

# NASB News Update--August 2017

## News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation



Office 549 Court Street Reno, NV 89501  
Mailing PO Box 14855 Reno, NV 89507  
Phone 775/657-8411 Fax 775/453-1017

Supporting Success for All Students  
through Local School Board Leadership



**A  
Message  
from  
NASB's  
President**



Thanks to each of you who attended our Legislative Workshop in Reno on August 5. We spent three hours reviewing the bills enacted by the 2017 Session of the Nevada Legislature impacting public education. NASB's Executive Director created two great documents for our use. You can find both of these on the Association's website [www.nvasb.org](http://www.nvasb.org) in the dropdown menu for the Advocacy section.

We have one remaining opportunity for professional development before the November Conference. That training has been scheduled for September 16 in Las Vegas at the Tuscan Suites, from 900am to noon. Hope to see some of you there.

This month's poem is focused on the beginning of the school year and our responsibilities as trustees.

**The heat of an August summer is in full swing  
Schools will be starting with all of the activities  
that brings  
The kids with enthusiasm after the summer break**

**Return to the classrooms their education at stake  
Now is the time for us to make a difference in their  
lives  
It is up to all of us to work together for the  
education we provide  
It is a big responsibility that all in public education  
share  
To provide a good education for every student and  
show them that we care  
For others get to pick and choose who may attend  
But for us, we take them all without end  
No matter what their status  
No matter from whence they came  
We open our arms to them and educate them all  
the same  
To help them realize their life dreams and goals  
Is no small task we shoulder, but this is our sacred  
role  
For we may not be able to pick and choose, but we  
will accept them all  
For the education of our youth is at stake, and we  
must not stumble or fall  
So let's prepare ourselves for the coming year  
ahead  
And take upon ourselves this challenge of  
educating everyone instead  
For every kid is precious and every kid has the  
right  
To get an education, so we must teach with all of  
our might  
For their future and ours is at the base of our  
foundation  
For we are the educators of this state, we are the  
backbone of Public Education**

My thanks to each of you for all you do each day to increase opportunities for our students to learn and achieve in the public schools they attend in each of our communities.

Sincerely,  
**Wade Poulsen**  
NASB President



## NASB News Update--August 2017

### News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

#### Friday Conference Keynote Speaker— Dr. William Parrett



**William H. Parrett** is the Director of the Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies and Professor of Education at Boise State University. He has received international recognition for his work in school improvement related to children and adolescents who live in poverty.

His professional experiences include public school teaching and principalships, curriculum design and media production, and college leadership, teaching, research and publication.

Parrett holds a Ph.D. in Secondary Education from Indiana University. Parrett has served on the faculties of Indiana University, the University of Alaska and Boise State University. As Director of the Boise State University Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies (1996 to present), Parrett coordinates funded projects and school improvement initiatives that currently exceed \$5 million annually. His research on reducing achievement gaps and effective schooling practices for youth living in poverty, and low-performing schools has gained widespread recognition.

Parrett is the co-author (with Kathleen Budge) of the best-selling, *Turning High-Poverty Schools Into High-Performing Schools*, (ASCD, 2012), winner of 2013 Silver Excel Award for Best Technical Book (Association Media and Publishing). He has also co-authored *Saving Our Students, Saving Our Schools, 2nd edition*, (Corwin Press, 2008, Best Seller & Honorable Mention, National Education Book of the Year 2009), *The Kids Left Behind: Catching Up the Underachieving Children of Poverty* (Solution Tree, 2007, Best Seller), *Saving Our Students, Saving Our Schools* (2003), *Hope Fulfilled for At-Risk & Violent Youth* (2001), and other important studies.

#### Saturday Conference Keynote Speaker— Ed Massey



**Ed Massey** is a native of Northern Kentucky. He lives in Boone County with his wife of 28 years and their three daughters. Ed is a graduate of Lloyd High School, Eastern Kentucky University and Chase College of Law.

Ed is a practicing partner in the law firm of Blankenship Massey and Associates. The firm has two offices. He is member of the Kentucky Bar Association, Ohio Bar Association and Indiana Bar Association.

Ed is graduate of the 2004 Class of Leadership Kentucky which is a unique program designed to “advance Kentucky by bringing people with leadership abilities together and providing them with insight into the complex issues facing the State.”

