



CABE Board Retreat Summary September 18–19, 2026

The CABE Board of Directors and Coordinating Council met for a two-day retreat at CABE Headquarters to reconnect around CABE’s mission, strengthen Board governance and engagement, build a shared vision for CABE’s next chapter, and launch the organization’s strategic planning process.

Board members reflected on their own roles, assets, and opportunities to contribute to CABE’s success while assessing the organization’s strengths, challenges and opportunities, envisioning its future, and identifying issues for the strategic planning process.

The following summarizes the key themes and ideas that emerged and recommended next steps.

1. What Brings Board Members to CABE?

Board members described strong personal and professional connections to CABE’s mission, including:

- Advancing **educational equity** and multilingual education.
- **Advocating** for multilingual learners, families, educators, and communities.
- Protecting the **rights** and opportunities of students and families; combating injustice
- Connecting **policy and practice**.
- Providing educators with trusted **resources, guidance, and community**.
- **Strengthening the field** of bilingual and multilingual education.

Several Board members connected their commitment to their own **lived experiences** and work as educators, administrators, advocates, and community leaders.

2. What Strengths, Expertise, Relationships and Networks Does the Board Bring?

Board members identified deep education, policy, instructional, leadership, and community expertise, including:

- Dual-language immersion and bilingual/multilingual education.
- English Learner programs, assessment, and services.
- Language acquisition, literacy, and biliteracy.
- Special education.
- Curriculum and program design.
- Instructional coaching and professional development.
- Parent and family engagement.
- Educational leadership and systems change.
- Accountability, policymaking, and legislative advocacy.
- Communications, writing, translation, and interpretation.
- Grant development and relationship building.

Board members also identified strengths in strategic leadership, project management, communication, negotiation, collaboration, listening, and building relationships.

Areas where the Board identified less collective expertise included **budgeting and finance, fiscal management, fundraising, business development, foundation and donor cultivation, and legal expertise.**

Board members identified relationships and networks spanning:

- State and local government and elected officials.
- School districts, county offices, and district governance.
- Statewide education and advocacy organizations.
- Multilingual and dual-language education networks.
- Higher education and teacher-preparation programs.
- Parent and community organizations.
- Vietnamese and other language communities.
- National and international professional networks.
- Researchers and subject-matter experts.
- Consular and international relationships.

Board members also identified the opportunity to use existing relationships to make warm introductions or “handoffs” to people and institutions CAFE does not yet know.

3. How Board Members Want to Contribute to Fund Development

Board members identified four ways they can support CABA's resource development: **Give, Connect, Open Doors, and Leverage Assets.**

Give

Board members identified opportunities to:

- Make personal contributions.
- Give to specific priorities such as scholarships.
- Provide professional services in-kind i.e. contribute translation and interpretation services; serve as presenters or facilitators; provide professional-development expertise.

The discussion also raised the possibility of establishing a more formal Board giving expectation or policy.

Connect

Specific relationships Board members identified included:

- Tony Plana.
- The Cárdenas family.
- Vietnamese Dual Language Immersion/Vietnamese community leaders.
- Consulate of Peru.
- eKadence Learning Foundation.
- Orange County Superintendent Dr. Stefan Bean.
- 21CSLA grant-related relationships.

Connections could generate funding, sponsorships, visibility, credibility, introductions, membership growth, partnerships, or access to new communities.

Open Doors

Board members identified opportunities to open doors to:

- Frank Carbajal/Silicon Valley Latino Leadership Summit.
- San Diego State University.
- Collaborative research and grant opportunities.

Leverage Assets

Board members identified ways to use their existing roles and expertise to:

- Provide or promote CABE professional development.
- Recruit new CABE members.
- Promote CABE through their districts, institutions, and networks.
- Introduce bilingual teacher candidates and university students to CABE.
- Connect people to scholarship and donation opportunities.
- Contribute instructional, literacy, and multilingual-education expertise.

4. SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Board members identified:

- Strong network of committed supporters and partners.
- Brand recognition.
- Deep subject-matter expertise.
- Cultural richness and diversity.
- Inclusive orientation.
- History of effective advocacy.
- Property and capital resources.

Weaknesses / Vulnerabilities

Board members identified:

- Marketing and branding.
- Limited presence in educator credential and pipeline programs.
- HR policies, practices, and systems.
- Membership structure, engagement and recruitment.
- Sustainable funding sources.
- Lack of an endowment.
- Chapter growth.
- Fiscal management.
- Gaps in Board skills and expertise.

Opportunities

Board members identified opportunities to:

- Expand partnerships with higher education and teacher-preparation programs.
- Pursue Title III, LCAP, grant, corporate, and technology funding.
- Expand into charter, private, faith-based, and migrant education communities.
- Build corporate and vendor partnerships.
- Increase CAFE visibility through partners and events.
- Better market CAFE's conferences, professional development, expertise, and services.

Threats

Board members identified:

- Weakening of federal education and civil-rights infrastructure.
- Rollbacks of DEI initiatives.
- Policy and funding changes affecting bilingual and multilingual education.
- Shifts related to the science of reading.
- Declining TK-16 enrollment.
- Threats to higher-education access.
- Increasing racism and anti-immigrant activity.
- English-only pressures.
- Changes in government leadership.
- Artificial intelligence as both a potential threat and opportunity.

