



AESA State Examiner

September 2026

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, state-level advocacy report from the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA). It provides legislative monitoring, curated news articles, and related content gathered from across 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 concludes with action-oriented advocacy tips to activate and empower our members to be informed, effective education advocates.***

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STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUE MONITORING

In each edition of the *State Examiner*, AESA monitors state-level legislation and legislative trends impacting ESAs and their client schools and districts. This month's report for September 2026 examines evolving state budget conditions and related school finance legislation and trends.

School Finance Legislation: Enrollment decline, cost growth, and the continued school finance debate

At the recent AESA Advocacy in Action State Advocacy Pre-Conference, representatives from the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS) described a changing fiscal and policy landscape for K–12 education. States are managing slower revenue growth, competing budget demands, enrollment shifts, and rising service costs while also considering changes to funding formulas, targeted student supports, and school-choice programs. This article examines how those pressures are reshaping the next school-finance debate—and how districts and educational service agencies can use local data this fall to prepare for the next legislative and budget cycle.

Public education is entering a fiscal reset. School budgets are tight in many places, but the larger issue is structural. Student counts are falling or shifting. Attendance is less stable than before the pandemic.

Costs for compensation, special education, transportation, utilities, and contracted services continue to climb. Temporary federal support has largely expired. At the same time, states face slower revenue growth and new demands on their budgets.

For districts and educational service agencies (ESAs), the question is not whether every community faces the same problem. They do not. The question is whether current finance systems recognize the changing cost of serving students. That is likely to be one of the central education debates of the 2027 legislative cycle.

A broad finance reform agenda

School finance is not a narrow policy issue. ECS tracks state legislation in funding formulas, targeted funding for specific student groups, school-choice funding, adequacy and core cost, district finance, state budgets and expenditures, taxes and revenues, facilities, and resource efficiency. Its public tracker does not provide a single real-time national total for every 2026 finance bill, but its earlier review identified 39 enacted K–12 funding-formula bills in 2023 and 22 more through late 2024. The volume and range of state activity show that formula design is under review in many parts of the country.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) also maintains a 50-state pre-K–12 legislation database that tracks finance among more than 50 policy issues. Together, these resources show that school-finance debates now reach beyond a base per-pupil amount. They include special education, transportation, student weights, property tax capacity, enrollment protections, school choice, literacy, staffing, mental health, and early childhood investments.

A structural mismatch is emerging

Most states allocate a large share of school funding through a per-pupil formula. Enrollment remains a reasonable starting point: it measures the students a district serves. But enrollment-based revenue can fall faster than a district can reduce its fixed costs. A district cannot quickly eliminate a bus route, close a building, reduce debt service, or stop providing services required by an individualized education program (IEP) because a small number of students leave. This is a reality that state policymakers must keep in mind.

The national pattern is clear but uneven. Public-school enrollment fell from nearly 50.8 million students in 2019 to almost 49.4 million in 2024, and 40 states recorded declines over that period. In rural and small districts, fixed costs are spread across fewer students, and local revenue options may be limited.

Attendance adds another layer. In states that use average daily attendance (ADA) or a similar count, a student can be enrolled but generate less formula aid when attendance drops. Chronic absenteeism is first an academic and student-support concern. But it can also become a fiscal concern when funding counts do not reflect the cost of keeping staff, routes, classrooms, and support systems in place for enrolled students.

Costs are not adjusting downward

The cost side of the ledger has not become easier. District leaders report pressure from compensation, health benefits, utilities, insurance, facilities, food, transportation, and purchased services. A 2026 RAND survey found that declining enrollment was a growing concern, especially for rural leaders. Superintendents also cited inflation in transportation, facilities, utilities, and other daily operating costs. These cost pressures may provide an opportunity for conversations around targeted relief, paying for results and greater use of shared services and related back office operational efficiencies.

Special education is central to this debate. District obligations do not fall simply because overall enrollment declines. Needs may become more intensive, while shortages in related-service providers, specialized transportation, out-of-district placements, and state/federal compliance demands raise costs. ESAs often help through shared specialists, regional programs, coordinated recruitment, professional learning, and cooperative purchasing. These strategies reduce duplication, but they do not remove the underlying cost of serving students.

Transportation has the same challenge. Fewer students do not always mean fewer miles, fewer routes, fewer drivers, or fewer buses.

A tighter state budget context

State budgets are not in crisis, but they are becoming more constrained. NASBO's Spring 2026 Fiscal Survey projected 2.5 percent general-fund revenue growth in FY 2027. The same survey showed governors increasingly relying on targeted reductions, hiring freezes, vacant-position eliminations, transfers, prior-year balances, and rainy-day funds to manage pressure.

