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**To:** The Education Transition Team of President-elect Barack Obama  
**From:** Brenda Lilienthal Welburn, Executive Director  
**Date:** 12/11/08  
**Re:** Organizational Communications and Recommendations for the Upcoming Education Agenda

The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) welcomes this opportunity to share information about State Boards of Education – the vital role they play in the states and nationally – and our recommendations for the education agenda of President-elect Obama. We remain committed to a constructive, two-way dialogue with the incoming Administration about how to strengthen state leadership in educational policymaking, promote excellence in the education of all students, including assuring equality of access to educational opportunity, and to assure continued citizen support for public education.

NASBE has provided support and services to state boards of education and been a national leader in promoting meaningful education reforms for fifty years. Over the last fifteen years, a series of deliberate and strategic plans have guided the work of the Board of Directors and the NASBE staff to ensure relevancy to state board needs in their effort to provide an extraordinary education for every student in the nation.

NASBE offers a wealth of timely and high-quality information, publications, and professional development opportunities to its members, many of which also function as vehicles for advancing significant policy changes at scale across states and districts. NASBE's commissions and study groups are perhaps the best known of these, serving both to provide information critical to board members' decision-making and, through action-oriented recommendations and bringing attention to important issues, fostering improvements in education policies and practices. An example of the impact of our study groups can be found in recent policy actions on financial literacy in three states. A 2006 NASBE commission anticipated the economic crisis in the United States and asserted that students were seriously under-prepared with the financial literacy skills they needed to make sound decisions. The report "*Who Will Own Our Children?*" is included in this packet with the 2008 Study Group Reports on Middle Schools and Career and Technical Education.

Study groups also are the foundation of project-based work to support the implementation of policy recommendations. NASBE is currently conducting, or recently has concluded projects on:



- Early Childhood Education
- Secondary School Redesign
- Adolescent Literacy
- Administrative Leadership
- Civic Learning and Student Leadership
- Student Health and Wellness

In 2009, NASBE Study Groups will focus on student assessment and dropout prevention through community partnerships. Other NASBE study groups may be launched in 2009 based on the availability and interest of external funders. NASBE’s comments and recommendations to the incoming administration are based on our study groups and project work and are presented either as suggestions for an economic stimulus effort or for more extended policy work.

Please note that recommendations about **early childhood education** are not included in this document because they were submitted by Dr. Mariana Haynes, NASBE Director of Research, through a previous meeting with the transition team

| <b>HEALTH AND WELLNESS</b>  |   |
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| <p>For over 20 years, NASBE has led work that connects health and wellness issues to the work of schools. In partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and through grant funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, NASBE promotes student health and wellness, good nutrition and obesity prevention. In the current climate, many schools are eliminating physical activity, eating and nutrition programs and health related instruction. Our stimulus recommendations suggest an opportunity to train workers, create jobs and enhance the community infrastructure to support wellness and prevention. Our policy initiative reflects the need to provide sustained access to quality health care services.</p> |   |
| <b>STIMULI</b>  | <b>POLICY INITIATIVES</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train paraprofessionals for school-based health services to alleviate the crisis created by a shortage of school health nurses</li> <li>• Refurbish school yards and playgrounds to improve safety and promote physical activity</li> <li>• Improve walkability and bikability to schools by creating sidewalks, bike lanes, and other traffic calming measures.</li> <li>• Provide equipment like salad bars, healthy vending machines, as well as staff support for school lunchrooms to serve nutritious meals</li> <li>• Create access to safe, free drinking water for children in the public schools, outside on the playgrounds and near school sports</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support for school-based health services to promote prevention and wellness</li> <li>• 2009 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization should support efforts to offer children the healthiest options in all federally funded programs.</li> <li>• 2009 Surface Transportation Reauthorization should support efforts to provide safe areas for children to play and be physically active at school</li> </ul> |



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| <p>facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize JROTC instructors who are properly trained and licensed to provide instruction for physical education classes</li> </ul> |  |
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**SECONDARY SCHOOL REDESIGN**

NASBE supports state policy initiatives to improve and redesign the nation’s secondary schools, particularly those focused on increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and on ensuring comprehensive post secondary opportunities for all students. In a current project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation three states have been awarded mini grants and will receive technical assistance in expanding and enhancing policies for turning around low performing high schools. Other current funding from the Carnegie Corporation provides support to five states to support state policy development in secondary literacy. College readiness, career and technical education and opportunities offered by the U.S. military also are factors in our work. Our members have expressed concern and support for increasing the focus on middle schools as an important element of secondary redesign and we will be exploring opportunities to implement recent NASBE study group recommendations.

