



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

2020

Legislative Platform

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2020 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 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:

- Creates a plan for adequate long-term education funding to achieve educational excellence in Utah's public schools.
- Funds annual student enrollment growth and inflation for the WPU and other minimum school programs that require indexing.
- Increases funding of the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind to cover student enrollment growth and inflation.
- Indexes line item programs to reflect growth and inflation by assigning WPUs.
- 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.
- Restricts income tax revenue flowing from K-12 to other uses.
- Eliminates private vendor bills for education programs and services which compete with the WPU.
- Protects and/or increases state and local property taxes as a source of revenue for schools.
- Preserves current funding levels for public education if federal education funds decrease.
- Prevents tax and spending limitations.
- Protects and enhances school trust lands revenue and distributions.
- Ensures redevelopment laws protect and enhance public school revenue.
- Provides increased state funds for an adequate and equitable school-building aid program including the Utah Schools for the Deaf and Blind.
- Increases capital outlay funding for districts experiencing rapid growth.
- 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.

- Establishes a sufficient annual WPU increase to allow districts to prioritize local funding needs such as:
 - Professional development
 - Licensed elementary specialists.
 - Library media centers.
 - Licensed library media specialists in elementary and secondary schools.
 - Upgrading statewide and district-level technology infrastructure to adequately support computer adaptive testing requirements and funding for professional staff development for computer adaptive testing.
 - Appropriate instructional technology for every teacher and every classroom.
 - Adequate technology support for all non-instructional professional personnel who work in a school setting.
 - Adequate technology support personnel at each school site.
 - Increasing the number of licensed counselors or social workers for elementary and secondary students.
 - Increasing ongoing funds for educational technology, training, and technology specialists.
 - Providing teacher planning time in elementary school.
 - Increasing the number of full-time paraprofessionals.
- Provides ongoing funding for textbooks and supplies.
- Increases funding for teacher-directed school supplies.
- Provides funding for related service health care professionals.
- Provides funding for supplementary services for special education students in regular education programs.
- Provides funding for hazardous pay for teachers at correctional institutions.
- Provides full funding of programs for students with disabilities, at-risk students, English language learners and state designated Turnaround schools.
- Increases resources for high quality early education opportunities.
- Provides full funding of career and technical education programs in the K-12 public schools.
- Provides full funding for any programs mandated by the state or federal government.
- Provides funding for increased transportation costs.
- Provides funding for comprehensive mental health services for students in K-12 public schools.

2. PROFESSIONAL COMPENSATION

Support legislation that:

- Ensures adequate funding to allow districts and local associations to prioritize local compensation needs such as:
 - Increasing salaries in order to attract and retain educators and address Utah’s growing teacher shortage.
 - Providing a professional salary level commensurate with national salary levels for every licensed educator.
 - Providing a yearly cost-of-living increase equal to the CPI-U.
 - Providing quality health insurance.
 - Compensating employees who participate in professional planning, curriculum design and decision making during off-contract time.
 - Compensating educators for extended year programs.
 - Maintaining existing negotiated salary schedules.
 - Fully funding salary-related retirement costs and maintaining all salary as retirement-eligible.
- 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.
- 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

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.
- Establishes a compounded cost-of-living adjustment.
- Provides post-retirement health and medical insurance, including a Medicare supplement.
- Strengthens the benefits of employees entering the teaching profession and those in the Tier II retirement 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 educators and support professionals.

4. EDUCATION EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

Support legislation that:

- Allows for educators to govern their profession through the standards, licensing and professional practices process and collective bargaining.
- 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 Board 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 employee rights to payroll deductions for organizational dues.
- Restores employee rights to payroll deductions for 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.
- Prevents the collection of individual educator evaluation data in CACTUS or other electronic formats and keeps confidential personal data related to an educator or an educator's evaluation.

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 to fund special education students included in regular education classrooms.
- Provides funding for additional educators in schools highly impacted with English language learners, at-risk and special education students, including state Turnaround schools.

6. TAX REFORM

Support legislation that:

- Provides stable, long-term growth in funding for public education, by reducing allowable income tax exemptions, increasing individual and corporate tax rates, adjusting extractive severance taxes or providing greater flexibility for local school districts through property tax use.
- Corrects the structural imbalance in the current tax base and policy.
- Mitigates the regressive nature of Utah's current tax code and provides tax relief to those most in need.
- Prohibits tax credits, implemented in any form, for private or home-schooled students.

7. EQUITY IN LOCAL OPTION TAXES

Support legislation that:

- Equalizes local property taxes using new sources of state revenue, not by redistributing existing revenues.
- 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 program 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 such as:
 - Rigorous teacher education programs which include professional supervision, practicum and internship.

