



**UTAH
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION**
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LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

SUPPORT POSITIONS

&

PRIORITIES

2012

UEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The Utah Education Association will assume a leadership role in urging the Utah State Legislature to pass legislation that preserves and promotes public education; specifically, improving students' learning opportunities, enabling educators to reach the peak of their potential and removing barriers to excellence.

1. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

The Association calls upon the legislature to adopt a plan for long-term education funding which increases per-pupil funding necessary to achieve education objectives by:

- Increasing funding to cover student enrollment growth and inflation for the WPU and other minimum school programs which require indexing.
- Indexing block grant programs to reflect growth and inflation by assigning WPU's. Proceed very cautiously with any adjustments to the WPU formula by decreasing line items to artificially inflate the overall WPU value. Any adjustments to the line items in the Minimum School Act should take into account the purpose of specific line item consolidation and protect the intent behind the initial formation of that line item.
- Providing an additional ongoing funding enhancement to support excellence in Utah public schools.
- Providing a professional level salary for every licensed educator.
- Providing additional sources of revenue that allow for a broad and stable funding base.
- Dedicating not less than 50% of the state budget to K-12 education.
- Protecting and/or increasing state and local property taxes as a source of revenue for schools and to assure these taxes are directed to the constituencies that are responsible for the tax.
- Preserving Utah's public education budget if federal funds for education decrease.
- Eliminating tax and spending limitations.
- Eliminating or phasing out specific sales tax exemptions.
- Protecting and enhancing school trust lands revenue.
- Insuring that legislation regarding redevelopment laws protects and enhances public school revenue.
- Providing increased state support funds for an adequate and equitable school building aid program including the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

- Increasing capital outlay funding for districts experiencing rapid growth.
- Resolving Utah's structural tax deficit.
- Fully funding accountability legislation requirements including increasing funding or resources for schools that have been identified through UPASS and the Grading Schools Legislation as needing improvement.
- Restore funding for Professional Development for teachers throughout the K-12 system and provide funding for teacher planning time in elementary schools.
- Establishing funding for licensed elementary specialists.
- Increasing funding for library media centers.
- Providing funding for licensed library media specialists in elementary and secondary schools.
- Providing funding for professional staffing of computer labs.
- Providing funding for appropriate instructional technology, including calculators, projectors, video equipment, and other technology in every classroom.
- Providing funding for baseline technology for every teacher, including a networked computer with Internet access, printer, and telephone.
- Providing funding for adequate technology support for all non-instructional professional personnel who work in a school setting.
- Providing funding for a computer and network operator at each school site.
- Providing funding for licensed counselors for elementary and secondary students.
- Providing ongoing funding for textbooks and supplies.
- Providing ongoing funding for teacher-directed school supplies.
- Providing funding for supplementary services for special education students in regular education programs.
- Providing funding for hazardous pay for teachers at correctional institutions.
- Providing full funding of programs for students with disabilities, at-risk students, and alternative language students.
- Increase funding of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to cover student enrollment growth and inflation.
- Providing full funding of career and technical education programs in the K-12 public schools.

- Providing full funding for programs that are mandated by the state or federal government.
- Providing funding for increased energy and transportation costs.

2. PROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION

Legislation which:

- Provides funding for a professional level of salaries and benefits for Utah public school employees, including a yearly cost of living increase equal to the CPI-U.
- Provides additional funding for quality health insurance
- Provides funding for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind and Utah College of Applied Technology to assure compensation parity, including a professional staff cost factor to compensate for experience.
- Increases the professional staff cost factor to compensate for experience and facilitate educator mobility within the state.
- Provides additional funds to compensate educators for extended-year programs.
- Avoids WPU legislative intent language that includes specific recommendations regarding the amount of licensed employee salary increases and/or asks districts to provide an additional increase to the salaries of a specific subset of licensed employees.

