



# PRIORITIES

NEVADA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

2024-2025 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



## ABOUT NSEA

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for 125 years. NSEA members are educators including teachers and other licensed professionals, education support professionals (ESPs), retired educators, and aspiring educators. The primary mission of NSEA is to advocate for and empower members by providing a united political and professional voice to ensure the right to quality public education. NSEA is extremely active in promoting opportunities for professional awareness, growth, and empowerment. We take pride in serving as a well-balanced, democratic organization serving the best interests of our members while meeting the needs of the students we teach and the communities we serve.

## NSEA'S CORE VALUES

### *Member Driven*

We believe in a member driven organization, created and democratically governed by members. As stewards of the organization, members determine the legislative agenda, provide financial oversight, and craft the guiding principles of the organization.

### *Justice*

We believe in the protection of member rights. We believe that the collective bargaining process is essential for the fair and just treatment of members.

### *Equality*

We believe public education is the basis for a strong and healthy society which results from quality schools, quality educators, quality education resources, and quality communities.

## NSEA'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

The NSEA TIP Policies outline the process for development of our legislative program. "The Government Relations Committee, in concert with the President and the Executive Director, shall develop the NSEA Legislative Program for each legislative session by assessing the membership, evaluating external legislative proposals, and reviewing the current political climate. The NSEA Delegate Assembly may propose legislative items for consideration. The NSEA-TIP Board of Directors shall make final approval of the NSEA Legislative Program."



# EDUCATOR RETENTION AND CLASS SIZE

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Retaining qualified teachers and other educators to keep schools running is critical for all Nevadans and a top priority for NSEA. Educator shortages have impacted school districts across Nevada for years, compromising the basic operation of too many of our schools. Since COVID, this crisis has been heightened. While Nevada has expanded educator development programs and recruitment, we have lost qualified educators at a greater or equal rate creating a structural, protracted educator shortage. Last session, NSEA helped pass legislation to expand the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Task Force to include all educators. Now is the time to fully implement this Task Force's recommendations, including financial recommendations to further increase educator pay and benefits.

Meanwhile, the number of students in a class makes a real difference for students and teachers alike. For students, smaller class size can help close the racial achievement gap, lead to earlier identification of learning disabilities, improve high school graduation rates, improve student behavior, and allow for more engagement in lessons. For educators, smaller class size improves educator morale as it allows for more individual and differentiated instruction, less time on paperwork, and stronger classroom management as teachers become more aware of individual students' strengths or weaknesses. Nevada class sizes continue to be the largest in the nation, and the only bill to effectively address this issue last session failed to receive a hearing. This, despite NSEA's Time for 20 campaign calling for average class sizes of 20 students.

Educator retention and class sizes are interrelated issues. Nevada needs to do better to retain educators to have the workforce necessary to reduce class sizes. And since issues related to large class sizes push too many educators out of the state or profession, Nevada needs to reduce class sizes to better retain qualified educators.

## **To address these concerns, the NSEA SUPPORTS:**

- Implementation of recommendations of the Educator Recruitment and Retention Task Force, including increasing the allocation of funding to education and prioritize the use of those funds for retention efforts.
- Average class sizes of 20 students.
- Increasing funding for class size reduction and passage of legislation to make class size a workplace bargaining issue.
- Equitable and developmentally appropriate caseload numbers for all certified positions within public schools.
- Permanent implementation of SB231 funding for all educators.





**RESPECT**  
**EDUCATORS**

# RESPECT EDUCATORS

Respecting educators means elevating the voice, well-being, and autonomy of educators in their work. Educator voice includes guaranteeing educators have their professional judgment and discretion respected by school and district administrators; are treated with civility and respect; are not required to complete excessively burdensome paperwork; are afforded adequate time during the work week for lesson planning and collaborations with other educators; have greater autonomy regarding student grading; are able to better enforce student attendance requirements; and have fair and meaningful work evaluations.

Meanwhile, a top concern of classroom educators has been too many standardized tests shifting the focus in the classroom away from student learning toward a culture of high-stakes testing. NSEA has been actively working to reduce the burden of standardized testing, helping pass a bill to require reviews of student assessments in 2017 and again in 2021. While small changes have been made over the last several years, NSEA continues to push for more substantive overhaul of state testing requirements. This should include ensuring the state adopts a single assessment to determine proficiency in reading for the Read by Grade 3 program and elimination of the High School Science Assessment and use of data from the ACT Science exam to standardize the measure used across the state.

