



UTAH EDUCATION ASSOCIATION LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

(Legislative Platform, Support Positions and Priorities)

*Last amended by the House of Delegates of the Utah Education Association
this 27th day of April, 2024.*

UEA Legislative Program

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UEA LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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 education professionals; specifically, improving students' learning opportunities and outcomes, enabling educators to reach the peak of their potential and removing barriers to excellence.

1. PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

Support legislation that:

- A. Creates a plan to guarantee adequate long-term distribution of education funding to achieve educational excellence in Utah's public schools.
- B. Ensures public education funding is guaranteed and protected in the state constitution and in statute.
- C. Funds annual student enrollment growth and annual inflation for the WPU and other minimum school programs that require indexing.
- D. Increases funding of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to cover student enrollment growth and inflation.
- E. Indexes line item programs to reflect growth and inflation by assigning WPUs.
- F. Protects the integrity of the WPU by taking into account the purpose and intent of specific line items, before recommending any change to the WPU formula, in order to prevent artificially inflating the WPU value.
- G. Eliminates private vendor bills for education programs and services which compete with the WPU.
- H. Protects and/or increases state and local property taxes as a source of revenue for schools.
- I. Preserves current funding levels for public education if federal education funds decrease.
- J. Prevents tax and spending limitations.
- K. Protects and enhances school trust lands revenue and distributions.
- L. Ensures redevelopment laws protect and enhance public school revenue.
- M. Provides increased state funds for an adequate and equitable school-building aid program including the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.
- N. Increases capital outlay funding for districts experiencing rapid growth.
- O. Fully funds 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.
- P. Establishes a minimum 2% annual WPU increase, as well as inflation and student enrollment growth amounts, to allow districts to prioritize local funding needs such as:
 - i. Professional development
 - ii. Licensed elementary specialists.
 - iii. Library media centers.

- 1 iv. Licensed library media specialists in elementary and secondary schools.
- 2 v. Upgrading statewide and district-level technology infrastructure to adequately
- 3 support computer adaptive testing requirements and funding for professional
- 4 staff development for computer adaptive testing.
- 5 vi. Appropriate instructional technology for every educator and every classroom.
- 6 vii. Adequate technology support for all non-instructional professional personnel
- 7 who work in a school setting.
- 8 viii. Adequate technology support personnel at each school site.
- 9 ix. Increasing the number of licensed counselors or social workers for elementary
- 10 and secondary students.
- 11 x. Increasing ongoing funds for educational technology, training, and technology
- 12 specialists.
- 13 xi. Providing educator planning time in elementary school.
- 14 xii. Increasing the number of full-time paraprofessionals and other education
- 15 support professionals.
- 16 Q. Provides ongoing funding for textbooks and supplies.
- 17 R. Increases funding for educator-directed school supplies.
- 18 S. Provides funding for related service health care professionals.
- 19 T. Provides funding for supplementary services for special education students in regular
- 20 education programs.
- 21 U. Provides funding for hazardous pay for educators at correctional institutions.
- 22 V. Provides full funding of programs for students with disabilities, at-risk students,
- 23 English language learners and schools designated for school improvement by the state.
- 24 W. Increases resources for high quality early education opportunities.
- 25 X. Provides full funding of career and technical education programs in the K-12 public
- 26 schools.
- 27 Y. Provides full funding for any programs mandated by the state or federal government.
- 28 Z. Provides funding for increased transportation costs.
- 29 AA. Provides funding for comprehensive mental health services for students in K-12 public
- 30 schools.
- 31

32 **2. PROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION**

33 Support legislation that:

- 34 A. Ensures adequate funding to allow districts and local associations to prioritize local
- 35 compensation needs such as:
 - 36 i. Increasing salaries in order to attract and retain educators and address Utah's
 - 37 growing educator shortage.
 - 38 ii. Providing a professional salary level commensurate with national salary levels for
 - 39 every licensed educator.
 - 40 iii. Providing a yearly cost-of-living increase at least equal to the CPI-U.
 - 41 iv. Providing quality health insurance.
 - 42 v. Compensating employees, at their contract rate, who participate in professional
 - 43 planning, curriculum design and decision making during off-contract time.