3. RETIREMENT

Legislation which:

- Maintains a defined benefit retirement system that is actuarially sound.
- Reduces the penalty for early retirement.
- Establishes a compounded cost-of-living adjustment.
- Provides post-retirement health and medical insurance, including a Medicare supplement.
- Provides a 2% formula or the equivalent thereof for all years of service for all retirees to maintain equity between employees and be able to attract new professionals into the system.

- Provide necessary education for new professionals as to the challenges and possible effects of registering to participate in the new Hybrid Retirement System.
- Pursues a no cost conversion provision to the non-contributory retirement plan.
- Establishes an investment trust within the Utah Retirement System through which local districts can fund other post employment benefits.
- Reduces barriers to re-employment for retired teachers.

4. EDUCATION EMPLOYEES' RIGHTS

Legislation which:

- Protects right to due process and organizing for all public school employees, including provisional and charter school educators.
- Provides a jointly-selected independent hearing officer for termination by local boards of education and licensing decisions by the Utah State Office of Education.
- Strengthens and ensures enforcement of state laws prohibiting discrimination.
- Strengthens and ensures enforcement of state laws relating to sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Protects professional negotiation rights for public school employees—pre-K-12, Utah College of Applied Technology, and the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.
- Imposes penalties and ensures enforcement of state laws for false allegations against public school employees through criminal and civil courts.
- Protects and/or restores employee rights to payroll deductions for organizational dues including political contributions.
- Bases disciplinary actions on job-related conduct.
- Repeals the law allowing individual employee contracts outside a master agreement.

5. CLASS SIZE

Legislation which:

- Expands funding for a progressive plan of class size reduction to achieve optimum class size in grades K-12.

- Provides appropriate weighting for special education students included in regular education classrooms.
- Provides funding for additional educators in schools highly impacted with at-risk students.

6. TAX REFORM

Legislation which:

- Supports reform that provides stable, long-term growth in funding for public education. This could be adjustments to the current income tax exemptions allowed or the current rate charged both to individual and corporate tax rates, adjustments to the oil and gas severance and greater flexibility for local school districts with regard to property tax use and or adjustments.
- Supports reform that helps resolve the structural imbalance found in current tax base and policy.
- Supports efforts to mitigate the regressive nature of Utah's current tax code and provide tax relief to those most in need.

7. EQUITY IN LOCAL OPTION TAXES

Legislation which:

- Empowers school districts to establish a local option income tax levy.
- Expands local school board authority to improve school programs through local property tax levies.
- Indexes the state guarantee for local voted and board leeway in a manner that keeps pace with rising property values.

8. EDUCATOR-DRIVEN REFORMS

Legislation which:

- Promotes school reform that assures maximum opportunity for every student beyond the core curricula.
- Increases ongoing funds for educational technology, training, and technology specialists.
- Requires rigorous teacher education programs which include professional supervision and practicum.

- Supports joint development of school site decision-making parameters in each district.
- Provides compensation for employees who participate in professional planning and decision making during off-contract time. Establishes necessary parameters and compensation for the development and delivery of online instruction.
- Provides funding necessary to implement quality teacher evaluations based on solid research findings and insure these evaluations have multiple measures and are not based upon high stakes tests administered to students.
- Provides varied employment options for educators.
- Provides resources, including time and money, which enable educators to participate in meaningful professional development opportunities to enrich their teaching practice, recertify and/or maintain employment
- Establishes necessary guidelines and oversight for effective charter schools within the public school system with the expectation that charter schools be held to the same accountability standards as the traditional public school.
- Provides a formal New Teacher Induction Program which offers resources, guidance, and mentoring from experienced, skilled professional educators.

9. SAFE SCHOOLS

Legislation which:

- Addresses violence and safety in schools.
- Requires confiscation of dangerous weapons at school and due process provisions for owners to regain possession.
- Provides penalties for negligent storage of firearms.
- Ensures learning environments free of harassment and discrimination.
- Encourages locally developed zero-tolerance policies for weapons and drugs.
- Provides a safe, hazard-free school environment.
- Provides adequate funding and processes for appropriate local alternative programs within the public educational system for disruptive students at all age levels.
- Prohibits concealed weapons on school property and at all school-related activities.

