable outcomes within the school divisions they represent. Through small group discussions, case studies, mentoring/coaching sessions, and lectures participants will develop the knowledge, tools, and insights necessary to solve a personal Theory of Action and address the Academy's guiding question: *Why is equity leadership important in the midst of competing pandemics (global health crisis & racial uprising)?*

Target Audience

The target audience of the NABSE Leadership Academy will be individuals that work in an educational setting. The focus of the program is two-fold. The program will focus on Individuals in their current position who wish to learn more about the position and will also focus on individuals that aspire to reach the next level. The target audience for the Academy will be:

- Teacher leaders
- Assistant Principals
- Principals
- District leaders
- Superintendents

Facilitators

NABSE will seek facilitators who are current practitioners, retired from the position, and/or university professors.

Capstone Project

Each participant will be responsible for completing a capstone project that aligns with the goals and curriculum of the NABSE Leadership Academy. The capstone project will provide participants the opportunity to:

- Think critically
- Solve challenging problems
- Develop skills related to strategic planning and implementation
- Develop presentation skills
- Develop public speaking skills. Participants will work with the guidance of their mentors to ensure the project reflects a deep understanding of the content and concepts necessary for leaders in their chosen career. Capstone projects will be presented at the national conference.



NABSE National Teacher Institute

Every educational system requires highly skilled teaching personnel in order to be effective. This validates the proposition that teachers are the most important element in schools. No educational system can excel above the quality of its teachers, and the quality of its teachers is measured by the outcomes they produce in terms of the achievement levels of their respective students. NABSE is dedicated to improving both the educational experiences and accomplishments of African American youth through the development and use of instructional and motivational methods that increase levels of inspiration, attendance and overall achievement. To that end NABSE is proposing the creation of the NABSE National Teacher Institute. The need for well qualified teachers to educate African American learners in more impactful ways, presented our Collaborative with the clarion call to envision an institute by which training and ongoing professional development, presented by the nation's premiere non-profit organization devoted to furthering the academic success for said children would be available to teachers from any school district NABSE serves. (See *Declaration pg. 8 – Educator Preparation/Other*)

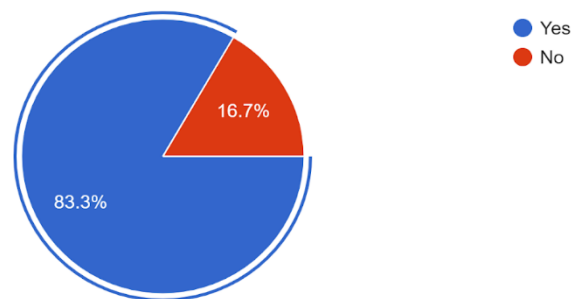
This collaborative's co-conveners began with three (3) basic dispositions. They then surveyed the various members of the collaborative to ascertain their thoughts and beliefs around the dispositions in order to begin to shape the vision. The results of the survey are as follows:

Predisposition #1

The National Teacher Institute is not designed to be accessed by pre-service teachers, but rather a way by which teachers can be further developed to maximize their effectiveness with African American learners.

Do you agree with Pre-Disposition #1?

6 responses



Some of the supporting rationales for this predisposition include;

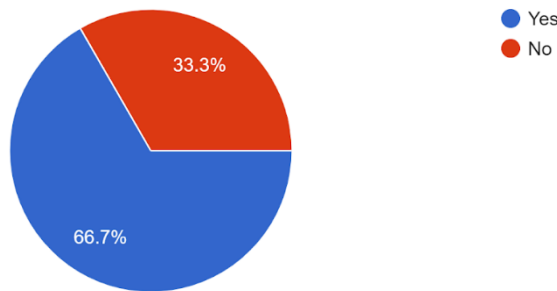
- Districts can use Title Funds to ensure that their teachers receive a nationally recognized program in culturally congruent curriculum.
- The component of pre-service teachers should be separate from The National Teacher Institute (NTI) in order for educators to gain access to knowledge of principles that can be applied to NTI.
- It is important to provide current teachers with tools to advance culturally responsive approaches that increase the success for African American learners.

