

The State Examiner: October 2024

A monthly, national look at State-by-State legislative issues, trends, and tips, empowering AESA members as education advocates

The State Examiner is a monthly report curated by the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESAs). It provides legislative monitoring, news articles, and related content gathered from the fifty states. The purpose of the monthly report is to ensure AESA members are aware of the latest state-level education policy, funding issues and trends, and state-level news that are impacting educational service agencies (ESAs), their client schools and districts. Each report also includes advocacy tips to activate and empower our members to be informed, effective education advocates.

STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUE MONITORING

In each edition of the *State Examiner*, AESA monitors state-level legislation and legislative trends impacting educational service agencies and their client schools and districts. This month's report for October 2024 will examine early learning and childcare and highlight the other top education policy trending issues in 2024.

Early Learning and Childcare

There is a growing focus on early childhood education in states across the country, including preschool, kindergarten, and childcare. Many states are expanding access to pre-K programs, increasing funding for early childhood initiatives, and implementing policies to support the early childhood workforce. This trend recognizes the importance of early learning in long-term educational outcomes. It is also reflective of a growing concern about the impact of the pandemic on learning outcomes and school readiness for early learners and, importantly, the role of quality childcare in supporting job growth and related economic activity. Not surprisingly, early care and education is one of the top five leading policy areas of activity in 2024.

According to data compiled by Education Commission of the States, thirty-five states and the District of Columbia passed and enacted 104 bills dealing with early care and education in 2024 (AK, AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, D.C., FL, GA, HI, IA, IL, IN, KY, LA, MA, MO, MN, MS, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, RI, SC, TN, UT, VA, VT, WA, WY).

Of the states outlined above, Colorado led the way with 11 bills focusing on issues from bilingual childcare licensing to outdoor-based Pre-K programs to childcare facilities funding and Pre-K to grade 3 funding.

A representative example of some of these state-level policy actions in Colorado and other states include the following key developments:

Inside this Edition

- State Legislative Issues Monitoring
- State Budget & Finance Monitoring
- Statehouse News: Education Policy
- National Education Policy Reports
- Advocacy Tips

- *Washington* State made substantial investments, with over \$1 billion allocated for early childcare and preschool access. This included an \$8.3 million funding boost for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and \$1.75 million for infant mental health consultation. The state also implemented various rate enhancements for childcare providers.
- *Georgia* approved nearly \$100 million for improvements to its Lottery-funded Pre-K program. This included capping class sizes at 20 children and ensuring salary parity between pre-K and K-12 teachers. The funding is expected to significantly increase access to pre-K education and improve overall educational outcomes.
- *Oregon* established the CHIPS Child Care Fund, appropriating \$2.5 million for childcare infrastructure improvements and \$4.5 million to support childcare providers. This is anticipated to increase access to preschool and childcare services across the state.
- *Colorado* further funded its Universal Preschool Program (UPK), allocating \$322 million to support expanded access to free preschool education for all 4-year-olds and underserved populations.
- *Nebraska* passed legislation (LB856) allowing childcare programs to receive subsidies for children under their own parents' care if the parents work at licensed facilities, aiming to enhance childcare access.

Additionally, states like Illinois, Ohio, and Rhode Island also advanced significant governance reforms with the creations of the Department of Early Childhood Education (IL), Department of Children and Youth (OH), and a permanent Child Care Commission (RI) respectively.

As state legislatures reconvene for lame duck sessions following the November general election there are still nearly 90 bills pending in state legislatures around the country dealing with issues related to:

- Preschool vouchers
- Childcare tax credits
- Early childhood education Licensure
- Universal preschool
- Pre-k to 3 funding
- Early literacy
- Childcare workforce studies and more.

These are issues that should continue to be monitored closely. Those that fail to cross the finish line at the end of a legislative session are often reintroduced in the next.

Education Policy Trends to Monitor

In addition to early care and education and related early learning initiatives, state legislatures were busy advancing legislation in several other key areas. A search of leading education professional associations, research organizations and legislative databases revealed the following top five legislative trends impacting K-12 education in 2024:

- *Workforce Development and Career and Technical Education* - There is a strong emphasis on preparing students for the workforce and expanding career and technical education (CTE) programs. Governors across many states are prioritizing initiatives that connect K-12 education to future career opportunities and skills development. This trend reflects a growing focus on ensuring students are ready for both college and careers upon graduation.

