

NASB News Update--April 2015

News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation



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Supporting Success for All Students through Local School Board Leadership



A Message from NASB's President



Happy Spring, everyone!

Continuing with this year's focus on literacy, I have chosen this month to review a book that has been a topic of conversation among various groups here in Nevada lately. It is *50 Myths and Lies That Threaten America's Public Schools: The Real Crisis in Education*.

50 Myths and Lies is an anti-privatization treatise, broken into short reads. Its twenty-one authors fact check beliefs and statements that in their view contribute to efforts of the more insidious side of education reform. They aggressively oppose those who would at once convert America's education endeavor into a market enterprise, and seek a corner on such a market if successful at creating it.

While much of the book echoes other attempts to counter oft-repeated and sometimes-stretched allegations about American public education (and makes a few stretches itself), it is in some places more aggressive than much of the current national dialogue. The first chapter acknowledges that many individuals seeking to improve education in the United States are sincere and devoted – even those caught up in misguided work. But it also alleges that some motives are self-interested (and possibly racist or deliberately in favor of one socioeconomic class) even to the likely detriment of others. It labels some of the narratives circulating in today's education debate as outright lies.

The first chapter quotes a *National Review* piece by columnist Michelle Malkin about "education schemes"

that she decries as "big-government and big-business collusion masquerading as 'reform.'"

As a conservative parent of children educated at public charter schools, I am especially appalled by these pocket-lining GOP elites who are giving grassroots education reformers a bad name and cashing in on their betrayal of limited-government principles.

Though not every essay is that aggressive, her quote previews the tenor of the book as a whole. The first chapter concludes with a quote from a 2013 speech by James Meredith, accepting the Medal for Educational Impact at the Harvard Graduate School of Education:

The civil rights issue of our time is to stop unproven so-called education reforms from totally destroying our children's public education and to get parents, teachers, community leaders and elders, the whole 'Family of God,' to take back control of our children's education from politicians, bureaucrats and for-profits, who have turned our public schools into pawns in a game of money and power. It is time we as citizens arm ourselves with the best evidence and information and take back control of our schools.

That call to action is echoed toward the end of the book, in the introduction for the last chapter:

Educators and other citizens—particularly those who run our schools—need to be vigilant to sort out myth from fact as they do the best they can in running a democratic, public education system as economically and effectively as possible.

All the material in between is designed to help in that endeavor, with a strong and unapologetic slant against any overt or accidental effort that would convert K-12 education into our economy's next dot-com or venture capital industry. I think the conclusion can be drawn that we are expected to take the data and assertions in this admittedly one-sided treatise in the context of the entire debate.

Although the title suggests that the entire book details only what policymakers should reject, I found as I took notes that it actually suggests more strategies and aims to pursue. What seemed to distill from among the 50 essays and six chapter introductions were four alleged "hoaxes and outright lies" and about a dozen worthy pursuits. Here they are, in that order:

The hoaxes:

1. Vouchers as a way to assist members of traditionally underserved populations. Pages 42-45 argue that school choice in practice turns out to be just that – schools choosing student populations, and thus creating favorable circumstances for themselves, more than families choosing schools.

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2. School Tuition Organizations or portfolio management (in Nevada, think "Achievement School District") as either efficient or effective. Chapter five argues multiple problems with these models and also condemns our current formula-based staffing models in much the same way that Dr. Roza does in the book I reviewed for the March NASB newsletter.

3. Competition as an effective motivator of the education workforce. This is a running thread in every chapter, though page 61 is most pointed. Data is presented to counter everything from merit pay to narrowly focused school accountability, and the difficulties inherent in attempts to define and measure success are pointed out in various contexts throughout the book.

4. Outliers as evidence that free-market reform will quickly and completely transform American education for the better. Pages 68-70 illuminate the questionable sustainability of results gained by Teach for America members working "investment banking hours in classrooms." Several parts of the book seek to expose, as stated on page 25, "a tendency to point to academic outliers as evidence that charter schools" – and other pieces of the corporate reform movement – "are working."

