

## The State Examiner: May 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 (AESA). 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 impacting educational service agencies and their client schools and districts. This month's report for May 2024 will examine state-level legislation targeting college and career readiness including apprenticeships, career technical education, dual enrollment, and related policies.

#### Tracking College and Career Readiness State Policy Activities

In 2023 and 2024, several states have introduced or enacted legislation aimed at enhancing college and career readiness through various approaches including apprenticeships, career and technical education (CTE), dual enrollment related programs and funding positions like career navigators or career pathway specialists. These legislative efforts reflect a growing recognition of the importance of providing students with diverse pathways to postsecondary education and career success.

State legislatures continue to focus on college and career readiness citing several important reasons:

1. **Preparing a Skilled Workforce** - One of the primary drivers behind state efforts to enhance college and career readiness is the need to develop a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of the modern economy. And, importantly, retain America's position as a global leader and economic powerhouse. By promoting apprenticeships, career and technical education (CTE), and dual enrollment programs, states aim to equip students with the knowledge and skills required for high-demand careers and the ability to compete in a global economy. This not only benefits individual students but also supports economic growth and attracts businesses to the state.
2. **Addressing Skills Gaps** - Many industries face skills gaps, where there is a mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and the skills required by employers. State legislation focused on college and career readiness helps bridge these gaps by aligning educational programs with

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industry needs. CTE programs, in particular, provide hands-on training and industry-recognized credentials, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for specific career paths.

3. **Improving Student Outcomes** - Research has shown that students who participate in college and career readiness programs, such as CTE and dual enrollment, tend to have higher graduation rates, better academic performance, and smoother transitions to postsecondary education or employment. By investing in these programs, state legislatures aim to improve overall student outcomes and increase the likelihood of success after high school. Increasingly, post-secondary outcomes are monitored and reported on state report cards.
4. **Promoting Equity and Access** - College and career readiness initiatives can help address educational inequities by providing alternative pathways to success for students who may not thrive in traditional academic settings. Apprenticeships, CTE, and dual enrollment programs offer diverse learning opportunities that cater to different learning styles and interests. These efforts align to other policies such as flex-credit, competency-based education, personalized learning and other differentiated instructional approaches that enable students to advance at their own pace. State legislation in this area often focuses on expanding access to these programs, particularly for underserved populations.
5. **Responding to Stakeholder Demands** - State legislatures are responsive to the demands and concerns of various stakeholders, including parents, educators, and industry leaders. As the importance of college and career readiness becomes more widely recognized, stakeholders have advocated for policies and programs that better prepare students for postsecondary success. State legislators have responded by introducing legislation to support these efforts.
6. **Aligning with Workforce Development Strategies** - Many states have developed comprehensive workforce development strategies that aim to align education and training programs with the needs of the state's economy. College and career readiness initiatives are often a key component of these strategies, as they help ensure a steady pipeline of skilled workers for in-demand industries.

By focusing on college and career readiness through legislation, state governments are taking proactive steps to address critical educational and economic challenges.

In the 2023 and 2024 legislative sessions, 278 bills have been introduced in forty-eight of the 50 states. Of these **88** (31.7%) have been **enacted**, **98** (35.3%) **failed**, **5** (1.8%) were **vetoed** and **87** (31.3%) are still **pending**. Tennessee led the states with 8 passed and enacted bills, followed closely by two states that passed 6 bills (WA, VA). Florida was close behind with 5 bills, and six other states passed 4 bills (UT, ID, IN, SD, ND, ME). Five states passed and enacted 3 bills (AR, MD, CO, TX, CA), and seven states passed and enacted two (AL, MS, KS, GA, WV, IL, OR). And, lastly, nine states and the District of Columbia passed one bill (KY, NM, IA, NJ, NV, NH, D.C., DE, OH, WI).