Ed has been a member of the Boone County Board of Education for over 20 years. Additionally, he has served as President of the Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA).

Having served as a board member for the National Parents and Teachers Association (PTA), he currently serves on an advisory committee to the sitting President.

In addition to his work in the legal field and with schools, Ed has served his community in a variety of ways including: CPR Instructor; Water Safety Instructor; Lifeguard; Emergency Medical Technician; Firefighter and football coach. Ed’s passion has inspired him to speak to Boards, PTA’s, Superintendents, Parents, Community Leaders, Businesses and anyone else who will

# NASB News Update--August 2017

## News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

listen, about the impact of public education on our communities, states and our nation.

### Plan Ahead for NASB's 2017 Conference

November 17-18—Reno, Atlantis Casino Resort Spa



Governance Meetings  
November 16, 2017

Deadline to Submit 2017  
NASB Nomination Forms  
500pm on August 15, 2017



Joe Crim, Jr., presents the 2016 Innovative Educator of the Year Award to Miki Trujillo [Douglas].



Some of NASB's departing trustees honored during the 2016 Conference.

### Food for Thought: Crossing Borders/ Border Crossings

By Carrie Kilman

On a cool morning in Whitfield County, Ga., a thin boy named Alfredo sits alone at the edge of the classroom. Shoulders hunched forward, Alfredo stares at the desktop in front of him. This is his first day of school in America, and he is frightened.

A thousand miles away, in St. Paul, Minn., 6th-grader Pang Yia doesn't say much until a teacher hands her a large sheet of paper and a box of markers. Speaking through pictures, Pang Yia tells the story of how she traveled from a Thai refugee camp to the middle of Minnesota.

Further east, in Lewiston, Maine, a tall young man named Mohammed weaves through a sea of mostly white faces and heads for an empty classroom, where he kneels next to another Somali-born student for the morning Muslim prayer.

Every year, thousands of immigrant and refugee students like Alfredo, Pang Yia and Mohammed enter American schools. One Minnesota educator calls the classroom "a cultural Petri dish" — one of the first places native English-speaking people interact with new immigrant populations.

For schools, this usually means growing pains, lots of questions and a crash course in multicultural literacy.

Yet multicultural training for teachers frequently lags behind immigrant population growth. Too often, one Georgia principal lamented, "multiculturalism" gets translated into a sombrero hung on a classroom wall. The result, educators say, can include harmful stereotypes, unfair disciplinary actions and failed opportunities to create classroom environments inclusive of all students.

While language barriers are perhaps the most obvious hurdle in teaching students from other countries, more and more educators are realizing

# NASB News Update--August 2017

## News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

they need to look beyond the obvious, examining their own cultural filters to better understand the cultures from which their students come.

They're learning a key tenet of English language learner programs: Students learn best in the safest, most comfortable environment possible.

### 'A Dual Identity'

"Being an immigrant or refugee student is like having a dual identity," says Be Vang, a 6th-grade teacher at Hayden Heights Elementary School in St. Paul, who immigrated to the United States as a child. "If you're from the dominant culture, maybe you've never experienced what that feels like."

Many of the Hayden Heights' Hmong refugee students have two names: a Hmong name given to them at birth and a Western name given to them upon arriving in the United States. One 5th-grader goes by "Jefferson" at school; at home, his parents and siblings call him by his Hmong name, "Bee." When asked what name he uses when he thinks of himself, he quietly answers, "Bee."

It's a delicate and exhausting balance, choosing what to hold onto from the native culture and what to embrace from the new one.

Mohammed Mohammed, a Somali-born junior at Lewiston High School in Lewiston, Maine, resembles many of his American-born peers: He rattles off sports scores, watches "American Idol" and uses Google to help with homework. But twice a day, Mohammed breaks from class to find an empty room, or he leaves campus and drives to a nearby mosque, in order to say his Muslim prayers.

He and his Somali peers face intense scrutiny, and sometimes bias, in a state the 2000 Census defines as the whitest in the nation.

"At first, the white students wanted to be our friends, but their parents wouldn't let them," says Mohammed's friend Khalid. "It was their first time around refugee students. Their parents told them we were bad people."