- 1 vi. Compensating educators for extended year programs.
- 2 vii. Maintaining existing negotiated salary schedules.
- 3 viii. Fully funding salary-related retirement costs and maintaining all salary as
- 4 retirement-eligible.
- 5 B. Provides funding for the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to ensure compensation
- 6 parity, including a professional staff cost factor to compensate for experience.
- 7 C. Increases the professional staff cost factor to compensate for experience and facilitate
- 8 educator mobility within the state.
- 9 D. Avoids WPU legislative intent language that includes specific recommendations
- 10 regarding the amount of licensed employee salary increases and/or asks districts to
- 11 provide an additional increase to the salaries of a specific subset of licensed employees.
- 12 E. Avoids bonuses or stipends that target only certain groups of educators or school
- 13 support staff.
- 14

15 **3. RETIREMENT**

16 Support legislation that:

- 17 A. Maintains a defined benefit retirement system that is actuarially sound.
- 18 B. Establishes a compounded cost-of-living adjustment.
- 19 C. Provides post-retirement health and medical insurance, including a Medicare
- 20 supplement.
- 21 D. Strengthens the benefits of employees entering the teaching profession and those in the
- 22 Tier II retirement system.
- 23 E. Establishes an investment trust within the Utah Retirement System through which local
- 24 districts can fund other post-employment benefits.
- 25 F. Reduces barriers to re-employment for retired educators and support professionals and
- 26 provides appropriate funding.
- 27

28 **4. EDUCATION EMPLOYEE RIGHTS**

29 Support legislation that:

- 30 A. Allows for educators to govern their profession through the standards, licensing and
- 31 professional practices process and collective bargaining.
- 32 B. Protects the right to due process, orderly termination, negotiation and organizing for
- 33 all public school employees, including provisional, charter school, and Utah Schools
- 34 for the Deaf and the Blind educators.
- 35 C. Guarantees a jointly-selected independent hearing officer for termination by local
- 36 boards of education and licensing decisions by the Utah State Board of Education.
- 37 D. Strengthens and ensures enforcement of state laws prohibiting discrimination and
- 38 sexual harassment in the workplace.
- 39 E. Imposes penalties and ensures enforcement of state laws for false allegations against
- 40 public school employees through criminal and civil courts.
- 41 F. Protects employee rights to payroll deductions for organizational dues.
- 42 G. Restores employee rights to payroll deductions for political contributions.
- 43 H. Bases disciplinary actions on job-related conduct.
- 44 I. Prohibits individual employee contracts outside a master agreement.

- 1 J. Protects the confidentiality of bargaining and negotiated agreement meetings as these
2 agreements are being developed.
- 3 K. Prevents the collection of individual educator evaluation data in CACTUS or other
4 electronic formats and keeps confidential personal data related to an educator or an
5 educator’s evaluation.
6

7 **5. CLASS SIZE**

8 Support legislation that:

- 9 A. Expands funding for a progressive plan of class size reduction to achieve optimum
10 class size in grades K-12.
- 11 B. Provides appropriate weighting to fund special education students included in regular
12 education classrooms and preserves existing definitions of the use of funds for
13 “incidental benefits.”
- 14 C. Improves the funding formulas for special education students.
- 15 D. Provides funding for additional educators in schools highly impacted with English
16 language learners, at-risk and special education students, including schools designated
17 for school improvement by the state..
18

19 **6. TAX REFORM**

20 Support legislation that:

- 21 A. Provides stable, long-term growth in funding for public education by creating
22 guaranteed funding mechanisms that are flexible and equitable for local education
23 agencies.
- 24 B. Corrects the structural imbalance in the current tax base and policy.
25
- 26 C. Mitigates the regressive nature of Utah’s current tax code and provides tax relief to
27 those most in need.
- 28 D. Prohibits tax credits, implemented in any form, for private or home-schooled students.
- 29 E. Preserves the obligation of the state to primarily fund the Minimum School Program
30 through state income tax, rather than local property taxes.
31