Thematically, these bills include provisions that address, but are not limited to, the following:

- expanded access to dual credit programs;
- new or enhanced academic and career planning requirements;
- increased operating funding for career technical education;
- capital investments in facilities and equipment for career technical education;
- stipends for journey worker teachers;

- apprenticeship educational pathways for teacher licensure;
- development of high school level apprenticeships;
- on the job training to students for pay, school, credit or both;
- creation of several state-level education and workforce boards or agencies;
- amending or establishment of statewide assessments to measure career readiness;
- providing tax credits to industry partners that offer apprenticeships;
- scholarships to teachers to obtain professional degrees;
- establishment of comprehensive 4-year career and technical education programs;
- addressing liability concerns for business owners who may employ a minor who is at least a specified age to work in a hazardous occupation if the student is in a registered apprenticeship program; and
- much more.

To find summaries of legislation and links to bill text, readers can look to two great resources:

- Education Commission of the States (ECS) 50-state education policy tracking tool: <https://www.ecs.org/state-education-policy-tracking/>
- National Conference of State Legislatures Legislative (NCSL) Education Bill Tracking Database: <https://tinyurl.com/3rma76ea>

The legislative efforts in 2023 and 2024 demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing college and career readiness through diverse educational pathways. It signals a swing in state policies from the early 2000's that pushed for more college degrees, emphasized "college for all," and included programs that put students on college campuses while still in high school. By expanding apprenticeships, strengthening CTE programs, and increasing access to dual enrollment opportunities among other policies highlighted above, states are providing students with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed in both higher education and the workforce regardless of the path they choose. These initiatives not only address current educational and workforce challenges but also lay the foundation for a more skilled and adaptable future workforce.

Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) should continue to monitor these policy debates and identify opportunities to influence policy decisions in a way that leverage their knowledge and expertise, and increase opportunities and improve outcomes for all students regardless of where they live or attend school.

## 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 May 2024 follows below.

[Kansas lawmakers increase special education funding in school budget \(cjonline.com\)](#)

The Topeka Capital-Journal

[As property tax bills rise, states look for long-term solutions](#)

Route 50

[DeWine attributes state revenue loss to tax cuts - WOUB Public Media](#)

WOUB

[Indiana tax changes drive General Fund expectation miss • Indiana Capital Chronicle](#)

Indiana Capital Chronicle

[Tax revenue jumps 22% in April, but U.S. deficit still looms large | KASU](#)

NPR – KASU

[Alaska Legislature passes budget, energy and education bills to end session](#)

Anchorage Daily News

[Pa. budget: Education funding boost, tax cuts on table \(mcall.com\)](#)

The Morning Call

[Where Do States Stash the Cash in Their Rainy-Day Funds?](#)

Governing

## 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:

[Becoming a teacher in Alameda County can be expensive. A new program costs just \\$42 a month](#)

The Oaklandside

[Local Students Receive Summer Enrichment Scholarships Through ESC](#)

Daily Times

[Council Bluffs Community Schools, Pott. County out pacing the state in kindergarten readiness for preschoolers](#)

KMTV3

[To meet class size mandate, officials look to virtual learning](#)

Route 50

[Judge allows Warren County ESC suit against state education agency to continue](#)

Dayton Daily News

[WSWHE BOCES introduces new emergency medical technician program](#)

The Saratogian

[Pennsylvania Senators Propose Youth Courts to Reform School Discipline](#)

My ChesCo

[Chester County Internship Program Prepares Students for Future Success](#)

My ChesCo

[ESD 105 Superintendent reflects on service district's operations, goals](#)

Columbia Basin Herald

[BOCES in Clinton, Essex counties gets \\$5M state grant to create central food hub](#)

NCPR

[Northwest AEA continues to lose more staff due to AEA reform bill](#)

KTIV4

[Colorado justices agree school district co-ops cannot locate facilities outside borders without consent](#)

Colorado Politics

## NATIONAL REPORTS IMPACTING EDUCATION

AESA monitors 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 and national surveys from Brookings, the School Finance Indicators Database, Education Commission of the States, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and RAND.