Predisposition #2

This Institute is not a collaborative with any particular higher ed organization, but rather NABSE's own Institute by which districts can send teachers (black and white) to be further developed.

Some of the supporting rationales for this predisposition include;

Do you agree with Pre-Disposition #2
6 responses



- NABSE has the ability to control the curriculum and its delivery.
- Two conditions must prevail:
 - 1. The Institute must provide EDU's.
 - 2. The Institute should be self-sustaining by charging enrollment fees to cover operating costs as well as generate surplus revenue.
- NABSE represents a plethora of talent and individuals from multiple colleges and universities. This is an advantage and authentic to a collaborative approach. Nationally, educators have come to respect NABSE as a brand leader in providing support directed at advancing black excellence.

The rationale for not supporting this predisposition is the fact that if some type of graduate credit is to be offered, then it would have to come from an accredited institution of higher learning, preferably an HBCU. While school districts can use Title Funds and General Funds for this type of professional development, it would be the responsibility of the individual teacher to pay any costs associated with

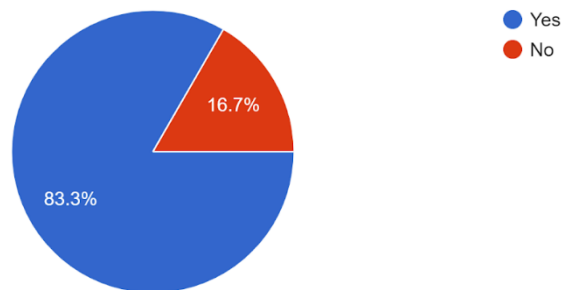
obtaining actual graduate hours. The collaborative is currently exploring this option further, as it would require thought-partnering with a college or university in order to make this a reality.

Predisposition #3

The teacher residency component was recommended as part of NABSE's Education Imperatives and needs to be a separate initiative that is not intertwined with the National Teacher Institute. A residency program is pre-service in nature, while the Institute is for teachers that are currently serving our students.

Do you agree with Pre-Disposition #3

6 responses



- Having a differentiated approach is always recommended and good forward thinking. This is an inclusive approach and increases the opportunities for multiple entry points into the program.
- There is a need for both; as separate entities, they impact teachers of African American learners in different ways.
- Enmeshing the two will result in the continued disconnect that we currently see in the educating of our students of African descent. Skills in different areas need to be taught so that they can be applied to NTI.

To this end the NABSE National Teacher Institute Collaborative will work to develop a program (in-person and remote), as well as a curriculum that will train, re-train and/or develop the culturally-congruent instructional strategies required for impacting achievement. The overall goal of the Institute will be to increase the quality and quantity of highly effective teachers (black and white) of African American learners. The Collaborative will seek out the best and brightest minds to serve as course instructors and facilitators while also seeking a partner HBCU that will collaborate with the Institute to provide EDU's and graduate hours.

An Invitation to Join Us

The NABSE National Teacher Institute (NTI) is an ambitious undertaking with a bold vision to offer a compelling set of professional development experiences for educators of all races. Teachers serving predominantly African American school communities are the target audience. Input from an array of NABSE professionals possessing varied experiences in and beyond the classroom is essential to moving the NTI from vision to reality. Completion of the model NTI program design will occur during summer 2021 with refinement in the fall. Final approval for implementation in 2022 will be sought at the NABSE conference in November 2021. Don't miss an opportunity to make an invaluable difference. Lend your expertise and creativity to this highly desirable initiative today. Contact the NTI collaborative planning team leaders ASAP for additional information and/or to volunteer at your earliest convenience.

Dr. Renee Willis - willis.renee@richmondheightsschools.org

or

Dr. Ayanna Shivers - ShiversA@lincolnu.edu



NABSE Website COVID-19 Portal

COMING SOON!