State reserves remain well above historical norms, but they are not a recurring revenue source. NASBO reports that states are spending down prior balances as spending exceeds revenue in some budgets. That distinction matters: reserves can help manage a transition or absorb a one-time shock, but they cannot permanently finance recurring salaries, special education services, or formula obligations without a sustainable revenue plan.

K–12 education remains one of the largest state commitments. NASBO estimates that it represented 18.2 percent of total state expenditures and 33.9 percent of general-fund expenditures in FY 2025. State K–12 spending grew from \$409 billion in FY 2019 to \$586 billion in FY 2025, while the federal share declined from its pandemic-era peak.

NASBO reports that states continue to prioritize per-pupil funding, compensation, literacy, math, tutoring, special education, mental health, safety, early childhood, and family-affordability measures. Yet, K–12 competes with Medicaid, transportation, corrections, disaster response, housing, and the fiscal effects of federal policy changes. This is why districts should make the case for targeted, practical finance reforms rather than assume that general state revenue growth will solve local structural problems.

What states are doing

Colorado — enacted formula transition and enrollment smoothing.

Colorado's SB 26-023 revises finance calculations during the transition to the state's new formula. The state's FY 2026–27 materials describe a smoothing calculation that uses the greater of current enrollment, 97 percent of prior-year enrollment, or a weighted three-year count, along with a transition hold-harmless provision. Colorado also continues dedicated special education and transportation support.

Pennsylvania — enacted adequacy and special education investment.

Pennsylvania's enacted 2026–27 budget included more than \$623 million in added K–12 support: \$565 million through targeted adequacy investment, \$58 million in Basic Education Funding Formula support, and \$55 million more for special education.

Utah — enacted formula value and local-tax protections.

Utah's 2026 legislative summary reports a 4.2 percent increase in the Weighted Pupil Unit and a 4.0 percent increase in the Minimum School Program. It also extended a hold-harmless period related to a reduction in a district's certified tax rate and enacted special education amendments.

Nevada — temporary enrollment protection.

Nevada used emergency action in September to avoid abrupt midyear aid reductions after unexpectedly sharp enrollment losses. The action temporarily retained legislative enrollment projections for monthly payments and preserved more than \$13 million in relief for affected schools.

Idaho — enacted high-cost special education support.

Idaho's SB 1288 creates the Idaho High-Needs Student Fund to reimburse districts for qualifying special education costs above \$30,000 per student. ECS highlighted the measure as an example of targeted funding for students with high needs.

Missouri and Wisconsin — developing 2027 finance debates.

Missouri's School Funding Modernization Task Force must report recommendations by December 1, 2026, while the state debates whether to fully fund the existing formula. In Wisconsin, state leaders are calling for a formula overhaul and higher state reimbursement for special education. Both examples show that the next wave of finance debates will center on adequacy, student need, and the limits of formulas built for an earlier enrollment and cost structure.

What districts and ESAs should do this fall

Fall is the time to move from a general concern to usable evidence. Budgets are adopted, enrollment and attendance patterns are becoming clearer, and governors' offices are beginning to build the next budget. Districts and ESAs should identify structural pressures before legislative positions harden.

- **Build a three-year fiscal picture.** Track enrollment, attendance, student needs, staffing, compensation, special education, transportation, utilities, and local revenue together. Show what is changing, what is fixed, and what is likely to continue. *Many states requiring fiscal forecasts; leverage this requirement to tell the story to policy makers and the public.*
- **Separate one-time from recurring costs.** Identify which temporary supports ended, which supports remain valuable but unfunded, and which costs are now embedded in the operating budget. *This is also time to calculate any recent state required mandates that may not have come with new funding.*
- **Model formula choices.** Calculate the local effect of current-year counts, prior-year counts, attendance-based counts, multi-year averages, weights, and hold-harmless provisions. Explain the service consequence, not only the revenue effect.
- **Document regional solutions.** ESAs should quantify the value of shared services: specialists provided, vacancies filled, districts participating, miles or costs avoided, purchasing savings, and services a single district could not sustain.
- **Make a targeted state ask.** The most credible requests define the problem and the response: revise a weight, improve a reimbursement rate, provide a limited transition, change a count rule, protect a high-cost service, or invest in regional service capacity.
- **Use the evidence early.** Share concise district and regional data with legislators, legislative staff, state education officials, budget staff, and community leaders before an executive budget is introduced. The goal is to shape assumptions, not merely react to final numbers.