### Overcoming Bias

Teachers aren't immune from bias. When Hayden

Heights Elementary was told it would receive more than 100 Hmong students from a Thai refugee camp, some teachers objected. Some worried the new students would lower the school's standardized test scores. Others complained they might be a drain on campus resources. And some worried that American parents would withdraw their children from the school.

"Their concerns really amounted to, 'What is best for our white students?'" says Polly Pampusch, a 1st-grade ELL teacher at Hayden Heights. "It's very upsetting that many teachers never think to ask, 'What global or political forces brought these students here?'"

Cultural education helps teachers overcome bias and stereotypes. Teacher Blanca Balderas came to Southeast Whitfield County High School near Dalton, Ga., two years ago from Monterrey, Mexico, through a program called The Georgia Project. The program sends Georgia teachers to a four-week language and cultural institute in Monterrey. Teachers from Mexico come to Georgia for one to three years to provide additional language support to immigrant students and their regular classroom teachers.

Balderas also acts as a cultural resource, helping teachers and administrators learn how to check their own cultural biases before judging a student's behavior.



"In Mexico, students don't have timed passing periods," Balderas says. "So we were having a lot of Mexican students showing up late for class. Some teachers would say, 'My goodness, they're lazy!' or, 'What's wrong with these students?' Nothing was wrong — they just needed someone

## NASB News Update--August 2017

### News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

to tell them, 'That's how you did it there; this is how we do it here.'"

Too often, though, the job of challenging teachers' biases lands on the shoulders of teachers of color. Vang, the 6th-grade teacher at St. Paul's Hayden Heights, says it's a job that sometimes leaves her feeling frustrated, tokenized and valued only for her knowledge of Hmong culture. To counter this, she says, districts should step up and provide the training that teachers need.

"What we really need to know is the nuts-and-bolts stuff, so that we don't write off our students as being bad or lazy or disrespectful," Vang says.

#### 'We Do Need to Listen'

Without proper understanding, teachers can unfairly interpret cultural differences as discipline problems.

Recently at Southeast High School in Georgia, a teacher scolded a student from Mexico for failing to look at her when she spoke to him. "She kept saying, 'Why are you looking at the floor? Look at me!'" Balderas remembers. "But he couldn't. In Mexico, that's a sign of great disrespect. So I pulled her aside and explained that by looking down, the student was trying to be respectful. She got it then."

Vang suggests that teachers "step back and ask ourselves, 'Is this behavior inappropriate because *my* culture teaches that it's inappropriate?' Different cultures value different things."

Vang doesn't advocate that teachers excuse inappropriate behavior simply because it might be rooted in cultural difference. "But we do need to listen and understand where our kids are coming from, so we know how to approach the situation in the most constructive way possible," she says.

At Lewiston High School last year, a student from Somalia approached biology teacher Michael McGraw after failing a test and tried to negotiate a better grade. McGraw reprimanded the student and told him, "We don't do that here." The student got upset, and a tense interaction ensued. But then, McGraw says, "I read a little,



and I realized that in this student's culture, negotiation is really important to survival. So I came back to the student and said, 'OK, we can negotiate for other things. Like, if you study more, I'll give you a higher grade.'"

#### Inclusive Classrooms

As a coping mechanism, many immigrant students become more reserved around teachers and classmates who don't understand their language or their culture.

In his first-period health class at Southeast High, Luis Hernandez sits at the back of the room. He doesn't speak much or raise his hand. One hour later, in a beginner's ESOL class with teacher Marie Varela, Luis sits in the front row, eager and self-assured.

Today, Varela is teaching about the endings of past-tense verbs. "Can anyone tell me a verb (that ends) with a 'T' sound?" she asks.

"Worked," Luis calls out, emphasizing the final "T" sound. Luis answers the next three questions, too.

Varela laughs and raises an eyebrow. "Good, Luis, you get it! Let's let other students answer, too."

ESOL teachers call this the ***affective filter***.

"If you are worried about making a mistake or whether someone is going to make fun of your accent, you're not going to learn," explains Jeff Hensley, an ESOL math teacher at Southeast High who spent four weeks in Mexico through The Georgia Project.

Hensley helps his students feel at ease by asking them to help him learn Spanish, hanging a map on the wall that shows each student's hometown and reading and traveling enough to know

## NASB News Update--August 2017

### News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

something about the Latin American regions from which his students come.

"I'll have teachers say to me, 'This student is so shy,'" he says. "And I'll think, 'Are we talking about the same student? That's one of the most outgoing students in my class!'"