NABSE is committed to utilizing its spheres of influence to monitor, gather, inform and share feedback on COVID-19 and related issues affecting public school students, teachers, families and communities in a timely manner. A portal on its official website (NABSE.org) will be established as a clearinghouse for information and resources of particular interest to educators, school boards, parents and leaders serving students in predominantly black school communities. The portal will be facilitated by NABSE's COVID-19 Braintrust. [For additional information contact Dr. Fadhilika Atiba-Weza, Executive Director; email: atiba@nabse.org]

Earlier this year NABSE was asked by the U.S. Dept of Education to provide input on America's schools reopening and related matters. Responses to these requests are included here and follow as examples of the kinds of information the NABSE COVID-19 portal may feature.



NABSE NARRATIVE #1: “The Devil is in the Details”

Executive Summary

NABSE Narrative #1: “The Devil is in the Details” positions the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) to serve as a mirror and a lens to reflect and view the impact of the CDC guidelines (Feb. 12, 2021) on reopening schools serving predominantly African Americans. Consistent with reactions of other educators across the U.S. serving students of color and impoverished white families, NABSE members agree that the guidelines are inadequate and not inclusive of all circumstances.

Effective ventilation systems were promoted as a key strategy for reopening schools while acknowledging that ventilation systems in aging or crowded schools would be unable to meet CDC criteria. The CDC’s failure to offer any alternative solutions for these schools is frustrating and insulting to some educators. Such omissions lead educators who work in these settings to believe that their schools, students and families are deemed insignificant or irrelevant by government officials.

A random sample of NABSE members from different parts of the U.S. shared detailed reactions to the CDC school reopening guidelines identifying several issues. These include: social distancing and ventilation, funding, fears and trust, and kinship care. Contradictions within and between specific CDC documents were noted, as well as the implications of equity that policy makers should consider in addressing racial disparities. A significant list of “confounding issues” highlighting the complexities associated with reopening schools is included.

NABSE Narrative #1 concludes with a succinct set of recommendations linked to each issue identified. First, and foremost, NABSE recommends that the Biden administration appoint a diverse group of K-12 educators to serve on the Coronavirus-19 Task Force ASAP. It also suggests that the U.S. Dept. of Education do the same. Finally, NABSE hopes that Narrative #1 is the first in a series of ongoing communications with government entities regarding K-12 education.

February 25, 2021

NABSE NARRATIVE #1: “The Devil is in the Details”

Acknowledging racial disparities in education is the first step on the rocky road toward equity that government has been ambivalent to traverse heretofore. As anguish over the COVID-19 pandemic has persisted, and the U.S. presidency transitioned, urgent calls for all schools in the nation to reopen have been amplified. With a sense of urgency and priority for the Biden-Harris administration, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) issued its latest guidance on reopening all schools on February 12, 2021. The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) welcomes the opportunity to serve as both a mirror and a lens through which the impact of these guidelines upon those who serve predominantly African American school communities can be reflected and viewed.

In many parts of the nation students enrolled in predominantly white school districts returned to in person instruction months ago. On the other hand, districts with more diverse enrollments, or primarily serving students of color, have mostly remained closed for a variety of reasons. Despite the stress-producing side effects of technology-based instruction, virtual teaching and remote learning have enjoyed some success among the most capable students in all school settings. However, primary students, reluctant learners, ESL and those with special needs have had less success. Sizable numbers of students in urban and low-income districts have failed to engage in remote learning altogether. Given a choice, however, most students would prefer to be in school. The isolation from friends, classmates, teachers, coaches and familiar routines is difficult to manage. Similarly, teachers with strong technical skills pre-pandemic have utilized them to best advantage, while less confident instructors have struggled with virtual instruction. Regardless of the challenges, schools have done their traditional best to provide in person instruction in accordance with CDC guidelines. Under the most unusual circumstances they have ever encountered, schools have adapted to the “new normal” as best they could, using remote or hybrid scheduling models.

