



National Association of
State Boards of Education

July 1, 2026

Dear Chair Hymas and Vice Chair Wood:

High schools are at a turning point. Across the nation, states are piloting new models, rethinking what a high school diploma means, and asking tough questions about whether the high school experience is actually preparing every student for what comes next. The momentum is real, and state boards are uniquely positioned to turn that momentum into durable, statewide change. **The NASBE [High School Transformation State Network](#)** connects the states that are ready to lead in this area with the peers, experts, and resources to turn that leadership into impact. The Utah State Board of Education is invited to submit an application to join this network in recognition of the groundwork you have laid to transform high schools, and because we believe your state is ready to lead what comes next.

NASBE, in partnership with KnowledgeWorks, Transcend, and Education Reimagined, is inviting a select cohort of state teams to join the next phase of this network and embark on a growing national movement to transform high schools. Over the next two years, participating states will work alongside peers, national experts, and student state board members to develop a personalized High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agenda to identify the questions your state needs to answer, the evidence you need to gather, and how that learning connects to real policy decisions.

Every state that joins this network starts from a different place. Your agenda will be built around your key areas of need, the current infrastructure, and the policy decisions you want to work toward. At the same time, the network is designed to stretch your thinking by exposing your team to what peer states are doing and what the evidence shows is possible. Cohort states will receive everything they need to turn momentum into action: dedicated coaching, two years of peer learning, a flexible stipend designed to build the capacity to develop your agenda, and direct access to the experts shaping the national conversation on high school transformation.

Participation is limited to four state teams. We are looking for states with a committed state board champion, existing momentum on high school transformation, and the appetite to lead. The enclosed packet includes everything you need to know about the network and how to apply. We hope you will review it and reach out with any questions. We would love to talk with you about whether this is the right fit for your state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paolo DeMaria".

Paolo DeMaria
President and CEO
National Association of State Boards of Education

Fact Sheet: High School Transformation State Network 2026-28

Purpose

The High School Transformation State Network (HSTSN) brings together state boards of education and their partners to ask the hard questions about why some high schools are able to innovate while others struggle, and to develop a plan to create the conditions for great innovation and excellence. The recently completed first phase of this work was about building awareness and exploring possibilities in states to transform high schools. In this next phase, NASBE, in partnership with KnowledgeWorks, Transcend, and Education Reimagined, will support four state teams in developing a High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agenda: a state-specific plan that assesses current conditions and activities, identifies the questions a state needs to answer, the evidence it needs to gather, and how that learning connects to real policy decisions.

Project Goals

- Support state teams in developing High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agendas that reflect each state's unique policy context and drive long-term planning and decision making.
- Establish a cohort of state policymakers and local school systems dedicated to transforming high schools, building continuous feedback cycles, cross-state information sharing, and ongoing improvement.
- Empower state boards of education to catalyze systemic change by convening state leaders, innovative school systems, and national partners in a culture that embraces evidence-based risk-taking and ensures student voice is a required input into that process.

Benefits of State Participation

Cross-State Collaboration and Expert Coaching

State teams receive dedicated coaching and facilitation support to develop their High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agenda over two years. Each team begins with a structured opportunity scan to provide an honest assessment of progress, current infrastructure, and gaps. From there, teams work with dedicated coaches to identify priority inquiry questions, launch their investigation, and develop a written agenda connecting evidence-gathering to real policy decisions. Teams will participate in peer learning sessions with cohort states to deeply unpack state policy issues with your cross-state colleagues.

Curated Evidence and Insights

Network states will benefit from a curated pipeline of evidence-informed tools and approaches from a coalition of research, policy, and practice experts. State teams receive structured input on promising high school transformation approaches, along with an honest account of what it would take to adopt and scale them in a real state policy context. State board members also have a direct channel to share candid feedback with the organizations developing these approaches, shaping how the field evolves.

Access to a Broader National Community

Network states have the option to engage with NASBE's broader state board membership through six virtual member exchange sessions running August 2026 through June 2027. These sessions extend the learning agenda from Phase 1 and give state teams exposure to a wider range of state perspectives as they develop their own agendas.

Additional Benefits

- Up to \$10,000 in flexible support over two years for stakeholder convenings, inquiry activities, and in-depth technical assistance.
- Travel support for up to three state team members to attend one in-person convening per year.
- Opportunities to elevate state leadership and lessons learned to a national audience through NASBE platforms and publications.

Schedule of Events

Policy Academy Schedule

State teams will participate in eight policy academies over the two-year grant period—two in person and six virtual. Each academy centers on a shared problem of practice, with state teams bringing real dilemmas from their own agenda work and leaving with concrete actions. Virtual policy academies will occur on the third Thursday of the month for 90 minutes. Prior to the first policy academy, state teams will be asked to join a series of virtual interviews to complete the opportunity analysis and a pre-conference preparatory call—date and time will be determined based on team availability.

Year 1 (2026–2027)	Year 2 (2027–2028)
Policy Academy #1 (In Person) Pre-conference policy academy at NASBE's Annual Conference on October 26, 2026	Policy Academy #5 (Virtual) June 17, 2027
Policy Academy #2 (Virtual) December 17, 2026	Policy Academy #6 (In Person) Pre-conference policy academy at NASBE's Annual Conference in October 2027
Policy Academy #3 (Virtual) February 18, 2027	Policy Academy #7 (Virtual) December 16, 2027
Policy Academy #4 (Virtual) April 15, 2027	Policy Academy #8 (Virtual) February 17, 2028

Member Exchange Series

Six virtual exchange sessions, open to NASBE's full state board membership, running August 2026 through July 2027. Each will take place on the third Thursday of the month at 3:00-4:30 pm ET.