**STIMULI**

**POLICY INITIATIVES**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advance career technical education by using dormant or underutilized facilities and workers to train students</li> <li>Fund specific school-to-work programs that will teach skills to non-college bound students that will take them immediately into the workforce</li> <li>Promote the US Military as a strategy for career training and college affordability</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop specific programs under the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to reduce dropouts including the use of community-based organizations</li> <li>Include funding and language in the ESEA reauthorization for programs that emphasize career and workplace training for middle and high school students</li> <li>Expand early college high school initiatives</li> </ul> |
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**SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND IMPROVEMENT**

A number of recommendations have been offered on school construction and improvement. Our members have expressed concern that assistance will be targeted nationally without state oversight or guidance. This issue was of particular concern to members of the Louisiana State Board who noted that the devastation of New Orleans has overshadowed the infrastructure needs of the rest of the state. Resources for school construction and improvement must be distributed via a state-level process to ensure equitable and effective targeting to priority infrastructure needs throughout the states. The recommendations offered reflect the



immediate need for an economic stimulus, although school facilities are a long term policy issue that would benefit from the support and assistance of the federal government over the next several years.

| STIMULI  | POLICY INITIATIVES   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund repairs and upgrades to schools that promote energy efficiency and use identified green standards such as LEEDS</li> <li>• Ensure internal wiring, air conditioning, and electrical supply is sufficient for increased technology use</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a comprehensive vision for for upgrading every public school for the twenty first century, including new school construction</li> </ul> |

**EDUCATOR AND ADMINISTRATOR QUALITY**

Educator quality is essential to sustained education reform. State Board members are focused on defining highly qualified and highly effective teachers and administrators. Proposals for common standards will demand changes in how some states prepare and license education professionals, and incentives to states for the development of joint initiatives would be extremely useful. NASBE supports customary teacher preparation and education, but recognizes the potential to provide jobs while addressing critical shortages. As such, one of the stimulus recommendations acknowledges the increasing number of unemployed and under-employed, college educated individuals who could be retrained for teaching.

| STIMULI  | POLICY INITIATIVES  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a system to train teachers to understand non-academic issues that affect the health and well being of students</li> <li>• Develop a joint appropriation to the Department of Labor and the Department of Education to expedite the training and certification of unemployed, high-skilled workers as new teachers in math and science</li> <li>• Provide training for supplemental service providers under NCLB that would include educators reentering the workforce for economic reasons</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the accreditation of teacher preparation programs and implementation of teacher evaluations to ensure teachers have knowledge and skills to integrate advanced literacy performance skills in content area coursework</li> </ul> |

**TECHNOLOGY/STEM EDUCATION**

To ensure that all students acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they will need to be successful in work, life and citizenship, the nation must revisit its investment strategy in educational technological infrastructure, hardware, software/applications, and professional development/technical support to change teaching and learning. In addition, any such



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|   | <p>grounded in high-quality data – is needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support quick turn around studies that can be immediately disseminated and implemented to state policymakers, including state boards of education</li> </ul>  |
| <b>STATE CAPACITY</b>   |  |
| <p>The current climate has increased demands on state departments of education without clear support to meet those expanding demands. As both federal officials and state leaders readily acknowledge, the success of federal education reforms heavily depends on the ability of states to provide support and technical assistance to low-performing districts and schools. Resources and support for stable governance would strengthen the state/federal partnership increasing the probability of successful implementation of both federal and state policies</p> |  |
| <b>STIMULI</b>  | <b>POLICY INITIATIVES</b>  |
| <p>Assist state, districts, and schools in developing a cohesive, longitudinal K-16 data system that could track individual student progress and needs – and communicating key elements of that data system in meaningful ways to parents and community members</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop high-quality, research-based resources for state policymakers charged with education oversight – and mechanisms to engage those policymakers in an ongoing dialogue about school improvement priorities and strategies.</li> <li>• Develop federal policies, resource allocation strategies, and other services to support and expand the capacity of state departments of education to provide technical assistance and other help to those schools and districts most in need</li> <li>• Assist state, districts, and schools in understanding and use of data for student achievement</li> </ul> |



investments should drive innovative programs to increase the numbers of students, especially young women and minorities, being exposed to and pursuing degrees in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields.

| STIMULI   | POLICY INITIATIVES  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deploy robust broadband connectivity to all schools and libraries</li> <li>• Invest in supporting 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms and school buildings, equipped with laptops, interactive whiteboards, and effective instructional software</li> <li>• Provide grants for science and applied technology/engineering labs and equipment for STEM adequate instruction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support joint actions by state and local policymakers to review and revise educational policies and regulations based on the opportunities and new challenges offered by an increased use of technology for education</li> <li>• Support a systematic and long-term research and development agenda to ensure that investments in educational technology drive successful innovation in education at scale addressed to core educational concerns: early childhood, adolescent literacy, dropout prevention, etc</li> <li>• Support initiatives that foster the teaching and learning of media and information literacy/critical thinking, digital ethics, and internet safety</li> <li>•</li> </ul> |

**RESEARCH**

Supporting and disseminating research is a key role for the U.S. Department of Education and state board members routinely grapple with the question of how research should inform policy and ultimately influence practice. Increasing funding for descriptive, quick-turnaround studies on topics of national import would be a valuable contribution. In addition, there is much to be learned from international comparative work (states vs. nations, nations vs. nations) to shed light on the evolving nature of education systems that would be valuable to state policymakers as in benchmarking their standards, assessments, licensure, and preservice/in-service educator and administrator preparation against global competitors.

| STIMULI   | POLICY INITIATIVES   |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make public and freely accessible online reports of all funded research and policy work by the U.S. Department of Education (contracts and grants), focused first on those that could inform stimulus-focused investments</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a rigorous, large-scale study of the skills and abilities required for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace (i.e., an update to the SCANS work of the early 1990s). Given structural changes in the global economy and the influence of technology on the workplace, a national conversation amongst policymakers, business leaders, and educators –</li> </ul> |