Consistent with reactions of other educators across the U.S., the CDC guidelines of Feb. 12, 2021 give NABSE pause. While headlines suggested they were the “clearest guidance yet,” educators serving students of color and impoverished white families panned the guidelines as inadequate and not inclusive of all circumstances. For example, among its key strategies, the guidelines promote the need for effective ventilation systems, but acknowledge the reality that ventilation systems in aging schools cannot and will not meet the CDC criteria. However, mere acknowledgement of this glaring shortfall is not only insufficient but perceived as problematic to some and insulting to others. The CDC’s failure to specifically address such an obvious fact, but more importantly propose realistic solutions is what frustrates educators who work in aging or crowded facilities.

For them, it accounts for the sense that, once again, the legitimate needs of their schools—their students and their families—are deemed insignificant or irrelevant. Educators committed to leading and working in these schools are deeply disappointed that the student and/or family challenges they confront routinely are not only exacerbated by the multiple impacts of COVID-19, but are largely obscured, confused or invisible to policy makers. That is why NABSE welcomes the opportunity to better illuminate the complexities that persist but are not clearly addressed within government-issued guidelines surrounding the safe reopening of schools. Examples of NABSE members’ reactions to social distancing and ventilation follow below in **boldface**.

Social Distancing & Ventilation

“So although the report makes sense, I am not confident all components, even minimally, can be executed. For example, classroom space and adequate personnel have been issues for some prior to the pandemic; so social distancing is not an option for all. Some have described social distancing as a privilege, yet it is one of the layered mitigation strategies.”

“Funding is needed to ensure physical distancing on school buses. Due to the need to physically distance on school buses, many districts in disadvantaged communities that offer bussing for students do not have the funding to add additional bus routes in order to limit the number of students on a school bus.”

“In addition, many schools in disadvantaged communities do not always have warm running water and have severely outdated ventilation systems.”

“No real solutions given to the impossibility of physically distancing students in classrooms at full capacity, although this is one of the five key strategies that is suggested.”

“Is the CDC so encapsulated that they don’t see that these so-called “guidelines” are an insult to many of us?”

Where are the calls for state education agencies to mandate that facilities audits be conducted in every district to identify schools whose physical limitations will not accommodate social distancing for all students? When will feasibility studies to determine whether or not older facilities can be retrofit with upgraded ventilation systems be proposed? What is more important than the safety of students and school personnel? Given the implications for future state and local budgets, why have costs for such improvements not been projected? Doesn’t cost matter? Funding, or the lack thereof, is always an issue in schooling. NABSE members sampled offered their perspectives on funding CDC recommendations. (See **boldface** below)

Funding Issues

“Funding to hire additional staff is needed. Many of our schools in minority communities would have to move to a staggered schedule or hybrid model to ensure that they can adhere to the CDC recommendations of physical distancing of 6 feet. In addition, funding for renovations and/or construction of new school facilities must be considered, as school budgets in many underserved African American communities are depleted and sent to local charter schools. For this reason, they simply do not have the reserves, capital or wealth to do renovations or construction of new school facilities.”

“Funding unrelated to property taxes should be provided so all students everywhere have equitable access to high quality, engaging, interactive, dynamic 21st century learning. Every resource needed must be supplied.”

“Funding and collaborative efforts (federal, state and local) to address any and everything that contradicts the report has to be a priority and timely. Right now, it appears that everyone is doing the best with what they have, but what they have continues to leave some minority children and families at a disadvantage.”

“Funding is needed for many of our African American schools to conduct widespread screening or frequent rapid coronavirus testing of staff and students.”

NABSE members identified issues that impact the reopening of schools specifically. Ranging from historical fears and trust factors to vaccine and pandemic-related traumas, kinship care and contradictions, see **boldface** below.

Fears and Trust

“In 2020, I heard a woman mention the following to her school board, ‘Would you enter a building with an active shooter? COVID-19 is the active shooter.’”

