



2026 ASBSD Standing Positions

OVERVIEW

Standing positions are broad policy statements that reflect the core beliefs of South Dakota's locally elected public school board members. Standing positions provide your school board association with general direction and guidance on a range of education policy issues.

EQUITY IN EDUCATION

School boards are encouraged to recognize and to understand the needs and strengths of all students. School boards should provide resources that will facilitate access to a high-quality, safe, and supportive education that prepares students for success. ASBSD urges local school boards to promote and to support the significant benefits of learning in racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse settings, to commit to equity and excellence for all students, and to support the needs of English-language learners.

Adopted: 2018

Revised: 2023

HEALTH & WELLNESS

ASBSD believes that wellness is related to staff and students' mental and physical well-being and their readiness to teach and learn. A growing body of research links student wellness to positive academic results, affirming the important role the overall wellness plays in student achievement.

Mental health is also vital to the wellbeing of all students and has become increasingly important as schools often serve as the first line of defense in providing mental health services or counseling to students. Additional State and Federal resources and funding to support the behavioral and mental health of students are needed to support both students and staff members.

ASBSD believes local public school boards should work with community stakeholders in a coordinated approach to promote policies and practices that encourage and enable wellness, including healthy food choices, nutrition education, personal care and hygiene and regular physical activity, and physical and mental wellbeing, including behavioral resources.

Comprehensive local policy includes multiple aspects of student/staff well-being, including drug resistance, suicide prevention, violence prevention and all forms of bullying.

ASBSD urges local public school boards to adopt policy that promotes healthy lifestyles and student safety, but opposes state mandates, whether funded or unfunded, which would limit the authority of local public school districts to design appropriate wellness programs that reflect school and community standards.

Adopted: 2008

Revised: 2024

INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

ASBSD believes devoting public funds to elementary and secondary education is an investment in the social and economic future of our children, our communities, our state and our nation. There is no impoverishment of public education that is not eventually an impoverishment of South Dakota.

In South Dakota, public schools deliver an outstanding return on investment. The personal and economic benefits of a quality education have a direct and dramatic impact on individuals, families and communities. Investments in the public education system serve multiple ends, but none are more important to the economic future of our country than ensuring every child graduates from high school ready for the postsecondary education or the workplace.

ASBSD believes investing in elementary and secondary education leads to improved student outcomes, particularly when investments strengthen teacher quality, improve access to high quality public K-12 programs and provide extended learning opportunities for students at-risk.

South Dakota's Constitution prescribes the commitment to public education in Article 8, Section 1; "The stability of a republican form of government depending on the morality and intelligence of the people, it shall be the duty of the Legislature to establish and maintain a general and uniform system of public schools wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all; and to adopt all suitable means to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education."

The State Aid inflationary index factor defined in SDCL 13-13-10.1 requires school districts to annually receive an increase in state aid. This law requires an increase in the investment in public education be made by the state each year and is the only such legal requirement amongst the state's institutions.

Investment in education should also come in attracting teachers to the profession. State funds and/or programs for an undergraduate scholarship for education majors in each K-12 education certification area or for a teacher academy for public school teachers holding a preliminary alternative certification or an alternative certification to assist in their completion of requirements for full certification are two options that could be explored.

ASBSD encourages the exploration of new funding sources for public schools, including, but not limited to, utilizing a transfer for excess funds in the state general fund balance or establishing a trust or accessing available trust fund dollars from the state to provide much needed additional funding to schools.

Adopted: 2011

Revised: 2025

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Public school districts are governed by elected leaders, who are responsive and accountable to local citizens. An informed, active citizenry is essential to our democratic and representative form of government.

Local boards, within parameters established by state law, are vested with authority to make local education decisions. Local board members, as the elected representatives closest to the students, families and communities in which they live, are best positioned to understand student and community needs and identify effective solutions. A local public school board cannot delegate statutory duties and responsibilities. State law must allow governance flexibility to ensure all school boards are positioned to meet the needs of their community and the changing public school environment.

Public school boards are accountable to students, citizens and staff for: providing education programs; striving for excellence; identifying needs; adopting clearly defined written policies; measuring program success; and interpreting and disseminating information to the public; and setting the school calendar that best fits their district.

Public school boards function best in a non-partisan, broadly representative, team-spirited manner while putting district needs ahead of partisanship, special or personal interest – be they political, racial, religious, geographic, economic, social, civic or any other form. The board and superintendent, along with other key personnel, serve as a local governance leadership team that works together to effectively and efficiently operate a public school district.

ASBSD supports the judgment and integrity of South Dakota public school board members and opposes initiatives or legislation that impedes a school board's ability to govern.

It is ASBSD's expectation that school board members be fully invested in the concept of public school education and the purpose for which public schools are created.