Focus on capacity building

The school-finance debate should not be reduced to a choice between protecting every historical funding level and cutting aid the moment enrollment falls. Both choices overlook the practical work of educating students. A sound system should recognize changing enrollment, direct resources toward student need, provide time to adjust, and avoid rewarding inefficiency indefinitely. It should also recognize the real costs facing small, rural, and geographically dispersed districts.

For ESAs, this fiscal reset is an opportunity to show how regional service delivery can protect access, build capacity, and improve efficiency. The work starts now: measure the pressure, explain the local impact, identify the regional response, and carry that evidence into the next state budget and legislative cycle.

Resources

The following sources and links are available for readers seeking additional detail:

- Education Commission of the States, State Education Policy Tracking. <https://www.ecs.org/colorado-and-mississippi-make-big-moves-in-k-12-finance-reform/>
- National Conference of State Legislatures, Pre-K–12 Education Legislation Database. <https://www.ncsl.org/education/pre-k-12-education-legislation-database>
- RAND, “Shrinking Budgets, Fewer Students: How District Leaders Are Navigating Financial Challenges” (July 2026). https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA4737-4.html
- National Association of State Budget Officers, Spring 2026 Fiscal Survey of States and State Expenditure Report. <https://www.nasbo.org/reports-data/fiscal-survey-of-states> | <https://www.nasbo.org/reports-data>

STATE BUDGET & FINANCE MONITORING

AESA monitors state level budget and finance news impacting preschool and primary and secondary education. These curated articles (with links) 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 September 2026 follows below:

- [Colorado State Budget Deficit Grows to \\$1.6B as Medicaid Costs Soar](#)
Colorado Sun
- [Budget Officials Ask Agencies to Tighten Belts, Including a 10% Cut Scenario](#)
Maryland Matters
- [Kentucky Adopts “Pessimistic” Revenue Forecast](#)
LINK nky
- [\\$3 Billion State Surplus Passes on to Next Budget Cycle](#)
The Daily Cardinal
- [Arizona Revenues Through August Up \\$37 Million From Estimate](#)
Law360

- [Ohio Lawmakers Approve Suspending Gas Tax for 90 Days](#)
USA Today Network/Yahoo News
- [Texas Comptroller Requests \\$1 Billion Increase to Double State's School Voucher Budget](#)
Texas Tribune/FOX San Antonio
- [More High-Income Families Are Using Indiana School Vouchers as Overall Program Growth Slows](#)
Chalkbeat Indiana/Indianapolis Business Journal
- [As Missouri's Student Population Shrinks, Schools Face a New Demographic Reality](#)
The 74/Yahoo News
- [Granite Staters Support GOP-Backed School Property-Tax Cap Vote, Survey Finds](#)
NH Journal/Ground News
- [Judge Vacates Anti-DEI Directive That Led to Teacher-Training Grant Cuts](#)
K-12 Dive
- [Drop in Federal Oversight Hurts Efforts to Improve Absenteeism, Watchdog Says](#)
The 74/Miami Times
- [Schools spend billions on AI, but struggle to figure out what's worth buying](#)
Stateline
- [The Rising Cost of Special Education is Straining School Budgets](#)
Governing

Key Takeaways for ESAs:

September's fiscal news points to a more constrained and uneven state-budget environment. ESAs should prepare for districts to seek regional cost-sharing, enrollment and facilities analysis, pooled special-education capacity, coordinated transportation, and stronger evidence demonstrating the return on shared services. The growth of voucher appropriations and property-tax limitations also increases uncertainty around traditional public-school revenue. ESAs can help districts model enrollment and revenue scenarios, explain the operational effects of proposed tax changes, and connect fiscal advocacy to specific consequences for staffing, student services, program access, and rural or capacity-constrained districts.

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:

- [Facilitators to lead 20 school merger discussions across Vermont](#)
WCAX30

- [Vermont School Consolidation: What's happening now](#)
Vermont Biz
- [Dickinson-Iron Intermediate School District holds Professional Development Day](#)
TV6
- [Judge Vacates Anti-DEI Directive That Led to Teacher-Training Grant Cuts](#)
K-12 Dive
- [Teachers Unions Announce AI Safety Agreement with Microsoft](#)
K-12 Dive
- [While NYC and LA Schools Draw a Line on AI, Alabama Has a Plan](#)
The 74
- [State Board's Accountability Task Force Reaches Consensus on Indicators for New Model](#)
EducationNC
- [Navigating Curriculum and Culture Wars: What Happened to Public School?](#)
Brookings Institution
- [Schools Should Help Students Navigate AI, Not Ban It](#)
The 74
- [Elementary Principals Are Getting a Crash Course in How Young Kids Learn Best](#)
The 74
- [High Tech, Low Standards: High School in the Age of Distraction & Student AI Use Is About Much More Than School Rules](#)
Thomas B. Fordham Institute
- [How Are Trump Efforts to Cut Funding Under Title IX Holding Up in Court?](#)
K-12 Dive

