



**UTAH
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION**
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**UTAH EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM
SUPPORT POSITIONS
&
PRIORITIES
2017**

UEA LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The Utah Education Association will assume a leadership role in urging the Utah State Legislature to collaborate with education professionals in order to pass legislation that preserves and promotes public education and values the expertise and voice of the education professionals; 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 pre-recession levels to cover annual 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 WPUs. 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 salary level commensurate with national salary levels for every licensed educator.
- Providing full funding for the implementation of the Public Education Human Resource Management Act that was passed during the 2012 legislative session.
- Dedicating not less than 50 percent of the state budget to K-12 education, and not less than 90 percent of State Income Tax to K-12 education.
- Eliminating private vendor bills dealing with education programs and services due to the potential negative effect on the WPU.
- Protecting and/or increasing state and local property taxes as a source of revenue for schools.
- 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.

- Ensuring 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.
- Fully funding legislative accountability requirements, including increasing funding or resources for schools identified through the state school accountability model as needing improvement and providing for local control in determining needed resources and implementing improvement plans.
- Restoring funding for professional development for teachers throughout the K-12 system and providing 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 to upgrade statewide and district-level technology infrastructure to adequately support computer adaptive testing requirements and funding for professional staff development for computer adaptive testing.
- Providing funding for appropriate instructional technology for every teacher and every classroom.
- Providing funding for adequate technology support for all non-instructional professional personnel who work in a school setting.
- Providing funding for adequate technology support personnel at each school site.
- Providing funding to increase the number of licensed counselors for elementary and secondary students.
- Providing ongoing funding for textbooks and supplies.
- Increasing funding for teacher-directed school supplies.
- Providing funding for related service health care professionals to meet the needs of students in our public education system.
- 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, English language learners and state designated Turnaround schools.
- Increasing funding of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to cover student enrollment growth and inflation.
- Increasing resources for Pre-K services.
- 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 utilities and transportation costs.
- Providing funding for comprehensive mental health services for students in K-12 public schools.

2. PROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION

Support legislation that:

- Provides additional funding to increase salaries in order to attract and retain educators. Utah is experiencing a severe teacher shortage. Attracting and retaining educators through competitive salaries must be a priority for the Legislature to avoid a serious crisis.
- 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 to ensure 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.

- Ensures the maintenance and full funding of the existing negotiated salary schedules.
- Provides compensation for employees who participate in professional planning, curriculum design and decision making during off-contract time.

3. RETIREMENT

Support legislation that:

- Ensures Social Security and retirement costs are treated as “above the line” expenditures under the Minimum School Program.
- 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 percent 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.
- 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

Support legislation that:

- Allows for educators to govern their profession through the standards, licensing and professional practices process.
- Protects the right to due process, orderly termination, negotiation and organizing for all public school employees, including provisional, charter school, and Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind educators.
- Guarantees 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 and sexual harassment in the workplace.

- 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.
- Prohibits individual employee contracts outside a master agreement.
- Protects the confidentiality of bargaining and negotiated agreement meetings as these agreements are being developed.

5. CLASS SIZE

Support legislation that:

- 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, including state Turnaround schools.

6. TAX REFORM

Support legislation that:

- Supports reform that provides stable, long-term growth in funding for public education, such as reducing income tax exemptions allowed, increasing individual and corporate tax rates, adjustments to extractive severance taxes or 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.
- Prohibits tax credits for private or home-schooled students.

7. EQUITY IN LOCAL OPTION TAXES

Support legislation that:

- Expands local school board authority to improve school programs through local property tax levies.

- Sets all school district levies to the same caps.
- Indexes the state guarantee for local voted and board leeway in a manner that keeps pace with rising property values.
- Protects a local school board's voted and board leeway decisions.

8. EDUCATION REFORMS

Support legislation that:

- Values education professionals as experts and is collaboratively developed with these professionals.
- Promotes school reform that ensures maximum opportunity for every student beyond the core curricula.
- Rejects school grading and any accountability legislation or rule which negatively impacts schools, students and educators.
- Ensures that the highest standards of professional licensure are maintained to effectively prepare both educators and administrators.
- Promotes research-based best practices designed to improve instruction and school communities:
 - Increases ongoing funds for educational technology, training, and technology specialists.
 - Requires rigorous teacher education programs which include professional supervision, practicum and internship.
 - Supports joint development of school site decision-making parameters in each district.
 - Provides for accountability, oversight and transparency for reporting results and quality of online learning programs and offerings.
 - Provides funding necessary to implement quality teacher evaluations based on solid research findings and ensure these evaluations have multiple measures and are not significantly based upon high stakes tests administered to students.
 - Protects and keeps confidential personal data related to an educator or an educator's evaluation in CACTUS or other electronic formats.
 - 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, maintain licensure or pursue additional endorsements or licenses.
- Establishes necessary guidelines and oversight for effective charter schools within the public school system with the expectation that charter schools and educators be held to the same standards of academic, financial and governance accountability as traditional public schools.
- Provides a formal New Teacher Induction Program which offers resources, guidance and mentoring from experienced, skilled professional educators.

9. SAFE SCHOOLS

Support legislation that:

- 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 and working environments free of bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Encourages locally developed 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.
- Discourages concealed weapons on school property and at all school-related activities.

10. EDUCATION ISSUES

Support legislation that:

- Prohibits the use of public funds for private schools.
- Caps the expansion of charter schools which siphon monies from neighborhood public schools.
- Reduces the amount of standardized assessments being administered.
- Requires financial and academic accountability for charter schools.

- Requires mandatory kindergarten attendance prior to entering first grade.
- Provides support for local control of supervision for optional all-day kindergarten programs for at-risk students.
- Addresses the unique needs 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 assistance to educators seeking National Board Certification.
- Continues to work with the special education community and professionals to ensure quality teaching 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.
- Creates direct, non-partisan elections for state school board members. Maintains non-partisan elections for local school boards.

11. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT

Support legislation that:

- Promotes site-based decision making among School Community Councils to ensure decisions are research-based.
- Increases opportunities for teachers to participate on School 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.

SUPPORT POSITIONS

The 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 that:

- A. Provides reimbursement to educators required to obtain subject-specific or skill-specific certification.
- B. Requires that students in youth shelters and detention facilities, that are not able to attend their school of origin, have licensed public school teachers as well as appropriate classroom opportunities, materials and guidance until they can return to their regular schools.
- C. Maintains full campaign finance disclosure and reforms the Utah electoral and legislative processes to provide open, accessible and ethical government practices.
- D. Requires full and complete lobby disclosure.
- E. Promotes fair and effective hiring practices.
- F. Provides opportunities for high school graduates to pursue higher education as residents, if they qualify irrespective of their immigration status.
- G. Establishes a state minimum living wage.
- H. Preserves the ability of all relevant agencies to maximize the returns of the SITLA holdings while increasing the value of the permanent fund and continuing the appropriate distributions to the beneficiaries.

UEA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2017

Adopted by the UEA House of Delegates May 14, 2016

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 2017 Legislative Priorities are:

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

- (1) High quality instruction and highly qualified education professionals.
- (2) Salaries, benefits and programs to attract and retain quality teachers.
- (3) Modern tools, technology and resources to improve the quality of instruction to address individual student needs.
- (4) Smaller class sizes to better meet the needs of every child.

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

- Recognize the importance of the professional judgment and voice of educators in creating education policy and programs.
- Protect the rights of employees.
- Provide for local autonomy in the distribution of resources and in the development of policy.
- 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, collaborating 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 Legislative 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 Legislative Team is encouraged to consult with local leaders when possible.