5. What Vision Did Board Members Articulate for CAFE?

When asked what difference CAFE should have made three to five years from now, Board members envisioned CAFE:

- Influencing **laws and policies** that support multilingual learners and multilingual education.
- Supporting successful **implementation of policy** and effective practice.
- Becoming **financially strong, sustainable, and increasingly independent**.
- Having a **strong and recognizable statewide brand**.
- Expanding its **reach** while remaining grounded in multilingual education.
- Becoming more **inclusive** of additional communities and constituencies.
- Expanding **multilingual** programming and opportunities.
- Producing accessible **research and evidence** for the field.

- Strengthening **partnerships with higher education and educator preparation.**
- Increasing the number of **students achieving biliteracy.**
- Expanding **dual-language programs.**
- Growing **membership** and strengthening member value.
- Developing a stronger **culture of storytelling** around CABE's impact.

Taken together, Board members articulated an emerging vision of CABE as a financially strong, highly visible, research-informed statewide leader that influences multilingual education policy, supports effective implementation, strengthens the educator pipeline, and expands equitable access to high-quality multilingual education.

6. What Big Issues and Questions Must the Strategic Plan Address?

Board discussions surfaced seven major areas for further exploration through the strategic planning process:

Financial Sustainability & Fund Development

What is CABE's sustainable revenue model? What funding sources, partners, grants, philanthropy, earned revenue, or endowment strategies should CABE pursue?

Strategic Communications, Marketing & Branding

How should CABE communicate who it is, what it does, and the impact it creates? What communications and marketing capacity is needed?

Organizational Capacity & Staffing

Does CABE have the staffing, structure, skills, and capacity required to execute its future priorities?

Nonprofit Business Model & Governance

What needs to be strengthened around budgeting, fiscal management, reporting, planning, accountability, governance, and fundraising?

Membership Growth & Value

What role should membership play in advancing CABE's mission? What is the value proposition, and how should CABE recruit, engage, and retain members?

Strategic Partnerships & Research

Which partnerships should CABE prioritize, and what role should CABE play in generating research, evidence, and thought leadership?

Prioritization & Implementation

What will CAFE prioritize—and what will it not? How will priorities be translated into realistic timelines, responsibilities, resources, and measures of success?

7. CAFE Membership: Purpose, Value Proposition & Redesign

Purpose of Membership

Board members described membership as a way for CAFE to:

- Build a **community of advocates** for multilingual education.
- Create **credibility** and strength in numbers.
- Gather **voices and perspectives** from the field.
- Maintain a direct **connection to local communities**.
- Develop **ambassadors**, storytellers, advocates, and local implementers.
- Generate broader **organizational support**.
- Develop the **next generation of multilingual-education leaders**.

Value Proposition for Members

Board members identified value in:

- **Connection** to a larger community, network, movement for multilingual education.
- Access to **resources, information, and learning for professional & leadership development**.
- **Opportunities and discounts**.
- Participation in **advocacy and policy**.
- Having their **voices represented**.
- Opportunities to create **local and statewide impact**.

The Board's discussion emphasized that membership should communicate not only tangible benefits, but what members become part of, what they gain access to, and what they can influence or accomplish.

Potential Membership Redesign

Ideas included:

- Conduct **listening sessions** with current, former, and prospective members.
- Define and communicate a clear CABE **membership promise and experience**.
- Strengthen membership **marketing and branding**.
- Use member and chapter stories to **demonstrate impact**.
- Expand communication beyond email, including **texting and other tools**.
- Develop a **member portal**, CABE app, or online community.
- **Tailor benefits and engagement** to different member groups.
- Build **stronger pipelines** through higher education and teacher-preparation programs.
- Connect with **Seal of Biliteracy** participants and other prospective constituencies.
- Explore discounts and other **tangible benefits**.
- **Revisit** CABE's regional and chapter **structure**.
- **Strengthen connections** between local and statewide engagement.
- Intentionally develop the **next generation of CABE leaders**.

Next Steps

1. Advance a Broader Strategic Planning Process

Use the Board's SWOT analysis, emerging vision, and strategic questions as starting points for broader constituent engagement. Engage members, chapters, staff, partners, educators, families, students, funders, and others to:

- Validate and expand the SWOT.
- Test and refine the emerging vision.
- Identify constituent needs and priorities.
- Explore the strategic questions surfaced by the Board.
- Make choices about priorities, capacity, resources, implementation, and measures of success.

2. Begin Activating the Board in Fund Development

Begin moving from discussion to practice by giving Board members concrete opportunities to:

- Make personal contributions.
- Activate specific relationships.
- Recruit members.
- Represent CAFE with external partners.
- Leverage their professional expertise and platforms.

Support Board members with fundraising coaching, talking points, a concise organizational pitch, storytelling tools, and opportunities to practice donor and partner engagement.

3. Continue Board Development

Continue strengthening Board capacity in:

- Nonprofit governance.
- Fund development and resource stewardship.
- Strategic planning.
- Fiscal oversight.
- CEO transition, support, and accountability.
- Board engagement and accountability.

Use the asset-mapping exercise to inform future Board development and recruitment, particularly in areas where gaps were identified: finance, fiscal management, fundraising, philanthropy, business development, corporate relationships, and legal expertise.

4. Continue the Membership Work

Engage current, former, and prospective members and chapters to test the Board's emerging ideas and further develop:

- CAFE's membership purpose.
- The membership value proposition.
- The membership promise and experience.
- Member benefits and engagement strategies.
- Communications and technology.
- Chapter and regional structures.
- Leadership and educator pipelines.