- Joint development of school site decision-making parameters in each district.
 - Accountability, oversight and transparency for reporting results and quality of online learning programs and offerings.
 - 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.
 - Comprehensive induction and mentoring programs which offer resources, guidance and support from experienced, skilled professional educators who are trained and compensated.
- Promotes educator-informed, restorative justice practices in every classroom in the state of Utah, and promotes collaboration between educators and lawmakers at the state and national level.

9. SAFE SCHOOLS

Support legislation that:

- Addresses violence and safety in schools for both students and employees.
- 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 or restorative practices within the public education system for students.
- 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 or for-profit schools or entities.
- Caps the expansion of charter schools.
- Establishes necessary guidelines and oversight for effective charter schools within the public school system with the expectation that charter schools and charter school educators be held to the same standards of academic, financial, professional and governance accountability as traditional public schools.
- Reduces the amount of mandated standardized assessments.

- Requires mandatory kindergarten attendance prior to entering first grade.
- Provides support for local control of 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 and reduce redundant and unnecessary paper work requirements. This includes recognition and funding of additional time necessary to accomplish extra requirements related to special education.
- Ensures equity and access to programs and educational opportunities for all students.
- Creates direct, non-partisan elections for state school board members. Maintains non-partisan elections for local school boards.
- Implements quality educator evaluations, developed locally in collaboration with educators, based on solid research findings and ensuring multiple measures not based on high stakes tests.
- Provides funding and resources to strengthen the teacher pipeline.

11. LOCAL EMPOWERMENT

Support legislation that:

- Promotes site-based decision making that includes educators and education stakeholders in making research-based decisions to guide local school priorities.
- 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.
- 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 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 2020

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 plan 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 2020 Legislative Priorities are:

Legislation that 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 teachers.
- (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.

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 equitable distribution of resources and in the development of policy.
- Provide 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.

UEA Priorities from the 2019 Utah Legislative Session

Education Funding

- **Tax reform to preserve and grow school funding efforts during the interim study.**
- The UEA proposes a long-term funding focus on four major areas: 1) Individualized Student Attention; 2) Address the Teacher Shortage; 3) Student Equity; and 4) Student Health and Safety. Full implementation of these goals will require a sustained funding effort over many years. TO BEGIN THIS EFFORT, the UEA recommends the 2019 Legislature:

- Fully fund student enrollment growth, including all impacted line items (est. \$37 million);
- Provide a 6.5% increase on the WPU, allowing LEAs maximum flexibility in addressing the above-referenced goal areas (est. \$206 million);
- Implement a teacher preparation scholarship incentive (est. \$2 million); and
- Initiate a high school student program to support K-12 Teaching CTE Pathway (est. \$350,000).
- Provide a one-time bonus for licensed educators and education support personnel in schools (est. \$60 million, one-time)
- Modernize Utah’s flawed tax structure by establishing sustainable, long-term revenue sources to address the chronic underfunding of public education.
- Allocate new, ongoing revenue to the WPU rather than create costly and time-consuming new distribution methods
- Fund charter schools in a manner that does not reduce neighborhood school budgets, is transparent, is equitable based on student need and provides taxpayer accountability.
- Oppose schemes to funnel public education money to personal student accounts or privately-run entities where taxpayer accountability is lost.

Teacher Shortage

- Ensure each classroom has an effective teacher by funding strategies to identify and address the root causes of Utah’s critical teacher shortage.
- Invest in programs that develop a pipeline of educators to the teaching profession, especially in rural areas or hard-to-staff subjects and schools.
- Maintain high standards for teacher licensure to ensure that every student has a teacher who is prepared and qualified to teach on day one.
- Improve teacher retention through comprehensive educator induction and mentoring programs.
- Create incentives to diversify the teacher workforce to reflect Utah’s changing demographics.
- Invest in educator salaries to attract the best and the brightest to remain in the teaching profession.
- Reduce class sizes to allow teachers the time needed to reach and inspire individual students.

Education Policy

- Increase resources for student social and emotional well-being such as school social workers and counselors, restorative justice, and trauma-informed teaching practices.
- Ensure every student’s unique learning needs are met by providing the resources to succeed.
- Strengthen accountability standards for charter and online schools consistent with neighborhood schools, including student performance, governance, educator evaluation and financial accountability.
- Eliminate the misuse of student test scores to grade schools and impose consequences on schools.
- Ease the overwhelming workload heaped on Utah teachers by reducing the number of education bills and limiting the number of mandated initiatives.
- Support direct, non-partisan election of school board members.