“The African American community has had well-founded trust issues throughout the course of history. From Dr. J. Marion Sims experimenting on black slave women without anesthesia, to the Tuskegee Experiment to the water crisis in Flint Michigan, it is easy to believe schools who serve the minority population will not receive the proper funding to adequately open schools safely.”

“There is not enough vaccination data involving people of color and the effects it actually has on their bodies that has been shared with the African American community.”

“Since younger students of color are not being vaccinated, what are the true risks for them when returning to on-campus learning; and as it pertains to the new COVID-19 variants?”

“Mitigation strategies must be employed to identify and manage the trauma that students, staff and families have endured during the pandemic such as death, displacement, job changes, joblessness, homelessness, illness, social disruption, learning gaps, etc.”

“The CDC, hospitals, medical professionals, scientists and researchers still need a more convincing messaging campaign about the safety of the vaccine. African Americans across the economic and educational spectrum still do not “trust” the vaccine despite all the emails from hospitals, PSAs, prominent community and national figures taking the vaccine on TV and news stories, etc. The message needs to be empathetic, relatable and needs to validate the historical context for the mistrust.”

“To ensure that we provide the healthiest environment for our educators and students, consideration should be given to designate every school in African American communities with high community spread as a vaccination site, and mandate local, state and/or federal resources to provide access to shots in the arms of all school personnel.”

“Many heads of these households are employed as “essential workers,” often in low-wage positions, where the potential risk of exposure to COVID may be greatest. By the very nature of their employment, they do not have the option to work from home, or personally supervise remote instruction. But like all parents, they want their children to succeed in school.”

Kinship Care

“Some family structures are multi-generational, with kinship care of school-age children provided by a grandparent or older relative while parents work. It is not uncommon for senior caregivers to have pre-existing health challenges that heighten their vulnerability to COVID. Protecting them from viruses that could be transmitted by children in their care attending school with other children who may be carriers is a legitimate fear. That fear is a primary reason why some parents of color are unwilling to send their children back to school during the pandemic. They will not gamble with the health of a beloved senior family member so long as remote learning is an option.”

“Kinship caregivers may not be tech-savvy or equipped to assist remote learners with schoolwork or be comfortable communicating with teachers.”

Contradictions

“Ironically, while the CDC “Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities” guidance (Dec. 2020) addresses the disadvantages, increased risks and disparities that racial and ethnic minority groups experience when it comes to social distancing,

employment, housing, mental health and education, these inequitable factors are not set forth in the school reopening guidelines (Feb. 2021).”

“Using community spread as a metric to re-open schools will likely keep most kids out of school for far longer than necessary which is creating a national emergency in and of itself. Per researchers at Boston and Harvard University...’We changed our position on this in light of overwhelming scientific evidence that transmission within schools can be kept low regardless of community spread, so long as good mitigation measures are in place. It’s also clear that community spread is not an indicator of within-school transmission,’ they wrote. ‘The CDC itself released a study showing this. It also recently wrote that there is ‘little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to community transmission.’ So why tie reopening schools to community spread?’”

Equity

As it pertains to equity, acknowledgement is at one end of the racial disparities continuum and accommodation is at the other. Accepting the fact that racial disparities are real—that their existence has consequences—that those consequences are complex and require differentiated responses and resolutions—that more often than not those responses and resolutions are provided by school personnel on a daily basis—these are part of the complicated truths policy-makers must begin to fully grasp. Until they do, the consequences endemic to racial disparities will persist in confounding efforts to address and accommodate issues of schooling all children in the pandemic era. Acknowledgement and acceptance that racial disparities exist and cannot be ignored must precede accommodation. If educating all of America’s children is truly a goal, policy-makers must dismantle barriers that preclude or limit access to equal educational opportunities for some, but not all, immediately.

Well-intentioned policy-makers whose eyes may be blind to the myriad forms racial disparities may manifest themselves, are ill-equipped to identify, let alone recognize and address, complexities that are commonplace to school folks.

In schools predominantly serving students of color the range of needs and circumstances to be addressed are not unique to people whose opportunities may be marginalized in more than one way. Their realities have been largely overlooked until now. NABSE welcomes the opportunity to explore equity issues in greater depth and detail, going forward.