32 **7. EQUITY IN LOCAL OPTION TAXES**

33 Support legislation that:

- 34 A. Equalizes local property taxes using new sources of state revenue, not by redistributing
35 existing revenues.
- 36 B. Expands local school board authority to improve school programs through local
37 property tax levies, including reducing Truth in Taxation hearing requirements.
- 38 C. Indexes the state guarantee for local voted and board leeway in a manner that keeps
39 pace with rising property values.
- 40 D. Protects local school boards voted and board leeway decisions.
41

42 **8. EDUCATION REFORMS**

43 Support legislation that:

- 44 A. Values education professionals as experts and is collaboratively developed with these
45 professionals.
- 46 B. Promotes school reform that ensures maximum opportunity for every student beyond
47 the core curricula.

- 1 C. Rejects school grading and any accountability program which negatively impacts
- 2 schools, students and educators.
- 3 D. Ensures that the highest standards of professional licensure are maintained to
- 4 effectively prepare both educators and administrators.
- 5 E. Promotes research-based best practices designed to improve instruction and school
- 6 communities such as:
 - 7 i. Rigorous teacher education programs which include professional supervision,
 - 8 practicum and internship.
 - 9 ii. Joint development of school site decision-making parameters in each district.
 - 10 iii. Accountability, oversight and transparency for reporting results and quality of
 - 11 online learning programs and offerings.
 - 12 iv. Resources, including time and money, which enable educators to participate in
 - 13 meaningful professional development opportunities to enrich their teaching
 - 14 practice, maintain licensure or pursue additional endorsements or licenses.
 - 15 v. Comprehensive induction and mentoring programs which offer resources,
 - 16 guidance and support from experienced, skilled professional educators who are
 - 17 trained and compensated.
- 18 F. Promotes educator-informed restorative justice practices in every classroom in the state
- 19 of Utah and promotes collaboration between educators and lawmakers at the state and
- 20 national level.

21

22 **9. SAFE SCHOOLS**

23 Support legislation that:

- 24 A. Addresses violence and safety in schools for both students and employees.
- 25 B. Requires confiscation of dangerous weapons at school and due process provisions for
- 26 owners to regain possession.
- 27 C. Provides penalties for negligent storage of firearms.
- 28 D. Ensures learning and working environments free of bullying, harassment and
- 29 discrimination, including protections against cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment.
- 30 E. Encourages locally developed policies for weapons and drugs.
- 31 F. Provides a safe, hazard-free school environment.
- 32 G. Provides adequate funding and processes for appropriate local alternative programs or
- 33 restorative practices within the public education system for students.
- 34 H. Discourages unpermitted concealed weapons on school property or openly-carried on
- 35 school property and at all school-related activities.
- 36 I. Encourages locally developed policies for school resource officers, including training
- 37 for officers, administrators and school staff.
- 38 J. Requires mental health providers report to the Utah Bureau of Criminal Identification
- 39 to temporarily prohibit an individual in a mental health crisis from purchasing a
- 40 firearm.
- 41 K. Establishes an Extreme Risk Protection Order law to temporarily secure a person's
- 42 firearms when they are in crisis.
- 43 L. Requires safe gun storage.
- 44 M. Establishes and funds a statewide emergency alert app for all local education agencies
- 45 to enhance communication within and across LEAs during a crisis.

- 1 N. Requires School Resource Officer training on how to respond to students' needs,
2 including special needs, in the school context.
- 3 O. Requires School Resource Officer training on cultural and racial awareness.
- 4 P. Establishes a goal ratio and cap limit for school counselors and funds the recommended
5 ratio.
- 6