Adopted: 2007

Revised: 2020

NATIVE AMERICAN CURRICULUM

ASBSD believes South Dakotans must continue to work toward embracing the pride, heritage and dignity of Native American culture, fostering collaboration and establishing long-term commitments, including consideration of the implementation of the Oceti Sakowin Essential Understandings or other curriculum and coursework in South Dakota Native American history and culture, to improving public educational outcomes for Native American students.

Adopted: 2010

Revised: 2022

NON-PUBLIC SCHOOLS OR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION FUNDING OR ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

The defunding of public education through the diversion of state funds to non-public schools or alternative education systems is a detriment to the state of South Dakota.

More than 140,000 students are enrolled in the public school district system, which accounts for more than 80 percent of the total K-12 school aged children in the state. With four out of every five K-12 school aged children in South Dakota enrolled in public schools, it is imperative for the good of the state the available public funds be utilized for public education and no other education systems.

Article 8, Section 1 of the South Dakota Constitution, which states, "...it shall be the duty of the legislature to establish and maintain a general uniform system of public schools..." further supports the sentiment of funding public schools in place of any other education system or delivery method.

Funding a private school scholarship, savings account, voucher program or other method or establishing a charter school or other education system or providing a property tax exemption or subsidy benefitting a non-public or alternative education structure beyond the public education system harms the state and impairs the students enrolled in South Dakota public schools.

ASBSD opposes the establishment and funding of a federal school choice program. Federal dollars should not be reallocated to fund a school choice program – charter schools, private education, etc. Federal funding should continue to be utilized to fund the programs already in place, which are utilized by public schools. A decrease in federal funding for public schools and education programs in order to be reallocated to fund a school choice program would be detrimental to public education.

Adopted: 2024

Revised: 2025

OPEN GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

As public bodies, school boards operate in a transparent manner that promotes active civic engagement and public discourse. Effective and efficient governance respects the public's right to observe, respectfully record a board meeting and petition government while operating under the legal framework of school board, state and federal policy. Public school boards, as government entities closest to citizens, provide a wealth of public information, including thorough financial records.

ASBSD believes it is incumbent upon each public school board member to have a working knowledge of both open meeting laws and privacy laws.

ASBSD supports state policies and potential legislation allowing public school boards the local option to post official minutes and public notices online.

ASBSD supports full disclosure of conflicts of interest as prescribed by law (reference SDCL 3-23-6 through 3-23-9).

Adopted: 2009

Revised: 2019

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE

ASBSD believes South Dakota's public education system, through South Dakota's open enrollment laws, does provide parents and students the choice to attend any of South Dakota's public schools.

ASBSD supports open enrollment laws that work to promote cooperation among public school districts that help meet the educational needs of all students and families.

ASBSD supports partnerships between schools and parents to offer diverse and multiple high quality educational options to meet the individual needs of students.

ASBSD believes public education offers communities the best way to educate all children including those who have disabilities and students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Adopted: 2007

Revised: 2022

SAFE AND SECURE SCHOOLS

ASBSD believes South Dakota public school students deserve to learn in a safe and secure school environment.

That safe and secure environment can be achieved through additional federal, state and local resources and funding for schools to implement or add school safety measures, which may include school resource officers, physical security improvements, or related student supports, so long as the resources and funding aren't accompanied by mandates that bypass local control.

A growing body of research has linked student achievement and behavior, as well as staff morale, to physical building conditions. Every child deserves a safe, technologically-ready school facility designed for student learning.

ASBSD believes local public school boards are responsible for the adoption of plans to prevent and respond to situations that threaten the safety or well-being of students and staff. School districts are encouraged to work with a variety of state and local government agencies and to prepare effective emergency response plans.

State and local government agencies are encouraged to inform and collaborate with school districts to obtain and utilize appropriate resources that will enhance the safety and security of school buildings.

ASBSD believes local public school boards, acting in compliance with federal and state law, must have the authority to enact and implement policies and procedures that maintain safe, orderly schools and create supportive learning cultures.

ASBSD supports current laws designed to keep convicted criminals from employment in schools and illegal drugs and weapons away from school buildings, as well as South Dakota School Safety Program, which provides many resources and training opportunities schools can use to keep students and staff safe.

ASBSD urges parents, businesses, communities, local law enforcement and state agencies to work with local school boards to provide safe, crime-free schools.

ASBSD recognizes the crucial role law enforcement, the juvenile justice system, social services, court-appointed advisors, mental health providers, and the medical community play in serving students and their families in protecting the school environment.

Adopted: 2010

Revised: 2024

SCHOOL FINANCE

South Dakota's public school students deserve a comprehensive school finance system. School finance decisions, whether at the local, state or federal level, should build the capacity of the public education system to expand learning opportunities for students. Policy makers at all levels should fulfill commitments and obligations to public schools before providing financial support to non-public schools.