SESSION 1	Portraits of a Graduate: From Aspiration to Action August 20, 2026
SESSION 2	Measuring Students' Competencies: Implications for State Assessments and Accountability November 19, 2026
SESSION 3	Communicating Student Competencies: Transcripts, Records, and Recognition January 21, 2027
SESSION 4	Redesigning Staffing, Time, and Resources to Meet Students' Needs March 18, 2027
SESSION 5	Sustaining Innovation: Keeping the Work Alive Through Leadership and Political Change May 20, 2027
SESSION 6	Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement July 15, 2027

Menu of Technical Assistance Services

Purpose

As part of the network, NASBE and its partners have access to complementary technical assistance (TA) requests as well as in-depth coaching and facilitation support services with additional resources accessed through a consultant wallet. Each participating state team will receive a \$10,000 stipend spread over the two-year project period to support in-depth technical assistance and state-led activities. States may use this stipend in one of two ways: a) as a mini-grant that can be used to directly pay vendors in your state or b) as credit toward a consultant wallet to draw down project partner services based on their team's needs.

Project Partners & Service Providers

KnowledgeWorks brings deep expertise in state education policy and translating promising practices into actionable policy recommendations, specializing in personalized, competency-based learning. Our expertise focuses on personalized, competency-based education grounded in a state policy framework. The primary lead will be Jon Alfuth, senior director of state policy.

Transcend works alongside state and local education leaders to design, implement, and scale learner-centered school models, with a focus on the policy and ecosystem conditions that enable innovation and transformative learning environments to take root and scale. The primary lead will be Leslie Colwell, director of policy.

Education Reimagined advances a learner-centered vision for education by helping states understand what it takes to shift from traditional to transformative school models, drawing on research and policy expertise to identify the conditions that allow learner-centered approaches to take root and scale. The primary lead will be Sarah Bishop-Root, senior partner of policy.

Complementary Technical Assistance

The following services are offered to HSTSN participants free of charge:

Network Coordination

- Making connections between state teams or experts in the field.
- Strategizing with the Student Advisory Council on ways to engage students in your state.

Knowledge Access

- Identifying and sharing resources to provide context and information that informs the state team's work.
- 1-3 page rapid-response memos grounded in existing organizational knowledge.

Technical Assistance Available through Consultant Wallet

Examples of potential in-depth services which will be provided via a consultant wallet include:

Research and Analysis

- In-depth policy research and analysis on a specific topic where additional investigation is needed beyond what the project team currently has in hand.
- Survey development for state teams to distribute across their state.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Focus groups with in-state stakeholders to explore questions driving the state team's High School Innovation and Evidence Plan.
- Facilitated working sessions, stakeholder convenings, or presentations to state board committees, advisory councils, or other partners.

Knowledge Sharing

- In-person presentations to state team members, state boards, or partners on specific topics identified by the state team.

Apply for the High School Transformation State Network

Ready to lead? Take the first step to join the High School Transformation State Network by completing the following statement of interest. To confirm interest and accept the invitation, a member of a state board of education or state board staff should complete this application and return it via email to Celina Pierrottet at celina.pierrottet@nasbe.org by **July 27, 2026**. All applicants will be notified of their selection status by August 7, 2026.

1. Tell us about yourself.

Please provide your first and last name, the state you represent, your role with the state board of education, and your preferred email address.

2. Who will serve as your state board champion for this network?

If different from the person completing this application, please provide the state board member's name, role, and contact information.

3. Why is this individual well positioned to champion this work for your state?

4. In 300 words or less, please tell us why your state board of education is interested in joining the HSTSN.

5. In 300 words or less, what outcomes do you hope to see as a result of your participation in the HSTSN over the next two years?

6. Describe the current landscape of high school transformation in your state. Where do you see the most promise?

This may include pilot programs, innovation zones, competency-based pathways, portrait of a graduate, performance-based assessment initiatives, or other efforts to redesign the high school experience. Please be as specific as possible.

7. What barriers in your state make it harder for innovative high school models to gain traction? How do you know?

8. One of the goals for states participating in the network is to develop a High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agenda. What evidence does your state currently lack that, if you had it, would most strengthen the case for expanding high school transformation efforts?
A High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agenda is a structured plan for generating the specific knowledge your state needs to move its high school transformation work forward. It is a practical, living document that identifies the questions your state needs to answer, outlines how you will gather that evidence, and connects what you learn to concrete policy decisions, using the people, programs, and structures your state already has in place.

9. Who in your state needs to be in the room for this work to have real traction? Are there additional champions for transforming high school in your state who you would want included on your team (e.g., school system leaders, community-based organizations, etc.)?
At a minimum, state teams should include representatives from the state board of education, a school system or intermediary working across school systems embracing innovative high school practices, and a staff member from the state education agency with research and data expertise. Teams do not need to be finalized at this stage; a list of potential members is sufficient.

10. How would your state plan to use a stipend to advance your agenda?
Each selected state team will receive a \$10,000 stipend divided over the two-year grant period to support your team's capacity to build your High School Transformation Evidence and Innovation Agenda. The stipend can either be used directly for state-led activities, such as stakeholder convenings or surveys, or applied toward the consultant wallet services described in the Menu of Services included on page 3. Please describe how your state team would use this money and express your interest in either receiving this money directly or accessing the consultant wallet.

11. The HSTSN will begin on September 1, 2026, and conclude by April 1, 2028. I understand that if I am unable to continue participation, I will designate a state board colleague to continue until the project is complete.

☐ Yes

☐ I need more information