

2018 AEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

The Association's goal is to fulfill the promise of a democratic society by promoting the cause of quality public education; advancing the education profession; expanding the rights and furthering the interests of education employees; and advocating human, civil, and economic rights for all. Our Delegate Assembly delegates set a broad platform for state legislative policy action reflecting the educational and societal concerns of our membership. The Legislative Platform provides the basis for legislative and policy initiatives that support our pursuit of AEA's Mission: *Keeping the Promise of Quality Public Education*. Our mission is focused on legislative policy that

- guarantees each child a free, equal, quality public education;
- recognizes that public school employees are central to educational excellence;
- supports community commitment to learning; and,
- assures fairness, equity, and respect.

THE PLATFORM

I. Quality Teaching and Learning

The AEA supports legislative and policy efforts that enhance the ability of students to be successful. The AEA advocates for and advances teaching and learning that emulate high standards for students and teachers. Quality learning for students cannot exist without quality teaching and support.

The AEA supports

- the creation of a Professional Standards Board to establish state standards for teachers;
- teachers and administrators being appropriately certified for their subject area and level;
- teachers certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards being recognized by Arizona's process for certifying new teachers;
- lobbying through the appropriate means that the number of teachers serving on the state board of education be increased by at least one;
- teacher evaluation systems that promote teacher growth and development;
- accountability systems that support authentic student learning utilizing multiple measures of student growth;
- charter schools being held accountable, using the same academic and professional standards as public schools;
- home-schooled students being held accountable, using the same academic and professional standards as public schools;
- legislative support for local school districts' efforts to recruit and retain quality teachers;
- legislative support for districts in developing quality professional development for teachers and education support professionals;
- academic freedom;
- mentoring programs consisting of peer assistance and peer review;
- lengthening the school year provided it is accompanied by appropriate funding;
- legislation to mandate class sizes that research indicates will maximize learning;
- locally decided consolidation or unification of school districts based on the best interest of the students;
- student discipline policies that are consistent, appropriate, and focused on restorative practices;

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- graduation requirements that are fair and appropriate;
- student promotion and retention being based foremost on what is best for the student;
- teachers making decisions regarding promotion or retention;
- internet access and student use of technology being made available to all students who follow appropriate and agreed-upon standards of use;
- professional development that promotes cultural competency, restorative practices, and social justice;
- technology being incorporated into a curriculum reflective of high standards for both students and teachers;
- all state and federal education mandates being fully funded;
- fair and appropriate education for children — including special needs, bilingual, and alternative education programs —in all state educational facilities;
- parental involvement in order to enhance and support student achievement;
- student personal information being made available to a teacher in a timely manner when such information aids in addressing the student's educational needs;
- high standards of teacher certification with appropriate flexibility in certification requirements to include AEA/ NEA endorsed pathways;
- decision-making school councils comprised of parents, teachers, and administrators;
- school enrollment at five years of age;
- certification assessments to include ones aligned with and appropriate to Arizona teaching standards;
- the full implementation of a HIV/AIDS curriculum statewide that includes the values, heritage, language, culture, and history of ethnic and LGBT groups; and,
- a safe and healthy learning environment in every public school in Arizona.

II. Employee Rights and Working Conditions

School working conditions are student learning conditions. AEA supports the need to include employees in the deliberations concerning the school work environment.

The AEA supports

- a safe work environment free of abusive language and actions;
- a gun-free work environment (excluding law enforcement officers and sanctioned programs);
- public policy efforts that guarantee the rights of education employees to organize and advocate for improved working conditions and benefits;
- school districts involving employees directly in the decision-making process aimed at creating positive working and learning conditions;
- employees' right to have their professional association dues deducted from their paychecks;
- due process for all education professionals;
- school districts extending to part-time employees the same rights and benefits provided to full-time employees;
- health benefits programs that include access to drug, alcohol, and psychological treatment;
- Affirmative Action;
- Open Meetings law;

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- employee personal information being handled with the appropriate safeguards to ensure privacy; and,
- efforts that will bring collective bargaining rights to Arizona school employees.

III. Funding, Compensation, and Benefits

The AEA supports public policy that places improved funding for public schools, community colleges, and universities as a top priority. Financial resources should be distributed equitably and be substantial enough to demonstrate an investment in quality education in Arizona.

The AEA supports

- adequate, stable, and equitable funding for public school maintenance and operations, capital, desegregation, school infrastructure, and technology needs;
- a commitment to a 5-year plan to bring school employee compensation in line with the national average;
- increased employee compensation and benefits systems —commensurate with education and experience — allowing districts to attract and maintain quality employees;
- moving employees up the pay scale and offering enhancements to the pay system for elements and accomplishments that positively affect teacher quality and student learning;
- a quality, stable, defined-benefit retirement system that provides a lifetime retirement income in alignment with the 2016-2017 ASRS practices;
- the same graded multiplier to educators who retired before August 11, 2001, that has been awarded to those retiring after 2001;
- a standardized accountability system for school district budgeting which takes into account all the components that comprise an adequate classroom, including but not exclusive to school counselors, librarians, aides, and other support professionals and resources;
- state funding of full-day kindergarten for every Arizona student;
- state funding for Community Schools;
- development/impact fees being assessed and used to most benefit local schools;
- tax structures that are fair, broad-based, stable, and in sync with our economy;
- quality, affordable, health care coverage for all active and retired public school employees;
- complete and equitable funding of Arizona's public schools; and,
- legislation that funds the cost of fingerprint clearance cards for all school district employees.

IV. Human and Civil Rights

The AEA supports public policy that preserves and strengthens basic human and civil rights and eliminates barriers restricting the exercise of those rights.

The AEA supports

- a paid state holiday honoring Cesar Chavez;
- the freedom from discrimination for all individuals;
- students' constitutional right to exercise Freedom of the Press;

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- equal access to public education and healthcare for all children regardless of ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or immigration status;
- funding for the educational resources needed to insure the fulfillment of an equitable status for all students, regardless of first language;
- basic protections against school discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity;
- the designation of all Arizona schools as safe zones. ensuring that every school is a safe place for students to learn, to thrive and to seek assistance, information, and support related to any immigration law enforcement that interferes with their learning experiences;
- in-state tuition status for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); and,
- the replacement of the Structured English Immersion (SEI) four-hour model with a research-based language development curriculum.

V. Political Involvement

School employees are community members, parents, and taxpayers. The informed action of our citizens is essential to preserving a democratic society.

The AEA supports

- the basic rights associated with full involvement in the political system;
- the basic right for its members to seek political office;
- the basic right to form and participate in political action committees; and
- “Legislator Back to School Day” as a means to get elected officials in the classroom to see the day-to-day work of our teachers and education support professionals.

VI. Attacks on Public Education

The AEA supports public policy that invests in our public schools and the students they serve. AEA opposes efforts that pull funds or support away from public schools.

The AEA opposes

- the establishment of and/or the maintenance of tuition tax credits;
- expansion of empowerment scholarship accounts;
- any reduction in revenue that would negatively impact the ability to fund public schools;
- the establishment and/or the maintenance of tuition vouchers; and,
- any privatization of Arizona's public school systems.