As I noted above, the book as a whole seemed to advocate, amidst its overtly negative stance, in favor of quite a few education strategies, beliefs and pursuits. I'll list them here with a page number or two, though most of these distill from multiple parts of the book:

- More resources to children who need more in order to succeed – page 72
- A multiplicity of purposes of America's public education system – pages 185, 211, 233
- A determination to change the facts of the future – page 61
- Support of an intrinsically motivated education workforce – page 55
- Recognition of the wonders of education that escape measurement – page 197
- Cognizance of differences in social capital and impact on education and social mobility – page 102
- Variety in approaches to education – page 40
- Diversity in student population and education workforce – page 167
- Preschool and class size of the kinds that wealthy parents choose – page 88
- Traditional public schooling as a choice that families make deliberately – page 22
- Organic variety in types and breadth of knowledge taught and learned – page 155
- Community collaboration to address factors that influence children's learning – page 51
- Deliberate and unrelenting work to improve school safety and climate – page 151
- Collaborative environments among educators – page 63

In summary: This is a data-rich book. Though it is a heavy and one-sided treatise that deals with very serious topics and makes aggressive assertions, it is organized in a way that is easy to read and easy to go back to for reference. It is somewhat lightly annotated, but I expect it will be a helpful resource as we continue to navigate the ongoing dialogue and debate about what will be best as we pursue success for our Nevada students.

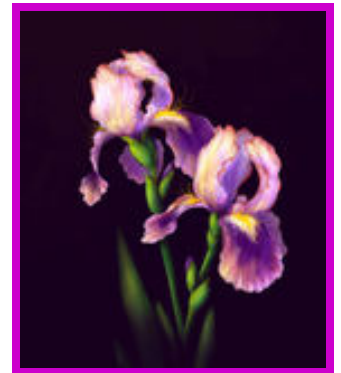
I look forward to seeing many of you next weekend in Reno at our Orientation, Part II, April 10 and 11.

Erin Cranor

NASB President [Clark]
702/266-6890



**24-Hour
School Board
Member
Orientation,
Part II
April 10-11
Reno
Hyatt Place
Hotel**



Content focusing on school finance; ethics for school board members; Nevada's academic content standards, assessments, and best practices; 50 Myths & Lies That Threaten American Schools; social networking for board members; and much more



Want to watch a 2015 Session floor session or legislative committee hearing? Check the Nevada Legislature website:

<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Calendar/A/>

For information about bills, check
<https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Session/78th2015/Reports/>

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PLAN AHEAD!
2015

NASB CONFERENCE
November 20-21

NASB GOVERNANCE MEETINGS
November 19
Reno—Atlantis Hotel Casino Spa
Resort

Dr. Draper earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Montevallo in Alabama and his Doctorate from Samford University. He is most proud of his doctorate from the school of "hard knocks" earned as a middle school assistant principal in charge of discipline for 1400 students. He has done keynotes for hundreds of school districts and education associations across the nation.

Here are some comments from those who have heard Dr. Draper speak at other conferences:

- *One of the best presenters I have ever had the opportunity to attend.*
- *John is an amazing leader and storyteller. This was the second time to hear him and both times I have come away with ideas and a brighter outlook.*
- *John's presentation was jam-packed with useful information presented in a timely and fun manner.*

Spotlighting One of Nevada's New School Board Members



NASB Conference Keynote Speaker, November 22— Dr. John Draper



Dr. John Draper has enjoyed a wide variety of experiences in his lifetime. He has been a newspaper reporter, construction worker, jailor, actor, timber buyer, musician, small business owner, choir director, soccer coach, Sunday school teacher, and door-to-door aluminum siding salesman.