10. EDUCATION ISSUES

Legislation which:

- Prohibits the use of public funds for private schools.
- Requires financial and academic accountability for charter schools.
- Requires academic accountability for home schools.
- Requires mandatory kindergarten attendance prior to entering first grade.
- Provides ongoing funding and support for local control of supervision for optional all-day kindergarten programs for at-risk students.
- Addresses the unique problems of public school employees working with special education students.
- Seeks to study and find solutions to problems of gender equity in the classroom.
- Strengthens attendance laws, supports stronger enforcement of such laws, improves attendance, and prevents student dropout.
- Provides funding for related service health care professionals to meet the needs of students in our public education system.
- Provides assistance to educators seeking National Board Certification.
- Continue to work with the special education community and professionals to assure quality teaching with work to reduce the redundant and unnecessary paper work requirements. This includes recognition and funding of the additional time necessary to accomplish the extra requirements related to special education.
- Involves a broad community in addressing issues and programs aimed at closing the achievement gap.
- Maintains the non-partisan nature of election and selection of education policymakers both at a state and local board level. This would include adjustments to the current process of selecting State School Board Candidates for elections.

11. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT

Legislation which:

- Promotes flexibility of funds to provide site-based decision making and work with School Community Councils to assure these decisions are quality research-based programs.

- Increase opportunities for teachers to participate with Community Councils.
- Encourages the partnership of school personnel and parents in establishing educational goals at the district level and at local school sites.
- Supports local school district autonomy.
- Provides local participation in the State School Board nominating process through regional committees or an open non-partisan primary election process for the State School Board.

SUPPORT POSITIONS

UEA may support legislation in the following areas if it is introduced. Support is contingent on the nature of specific bills. The following are not listed in order of priority. UEA supports legislation which:

- A. Provides reimbursement to educators required to obtain subject-specific certification.
- B. Eliminates the constitutional prohibition of school fees.
- C. Requires that students in battered persons' and youth shelters have licensed public school teachers and appropriate classroom opportunities, materials and guidance until they return to their regular schools.
- D. Maintains full campaign finance disclosure and reforms the Utah electoral and legislative processes to provide open, accessible and ethical government practices.
- E. Requires full and complete lobby disclosure.
- F. Promotes fair and effective hiring practices.
- G. Provides opportunities for high school graduates to pursue higher education as residents if they qualify irrespective of their immigration status.
- H. Establishes a state minimum living wage.

UEA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2012

Adopted by the UEA House of Delegates April 30, 2011

The UEA believes public schools provide the foundation for a civil and just society and the opportunity for every student to maximize his/her potential and talents for future success and positive participation in the community. From our viewpoint as education professionals, the UEA Legislative Platform and Priorities outline the policies and the investment necessary to provide this foundation to democracy.

The UEA legislative platform is a comprehensive program to enhance the integrity of the education profession and to provide the tools, resources, and services needed to improve student achievement. The UEA platform and priorities reflect an agenda of positive change in education. The UEA 2012 Legislative Priorities are:

Legislation that significantly increases the investment in public schools to provide for:

- (1) Salaries, benefits and programs to attract and retain quality teachers.
- (2) Modern tools, technology and resources to do our jobs.
- (3) Smaller class sizes to better meet the needs of every child.

The UEA believes that ANY legislation must meet the following criteria:

- Protect the rights of employees.
- Provide for local autonomy in the distribution of resources and in the development of policy.
- Recognize the importance of the professional judgment and voice of educators in creating education policy and programs.
- Provide the sustainable and adequate revenue streams necessary to provide a great public school for every child in Utah.

The UEA seeks to promote this agenda by pro-actively developing and seeking sponsors for legislation aligned with UEA goals and joining forces with other stakeholders to promote sound education policy.

The nature of lobbying and legislative process is dynamic and situations change from one moment to the next. The UEA House of Delegates directs the Board of Directors to ensure that the UEA Lobby Team is flexible within the general platform and these legislative priorities to achieve the greatest benefit to UEA members and the students they serve. The lobby team is encouraged to consult with local leaders when possible.