

Agenda for the 2010 Legislative Session - COLORADO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Adopted by CEA Board of Directors – November 6, 2009

Our Association's commitment to quality public schools requires that we advocate for issues vital to children and public education. It is our responsibility to work with the members of Colorado General Assembly and other elected and appointed public officials to strengthen public education, maximize student learning, ensure children's health and safety, and respect education employees.

I. Strengthening Public Education

Our Association supports increased funding for all levels of public education, preschool through higher education. These goals include the establishment of an adequate and equitable school finance system, the identification of new funding sources, and modifications to TABOR and other revenue growth and spending restrictions that artificially limit educational resources available to Colorado's public schools. We oppose efforts to weaken public education through vouchers, private school tax credits, and privatization.

Ongoing and Long-Term Goals

- Support new sources of funding for pre K-12 public school finance, including adjustments to current laws that limit program spending on pre K-12 public schools
- Support the implementation of a progressive tax system that meets the needs of pre K-12 public schools and supports economic development
- Oppose mechanisms to weaken the tax base that supports pre K-12 public school finance
- Oppose vouchers, private school tax credits, and the privatization of any school services
- Require consistent accountability standards for all public schools, including charter schools and online schools
- Support increased higher education funding and monitor legislation on higher education funding and reform issues
- Eliminate the Charter School Institute

School Funding Adequacy - Program

- Increase pre K-12 school finance funding to provide schools with the appropriate amount of financial resources to meet student proficiency requirements mandated by state and federal government
- Protect the long-term solvency of the State Education Fund through General Fund increases to pre K-12 funding
- Support that Amendment 23 money, not needed for Constitutional spending requirements or for investment purposes, is used for strategic programs to increase student achievement and teacher quality
- Maintain Constitutional spending requirements for pre K-12 public education without additional mandates
- Eliminate all unfunded pre K-12 spending mandates and/or require all existing and new mandates to be fully funded at the state level
- Support adjustments to the School Finance Act, in the form of adjustments to base per pupil funding, that fully fund costs beyond the control of school districts
- Increase pre K-12 school finance funding to cover school district costs related to the administration of charter schools
- Adjust school finance laws to avoid loss of revenue to school districts caused by new or existing charter schools

School Funding Adequacy – Capital

Provide full state funding for pre K-12 capital construction to ensure that all students have access to safe school facilities, not be at the expense of programmatic needs and not from the State Education Fund

Short-Term Goals:

- Strengthen local school district control over the approval, denial and renewal of charter school contracts
- Optimize the income generated by the lands and properties in the School Land Trust for the benefit of current and future Colorado public school students
- Establish a commission to review and revise Colorado teacher and principal performance standards and Colorado Educator Licensing Laws

II. Maximizing Student Learning

Our Association supports measures that create an optimal teaching and learning environment for all students. We advocate for funding programs that increase student achievement and prepare students for life long learning and jobs of the future. We are committed to having a licensed quality teacher in every classroom.

Ongoing and Long-Term Goals

- Reduce class sizes in all grades with priority attention to grades pre K-3
- Support the use of longitudinal testing data as a diagnostic tool to ensure the focus is limited to improving student performance
- Change the focus of the state student assessment program so it can be used by teachers and students to improve teaching and learning
- Ensure that state student assessment program results are available to teachers by the beginning of each school year and are portable from district to district for purposes of instruction
- Support programs that provide students and teachers access to technology resources and learning environments that support the delivery of 21st century skills necessary to successfully compete in the global economy
- Support professional development for all teachers in teaching 21st Century skills
- Increase readiness for and access to higher education and workforce opportunities for all students

Short-Term Goals

- Require districts to provide universal access to full-day kindergarten programs that are fully funded through school finance funding
- Allow parents to opt out their children from taking the CSAP without assessing a negative score to the student's school and district
- Continue state funding for school districts to offer preschool programs to all eligible at-risk children
- Provide state funding for increased professional development, induction, and mentoring programs for teachers and education support professionals
- Support state higher education tuition waivers for high school students entering teacher preparation programs and expand the eligibility criteria for the state's teacher loan forgiveness program
- Require all schools receiving public school finance funding, including charter schools and online programs, to hire "highly qualified" teachers
- Oppose efforts to replace live participation in classroom learning completely with online learning (cyber-schools)
- Maintain funding for supplemental online education courses

III. Ensuring Children's Health and Safety

Our Association advocates for local, state, and federal programs that assist families in raising healthy children. We support efforts to make students' learning environment safer.

Ongoing and Long-Term Goals:

- Increase state funding to employ additional school nurses, counselors, social workers and psychologists
- Increase state funding for school safety and security
- Support state funding for school breakfast and lunch programs

IV. Respecting School Employees

Our Association advocates for increased salaries, benefits, and working conditions for all education employees. We support professional development for all employees. We advocate for basic rights in collective bargaining and due process for all education employees.

Ongoing and Long-Term Goals:

- Maintain or improve current due process for licensed pre K-12 teachers and special services providers
- Obtain due process, including evaluation, for pre K-12 education support professionals
- Restore due process through state law for higher education faculty
- Oppose all efforts to restrict employees' use of payroll deduction for Association dues or political contributions
- Require school districts to allow all pre K-12 employees to move between/among school districts without losing non-probationary status and years of experience

Short-Term Goals:

- Advance education employees' ability to bargain collectively
- Maintain PERA's ability to provide adequate, predictable, and sustainable retirement benefits through a defined benefit program
- Pursue adequate and affordable health insurance for all public school employees. Support access to individual and group insurance plans under a statewide system
- Pursue options for teachers and education support professionals to become "highly qualified" under the federal "No Child Left Behind" law in order to maintain their careers as educators
- Limit and reduce state regulations and reporting requirements that impact teachers' time and ability to instruct students
- Enhance educator performance evaluation processes to support professional growth, continuous improvement, and effective instruction

Note: Roman numerals do not indicate priority of CEA's legislative goals