

## The State Examiner: January 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 our fifty states. The purpose of the monthly report is to ensure AESA members are aware of the latest state-level education legislative 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 January 2024 will examine what is happening in statehouses around the country regarding **high dosage tutoring and related interventions**.

In recent years, the landscape of education in the United States has witnessed a growing emphasis on addressing learning gaps through targeted interventions. High dosage tutoring, an intensive and personalized approach to academic support, has gained prominence as a potential solution for enhancing student outcomes. This month's issue monitoring article aims to explore and analyze the current legislative landscape across all fifty states, shedding light on the policies and initiatives in place to promote high dosage tutoring for K-12 students. By identifying and briefly explaining these legislative initiatives, we seek to provide members with insights into the commitment of various state legislatures to foster educational equity and excellence through tailored support mechanisms.

According to a review of the National Conference of State Legislatures' 50-state database, thirty bills were introduced in eighteen states in the 2023 legislative session related to tutoring. Of the introduced bills 9 (30%) failed, 15 (50%) are still pending, and 6 (20%) were passed and enacted.

Those that passed include:

- Arkansas Senate Bill 294
- Hawaii House Resolution 159
- Louisiana Senate Bill 177
- North Dakota Senate Bill 2284
- South Carolina Senate Bill 39
- West Virginia Senate Bill 688

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These bills address a number of issues including, but not limited to, contracting retired teachers to serve as tutors, establishing educational scholarship trust funds, permitting the use of private tutors on public school premises, requiring states to published lists of high-quality tutoring programs, exempting high-quality tutors from state procurement laws, increasing access to tutoring services outside of the public school system, and requiring state departments of education to publish reports on access to tutoring services.

More information on the bills outlined above, including access to summaries of enacted legislation, can be found online at: <http://tinyurl.com/5d6tj5bk>.

The examination of high dosage tutoring legislation across the fifty states underscores a shared commitment to bolstering educational opportunities for K-12 students. As states grapple with diverse challenges in their educational systems, many of which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the recognition of high dosage tutoring as a viable intervention demonstrates a collective effort to bridge gaps and promote academic success. Moving forward, the insights gained from this review may help to inform policymakers, educators, and education stakeholders in other states about potential best practice policies for replication and implementation. Those seeking to address this issue through enactment of state policy may consider outreach to their ESA colleagues in states that have extensive experience in this area.

Other state government policy and fiscal resources to monitor education and education funding related issues across the fifty states include the following:

- Education Commission of the States: <https://www.ecs.org/>
- National Governors Association - <https://www.nga.org/>

## STATE BUDGET & FINANCE MONITORING

AESA monitors state level budget and finance news impacting preschool and primary and secondary education. The latest state budget-related news for January 2024 follows below.

### State Budget Problems Spread

According to a recent article from the Pew Center for the States, for the first time since 2020, many state governments must confront broadly shared budget challenges. Based on budget analyses states published in late 2023, roughly half of Americans live in states that report short-term budget gaps, potential long-term deficits, or both—and this inventory almost certainly understates the scope of the problem because many states do not publish sufficient forward-looking data to meaningfully assess their fiscal outlook. For states with structural budget deficits—where ongoing spending chronically exceeds ongoing revenue—policymakers need to either decrease spending or increase revenue to bring the budget back into balance, or else they will eventually exhaust even the largest reserves. The first step is for states to determine the size, timing, and causes of any challenges they face so they can act promptly to bring their budgets back into balance.

To learn more about fiscal conditions in the states go to: <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2024/01/09/state-budget-problems-spread>

## State Tax Changes In 2024

Strong fiscal conditions with few signs of stress often lead state policymakers to cut taxes. This is a trend that was prevalent in 2023 and continues into 2024. The Tax Foundation recently summarized tax changes taking effect in the new year, noting that the most common dates for tax changes to kick in are January 1 or July 1 (for the forty-six states that begin their fiscal years on that date). Frequently, income tax changes have a January 1 effective date, given that federal income taxes conform to calendar years.

A Federal Funds Information for the States (FFIS) review of the Tax Foundation analysis revealed that fourteen states have individual income tax rate reductions taking effect in 2024. In addition to states reducing tax rates other changes included the following:

- Ohio and Montana consolidated tax brackets.
- Georgia implemented a flat tax.
- Michigan increased its tax.
- Montana and Massachusetts codified filing status requirements.
- Missouri exempted social security benefits from taxation.
- California's top marginal tax rate on wage income increased.

