

# 2022-2024 AEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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## PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

The Association's goal is to fulfill the promise of a democratic society by promoting 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, safe, equitable, quality public education;
- recognizes that public school employees are central to educational excellence;
- supports community commitment to learning;
- recognizes and addresses racial and social justice;
- assures fairness, equity, and respect for students and school employees; and
- upholds educators as professionals.

## 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, teachers and education support professionals. Quality learning for students cannot exist without quality teaching, education support professionals and adequate resources .

The AEA supports

- the creation of a Professional Standards Board to establish state standards for teachers;
- educators and administrators being professionally certified for their subject area and level;
- education support professionals being trained or certified based on the standards of their field;
- 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;
- school employee evaluation systems that promote professional 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, fiscal, and professional standards as district public schools;
- voucher programs being held accountable, using the same academic, fiscal, and professional standards as district public schools;
- legislative support for local school districts' efforts to recruit and retain quality educators;
- legislative support for districts in developing quality professional development for certified and classified professionals;
- academic freedom;
- fully funded mentoring programs consisting of peer assistance and peer review;
- adequate funding for smaller class sizes, lower caseloads and appropriate student to school

## 2022-2024 AEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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- counselor ratios based on current research recommendations and the needs of students;
- locally decided consolidation or unification of school districts based on the best interest of the students;
- student discipline policies that are consistent, appropriate, focused on restorative practices, and the social emotional well-being of all children;
- graduation requirements that are fair and appropriate;
- student promotion and retention being based foremost on what is best for the student;
- any state testing that is used to determine student growth should compare students to themselves and not be done with a ranking system comparing them to other students;
- educational teams including 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;
- technology being incorporated into a curriculum reflective of high standards for both students and teachers;
- a comprehensive approach to educating the whole child to be inclusive of arts, music, physical education and extracurricular activities
- professional development that promotes cultural competency, restorative practices, and social justice;
- the full implementation of a comprehensive health education curriculum statewide;
- the dissemination of information and programs that include the values, heritage, language, culture, and history of BIPOC and LGBTQ groups;
- all state and federal education mandates being fully funded and implemented;
- 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;
- fully funded universal pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten;
- school enrollment between three and five years of age;
- certification assessments to include ones aligned with and appropriate to Arizona teaching standards;
- a safe and healthy learning environment for all students regardless of status in every public school in Arizona;
- all efforts to recruit and retain quality educators reflective of student populations; and
- curricula and programming that ensures the social emotional well-being of all students.

# 2022-2024 AEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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## II. Employee Rights and Working Conditions

School employee 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 verbal, physical or other actions that ensures the social emotional well-being of all school employees;
- a safe return to school based on scientific metrics;
- 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;
- nondiscriminatory, quality, affordable health benefits programs that include access to drug, alcohol, and mental health treatment;
- Affirmative Action;
- Open Meetings law;
- employee personal information being handled with the appropriate safeguards to ensure privacy;
- efforts that will bring collective bargaining rights to Arizona school employees;
- adequate leave for life events; and
- a workplace free of discriminatory practices.

## 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 by Legislators and the Governor to a 3-year plan to bring per pupil spending in line with the national average and to support equitable funding of Arizona's public schools;
- a commitment by Legislators and the Governor to a 3-year plan to bring school employee compensation in line with the national average;
- competitive employee compensation and benefits systems —commensurate with education and experience -- allowing districts to attract and retain quality employees;
- a living wage for all employees that avoids salary compression;
- permanent salary structure for all public school employees which includes annual raises and offering enhancements to the pay system for elements and accomplishments that positively affect educator quality and student learning;

## 2022-2021 AEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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- a quality, stable, defined-benefit retirement system that provides a lifetime retirement income in alignment with the current 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 a fully-resourced and appropriately staffed worksite;
- state funding of universal pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten for every Arizona student;
- state funding for Community Schools;
- development and 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;
- educators should be paid for days worked (e.g., no trade days or similar compensation);
- quality, affordable, health care coverage for all active and retired public school employees; 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

- the freedom from discrimination for all individuals;
- students' constitutional right to exercise Freedom of the Press;
- equal access to public education and healthcare for all children regardless of ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, or immigration status;
- full funding for the educational resources needed to ensure the fulfillment of an equitable status for all students, regardless of ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, or immigration status;
- basic protections against school discrimination on the basis of ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, or immigration status;
- 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;
- the repeal of the English-Only instruction and replaced with a research-based language development curriculum;
- in-state tuition status for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA);
- a paid state holiday honoring Cesar Chavez; and
- students having access to the basic needs of being a 21<sup>st</sup> century learner.

# 2022-2024 AEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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## V. Political Involvement

School employees are community members, parents, and taxpayers. The informed action of our citizens is essential to preserving a democratic society. AEA believes every educational decision is a political one. Therefore, educators should be involved everywhere decisions are being made that impact students.

The AEA supports

- the basic rights associated with full involvement in the political system including registering to vote, using request to speak, and contacting legislators;
- the basic right for its members to seek political office;
- the basic right to form and participate in political action committees; and,
- “Take Your Legislator To School Day” as a means to get elected officials in the classroom to see the day-to-day work of our educators 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 eliminate or divert funds from public schools.

The AEA opposes

- The establishment, maintenance and expansion of taxpayer funded:
  - a) Empowerment scholarship accounts (i.e., vouchers)
  - b) Student tuition organizations (i.e., tuition tax credits)
  - c) For-profit charter schools and non-profit charter operators that financially abuse the system
- any reduction in revenue that would negatively impact the ability to fund public schools; and
- any privatization of Arizona's public school systems; and
- the reduction of professional standards for all school employees.

The AEA supports

- educating members and general public on the impact and influence of major, indirect private and corporate contributions, lobbyists, think tanks, and legislative exchange councils in leading attacks on Arizona public education policy, funding, and public pensions.

## VII. Racial & Social Justice

The AEA recognizes the impact that systemic racism has on Arizona's students and supports efforts towards the implementation of social justice practices.

The AEA supports

- the dismantling and elimination of systemic racism; and
- resources and curricula that represents the diversity of all student and the world in which they live.