



Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

SCHOOL BOARD PROJECT

Learn More & Be Part of the Action!

The School Board Project is still going strong! Check out page 3 of this edition of Public Policy News for more information about **how you can take action locally**. We have **directions, links, dates, and a few direct asks**.

You can also take a peek at page 2 of this edition of Public Policy News for more information about the role of California school boards. Click the link at the bottom of page 2 to download the article so you can share this information in your monthly newsletters.

LOBBY DAYS 2024 APRIL 2-3, 2024

Advocate for legislation to advance our priorities! Most meetings will be held virtually via Zoom, so it's easy and convenient to participate.

Register [HERE](#) before February 15, 2024.

If you would like to help us to recruit college students click [HERE](#) to access our fliers and share them out! Fliers include key information, dates, and registration links.

WHERE IS THAT?

Find All Things Public Policy

Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- [AAUW Policy Leaders Manual from National](#)
- [Branch liaisons](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.
- Tell us about your branch public policy events by filling out this [form](#).
- Sign up for CA Legislative Action Alerts [HERE!](#)

NEXT MEETING FOR BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS

Wednesday 2/07 @ 2pm PT

Kathi Harper, chair of the School Board Project, will share an update about the project and what members can do now to help.

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.

SAVE THE DATES!

Upcoming Bimonthly Virtual Meetings for Branch Public Policy Chairs

Wednesday 4/10* @ 2pm PT
Wednesday 6/05 @ 2pm PT

Amy and Missy will provide updates and branches will have the opportunity to share ideas.

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.

*Note: April's meeting will be on the second Wednesday of the month, as Lobby Days is scheduled for the first week of April.

The Role of California School Boards

By Seena Trigas, Member AAUW California Public Policy Committee School Board Project

AAUW California is concerned about the censorship of classroom material, the heightened enforcement of board policies rejecting diversity, and providing discriminatory policies against gay and minority students. This concern now leads me, as a former school board member, high school teacher/department chair and adjunct college professor, to reflect on the role of school boards in California and their limitations.

The State Board of Education (SBE) is the controlling structure for K-12, and is the governing and policy-making body of the state for public education. Among its duties is the adoption of statewide academic standards for content and of curriculum frameworks. These inform and guide the local school boards in the development and implementation of specific curricula for K-12 students, and serve as the basis for the adoption of instructional materials. School board members represent districts within the school district boundaries. As the only locally elected officials representing the interests of school children, board members are advocates for students, the district's educational programs and public education.

The California Education Code requires that governing boards of school districts adopt instructional materials in accordance with the state framework adopted by the State Board of Education and district boards shall provide substantial teacher involvement in the selection of instructional materials.

In 2016, the New State Framework in History and Social Sciences was issued and supported the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful (FAIR) Act. Part of the requirements indicate that all K-12 students shall receive instruction that “strongly emphasizes student inquiry” and “reflects on the contributions of many diverse groups. In 2019 the California School Boards Association (CSBA) Governance Brief stated that “Effective school boards are equity-driven, making intentional governance decisions that combat institutional discrimination and bias (both explicit and implicit) and eliminate disparities in educational outcomes based on socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or family background.”

In 2023 AB1078 was passed, which requires the California State Department of Education to assess if school boards are in compliance with state laws requiring public schools to provide diverse and comprehensive education. It requires local school districts with insufficient instructional materials to correct this and authorizes the department to purchase (at district expense) adequate curricula if the district restricts students from learning about important topics like racism, sexism, and gender-based marginalization.

AAUW branch members play a critical role in ensuring all California school boards are governed by board members who will follow AB 1078, and who oppose policies that infringe on the civil rights of LGBTQ+ students. All our members are encouraged to become vigilant observers of their local districts, and to contact your assigned liaison if members are not meeting their obligations under the guidelines outlined above. You can find the reporting form [HERE](#) and the contact info for your liaison [HERE](#).

School Board Project - Take Action Now!

Dates, Asks, and Tasks

The School Board Project cannot succeed without your participation. **Here is what we're asking you to do:**

- Attend school board meetings in your local district(s) whether you think there is a problem in your area or not
- After attending a school board meeting, tell us what you observed by completing the School Board Project [Checklist](#)
- Speak out at school board meetings. Find a sample script [HERE](#)
- Help find qualified school board candidates to run for open seats, or to challenge regressive members. Find a sample solicitation script [HERE](#)
- Tell your SBP liaison about your activities. You can find your liaison [HERE](#). (If you can't find your liaison, contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org.)
- For more resources, check out the School Board Project [Toolkit](#)

If you have been going to school board meetings, we want to hear about it! Please send your completed [checklist](#) and any other updates to your [liaison](#) by February 10, 2024.

Be sure to join the next bi-monthly meeting for branch public policy chairs on **February 7 at 2pm PT** to hear an update about the School Board Project from Kathi Harper. **Find the Zoom link [HERE](#).**

Kathi will also be presenting a **webinar “School Boards: The Battleground for the Education Culture Wars” on February 7 at 4pm PT** to AAUW members nationally. The webinar is intended to educate other states about AAUW California’s School Board Project. Join for a refresher and new updates about the project. **Register [HERE](#).**

CELEBRATING BLACK WOMEN’S HISTORIES

February, March, and Year-Round

As we welcome February and March, we also welcome important month-long celebrations that center Black History and Women’s History. While each month-long celebration recognizes important stories of marginalization, struggle, and triumph, the distinction between Black history and Women’s history also points to the problematic ways in which these histories can be (and have been) ideologically separated to obscure the unique experiences of Black women (and others with intersectional identities). To avoid this potentially problematic separation, we enter February and March with a call to recognize these historically problematic distinctions, and to act by centering and celebrating the unique histories and experiences of Black women and women of color throughout these months—and ideally, all year long.

QUESTIONS?

EMAIL US AT PUBLICPOLICY@AAUW-CA.ORG