### [Why Did Schools Lose Students After COVID-19?](#)

- According to Brookings' analysis the share of students attending traditional public schools in 2022-23 was about four percentage points below pre-pandemic enrollment (2019-20). What it further reveals is that public school enrollment losses are not fully explained by changes in population, charter school enrollment, or private school enrollment, suggesting that many families have chosen to homeschool after the pandemic. Learn more by checking out this latest report from Brookings.

### [The Adequacy and Fairness of State School Funding Systems](#)

- The School Finance Indicators Database (SFID) is a public collection of data and research on U.S. K-12 school finance compiled by researchers from the Albert Shanker Institute, University of Miami School of Education and Human Development, and the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education. The SFID team publishes two primary databases—one for states and one for over 12,000 individual school districts—along with accompanying reports and resources using and presenting these data. All SFID products are freely available to download, and are designed for use not only by researchers, but also by parents, policymakers, journalists, educators, and the public. In this sixth edition of their annual report, they evaluate the K-12 school finance systems of all fifty states and the District of Columbia. Though released in 2024, the latest year of data presented is the 2020-21 school year.

Readers can download any of the 51 one-page profiles that evaluate the performance of the K-12 school finance systems of all fifty states and the District of Columbia.

### [50-State Comparison: K-12 Funding](#)

- Education Commission of the States maintains and updates a comprehensive database of state funding and policy. In March 2024, they updated their K-12 funding database. This 50-State Comparison summarizes these key choices, including: the primary funding model, base funding, student counts, funding for special education services, English learners, students from low-income backgrounds, gifted and talented students, and small and rural school districts.
- Users can click on any one of the metrics included in the database to see how all states approach various aspects of K-12 funding. One can also view a specific state's approach by going to the [state profiles](#) page.

### [Expiration of Federal K-12 Emergency Funds Could Pose Challenges for States](#)

- As lawmakers take up education funding during this year's state legislative sessions, the loss of federal ESSER/ARPA funds and the related implications for schools and school districts should be top of mind for policymakers. In this report, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities cautions state lawmakers to resist calls for further tax cuts and the diversion of resources away from K-12 education to other priorities. The fiscal impact of the expiration of ESSER funds for states and school districts could be exacerbated by several factors including inadequate school funding formulas, elevated costs, and an uncertain revenue outlook. In combination with these factors, the loss of ESSER funds could have severe implications for students, including risking teacher layoffs and the loss of crucial student programming.

The report includes comprehensive state-level datasets to gauge the relative impact of ESSER funding on state and school district budgets.

### [Supports for Implementing Equitable Practices in the K–12 Classroom: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions](#)

- Public schools in the United States have become more diverse over the past two decades, and there is an emerging push for equity considerations in instruction in public schools. Yet, there is often a lack of clarity around the types of messages that teachers receive about teaching with an equity lens and how teachers enact equitable practices in the classroom. In this study, the authors interviewed forty-five teachers of mathematics and English language arts in kindergarten through grade 12 and examined the messages that these teachers reported receiving from various sources as they relate to equity and how teachers operationalize such messages to instruct students from traditionally underserved backgrounds.

## **MAY 2024 MONTHLY ADVOCACY TIP**

As a public sector education agency or non-profit organization, navigating the complex landscape of policymaking and statehouse politics can be a daunting and intimidating task. Hiring a skilled lobbyist or

government relations specialist can be a strategic investment that amplifies your voice and advances your advocacy agenda or that of your statewide ESA network. However, it is crucial to approach this decision thoughtfully and with a clear understanding of your organization's or network's needs and goals. This month's advocacy tip focuses on when and how to hire a government affairs specialist or lobbyist.