The report also highlighted six states with 2024 reductions in their corporate income tax rates. Other changes affecting corporate income taxes include the following:

- Owners of pass-through entities in Connecticut may elect to pay the individual income tax at the entity level or as individuals.
- Florida reduced its rate on business rent.
- Ohio raised the Commercial Activity Tax gross receipts threshold.
- Texas doubled the threshold for owing no taxes under the franchise tax.
- New Hampshire decoupled the state's tax code from a section of the federal code.
- Louisiana ended the taxation of "nowhere" income.

Tax rate cuts are generally used to boost economic growth by allowing individuals or business entities to keep more of their money. Tax cuts may encourage individuals to work, save, and invest, or for businesses to expand and increase activity. But it also usually means reduced state revenue, at least in the short-term, to fund essential state services like education. Generally speaking, if the tax cuts are not financed by immediate spending cuts, they will likely also result in increased budget deficits or slower growth. The latter is more likely in state budgets due to state-level balanced budget requirements.

Educators and school advocates should continually monitor state fiscal and tax policy changes to understand the fiscal implications of these changes on state general fund revenue (GRF) for public education. In a world of finite resources, every action that impacts one set of interests often has an equal and opposite effect for another group that could mean funding cuts or slower spending growth.

## STATEHOUSE NEWS: EDUCATION FINANCE AND POLICY

Below is a representative sample of news coming out of the states or impacting the states that will be of interest to ESAs and their client schools and districts:

[Parental Pursuit of School Choice Is Skyrocketing](#)

Real Clear Education – 25 January 2024

[Legislative breakfast highlights WSWHE BOCES educational priorities](#)

The Record – 25 January 2024

[AEA Overhaul Would Dismantle Services Rural Schools Depend On, Says Local AEA Chief](#)

New Review – 24 January 2024

[Michigan After-school Partnership Applauds \\$50M State Investment in Youth Programming](#)

Keweenaw Report – 23 January 2024

[Kids are flooded with social media and news. Some states want to help them question it](#)

Stateline - 19 January 2024

[What Makes a Strong Early Reading Law? Not Everyone Agrees](#)

EdWeek – 16 January 2024

[U.S. Department of Education Announces Over 1 million 2024-2025 FAFSA Forms Successfully Submitted and Form Now Available 24/7 for Students and Families](#)

USD OE - 8 January 2024

[Experts Recommend Mental Health Screenings for Students. Most Schools Aren't Doing Them](#)

EdWeek - 4 January 2024

[Education Announces \\$47 Million to Support School Infrastructure Investments](#)

U.S. Department of Education – 4 January 2024

[Treasury struggled to help states and cities with COVID reporting](#)

Route Fifty-two – 2 January 2024

[Ohio's new governor-appointed education director talks reading, vouchers and accountability](#)

Statehouse News Bureau - 1 January 2024

[Illinois Schools Face Financial Cliff as Pandemic Aid Ends](#)

Governing – 1 January 2024

## 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, and peer review and publication venue. This month AESA spotlights two reports from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and one from the National Council on Teacher Quality, which are highlighted below:

### State of Play: An Inside Look at Artificial Intelligence Policy and State Actions

A new video partnership between A Starting Point and NCSL examines how states are navigating the complexities of AI regulation. To access the article and view the video, go to: <https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/state-of-play-an-inside-look-at-artificial-intelligence-policy-and-state-actions>

The state of Ohio is a leading example of a state providing guidance and resources for policymakers, teachers, and parents to advance AI readiness in Ohio schools. This toolkit will equip stakeholders in Ohio's schools (district superintendents, school principals, educators, parents, and more) with the resources to advance AI literacy among their students. The toolkit can be accessed at: <https://innovateohio.gov/toolkit>.

### **NCSL Special Report: A Look at 2024's Trending Legislative Topics**

From education to the environment, from elections to energy, the stories in this **State Legislatures News special report** offer insights from NCSL experts on what lies ahead for state lawmakers in 2024. What's trending for the new year? Explore the topics in the following link to see what's in the forecast: <https://www.ncsl.org/resources/forecast-24-special-report>

As it relates to primary and secondary education, state legislatures are expected to continue policy to address students' literacy and math skills, support effective teachers, improve student mental health, and boost the value of postsecondary education. To learn more go to: <https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/todays-assignment-returning-american-education-to-the-head-of-the-class>.

Supporting effective teachers and administrators is a key priority identified by NCSL. To support their member legislatures in tackling this issue, NCSL has updated its **Teacher and Principal Policy Toolkit**. This toolkit provides a wide variety of resources on teachers and principals, including legislators' guides, a glossary of teacher preparation terms, and relevant reports from external partners. Although these resources present policy strategies separately, NCSL research suggests these policies have the greatest impact when implemented together as a [comprehensive set of practices](#) to improve the educator pipeline. Education leaders interested in policy and understanding what informs the legislative perspective can access the toolkit here: <https://www.ncsl.org/education/teacher-and-principal-policy-toolkit>.

