

# 2021 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY AGENDA

The 2021 AEA Legislative and Policy Agenda is derived from member input and approved by the AEA Board of Directors. It is based on the public policy statements in the AEA Legislative Platform adopted by the 2020 AEA Delegate Assembly.

## Responding to COVID-19

### *AEA advocates for policies that:*

- Create a statewide plan for addressing COVID-19 in schools.
- Require a statewide mask mandate.
- Address technology needs of schools and community.
- Provide additional funding for PPE and cleaning supplies.
- Provide funding for upgrades to HVAC systems and air filters.
- Eliminates performance evaluations for the year.
- Require safety protocols for school districts regarding COVID-19 which must include:
  - a. Paid time off available for staff to quarantine when exposed to COVID-19.
  - b. Requiring symptomatic students and staff to quarantine for 14 days, and show negative test results before returning in person.
  - c. Access to COVID-19 testing.

## Public Education Funding

### *AEA advocates for policies that:*

- Provide full and immediate implementation of voter approved Proposition 208.
- Additional public education funding (FY2022) focused on equity and closing the opportunity gap for all students to meet the needs of our public schools in Arizona as follows:
  - a. Provide critical resources for classrooms such as support services, supplies, updated textbooks, and technology and internet access;
  - b. Fund school building maintenance and repairs to give students safe, clean, and functional places to learn;
  - c. Provide adequate funding to allow for smaller class sizes and lower caseloads;
  - d. Funding for additional school counselors, social workers, and nurses; and additional mental health resources for staff;
  - e. Invest in school readiness via early childhood and pre-kindergarten through third-grade educational programs, including state-funded, full-day kindergarten;
  - f. Provide career and technical education funding to assist students in preparing to enter the workforce.
- Prevent the Arizona Legislature and Governor from diverting revenue away from public schools through tax cuts, tax credits, and vouchers (i.e., empowerment scholarship accounts and student tuition organizations)
- Attract and retain a workforce of certified employees by providing funding for immediate salary increases that will create competitive pay with neighboring states.
- Education Support Professionals (classified staff) must receive compensation that reflects a livable wage and must be competitive with similar jobs in the private sector.
- Establish permanent salary structures for all public education employees which include annual raises.
- Secure affordable, quality healthcare coverage for all public education employees.
- Forgive student loans for public education employees.

## Fair Employment Rights

### *AEA advocates for policies that:*

- Remove high-stakes consequences tied to mandated assessment data, including: Local Education Agency (LEA), school, and individual ratings of effectiveness (i.e., A-F accountability system and results-based funding); evaluations; compensation structures; and personnel decisions
- Strengthen public education employee employment rights relating to fair contract practices and dates, Reduction In Force (RIF) process, salaries, non-renewal notices, and association work
- Establish due-process rights for Education Support Professionals (classified employees)
- Provide for fair and relevant evaluation systems that:
  - a. include educator input and a clear appeal process;
  - b. support professional development and growth;
  - c. promote quality teaching and learning; and
  - d. use various data points that reflect the course of instruction.

## Retirement System

### *AEA advocates for policies that:*

- Sustain and protect a defined-benefit plan for public education employees.

## Charter Schools

### *AEA advocates for policies that:*

- Provide similar accountability measures for charter schools as public schools.

## Quality Teaching and Learning

### *AEA advocates for policies that:*

- Promote a statewide systemic approach to quality teaching and learning, including highly effective educator preparation programs and certification; professional development; mentoring and induction; career development pathways; and compensation structures.
- Promote equitable access to social and emotional learning for all students by providing funding for curriculum and educator training.
- Recognize educators as professionals and protect their autonomy to deliver a flexible curriculum and make instruction-based decisions to meet the needs of their students.