- *K-12 Funding* - Funding for K-12 education remains a top priority for state legislatures and governors in 2024. Many states are celebrating increased investments in education and proposing additional allocations for areas such as student transportation, special education, meals, and academic and mental health services. Some states are also addressing funding formulas and exploring ways to sustain education budgets as federal COVID-19 relief funds expire.
- *Teacher Workforce* - Addressing teacher shortages and supporting the educator workforce is a significant trend in 2024. States are implementing various strategies to recruit, retain, and support teachers, including salary increases, improved benefits, professional development opportunities, and initiatives to enhance teacher well-being.
- *Academic Achievement and Literacy* - States are prioritizing efforts to improve academic achievement, particularly in the areas of literacy and math. There is a renewed emphasis on evidence-based instructional practices, such as the Science of Reading, and targeted interventions to address learning gaps exacerbated by the pandemic. Many states are also implementing initiatives to combat chronic absenteeism and enhance overall student engagement. It is anticipated in many states, that a focus on Math, like that for the Science of Reading, is likely to follow close behind.

These trends reflect the ongoing challenges and priorities in K-12 education as states work to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, prepare students for future success, and address longstanding issues in the education system. It's important to note that while these are the top trends, other significant issues such as school safety, mental health support, and the integration of technology (including artificial intelligence) in education also continue to shape legislative agendas across the country.

Resources

For more information on enacted or pending legislation and issues coming from the states, check out the following resources:

- ***American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Advocacy:*** <https://www.aasa.org/advocacy>
- ***National Conference of State Legislatures Searchable Database:*** <https://www.ncsl.org/education/pre-k-12-education-legislation-database>
- ***Education Commission of the States Policy Watch List:*** <https://www.ecs.org/state-education-policy-watch-list/>

STATE BUDGET & FINANCE MONITORING

AESA monitors state level budget and finance news impacting preschool and primary and secondary education. These curated articles can provide insights into what is happening in your state and collectively across the U.S. The latest state budget and finance-related news for October 2024 follows below.

[Map Shows States Voting on New Taxes in November](#)

Newsweek

[Medicaid Enrollment & Spending Growth: FY 2024 & 2025](#)

Kaiser Family Foundation

[State revives effort limiting funds municipalities can give school districts for non-instructional costs](#)

Juneau Empire

[State Aid Kept Public Tuition from Outpacing Inflation](#)

Inside Higher Ed

[Iowa revenues projected to drop by \\$500 million in each of next 2 years due to GOP tax cuts](#)

Des Moines Register

[State Digital Equity Spending Can Benefit Economies, Health Care, and Education](#)

Pew Trust

[Georgia governor proposes \\$1B tax rebate as state Legislature urged to tap hefty surplus](#)

Georgia Recorder

[More States Are Planning for the Coming Retirement Surge](#)

Pew Trust

[Illinois educators and parents seek \\$550 million school funding increase for next year](#)

Chalkbeat Chicago

[School choice goes before voters in 3 states, faces pushback in others](#)

Stateline

[In an unprecedented move, Ohio is funding construction of private religious schools](#)

Route Fifty-Five

STATEHOUSE NEWS: EDUCATION POLICY

Each month AESA finds representative examples (with links) of **news items** coming out of the states or impacting the states that may be of interest to ESAs and their client schools and districts:

[Ohio, governor aiming to cut number of chronically absent students in half over five years](#)

The Columbus Dispatch

[First-of-Its-Kind Report on Dyslexia, Reading Unveiled at Nebraska Department of Education](#)

The 74

[The debate over cell phone use in schools: pros and cons](#)

Times-Republican

[Region 7 ESC hosts dyslexia awareness event for 31 school districts](#)

KLTV

[More Michigan students taking advantage of job training programs than before COVID](#)

Michigan Public (NPR)

[More than \\$60M going to literacy programs in Ohio](#)

The Center Square

[Grants move teacher apprenticeship programs forward](#)

Ed Source

[Iowa's AEs endure challenges, staff cuts](#)

Radio Iowa

[School Districts Can Help Grow Own Staff with \\$175M in Funding](#)

Michigan Department of Education

[Genesee Intermediate School District launches new Beyond Grad Website](#)

The Flushing View

[Understanding Iowa's new chronic absenteeism law](#)

Times Republican

[Boosting Futures: \\$400K Investment Sparks New Era in Local Manufacturing Training!](#)

MyChesCo

[Washtenaw County schools bracing for small enrollment declines on state's student count day](#)

Michigan Live

[Genesee Intermediate School District to host 2nd annual Mental Health Symposium](#)

Flint Side

[Capital Region BOCES students tour Schenectady steel plant](#)

WYNT

[Bucks IU approved to provide ACRE training](#)

Lower Bucks Times

[Schools turning to ESC for help meeting state standards](#)

The Review

[Biden-Harris Administration Announces New Centers to Advance Educational Opportunity, Foster Academic Achievement and Raise the Bar for Students](#)

ED.GOV

STATE & NATIONAL REPORTS IMPACTING EDUCATION

AESA monitors state and national reports highlighting state-level information of interest to ESAs. As always, it is important to view these reports through a critical lens with attention to research design, methodology, data sources and citations, peer review, and publication venue. This month AESA spotlights reports from *The Education Recovery Score Card* supported by Harvard and Stanford Universities, *Education Next*, *Education Week*, and the *Manhattan Institute*.