Confounding Issues

In addition to all of the foregoing, there are a number of complexities associated with the reopening of schools that further complicate doing so in the near future.

NABSE considers these “timely topics” to be confounding issues that should not be dismissed. They reflect legitimate concerns being expressed formally and informally among African American educators and those serving predominantly African American school populations.

- 1) There are African American educators who are afraid to return to school and do not trust the vaccine.
- 2) There are African American families that are afraid to send their children to school and they do not trust the vaccine.
- 3) Mitigation strategies for evaluating the health risks for African American families must include the needs of students as well as everyone else in the home, especially elderly family members and/or those with compromised immune systems.
- 4) Mitigation strategies must be employed to identify and manage the trauma that students, staff and families have endured during the pandemic such as death, displacement, job changes, joblessness, homelessness, illness, social disruption, learning gaps, etc.
- 5) What basic school-based health screenings have students missed due to the pandemic? What are the ramifications and/or the remedies?
- 6) What structures and support personnel need to be in place to transition students with behavioral challenges successfully back into the school setting?
- 7) District, state and national assessments must not attach punitive consequences to schools and/or districts based upon student performance.
- 8) Arbitrary timelines for reopening will have adverse effects on low-resourced communities with high minority populations. They cannot meet the same guidelines at the same pace as resource-rich, homogeneous districts.
- 9) Corporate and community organizations must partner with every school district to assure that students stay connected to changes in the real world and the global marketplace.
- 10) Teachers should be provided in-depth professional development on 21st century learning, online learning resources and dynamic remote instruction.
- 11) What teachers have learned and accomplished in the pandemic era must be chronicled and heralded.

- 12) Staff, students and community stakeholders must be educated about post-pandemic cognitive, mental and socio-emotional issues. Training, counseling and self-care must be provided.

RECOMMENDATIONS

NABSE values the opportunity to lend its considerable knowledge and expertise to government-based decision-makers on all K-12 education matters. That is why we have been intentional in enumerating in detail specific issues and concerns requiring attention throughout this document. Moreover, we would not conclude our perspectives without offering succinct recommendations for consideration. Toward that end, we offer one or more potential solutions for each issue identified herein.

First, and foremost, we believe that the Biden administration should add K-12 educators to serve on its COVID-19 Task Force immediately. These individuals should reflect the diversity of America's schools, but especially those populations where racial and ethnic health disparities are greatest. Of course, NABSE is prepared to offer names of its selected members who could be of assistance. Further, the U.S. Dept. of Education should create its own COVID-19 Task Force. The implications of the pandemic will be lasting and reverberate exponentially for years to come.

Additional issue-specific recommendations are as follows:

Social Distancing

Adopt hybrid attendance models to decrease the number of students on campus any given day.

Ventilation

Acquire and install portable ventilation systems for all facilities built before 1990 immediately (i.e., air purifiers, etc.).

Funding

Mandate the realignment of state education budgets to set addressing pandemic-related needs of schools as highest priorities. (See also "Confounding Issues #8)

Fears and Trust

Conduct ongoing virtual town hall meetings to educate and inform, as well as address concerns.

Increase access to healthcare professionals, services and vaccines at school sites.

Kinship Care

Retain and/or assign caseworkers to problem-solve with multi-generational families.

Offer kinship care training sessions in partnership with local churches and community centers.

Contradictions

All updates issued by the CDC should include information about racial and ethnic health disparities.

Cease using “community spread” as a reopening metric.

Equity

Programs and experiences designed to pierce the encapsulation of policy makers at all levels of government (federal, state, local) regarding the impacts and implications of racial and ethnic disparities and inequities should be identified and accessible to all.

“Allyship” strategies should be explored by policymakers to gain clarity and foster understanding about human circumstances beyond their scope of experience.

Confounding Issues

#4 - Additional psychologists, therapists and programming are needed to address trauma-related issues exclusively impacting students and their families.

