

Legislative and Policy Agenda **2025**

WHO WE ARE

The Arizona Education Association is made up of more than 22,000 educators across Arizona. We are teachers, bus drivers, librarians, school counselors, cafeteria workers, school nurses, and more. We have more than 100 local affiliates in almost every school district in the state and are the state's second-largest labor union. We are part of the National Education Association, which is 3 million members strong — the largest labor union in the world. Unlike other organizations involved in public education, which may set their priorities based on the preferences of donors or small groups of activists, our union makes decisions democratically. Our legislative priorities are set by our members at our annual 600-person Delegate Assembly, with decisions made by an elected board of directors during the rest of the year.

Every person on our board of directors is a current AEA member and union educator. Most continue to teach and work with students full-time, squeezing their board duties into evenings and weekends already full of coaching, lesson planning, and grading. Their commitment comes from a deep dedication to the cause of public education and the well-being of Arizona's students. The Arizona Education Association doesn't just speak for Arizona's educators — we are Arizona's educators. And as such, **we need to be at the table whenever decisions are made that affect public education, our colleagues, and our students.**

AEA'S MISSION AND VALUES

Quality Public Education for All

We believe that every child is entitled to a free, quality, public education. Rich or poor, Black or white, gifted or disabled—all children deserve the chance to grow, to learn, and to reach their potential.

Fairness, Equity, and Respect for All

We believe that every person is entitled to be treated fairly and with respect. Students and school employees should be honored for their differences in culture, history, language, religion, physical condition, ethnicity, and learning styles. These differences enrich our society.

Teaching as an Esteemed Profession

Because of the power of teaching and its value to the future, to our society and to our children, we work to enhance the esteem with which teaching is held by society.

Education Support Professionals as Valued Partners

Education Support Professionals are librarians, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, security guards, classroom aides, maintenance managers, groundskeepers, speech-language pathologists and all the other professionals who play a key role in educating our students but don't serve as certified classroom teachers. We believe that Education Support Professionals are integral partners in all areas of the learning process and are valued within public education.

Learning as a Community Commitment

Schools are part of communities. They reflect communities and can change them for the better.

Communities and schools must join hands to ensure that each continues to learn, grow, and progress.

OUR 2025 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Educators play a vital role in our communities — they **shape our future generations, contribute to building a healthy society, and provide spaces for learning and growth.** AEA is committed to ensuring educators are rightfully respected and trusted as professionals, which includes empowering them to work collectively to determine a curriculum that ensures accurate and honest education; ensuring their safety; and ensuring educators are considered when developing legislation to continue building positive, healthy, and supportive learning environments.

Retain and Attract Educators

Certified Staff: Demand a minimum salary of \$66,000 for all certified staff, provide salary adjustments to address pay compression, and provide compensation incentives for rural educators.

Education Support Professionals (classified staff): Demand compensation and benefits that reflect a minimum starting salary of \$18 per hour and include salary adjustments to address pay compression.

Health Insurance: Secure affordable, quality healthcare coverage for all public school employees and families.

Pension: Protect and sustain the ASRS-defined benefit pension plan for public school employees.

Mentoring: Establish a funding weight for school districts to implement a robust mentoring program that supports new educators in the first three years of the profession.

Educator Preparation and Professional Development: Promote a statewide systemic approach to quality teaching and learning, including highly effective educator preparation programs and professional development programs.

New and Ongoing Funding for Future Ready-Students

Special Education Weight, Opportunity Weight, and Inflation Adjustments for District Additional Assistance: Protect and sustain the existing funding weight for special education, the opportunity weight for schools that serve the most under-served areas, and annual inflation adjustments for District Additional Assistance.

Restore Full-Day Kindergarten: Fully restore state funding for full-day kindergarten.

Future Ready School Counselors and Social Workers: Provide adequate funding for school counselors and social workers based on current research recommendations.

CTE: Provide career and technical education (CTE) funding to assist students in preparing to enter the workforce by restoring 9th grade CTE program funding and implementing CTE program opportunities in 7th and 8th grade.

Culturally Relevant Education: Defend against legislation that eliminates bilingual education or culturally relevant programs.

How We Pay For It

Private School Vouchers and Tax Credits: Take immediate action to prevent the Arizona legislature from diverting revenue away from public schools through private school vouchers and tax credits (for instance, ESA vouchers and student tuition organizations).

ACTIONS NEEDED IN 2025 TO DEFEND OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PROP 123 AND THE AEL: Develop a renewal proposal for Prop 123 that continues the \$360 million in additional funding to public schools and pass an aggregate expenditure limit (AEL) calculation that more accurately reflects school spending.

NO UNFUNDED MANDATES: We call on all our elected officials to block any legislation that would create additional unfunded mandates or requirements for educators, and to repeal any current unfunded mandates. As it is, unmanageable workloads are contributing to educator burnout and to our state's educator retention crisis.

PREVENT ATTACKS ON EDUCATORS, OUR STUDENTS, AND OUR COMMUNITIES: We call on our legislature and on Governor Katie Hobbs to block any bills that would ban books, obstruct social-emotional learning, censor curricula, create a hostile learning and working environment for LGBTQ and BIPOC students and educators, bring more guns on to school campuses, or undermine educators, our students, and our communities.

NO CUTS, NO LAY-OFFS, NO CLOSURES: Similarly, our state's elected leaders need to ensure that tax cuts for the wealthy top 10% and the out-of-control ESA voucher program do not result in school closures, educator lay-offs, or funding cuts to public education or other critical programs. We expect lawmakers of both parties to exercise leadership in ensuring that ESA vouchers and tax cuts for the rich are not prioritized over our state's existing funding commitments to public schools.