## Given these developments, NSEA SUPPORTS:

- Elimination of student data in teacher evaluations.
- Greater autonomy regarding student grading and enforcing student attendance requirements.
- Policies to better address chronic student absenteeism.
- Adequate time during work hours for lesson planning and collaborations with other educators and reduction of excessively burdensome paperwork.
- Requiring explicit plans in each school district to address administrative bullying, hostile work environments, and school culture issues.
- Allowing active educators to serve on their elected school boards and/or establishing district advisory committees comprised of educators to work with elected school boards to better understand the needs of their community and schools.
- Streamlining Nevada's assessment systems.
- Reliance on the professional teachers in the classroom to assess students and to design and deliver instruction.
- Education support professional Bill of Rights



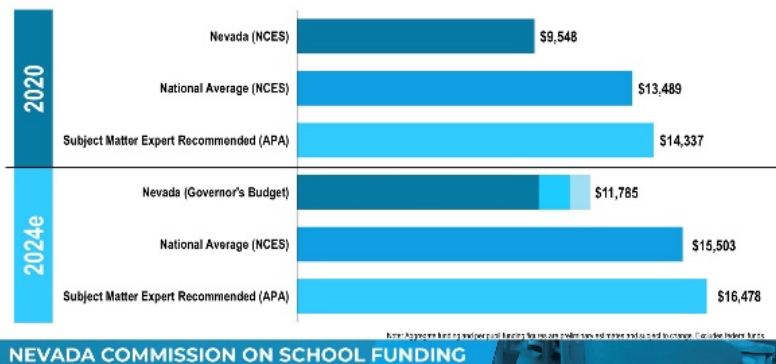
# SCHOOL FINANCE

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For decades, NSEA has led the charge against chronic underfunding of public education in Nevada, from the instigation of the IP1 room tax in 2008 and qualification of the Education Initiative in 2014 to our major Red for Ed and Rainy Day rallies in Carson City in recent years. NSEA's efforts have been a large part of creating a social and political consensus – Nevada needs to invest significantly more in public education.

The Commission on School Funding was formed as a part of the new school funding plan passed in 2019 and charged with determining optimal education funding and developing a plan to reach that in 10 years. In 2021, the Commission published its first *Recommendations Regarding Optimal Funding*. It has updated its projections based on Nevada expenditures and national trends since that time.

## Per Pupil Funding Comparison



Over the last few years, Nevada has significantly increased education funding. At the same time, the cost of education has also significantly increased. According to the Funding Commission, the net effect of these two trends is Nevada has made slow progress, despite record investment. In 2021, Nevada's per pupil spending was \$4603 behind optimal funding. In 2025, Nevada will be \$4091 per pupil short, closing the gap by \$512 across 4 years.

With increased funding last session, many Nevada educators were able to negotiate 20% salary increases last year. These increases helped narrow the educator pay gap, but the positive impact was blunted by increases in cost of living. This dynamic is directly related to overall education funding and costs, as described above.

The Funding Commission is making recommendations to reach optimal funding, including increasing revenue from property and sales taxes. NSEA supports these recommendations. We also encourage legislators to consider more progressive revenue sources. NSEA looks forward to continuing our decades-long fight against chronic underfunding of public education in Nevada.

## To address these concerns, NSEA SUPPORTS:

- Full implementation of the recommendations of the Commission on School Funding.
- New, progressive revenue. This could include a wealth tax, millionaire tax, expanded gaming and mining taxes, and closing business tax loopholes.



# SCHOOLS OVER STADIUMS AND STUDIOS



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There has been a fundamental contradiction in the actions of Nevada leaders when it comes to properly funding public education and other vital state services. While nearly every state leader claims to prioritize education, there's a competing record of corporate giveaways, from Tesla to the Raiders, that cost the state over a billion dollars.

Immediately after last session, the Governor convened a special session to give billionaire John Fisher \$380M in public money to build a baseball stadium in Las Vegas. A majority of legislators voted to approve the proposal. During that session, NSEA and our allies pointed out Nevada was the only state in the country to receive 3 Fs in education funding in the 2023 "Making the Grade" report released by the Education Law Center. Instead of doing more to address this, state leaders delivered for the A's.

In response, NSEA launched Schools Over Stadiums to pursue every path to stop the use of public money for this private subsidy. Initially, Schools Over Stadiums launched a referendum petition to block the use of public monies. Unfortunately, the courts blocked Nevada voters from having a say in 2024. In addition to the referendum petition, Strong Public Schools Nevada filed litigation challenging the constitutionality of Senate Bill 1. This lawsuit has the potential to remove every dollar of public funding from the project.