[Federal Pandemic Relief and Academic Recovery](#)

Education Recovery Score Card

When given additional funds, how effectively do school boards and district leaders spend them to improve student outcomes and by how much? The recent influx of federal pandemic relief provides a fresh opportunity to test the relationship between spending and achievement. During 2020 and 2021, the federal government approved three aid packages totaling nearly \$190 billion for elementary and secondary schools, ninety percent of which was provided directly to local school districts with little federal or state oversight. Researchers from Harvard and Stanford explore this complicated question in this report released in June 2024. Read more [here](#).

[No Silver Bullet](#)

Education Next

Does the end of ESSER mean test scores stay stuck at 2024 levels? Or is it possible to get better outcomes for the dollar so that learning recovery can continue when ESSER is gone? Many districts did indeed produce impressive recovery. But in others, the results have been the opposite, with test scores continuing to fall even as large sums flowed. One thing is clear: there are no silver school-spending bullets. But, Education Next has been analyzing the data and engaging with leaders to understand how systems might get more return on the dollars they have, and their findings point to five lessons on making money matter more in schools. Read more [here](#).

[Different Subjects Different Reading: Literacy Across the Disciplines](#)

Education Week

Education Week looks at the idea of literacy across disciplines, and the role teachers play in helping students understand and communicate deeply—lessons that will connect to success in postsecondary, work, and beyond. Read the full report [here](#).

OCTOBER 2024 MONTHLY ADVOCACY TIP

Educational service agency (ESA) leaders and staff play a crucial role in advocating for the needs of the K-12 public education system. But to be successful, they cannot do it alone. This is true, at least in part, because in some states the role of service agencies as an “intermediate” agency can be confusing to policymakers and the public. But, by forming strategic alliances with like-minded organizations and stakeholders, ESAs can significantly amplify advocacy efforts and maximize impact. This month’s article provides guidance for AESA members on building effective partnerships to advance shared educational priorities.

Amplifying the ESA Voice: The Keys to Forging Strategic Partnership for Effective Education Advocacy

Outlined below are 7 key steps to forging, and importantly, sustaining strategic partnerships that can help advance success in local, regional and state advocacy campaigns.

Step 1: Conduct Research

To find aligned organizations, ESAs can:

- Use community resource inventories or directories.
- Check with local libraries, chambers of commerce, and government offices.
- Employ the "snowball technique" by asking known allies to suggest other potential partners.

Map out various community sectors (e.g., businesses, nonprofits, higher education) and identify relevant organizations within each.

Step 2: Identify Potential Partners

When seeking advocacy partners, consider organizations that share your ESA's or state network's commitment to public education and have complementary strengths. Potential allies may include:

- Teacher unions and professional associations.
- Parent-teacher organizations.
- Civil rights and community groups.
- Business and industry associations.
- Higher education institutions.
- Youth-serving nonprofits.

Look for partners with a track record of education advocacy and a strong presence in your community, region or state.

Step 3: Assess Mutual Benefits and Risks

Evaluate how a potential partnership could benefit both parties:

- Create an "Allies' Risks vs. Benefits Table" to analyze what each organization may gain or lose by collaborating.
- Consider non-monetary factors like prestige, time commitments, and alignment with organizational identity.

This can be an important early step in charting a path toward successful, impactful partnerships.

Step 4: Criteria for Selecting Partners

To ensure alignment with your advocacy goals, evaluate potential partners using these criteria:

- Shared values and vision: Do they have a similar outlook on public education?
- Complementary expertise: Can they bring unique skills or resources to the table?
- Credibility and influence: Are they respected voices in education policy discussions?
- Capacity for collaboration: Do they have the staff and resources to actively participate?
- Track record of success: Have they achieved measurable advocacy wins in the past?

These criteria serve as examples and should be customized to meet each individual ESA or statewide network's context.