#6 - Intervention specialists and other appropriate personnel must be provided pandemic-specific training and strategies to facilitate transitions for special needs students.

#7 - Personalized intervention services need to be in place for ALL students who have experienced learning gaps during pandemic education.

#8 - A reopening checklist should be developed and districts should plan to reopen after they complete the checklist. State and federal funds should be used to achieve these goals.

#10 -Professional development related to pandemic-era education policies, procedures and practices should be mandatory for all personnel serving children and families. Bargaining units should be encouraged to partner with local districts to assure optimum outcomes for all.

#11 – State and local education agencies should celebrate with pride and share “best practices” and “lessons learned” broadly with all stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

NABSE believes that all voices can and must be heard as America seeks to fully educate all of its citizens. That is why we hope that our response to this requested interaction with policy makers at the federal level regarding the reopening of schools is not a “one-off” experience. In fact, it is our hope that this is the first in a series of ongoing dialogues regarding COVID-19 and other topics related to K-12 education. Toward that end, we have taken our own advice and established a NABSE COVID-19 Braintrust to maintain a priority focus on all pandemic-related matters. It is our goal to better serve our membership by enhancing communication, gathering and sharing information, and identifying resources as we manage the future together. Onward and upward!

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February 25, 2021

NABSE NARRATIVE #2: “Re-ordered Volume II Priorities”

The National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE) is delighted to share its perspective on issues impacting K-12 education. In that regard, we recently polled a random sample of thought leaders within our membership to rank order the Volume II draft topics proposed for further development by the U.S. Dept. of Education. Clearly, all nine topics were not viewed in the same light. The topics were re-ordered with a particular focus on how the issues may impact African American learners and the educators serving them. Noting the differences in priorities from the original list, the NABSE rankings are as follows:

- 1) Social-emotional well being of students and educators
- 2) Equity, including racial and socioeconomic impact and resource equity (#8)
- 3) Support for educators, including advancing educator diversity
- 4) Online learning and in-person learning
- 5) Extended learning time (#7)
- 6) Digital equity
- 7) School discipline (#9)
- 8) School nutrition (#5)
- 9) Bridging learning opportunities and/or gaps (#2)

NABSE suspects that the differences in ranking are meaningful and reflect the value of diverse perspectives being included. One way of viewing these differences is to consider COVID-19 impacts upon America’s schools through the prism of Maslow’s needs hierarchy. Clearly, schools enrolling predominantly black and brown student populations are expending resources, time, and energy on meeting physiological and safety needs of students, faculty and staff. These are the school communities where families with significant numbers of essential workers may reside, reflecting inequities in employment and economic opportunities. These are the same communities where COVID-19-related illnesses and death due to health care disparities are greatest, and skepticism about health care services are deeply held.

While schools with less diversity may be able to focus upon higher order self-actualization needs of their students and teachers during and post-pandemic, the stark differences in demographic realities cannot be ignored. A U.S. Education department that fully recognizes and values these differences, but responds accordingly is critical to its viability and credibility in school communities of color. That is why newly confirmed Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and his staff should rest assured that NABSE not only welcomes his leadership, but optimistically anticipates the opportunity to collaborate with him, going forward.

Toward these ends, NABSE is anxious to share two forthcoming documents that detail its positions on multiple K-12 education issues as they affect African American learners and the educators who serve them. Specifically, the *NABSE Declaration of Education Imperatives for the 21st Century* outlines legislative priorities, as well as education imperatives. The *NABSE G•P•S (Glidepaths•Potentialities•Solutions)* will detail immediate and long-range action plans for implementation of the imperatives and priorities. Both documents will be officially released to the public next month. Scheduling a virtual dialogue session with Secretary Cardona and NABSE leadership to occur as soon after the release as possible is highly desirable.

In addition, NABSE has formed its own COVID-19 Braintrust whose members are committed to utilize their spheres of influence to monitor, gather, inform and share feedback on issues affecting public school students, teachers, families and communities. A dedicated portal on NABSE's website will facilitate this work on a continuous basis as finishing touches are imminent.