Key Takeaways for ESAs:

The national news stories curated in this month's State Examiner underscore a widening gap between rapid policy change and local implementation capacity. ESAs can help districts translate state AI, technology, accountability, literacy, and assessment policies into model procedures, procurement standards, professional learning, family communications, and defensible data practices. Enrollment decline and accountability redesign also could provide opportunity for ESAs to support regional demographic analysis, program and facilities planning, early-learning leadership development, assessment-security training, and cross-district approaches that preserve student access while systems adjust to changing enrollment and resources.

STATE & NATIONAL REPORTS IMPACTING EDUCATION

AESA monitors state and national reports and policy briefs highlighting state-level information of interest to ESAs. As always, *it is important to view these resources 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 policy briefs from the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), and the Brookings Institute.

- **[Facility Issues Led About One in Five Districts to Cancel School in 2024-25, Affecting 2 Million Students: GAO-26-107970.](#)** Chronic facility issues disrupted teaching and learning in schools nationwide in school year 2024-25, according to GAO's nationwide survey of districts. GAO estimates that nearly one in five districts (19 percent) canceled school that year due to a facilities issue. These cancellations affected an estimated 2 million students, who lost an estimated 3.5 million days of learning as a result. Top reasons districts canceled school included plumbing emergencies and extreme classroom temperatures. One district GAO visited canceled school after classroom temperatures reached 110 degrees. GAO also estimates that nearly half of districts (47 percent) had chronic facility issues that often disrupted learning. Access the full report [here](#).
- **[Actions to Improve Oversight of Key Federal Programs and Address High Chronic Absenteeism: GAO-26-107920.](#)** At least one quarter of K-12 students are chronically absent, meaning they miss 10% or more of school days. To receive federal funds, states must report on chronic absenteeism. But in 2026, the Department of Education stopped its key monitoring strategy for this, and other legal requirements states must meet to receive federal funds. This limits the ability of the federal government and states to monitor and address chronic absenteeism. Also, without more oversight, these funds—nearly \$27 billion in FY 2025—are at higher risk of fraud, waste, or abuse. Access the full report [here](#).
- **[With vouchers and other school choice policies, read the fine print.](#)** Report authors share that at least a third of American students no longer attend their neighborhood public schools because of school choice programs like charter schools, homeschooling, private schools, and now vouchers and micro-schooling—a trend the federal Education Freedom Tax Credit, taking effect Jan. 1, will reinforce. The authors argue that the effects of school choice, and the objectives served, depend on nine choices regarding design and implementation. Read the full brief [here](#).

Key Takeaways for ESAs:

These reports highlight opportunities for ESAs to help districts strengthen facility assessments, emergency and continuity-of-learning plans, and regional approaches to infrastructure challenges that increasingly disrupt instruction. ESAs can also improve the accuracy of attendance data, coordinate evidence-based responses to chronic absenteeism, and reinforce fiscal controls and compliance as federal monitoring declines and funding faces greater risk of misuse. As school choice expands, ESAs should help communities examine the policy “fine print”—including eligibility, enrollment, transportation, family information, accountability, equity, and implementation—because these design choices ultimately determine which students benefit.

SEPTEMBER 2026 MONTHLY ADVOCACY TIP

From the Campaign Trail to the Policy Agenda: Preparing for new legislators and new committee dynamics

If there is one thing we have all learned in recent years, elections have consequences. But effective advocates do not need to be victims of circumstance. With proper planning, an eye to the future, and proactive outreach, ESA advocates can be well-prepared to inform legislative policy debate when new legislatures convene in early 2027.

The weeks before an election are not an advocacy pause. They are the planning period for the next legislative session. By the time results are known, candidates will become legislators, leadership teams will be taking shape, committees will begin to form, and chairmanships will be determined. ESAs that wait until bills are introduced to make contact will be starting late.

The 2026 election cycle makes early preparation especially important. Voters in **46 states** will choose **6,139 state legislators** on November 3—more than **83 percent** of all legislative seats nationwide. **Thirty-nine gubernatorial elections** will also shape executive priorities, agency leadership, and budget negotiations. ***For ESAs, this is a practical opportunity to prepare a thoughtful, nonpartisan welcome for new decisionmakers and a clear explanation of the regional capacity available to help schools deliver on state policy.***

The advocacy moment

The pre-election period is the right time to identify likely turnover, open seats, committee changes, and the policy and funding issues that may define the next session. It is also the best time to prepare before calendars fill and positions harden. New legislators will face a steep learning curve. They will need to understand school finance, special education, transportation, staffing, student mental health, career pathways, accountability, technology, and many other issues—often in their first few months in office. No entity is better positioned than ESAs to explain how policy translates to practice.