ASBSD supports a school finance system that:

- Provides necessary equitable, predictable and timely funding; and
- Provides equal opportunities to all public school students while addressing South Dakota's diverse student needs; and
- Provides judicious funding based on relief for enrollment fluctuations; and
- Provides locally elected public school boards the authority and responsibility to prioritize and allocate funding, within the mandates and parameters of each fund set in state statute, to best meet student needs; and
- Provides an appropriate level of funding for special education programs; and
- Provides additional funding to meet state and federal expectations.

In addition, ASBSD supports the local control of school boards in the management of district funds.

Adopted: 2007

Revised: 2024

SCHOOL REORGANIZATION

ASBSD believes school district reorganization, resource sharing and cooperative arrangements are in the best interest of South Dakota's public school students when:

- Educational outcomes, measured in expanded educational opportunities with expectations for improved achievement, is the most important consideration; and
- Geographical issues are considered, including the amount of student travel time and allowing for continued community participation; and
- Reorganization is voluntary – initiated at the local level by the board or citizens and approved by the citizens of the public school district.

Adopted: 2006

Revised: 2020

STATE REQUIREMENTS & OVERSIGHT

Decisions made by the State Board of Education and the process of implementation of those decisions by the state Department of Education should be done so with full consideration of the effect on students, educators, administrators and school boards.

Outcomes affecting South Dakota academic content standards, graduation requirements and state assessment exams should be reached with sufficient input from stakeholders in public education as they serve as expectations for what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level and upon graduation with the goal being all students continue their education, ultimately becoming career and life ready.

An appropriated guarantee of sufficient financial resources and professional development opportunities being made available to public schools and staff members to ensure all students can achieve the benchmarks is also needed.

Legislative intervention to halt or repeal content standards approved by the State Board of Education Standards should not be broached as any intervention in the process could result in unintended consequences for our schools in the future; and erodes local control or undermining the board.

The inclusion of multiple K-12 educators or those with a background in K-12 education to serve on the South Dakota State Board of Education Standards should be strongly considered by the Governor when making appointments. The Senate Education committee and Senate body as a whole must thoroughly review any proposed appointments before voting to confirm the individual.

Establishing parameters for membership or adjusting the Governor's appointment or Senate confirmation process made in state statute may compromise the integrity of the board and its membership in the future and should be avoided.

Adopted: 2024

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

One of a local public school board's core responsibilities is to develop, adopt and oversee policies focused on improving student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps between low achieving students and students performing at or above grade level.

Every student can achieve at high levels when the state, local public school boards and communities establish high expectations and provide necessary resources and support for students. In order for a student to achieve those high levels, enrollment in school should be required until the student graduates, earns their GED or reaches the age of 18.

Today's public school boards strive to develop instructional policy that provides for multiple paths to knowledge that moves students to develop more critical thinking, collaborative problem solving and self-reliance skills.

As community leaders, public school board members focus on providing programs and working collaboratively with other agencies.

Public school administrators and teachers provide an excellent education to their students and to ensure that remains, each should be fully certified and stay up-to-date on their continuing education credits. Educators not certified should be working toward certification.

Initial and continuing education of school board members is also important in order to enhance their knowledge base resulting in strong and effective leadership for the district and to set a good example for students, administrators and staff.

Student achievement should be gauged using an accountability system based on multiple assessments that are valid, reliable, defensible, credible and diagnostically meaningful to a variety of stakeholders.

Public schools in South Dakota offer students multiple avenues to reach their potential success that is not measured strictly by assessments.

ASBSD urges policymakers at all levels to support programs that promote high level skills such as digital literacy, innovative thinking, and interactive communication to engage learners leading students to succeed in today's highly competitive, global economy.

In addition, as education needs of students change, educational opportunities need to continue to evolve, to help guide students down pathways of success for their future career goals and an expansion and creation of Career and Technical Education (CTE) options through state created grant opportunities so districts may provide that avenue.

Adopted: 2010

Revised: 2025

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

Technology has an essential and expanding role in our global society. Emerging information and communication technologies will reshape how students learn and how they apply their knowledge, skills and abilities.

ASBSD believes technology transforms public K-12 education. The infrastructure, hardware, software, and platforms are either available or being developed that will continue to change the nature of how we teach our children in profound and far-reaching ways.

ASBSD believes technology is a powerful, important tool for public education to be used in combination with proven teaching and learning strategies to ensure a high-quality education.

ASBSD supports technology initiatives that are focused on improved student outcomes and that reflect the need for ongoing support and renewal in the ever-changing technological landscape. Digital technology using virtual learning strategies, blended learning, and other cutting edge teaching coupled with quality training, will advance our students in the highly competitive global environment.

South Dakota's public school systems should embrace technology as a catalyst to improve teaching and learning. School district staff need support, through high-quality, embedded professional development, to integrate technology into their instruction. Technology integration is a critical tool to prepare our students for digital world that is transforming around them.

The use of Artificial Intelligence in schools should be determined by local school board policy that best fits the district's needs.

Adopted: 2012

Revised: 2024