Step 4: Build Trust and Communication

Once potential partners are identified spend time building the relationship particularly if it's a new or cross-sector partnership:

- Invest time in building rapport through open communication and transparency
- Establish regular communication channels to keep all stakeholders informed and engaged
- Consider face-to-face meetings and joint problem-solving activities to strengthen relationships

Step 5: Explore Different Partnership Models

Strategic partnerships for advocacy can take various forms:

- Collaborative programs to develop and implement educational initiatives
- Resource sharing to provide comprehensive support
- Joint advocacy and awareness campaigns
- Mentorship networks
- Coordinated fundraising efforts

Step 6: Formalize the Partnership

To ensure clarity and alignment consider creating a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to define objectives, strategies, and resource allocation:

- Develop a clear “purpose and fit” statement for each potential partnership
- Negotiate agreements that outline roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes

This does not need to be a legal agreement but is an important step in creating joint ownership in a shared vision and plan and provides partnership “guard rails.”

Step 7: Sustain Effective Partnerships

Once you've identified promising partners, follow these steps to establish strong working relationships and sustain their operational effectiveness:

- **Establish clear goals:** Define shared advocacy priorities and desired outcomes.
- **Define success:** Being clear about what is actionable and doable given the circumstances and articulating it on the front end is important.
- **Designate point people:** Assign staff to manage communication and coordinate efforts.
- Share resources: Pool information, research, and connections to maximize impact.
- **Develop a joint strategy:** Create a coordinated plan for messaging and outreach.
- **Meet regularly:** Schedule check-ins to assess progress and adjust tactics as needed.
- **Measure impact:** Data collection will not only indicate whether the partnership is meeting intended outcomes but can fuel future advocacy efforts.

Ultimately, well-planned and intentional, strategic alliances can enhance your ESA or statewide network advocacy efforts in several ways:

- **Expanded reach:** Partners can help disseminate messages to broader audiences.
- **Diverse perspectives:** Collaborators bring varied expertise to strengthen policy proposals.
- **Resource sharing:** Pool funding, staff time, and other assets for more robust campaigns.
- **Increased credibility:** A united front of multiple organizations carries more weight with policymakers.

Conclusion

By strategically aligning with complementary organizations, ESAs can significantly amplify their advocacy impact. Remember to choose partners carefully, establish clear expectations, and leverage each other's strengths. Together, we can create a more powerful voice for K-12 public education.

AESA ADVOCACY GUIDE: Maximizing Impact

Educational Service Agencies play a critical role in supporting schools and districts, yet their unique needs and challenges often require tailored advocacy approaches. The recently released AESA Advocacy Guide recognizes the distinct position of ESAs and offers targeted strategies to help you navigate the complex landscape of education policy and funding.

Key Features of the toolkit include:

- Audience Analysis
- Message Development
- Channels & Content
- Advocacy Tactics

Advocacy is essential for ensuring that ESAs receive the support and recognition they deserve. With this specialized Advocacy Guide, you're equipped to lead impactful advocacy efforts that can make a real difference. [Download your copy today](#) and take the first step towards stronger, more effective advocacy for your ESA.

SHARE YOUR ADVOCACY SUCCESS STORIES

AESA would like to highlight successful state-level advocacy campaigns. Share your triumphs in state advocacy with fellow members! Contribute to our newsletter by submitting your success stories – your experiences can enlighten and inspire others in navigating the often-complex landscape of state advocacy. Together, we can amplify our collective knowledge for the benefit of the entire AESA membership. Send your stories to info@aesa.us

AESA OFFERS ADVOCACY WORKSHOPS

AESA offers three levels of workshops designed to enhance your understanding and effectiveness in state-level advocacy: the Three-Day Workshop, the One-Day Workshop, and Customized Presentations.

Three-Day Workshop

Objective: This in-depth, three-day workshop covers the essential aspects of state advocacy and lobbying, providing participants with the knowledge and skills needed to engage effectively in the state legislative and policy-making process.

Day 1: Understanding the State Legislative Landscape

Day 2: Navigating State Policy and Rulemaking

Day 3: Advocacy in Action

One Day Workshop

Objective: This condensed one-day workshop covers the essential aspects of state advocacy and lobbying, providing participants with a comprehensive overview of the state legislative process, budgeting, rule-making, and effective advocacy strategies.

All workshop sessions include specific learning objectives to ensure participants gain valuable insights in the available timeframe.

Customized Workshops and Presentations

You can rely on AESA to provide highly qualified, experienced speakers for presentations at your local or regional events. This approximately one-hour legislative update presentation will cover state politics, finance, and education policy with an added emphasis on effective advocacy embedded throughout. It can be customized as appropriate to a state's unique issues.

Please contact Joan Wade, AESA Executive Director, for more information.

STAY CONNECTED & INVOLVED

Have feedback for the AESA state advocacy team? Would you like to see a particular issue area addressed in future issues? Send feedback to info@aesa.us

STAY CONNECTED