## Effective Advocacy Tips: A Strategic Investment for Advocacy Success

**When to Consider Hiring a Lobbyist.** Determining the right time to engage a lobbyist or government relations specialist is a critical first step. Here are key scenarios where their expertise can be invaluable:

1. **Legislative Priorities:** If your organization has specific legislative priorities or policy changes that require navigating the intricate web of government processes, a lobbyist can be instrumental in advocating for your cause effectively.
2. **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Public sector agencies and non-profits often rely on government funding or resource allocation. A lobbyist can help ensure your organization's interests are represented and prioritized during budget negotiations and decision-making processes.
3. **Regulatory Changes:** Proposed regulatory changes can significantly impact your operations or the communities you serve. A lobbyist can help you stay informed, provide insights, and advocate for favorable outcomes.
4. **Building Relationships:** Establishing and maintaining relationships with key policymakers and legislators is crucial for long-term advocacy success. A skilled lobbyist can leverage their existing connections and help you build new ones.

**Key Considerations When Hiring a Lobbyist.** Once you have determined the need for a lobbyist, it is essential to evaluate potential candidates carefully. Here are some key factors to consider:

1. **Qualifications and Experience**
  - Subject Matter Expertise: Look for lobbyists with a deep understanding of the issues relevant to your organization, such as education policy, healthcare, or environmental regulations.
  - Relationships and Connections: Evaluate the lobbyist's existing relationships with policymakers, legislators, and other stakeholders in your area of interest. Strong connections can accelerate your advocacy efforts.
  - Track Record: Review the lobbyist's past successes and failures in advocating for similar causes or organizations. A proven record can provide valuable insights into their effectiveness.
2. **Alignment with Your Organization's Values and Goals**
  - Mission and Vision: Ensure the lobbyist's values and approach align with your organization's mission, vision, and ethical standards.
  - Communication and Transparency: Establish clear expectations for regular communication, reporting, and transparency throughout the lobbying process.
  - List of clients: the lobbyist or their firm should not have engagements with clients whose interests are contrary to those of your organization or network.

### 3. **Cost and Budget Considerations**

- **Fee Structure:** Understand the lobbyist's fee structure, including hourly rates, retainers, or success-based compensation models.
- **Additional Expenses:** Clarify any additional expenses, such as travel, research, or administrative costs, which may be incurred during the lobbying process.

**Evaluating Lobbyist Performance.** Once you have hired a lobbyist, it is essential to monitor their performance and evaluate their effectiveness regularly. Here are some key performance measures to consider:

1. **Legislative and Policy Outcomes:** Assess the lobbyist's success in achieving your organization's legislative or policy goals, such as the passage or defeat of specific bills or regulations.
2. **Access and Influence:** Evaluate the lobbyist's ability to secure meetings and build relationships with key decision-makers, legislators, and stakeholders.
3. **Communication and Reporting:** Monitor the quality, frequency, and timeliness of the lobbyist's communication and reporting, ensuring transparency and accountability.
4. **Reputation and Credibility:** Assess the lobbyist's reputation and credibility within the policymaking community, as well as their ability to maintain your organization's positive image.
5. **Strategic Guidance:** Evaluate the lobbyist's ability to provide valuable insights, strategic advice, and guidance on navigating the policymaking landscape effectively.
6. **Responsiveness and Availability:** Ensure the lobbyist is responsive to your organization's needs and available when required, particularly during critical periods or legislative sessions.

By carefully considering these factors and performance measures, you can make an informed decision when hiring a lobbyist and ensure a productive and successful partnership that advances your organization's advocacy goals.

In conclusion, hiring a skilled lobbyist or government relations specialist can be a valuable investment for public sector education agencies and non-profits seeking to influence policy and legislation. By understanding when to engage a lobbyist, evaluating potential candidates thoroughly, and monitoring their performance regularly, you can maximize the impact of your advocacy efforts and amplify your organization's voice in the policymaking process.

## 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](mailto:info@aesa.us)



## 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](mailto:info@aesa.us)

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