

NASDSE President's Priorities for NASDSE for 2016-2017

1. Engage the community to raise expectations regarding students with disabilities.

Educational improvements impact the greater educational and business community, not just students with disabilities; however, many stakeholders defer providing input to other individuals perceived as having special knowledge and expertise regarding students with disabilities. We need to create an environment where all stakeholders feel empowered to consider how the needs of all students align with, and support, the needs of students with disabilities.

2. Increase NASDSE's engagement with the state directors of special education to further NASDSE's mission and efforts to ensure all students with disabilities receive the educational supports and services they need from birth through 21 to leave school ready for college and career.

With the ongoing turnover in state directors of special education and their state teams, it is imperative that NASDSE offer and encourage participation in meaningful dialogue on state needs with colleagues. We must have access to safe opportunities to learn and problem solve, while also providing input for Board direction and decisions. Most importantly, we need to leave these discussions with achievable action plans and communication protocols.

3. Lead discussions around NASDSE's guiding principles for reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to support students with disabilities within the public education system, recognizing that it differs at each state.

My third priority is to ensure that the next version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is written in alignment NASDSE's guiding principles. There are numerous stakeholder groups who are already engaged, and others are poised to support our work. A common message that benefits all students, as well as students with disabilities, strengthens our actions. NASDSE will be searching for opportunities to identify areas of agreement and discuss needs, with both current and new partners in areas such as dyslexia and teacher education programs. We will also identify methods to integrate these discussions into current state efforts to implement the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). NASDSE will also engage with specialized instructional support personnel and coordinate with other state agencies whose actions impact students with disabilities.

4. Expand awareness of restorative justice as an option to reduce disproportionality and the use of disciplinary practices that remove students with disabilities from instruction.

My fourth priority is to decrease the number of students with disabilities who are removed from instruction for disciplinary incidents. Disciplinary practices have historically impacted students with disabilities disproportionately and in a negative manner. NASDSE's immediate Past President John Eisenberg's focus on improving discipline, school climate, culture and chronic absenteeism resulted in the formation of the Consortium for Positive School Climate this past year. This valuable work must continue, and expand, to consider research and evidence-based practices in addition to multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) and

positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), with school-wide engagement, including School Resource Officers (SROs), parents and families.

5. Provide states with support to develop and implement research-aligned policies designed to ensure that students with disabilities receive equitable access to online instruction while also receiving FAPE.

My fifth priority is to improve access to and supports within online learning environments for students with disabilities. Every state is currently providing online learning opportunities, but not all states have adequately addressed the specific needs of students with disabilities, their educators and families in that environment. NASDSE will create model guidance documents to help state staffs foster appropriate educational opportunities for these students in virtual environments, including providing appropriate accommodations and services. NASDSE will also continue to support and encourage research on evidence-based practices for learners in virtual environments and make the results quickly accessible and implementable to state and LEA staff.

By focusing on these five priorities during the coming year, NASDSE will not only further its mission to support states in providing appropriate services and supports for students with disabilities, but help each one of us to be better informed and able advocates for equity and quality in public education.