#### 'Something to give'

Teachers don't need to travel to other countries or learn new languages to create culturally inclusive classrooms. But they do need to look beyond food festivals and other themed activities, says Vang, from Hayden Heights.

"Teachers love themes because it means we can do the same thing every year," she says.

"But it teaches students that it's okay to tokenize. The message is, 'This month we're going to care about the Latinos, or the African Americans, or the Asians, and when it's over we're not going to look back.'"

Alternatively, authentic multicultural education happens naturally, subtly and throughout the year, she says: "It shouldn't have to be Latino Cultural Week to read a book by a Latino author."

Sometimes, all teachers need to do is ask questions.

Advanced ESOL student Gabriella Casillas, a junior from Michoacan, Mexico, who attends Southeast High, says she likes it when non-ESOL teachers ask about her culture.

"We are learning about American culture, where everything is different," Gabriella says. "So when someone asks me about *my* culture, it makes me feel important, too, like I have something to give."

*[From Teaching Tolerance; A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Number 28: Fall 2005.]*

#### Special Thanks to These Generous NASB Corporate Friends—

**ANCHORMAN** INC.



# NASB News Update--August 2017

## News from the Association, Nevada, and Across the Nation

### Can Ethnic Studies Courses Help Students Succeed in School? Evidence from San Francisco

Decades of highly influential, qualitative scholarship have examined how culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and curricula can unlock the academic potential of historically underserved students. This research stresses the importance of aligning classroom content to students' out-of-school experiences, affirming students' cultural competencies and developing their social and political awareness. However, until recently, there has been relatively little quantitative evidence on the educational impact of culturally relevant practices.

Furthermore, practitioners who have sought to introduce culturally relevant pedagogy into their schools and classrooms often face strong political headwinds. Perhaps the most prominent examples are the contentious debates over the adoption of "ethnic studies" courses and content materials.

Seeking promising avenues for supporting its diverse students, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) began an ethnic studies pilot program, explicitly referencing the promise of ethnic studies courses to support the academic potential of its students. Five high schools participated in the pilot, offering a year-long, ninth-grade ethnic studies course between the 2010-11 and 2013-14 school years. District leaders then looked for evidence about the effects of the program to inform their decisions about the program's future which we provided through the Stanford-SFUSD Partnership.

SFUSD's ethnic studies course stressed the use of culturally relevant pedagogy as a way to engage with students that had previously felt marginalized by the traditional curricula. It examined histories and political struggles from the perspectives of multiple race/ethnic groups. The course also encouraged students to explore their individual identities and required them to

design and implement service-learning projects in their local community.

#### **The Study**

The ethnic studies pilot implementation allowed us to estimate the causal effects of the course on several grade-9 outcomes with clear relevance to school persistence (i.e., attendance, GPA, and credits earned). In five school-year cohorts of entering 9th graders (n=1405), students identified by an early warning indicator because they had an eighth grade GPA below 2.0 or an attendance rate below 87.5% were encouraged to take the ethnic studies course. In practice, virtually every student flagged by the early warning indicator had a GPA below 2.0, so we focus particularly on that margin.

Our research design, called a Regression Discontinuity Design, effectively compares those who were just eligible for encouragement to take the ethnic studies course (i.e., 8th GPA below 2.0) to those who were just ineligible for this assignment (i.e., 8th grade GPA at 2.0 or above). Regression Discontinuity Designs make the critical assumption that students just above and below the 2.0 threshold are the same on all features except their slightly-different GPAs and that their locations just above and below this threshold are conditionally random. Our tests suggest that these assumptions hold.

#### **Findings**

The ethnic studies course had dramatic effects on all of the outcomes we examined. Results indicate that taking ethnic studies increased attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23 credits (or roughly four courses). These effects are quite large for school-based interventions; however, some of these striking gains are likely to reflect reductions in dropping out as well as gains in the performance of enrolled students. In addition, our estimates are defined for students close to the 2.0 GPA threshold who are at considerable academic risk, so larger academic gains are possible.

*[The original article appeared in Education Week Spotlight, Urban Education Reform Blog, July 31, 2017. Authors are Thomas S. Dee, Professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and Emily K. Penner, Assistant Professor in the School of Education, UC Irvine.]*