For the last 30+ years he has been middle and high school teacher, assistant principal, principal, Executive Director of the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, CEO of the Educational Research Service in Washington, DC, and now serves as a nation-wide consultant with the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA). NSPRA is a membership organization helping educational leaders increase public support for schools and school districts.



Dr. Angela Taylor was appointed to the Washoe County Board of School Trustees in November 2015. She has a long history of leadership, community service, higher education, and nonprofit experience. At the time of her appointment, the Board and community had lost trust in each other. One of her primary goals has been to assist with bridging the gap and mending that relationship. She brings to

the position more than 20 years in higher education and more than 30 years in community involvement with various organizations. While at the University of Nevada, Reno, she served as Senior Associate Director of Athletics, Assistant Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations, and Associate Vice President for Student Success Services. She is President and CEO of a training company that conducts workshops, seminars, etc. in the areas of leadership, teambuilding, diversity, and inclusion. In addition, Dr. Taylor is an ordained minister and serves as the administrative assistant Pastor at Greater Light Christian Center in Reno.

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Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards

What makes an effective school board—one that positively impacts student achievement? From a research perspective, it's a complex question. It involves evaluating virtually all functions of a board, from internal governance and policy formulation to communication with teachers, building administrators, and the public.

But the research that exists is clear: boards in high-achieving districts exhibit habits and characteristics that are markedly different from boards in low-achieving districts. So what do these boards do? Here are eight characteristics:

1. Effective school boards commit to a vision of high expectations for student achievement and quality instruction and define clear goals toward that vision. Effective boards make sure these goals remain the district's top priorities and that nothing else detracts from them. In contrast, low-achieving boards "were only vaguely aware of school improvement initiatives" (Lighthouse I). "There was little evidence of a pervasive focus on school renewal at any level when it was not present at the board level," researchers said. (Lighthouse I)



2. Effective school boards have strong shared beliefs and values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn, and of the system and its ability to teach all children at high levels. In high-achieving districts, poverty, lack of parental involvement and other factors were described as challenges to be overcome, not as excuses. Board members expected to see improvements in student achievement quickly as a result of initiatives. In low-achieving districts, board members frequently referred to external pressures as the main reasons for lack of student success. (Lighthouse I)

3. Effective school boards are accountability driven, spending less time on operational issues and more time focused on policies to improve student achievement. In interviews with hundreds of board members and staff across districts, researchers Goodman, Fulbright, and Zimmerman found that high-performing boards focused on establishing a vision

supported by policies that targeted student achievement. Poor governance was characterized by factors such as micro-management by the board.

4. Effective school boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in setting and achieving district goals. In high-achieving districts, school board members could provide specific examples of how they connected and listened to the community, and school board members received information from many different sources, including the superintendent, curriculum director, principals and teachers. Findings and research were shared among all board members. (Lighthouse I; Waters and Marzano) By comparison, school boards in low-achieving districts were likely to cite communication and outreach barriers. Staff members from low-achieving districts often said they didn't know the board members at all.



5. Effective school boards are data savvy: they embrace and monitor data, even when the information is negative, and use it to drive continuous improvement. The Lighthouse I study showed that board members in high-achieving districts

identified specific student needs through data, and justified decisions based on that data. Board members regularly sought such data and were not shy about discussing it, even if it was negative. By comparison, board members in low-achieving districts tended to greet data with a "blaming" perspective, describing teachers, students and families as major causes for low performance. In these districts, board members frequently discussed their decisions through anecdotes and personal experiences rather than by citing data. They left it to the superintendent to interpret the data and recommend solutions.

6. Effective school boards align and sustain resources, such as professional development, to meet district goals. According to researchers LaRocque and Coleman, effective boards saw a responsibility to maintain high standards even in the midst of budget challenges. "To this end, the

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successful boards supported extensive professional development programs for administrators and teachers, even during times of [fiscal] restraint." In low-achieving districts, however, board members said teachers made their own decisions on staff development based on perceived needs in the classroom or for certification.

7. Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust. In successful districts, boards defined an initial vision for the district and sought a superintendent who matched this vision. In contrast, in stagnant districts, boards were slow to define a vision and often recruited a superintendent with his or her own ideas and platform, leading the board and superintendent to not be in alignment. (MDRC/Council of Great City Schools)

8. Effective school boards take part in team development and training, sometimes with their superintendents, to build shared knowledge, values and commitments for their improvement efforts. High-achieving districts had formal, deliberate training for new board members. They also often gathered to discuss specific topics. Low-achieving districts had board members who said they did not learn together except when the superintendent or other staff members made presentations of data. (Lighthouse I; LFA; LaRocque and Coleman)

Though the research on school board effectiveness is in the beginning stages, the studies included in this report make it clear that school boards in high-achieving districts have attitudes, knowledge and approaches that separate them from their counterparts in lower-achieving districts. In this era of fiscal constraints and a national environment focused on accountability, boards in high-performing districts can provide an important blueprint for success. In the process, they can offer a road map for school districts nationwide.

[This article is from the Center for Public Education posted January 28, 2011.]

<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Public-education/Eight-characteristics-of-effective-school-boards>

News about School Nutrition

At the end of January, the Department of Agriculture released **Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010**, its final regulation on certification/training for school food service personnel. This proposed rule would establish minimum professional standards for school nutrition personnel who manage and operate the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

The proposed rule would also institute hiring standards for the selection of State and local school nutrition program directors; and require all personnel in these programs to complete annual continuing education/training.

The regulations take effect July 1 and set the minimum hiring qualifications for managers of local/state nutrition programs. The regulations provide direction depending on district size and mandate the number of hours required for annual/ongoing professional development.

Enrollment thresholds determine the standards to which a specific district must comply (2499 or less, 2500 to 9999, 10000 or more). The minimum hiring requirement for a director in a small LEA will be a high school diploma plus five years' relevant experience. Directors hired without an associate's degree will be encouraged to work toward achieving it, upon hiring.

Mid-sized districts can hire someone with an associate's degree and one year experience, but who would be encouraged to pursue a bachelor's degree.

In larger districts the minimum requirement is a bachelor's degree, along with state-recognized certification in food/nutrition, food service management, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nutrition education, culinary arts, or business.

Commentary—Why Our Classrooms Benefit From Minority Teachers

By Matthew Lynch

The number of minority students enrolled in U.S. schools is growing at a rapid rate, yet student enrollment is not matched by minority teacher representation. The National Center for Education Statistics tells us that nearly 82 percent of public school teachers are white—and Black and Hispanic students are two to three times more common than teachers of the same ethnicity. The gap is typically the widest in areas of the country with high percentages of students of color.



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Nationwide, parents and policymakers are highlighting the importance of racial representation in the classroom. Many feel that minority teachers are in a position to put a stop to negative stereotypes and act as role models and mentors for students of color. Teachers who can relate to their students' backgrounds usually are better able to look past biases of their abilities. A study in *Economics of Education Reviews* tell us that minority students perform better with minority teachers.

In addition to the challenge of having too few minority teachers, we also see the highest percentage of Black teachers leaving the profession. This is likely because minority teachers tend to work in schools with high rates of poverty.



The education gap is a serious obstacle our country faces - and I think that the "diversity gap" is a major part of our struggle. The education gap is staggering and it is hindering our country socially and economically. We have to find ways to get more teachers of color in the classroom. Students perform better when they can relate to their teachers, and teachers who can relate to their students are less likely to have a preconceived idea of how each student will perform. We need more teachers of color in our schools acting as strong role models for our minority students.

[This article was originally published in Education Week, March 10, 2015.]

**Reno—Hyatt Place Hotel
April 10, 2015**

**NASB Executive Committee
Meeting
1100am - 145pm
Light Lunch Will Be Served**

**NASB Joint Meeting
Board of Directors and
Executive Committee
200pm - 345pm**

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