Thanks again for the opportunity to give input. We await a timely response.

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March 6, 2021



AFTERWORDS

As the nations of the world and their schools slowly emerge from the ravages of COVID 19, NABSE is optimistic that the “lessons learned” both in the U. S. and the African diaspora will intensify advocacy for equity in education. Without question, practitioners serving students of color in general, but students of African descent in particular, were well aware of many inequities long before the pandemic laid them bare for all to see. While nostalgia for a return to our pre-pandemic ways may seem desirable, doing so would nullify the enormous opportunities before us to overcome blind spots and short-sightedness as professionals in order to right past wrongs.

Access to adequate fiscal resources, safe and up-to-date facilities, content-rich curriculum and culturally-competent teachers have long been deficiencies in schools serving predominantly black and brown students. Averted eyes can no longer avoid these inequities, least of all those of us committed to the education of students. Similarly, lack of representation at state and federal policy-making levels must be rejected. Wherever decisions impacting students of color are being made, we must advocate vociferously both for seats and a “say” at the table to articulate their needs and propose viable solutions to address them.

Let us rush headlong into the “new normal” of unbridled advocacy for learners of African descent. While the spotlight of opportunity illuminates the underbelly of substandard, inadequate, underfunded education, we must laser-focus on sustainable fixes that scrutinize prior oversights with intentionality. To act decisively for the foreseeable future, we must amplify our collective voices to promote anti-racist policies and disrupt discriminatory procedures. We cannot fail to press toward irrefutable relevance, as we sustain this pivotal moment in the sunlight of reality.

Dismantling anti-blackness must be our goal as we tackle structural racism in our school communities. We must not be daunted by the enormity of the task or the intransigence of centuries-old deeply rooted challenges. The opponents of critical race theory, diversity education and the 1619 project prefer to cling tenaciously to the advantages inherent within their ignorance rather than acknowledge the inequities their shameless myopia perpetuates. For them, the comfort they derive from the status quo is not too high a price to pay to maintain the disparities, disadvantages and collateral damage inflicted upon people of color.

Nevertheless, overcoming insurmountable odds has always been the connective tissue within the DNA of black people, linking our bloodlines across generations, continents, cultures and adversities. Afro futurism is the STEM tomorrow that is within our grasp today!

Negative perceptions of black people will linger as long as they remain unchallenged. Low expectations of black learners will persist so long as they are permissible. Culturally-competent teaching staffs will continue to be a “high bar” expectation while teacher preparation programs are agnostic toward development of such skills. Given the racial disparity between students of color and those who teach them, remote learning allowed many black parents to observe first-hand instructional practices and classroom procedures they deemed to be discriminatory toward their children. By contrast, remote learning has been good for some learners. In fact, some black parents believe virtual schooling shielded their children from racism and non-inclusive curricula. Nevertheless, whatever benefits students have derived from remote instruction should not be minimized, but valued and positioned advantageously, going forward.

Finally, allies of all races desiring to broaden their individual awareness, deepen personal understanding, and optimize their professional spheres of influence should consider NABSE a resource on their journey toward enlightenment. Making positive differences in classrooms serving learners of African descent should be a shared goal and mutual quest for all who teach them. Until or unless that happens, the reimaged future-focused NABSE will have to be enough. Ultimately, as the impact of COVID-19 continues to wane, black educators will forever be “facing the rising sun of our new day begun.” We will march on until victory is won!

May 2021



APPENDIX

NABSE Education Imperatives Collaborative-Team Members

- Michelle D. Walton, CONVENOR
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- Betty Maceo, NABSE Parent Commission Chair, Sandusky, Ohio
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NABSE National Teacher Institute Collaborative Team Members

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Texas Southern University (Past Chair) - NABSE Higher Education Commission
- Thandabantu B. Maceo - Vice Pres., Strategic Enrollment Management & Marketing,
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