### **Five Policy Actions to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading**

Only when state leaders implement a literacy strategy that prioritizes teacher effectiveness will states achieve a teacher workforce that can strengthen student literacy year after year. This report outlines five policy actions states can take to ensure a well-prepared teacher workforce that can implement and sustain the science of reading in classrooms across the country.

To learn more, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/h4e5rpr9>

### **JANUARY 2024 MONTHLY ADVOCACY TIP**

Forming alliances with like-minded organizations, interest groups, and constituents can amplify an organization's advocacy efforts. Collaborating with diverse partners can also help educators cover different angles and expertise, making their advocacy more comprehensive. This month's publication provides key strategies to building a united front with like-minded peers to present a broader and more influential voice and, in the process, displaying widespread support for an organization's cause.

## **Building Strategic Alliances for Effective Advocacy Campaigns in Education**

In the ever-evolving policy and political environment of K-12 education, the power of advocacy lies not only in the voice of educators but also in the strength of strategic alliances. Forming partnerships with like-minded organizations, parents, and community leaders can significantly amplify the impact of advocacy efforts, fostering a united front for positive change in public schools. These types of strategic alliances can be particularly powerful when they are cross-sector partnerships like education and the business community as a leading example.

This article will delve into key strategies for building such alliances, enhancing operational and academic outcomes for both educators and the students they serve.

### **1. Identify Common Goals and Values:**

The foundation of any successful alliance is a shared vision. Educators, organizations, parents, and community leaders must align on common goals and values to create a cohesive force for change. By identifying mutual interests, such as improving educational standards, promoting inclusive policies, or securing adequate funding, alliances can focus on objectives that resonate with all stakeholders.

### **2. Cultivate Relationships with Like-Minded Organizations:**

Collaborating with organizations that share similar advocacy goals is a cornerstone of strategic alliance-building. Reach out to education-focused non-governmental organizations (NGOs), teacher unions, or grassroots movements that champion causes relevant to your campaign. Establishing these connections can provide access to valuable resources, expertise, and a broader network of supporters, amplifying the reach and impact of your advocacy efforts. Cross-sector partnerships can be particularly compelling, especially if the partner has a focus and relationships that complement those of one's own organization.

### **3. Engage Parents as Advocates:**

Parents are powerful allies in the advocacy landscape. Create avenues for open communication with parents, ensuring they understand the issues at hand and feel empowered to advocate for positive change. Host informational sessions, workshops, or community forums to foster dialogue and build a strong partnership. Parental involvement not only adds diverse perspectives to the advocacy campaign but also strengthens the grassroots support crucial for systemic change.

### **4. Collaborate with Community Leaders:**

Local community leaders play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and policy. Engage with these leaders to garner their support for educational initiatives. This may involve attending community events, seeking endorsements, or participating in local governance structures. By aligning with respected figures in the community, advocacy campaigns gain credibility and increase their influence on decision-makers.

### **5. Leverage Digital Platforms for Outreach:**

In today's interconnected world, digital platforms offer unparalleled opportunities for outreach. Utilize social media, online forums, and advocacy websites to connect with potential allies. Share compelling stories, data, and updates to build a virtual community dedicated to the cause. The digital landscape not only facilitates information dissemination but also enables efficient coordination among diverse stakeholders.

**6. Establish a Coordinated Advocacy Strategy:**

To maximize impact, ensure that all alliance members are on the same page regarding advocacy strategies and messaging. Develop a coordinated plan that leverages the strengths of each partner while maintaining a unified front. Regular communication, strategic planning sessions, and collaborative initiatives will foster a sense of teamwork and cohesion within the alliance.

**7. Advocate for Inclusive Policies:**

Inclusivity is key to a successful advocacy campaign. Ensure that the alliance reflects the diversity of the community it serves. Advocate for policies that prioritize equitable access to quality education for all students, regardless of background or socioeconomic status. By championing inclusivity, the alliance not only strengthens its moral standing but also broadens its appeal and impact.

Building strategic alliances is a fundamental aspect of effective advocacy campaigns in education. By uniting educators, like-minded organizations, parents, and community leaders, these alliances can create a formidable force for positive change in public schools. The collaborative efforts will not only amplify the impact of advocacy initiatives but also contribute to improved operational and academic outcomes for the benefit of students and the entire education community. Through shared goals, open communication, and inclusive practices, these alliances become catalysts for lasting and meaningful change in the educational landscape.

## 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)

STAY CONNECTED