7 **10. EDUCATION ISSUES**

8 Support legislation that:

- 9 A. Prohibits the use of public funds for private or for-profit schools or entities.
- 10 B. Caps the expansion of charter schools.
- 11 C. Establishes necessary guidelines, oversight and transparency for effective charter
12 schools within the public school system with the expectation that charter schools and
13 charter school educators be held to the same standards of academic, financial,
14 professional and governance accountability as traditional public schools.
- 15 D. Reduces the amount of mandated standardized assessments.
- 16 E. Requires mandatory kindergarten attendance prior to entering first grade.
- 17 F. Provides a full-day kindergarten option for every family who chooses to participate.
- 18 G. Addresses the unique needs of public school employees working with special
19 education students.
- 20 H. Seeks to study and find solutions to problems of gender equity in the classroom.
- 21 I. Creates an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students and staff.
- 22 J. Allows for comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education curriculum while allowing
23 parents to opt out their student.
- 24 K. Strengthens attendance laws, supports stronger enforcement of such laws, improves
25 attendance, and prevents student dropout without supporting the school-to-prison
26 pipeline.
- 27 L. Provides assistance to educators seeking National Board Certification.
- 28 M. Continues to work with the special education community and professionals to ensure
29 quality teaching and reduce redundant and unnecessary paperwork requirements. This
30 includes recognition and funding of additional time necessary to accomplish extra
31 requirements related to special education.
- 32 N. Ensures equity and access to programs and educational opportunities for all students,
33 including specialized programs that emphasize trauma-informed and restorative
34 practices for students who have experienced significant trauma.
- 35 O. Creates direct, non-partisan elections for state school board members. Maintains non-
36 partisan elections for local school boards.
- 37 P. Implements quality educator evaluations, developed locally in collaboration with
38 educators, based on solid research findings and ensuring multiple measures not based
39 on high stakes tests.
- 40 Q. Provides funding and resources to strengthen the educator pipeline to better reflect the
41 diversity of student and community demographics.
- 42 R. Allows equitable access to the ballot, including access to in-person voting, vote-by-
43 mail, and inclusive policies in political party nominating processes (i.e.,
44 caucus/convention and primaries).
- 45 S. Implements ranked choice voting or instant run-off elections for primary elections that
46 are equitable, fair, and logistically feasible to address plurality in these elections.

- 1 T. Affirms the responsibility of educators to lead and ensure culturally
2 responsive practices to close opportunity gaps and encourage future educators,
3 administrators, support personnel and student leaders to engage in self-
4 reflection and connect curriculum to students' lived experiences.

5

6 **11. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT**

7

Support legislation that:

8

- A. Promotes site-based decision making that includes educators and education
9 stakeholders in making research-based decisions to guide local school priorities.

10

- B. Increases opportunities for educators to participate on School Community Councils.

11

- C. Encourages the partnership of school personnel and parents in establishing educational
12 goals at the district level and at local school sites.

13

- D. Supports local school district autonomy.

UEA LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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 educators as well as appropriate classroom opportunities, materials and guidance.
- 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 lobbyist disclosure.
- E. Promotes fair and effective recruitment and 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 wage that is livable.
- 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.
- I. Significantly increases the investment in public schools to provide for:
 - 1. High quality instruction and highly effective education professionals.
 - 2. Salaries, benefits and programs to attract and retain effective educators.
 - 3. Modern tools, technology and resources to improve instructional effectiveness to address individual student needs.
 - 4. Smaller class sizes to better meet the needs of every child.
- J. Ensures protections against discrimination based on natural hair.
- K. Upholds the Utah constitutional mandate to prioritize and fully fund public education.

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

- L. Recognize the importance of the professional judgment and voice of educators in creating education policy and programs.
- M. Protect the rights of employees.
- N. Provide for local autonomy in the equitable distribution of resources and in the development of policy.
- O. Provide sustainable and adequate revenue streams necessary to provide a safe and equitable 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.

UEA LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

PRIORITIES

The UEA believes public schools provide the foundation for a civil and just society and the opportunity for every student to maximize their 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 Program is a comprehensive plan to enhance the integrity of the education profession and to provide the tools, resources, and services needed to improve student achievement. The UEA Legislative Platform and Priorities reflect an agenda of positive change in education.

The UEA Legislative Priorities are developed annually, prior to the start of the General Session of the Utah Legislature. The purpose of developing annual legislative priorities is to identify specific budget and policy requests, based on the legislative platform. The annual legislative priorities document can be found on the UEA Under the Dome webpage.

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.

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