

AASA, The School Superintendents Association

President-Elect Candidate 2025



Michael J. Barnes, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Mayfield City School District
Mayfield Heights, Ohio

Member:

- AASA, 2018-present
- AASA Executive Committee Member: Appointed by President-Elect, 2024-present
- AASA Governing Board Member, 2023-present

Current Position: **Superintendent, Mayfield City School District**
Mayfield Heights, Ohio
2021–present

Previous Position: **Superintendent, Lakewood City School District**
Lakewood, Ohio
2018–2021

Post Secondary Education:

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.): Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., 2008

Master of Education: Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH, 1998

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science: Edinboro University, Edinboro, PA, 1993

AASA Leadership and Other Activities:

Presenter: "Pathways for Success" at Suburban School Superintendent Conference, November 2024

- **Representative:** Advocated on Capitol Hill to protect federal funding for Title I, Title II, and special education programs, 2024
- **President:** Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), Ohio. Sworn in August 2024
- **Facilitator:** Panel discussion on the state of the superintendency, Midwest Suburban Superintendents Association (MSSA), July 2024
- **Author:** Article titled "*Shaping Students Holistically Through the Wildcat Portrait*" published in *School Administrator*, December 2024

Why are you seeking election as AASA's president-elect?

I am seeking election as AASA President to amplify the voices of superintendents nationwide and advocate for equitable access to quality education for all students. With a proven track record of leadership, a passion for collaboration, and a commitment to addressing challenges in public education, I aim to drive meaningful change. By fostering innovation, championing resources for student success, and strengthening the superintendency, I will work to ensure every district thrives in an ever-changing educational landscape. Together, we can empower educators, engage communities, and build a brighter future for all learners.

If nominated and elected, what will be your No. 1 priority?

I will champion two critical priorities: ensuring every child reads proficiently by third grade and securing equitable funding for K-12 education. The link between literacy and funding is as important as the foundation of a building to its structure. We must commit to making early literacy and equitable funding a first priority in our districts, states and nation.

AASA ESSAY: LINKING LITERACY AND ADEQUATE FUNDING

BY: Michael J. Barnes, Superintendent, Mayfield City Schools

As educators, the common goal we share is to prepare students for a future filled with opportunity, growth and success. While this mission encompasses many facets of education, two foundational elements underpin them all - early literacy and adequate funding. The ability to read and comprehend is a critical milestone in a child's educational journey as much as having equal access to high quality teachers, modern facilities and the tools necessary for success. The link between literacy and funding is as important as the foundation of a building to its structure. Just as a strong foundation supports the integrity of a building, adequate funding supports the development of literacy programs, educational resources, and access to quality teaching. Each is reliant on the other - without both what remains is a broken foundation of educational inequalities and reduced opportunities. Yet, with both, a forward-focusing commitment to ensure every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential remains.

Pillar 1: Early Literacy and Lifelong Impact

Early literacy is a keystone for success. The ability to read proficiently by third grade determines a child's trajectory—not just academically, but throughout their lives. Yet, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only about 35 percent of fourth graders in the United States achieve grade-level reading proficiency. This literacy crisis disproportionately impacts underserved communities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequity.

We know the data: children who struggle with reading by the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. This isn't just an education issue; it's a societal one. To break these cycles, we must invest in high-quality early literacy programs, evidence-based interventions, and professional development that empowers educators to meet students where they are.

Together, we can build coalitions with policymakers, community organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure literacy becomes a shared priority. Programs like Success for All and other proven models serve as examples of what is possible when we commit to giving every child the foundation of literacy.

Pillar 2: Adequate Funding as a Shared Responsibility

Education is one of our nation's greatest investments, yet it is too often underfunded and inequitably distributed. Schools serving students from low-income families continue to face significant challenges in securing the resources needed to thrive. Federal contributions to education make up approximately 10

percent of funding, leaving states and local communities to carry a disproportionate burden. This funding gap widens inequities and hinders progress.

Adequate funding is not simply about meeting budgets; it is about guaranteeing every child has access to high-quality teachers, modern facilities, and the tools necessary for success. We must advocate for a sustained federal investment in programs like Title I and IDEA while exploring innovative funding solutions through public-private partnerships and community engagement.

To achieve this, we must adopt a shared responsibility framework, recognizing that education is a public good requiring collaboration from all sectors of society. As educational leaders, we must advocate fiercely for sustainable, equitable funding solutions that honor our commitment to future generations.

A Call to Action

Let us join together in championing two critical priorities: ensuring every child reads proficiently by third grade and securing adequate, equitable funding for K-12 education.

Together, we can:

1. **Advocate for Early Literacy:** Mobilize resources and promote research-based programs that empower children with the reading skills they need to succeed.
2. **Demand Equitable Funding:** Engage policymakers, community leaders, and stakeholders to prioritize fair and adequate investment in education, ensuring that all schools—regardless of zip code—are equipped to meet students' needs.
3. **Lead the Change:** As AASA members, let us leverage our collective expertise to inspire innovation, build partnerships, and create sustainable solutions for our schools and communities.

The future of our children and nation depends on it.