Meanwhile, a proposal to give upwards of \$2B to Sony to develop a movie studio in southern Nevada that failed to move forward last session appears to be coming back in the upcoming session. NSEA opposes giving away public money to private enterprises while our public schools and other public services remain so chronically underfunded.

## To address these concerns, NSEA SUPPORTS:

- Public money in public schools and services.
- No tax abatements for stadiums or studios or other enterprises.
- A rollback of existing abatements and giveaways.



**PUBLIC EDUCATION**  
**THE GREAT EQUALIZER**

# PUBLIC EDUCATION, THE GREAT EQUALIZER

Public schools are available to every child, and that's where 90% of Nevada students are educated. A high-quality public education system helps address inequalities in opportunity and disparities in resources across families and communities. Efforts to defund public schools are directly related to calls to allow public resources to pay for private schools or privately-operated charter schools exacerbates inequality. Unfortunately, backroom dealmaking at the end of legislative sessions has led to the giveaway of millions of dollars in public funds to those profiting from education, including unaccountable charter schools and private schools.

Charter schools were initially promoted by educators who sought to innovate within the local public school system to better meet the needs of their students. Over the last 25 years, charter schools have grown dramatically to include large numbers of charters that are privately managed, largely unaccountable, and not transparent as to their operations or performance. While charter schools themselves are non-profit, many are managed by out-of-state, for-profit charter management organizations, like Academica.

The explosive growth of charters has been driven by deliberate, billionaire-backed efforts to ensure that charters are exempt from the basic safeguards and standards that apply to public schools. This growth has undermined local public schools and communities, without producing any overall increase in student learning and growth. While charters are prohibited from discriminating, they continue to serve far fewer students in poverty, English language learners, and students with disabilities. Efforts to diversify charter school student populations have not been able to correct the structural inequity that is built into the system of charter schools and their relationship to neighborhood public schools.

In 2021, NSEA proposed legislation to require all teachers who provide instruction at charters to be licensed. However, this legislation was met with resistance from the charter industry and was watered down to only require 80% of charter teachers to be licensed. Other small charter reforms have been adopted over the years, but charter school expansion has been left in the hands of the pro-charter Authority.

Meanwhile, NSEA has also played a key role in the fight to make sure public money stays in public schools. This includes killing Education Savings Accounts, the 2015 private school voucher proposal. Last session, the Governor proposed a massive increase to private school vouchers, increasing the program by hundreds of millions of dollars over 10 years and expanding eligibility to wealthier families. While a competitor union sat alongside the administration to present the bill, NSEA pushed back forcefully, and the private school voucher provisions were not passed.

## To address these concerns, NSEA SUPPORTS:

- Elimination of private school vouchers (Opportunity Scholarships).
- Require uniform standards for teachers at charter schools and neighborhood public schools, including requiring all charter teachers to be properly licensed.
- Stronger controls for charter schools, including regulations on siting of new charter facilities, limits on the expansion of for-profit education or charter management organizations, and regulations on charter real estate dealings.
- Prohibiting the outsourcing of public jobs, including education support professional positions.



# MEMBER RIGHTS

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As the representative of teachers and other licensed educators and education support professionals across the state, NSEA is committed to the well-being and protection of our members. This includes safety and rights in the workplace, our collective bargaining rights, access to life's necessities like healthcare, childcare, and security in retirement, and worker voice on decisions impacting us.

A longstanding issue for NSEA is equity in the accrual of retirement benefits for education support professionals who work the full school day and school year. During the last session, NSEA worked closely with PERS on this issue and was able address this issue for some education support professionals. NSEA will continue to pursue legislation to specifically require full-year PERS credit for all 9–11 month education support professionals.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, educators across the state have become increasingly concerned with accessing quality, affordable healthcare. This affects active educators, and especially retirees who are not eligible for Medicare or are living in areas without good health provider options. We believe that healthcare is a right, and that the state should ensure those who have served to educate our kids have access to the healthcare they need to live with dignity.

## To that end, NSEA SUPPORTS:

- Defending Nevada PERS defined benefit status and provide equity in retirement accrual for education support professionals.
- Protecting and strengthening collective bargaining for educators, including restoring ending fund balance provisions to 8.3%.
- Extend summer unemployment eligibility to 9-11 month education support professionals.
- Ensuring every educator and retired educator has access to quality, affordable health care including affordable prescription coverage.
- Paid family and medical leave for all educators.
- Ensuring a living wage for all education employees.
- Requiring Pre-K and early childhood education at every publicly funded elementary school.





# **NSEA LOBBY TEAM**

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