An ESA should approach this period as a transition, not a campaign. The goal is not to endorse candidates, direct political activity, or seek immediate commitments. ***The goal is to be a credible, nonpartisan resource.*** When candidates become officeholders, they should already know that the ESA is a regional partner with useful information, practical expertise, and a direct connection to district-level implementation. ***Establish yourself and your organization as the “first call” on education policy and related issues.***

What ESAs should watch

1. **Open seats and likely turnover.** Track retirements, resignations, term limits, competitive districts, special elections, and candidates likely to replace experienced legislators. An open seat can represent a complete reset in a region’s policy relationships.
2. **Leadership and committee signals.** Watch leadership contests, caucus changes, and early discussion about committee chairs, vice chairs, and membership. Education, appropriations, finance and appropriations, tax, workforce, health, transportation, and technology committees can all influence ESA and district priorities.

3. **Statewide races and ballot measures.** Gubernatorial, state superintendent, state board, and ballot-measure outcomes may shape budgets, agency direction, school funding, and education priorities. Education Week reports that 36 states have gubernatorial races this fall, while statewide education offices and education-related ballot initiatives are also on the ballot in several states.
4. **Budget and policy signals.** Listen for campaign themes and transition discussions related to affordability, property taxes, school funding, workforce, literacy, school choice, special education, public safety, student well-being, and artificial intelligence. These themes often become the starting point for a governor's budget or a legislator's first bill.
5. **Local implementation pressures.** Keep a current record of what districts need help solving. A policymaker's first question may be, "What does this mean for my communities?" The strongest answer combines local evidence, a district story, and a practical regional solution.

A proactive transition framework

The most useful tool is a transition map. It is not simply a list of elected officials. It is a working plan that identifies the people who may influence policy, what they need to know, who has the right relationship to make contact, and what should happen next. Build it now, refresh it after the election, and use it throughout the first session.

Start by sorting contacts into three groups: 1) returning legislators who may have new roles, 2) likely new members or open-seat candidates, and 3) influential staff or state officials. Then identify an appropriate first touch for each person. A brief congratulatory message after the election, a one-page regional profile, and an invitation to visit an ESA program are often better first steps than an immediate policy "ask." The transition map should also distinguish between an **introductory conversation** and an **advocacy meeting**. An introductory meeting should be short, useful, and centered on listening. Ask what the new official heard during the campaign, what education issues matter most in the district, and what information would be helpful. Explain the ESA's role in plain language: the agency helps districts solve problems that are difficult or inefficient to solve alone.

This approach matters because new policymakers will quickly be approached by many organizations. A generic fact sheet will be forgotten. A well-timed invitation to see students, educators, and regional services in action is more likely to build a durable relationship. ***The first meeting should leave the official with three impressions: 1) the ESA is nonpartisan, 2) the ESA understands local schools, and 3) the ESA can help state policy work in practice.***

A field example

Consider a regional service agency serving 18 districts, including several rural districts, in an area with two open legislative seats. Before Election Day, the ESA's leadership team creates a transition map. It identifies the open-seat candidates, current legislators who may seek committee leadership, legislative staff with local ties, and superintendents who know the candidates personally. The team prepares a one-page regional profile with district enrollment, major service lines, workforce shortages, special education capacity, and two short examples of shared services that save districts money or expand access.

Within a week of the election, the executive director sends a short congratulatory message to the winners. The message does not request a vote or promote a bill. It offers a briefing and an opportunity to visit a regional special education program, career center partnership, or professional-learning session. During the visit, local superintendents describe the challenge; staff describe the implementation work; and the ESA explains how regional collaboration helps districts serve students. By January, the new legislators have practical contacts, local context, and a clearer understanding of where the ESA fits in the education system.

Avoid the common mistakes

First, do not wait for committee assignments to begin preparation. Those assignments matter, but relationship-building should begin as soon as results are clear. Second, do not treat new members as blank slates. Many bring experience as parents, school board members, employers, local officials, educators, or community leaders. Ask what they know and what they want to learn. Third, do not make the first contact only about a funding request. The most durable relationships are built by providing value before asking for action.

Finally, keep the work nonpartisan and consistent. Offer the same respect, factual information, and access to every officeholder. Public resources, staff time, facilities, and communications should be used in accordance with applicable law, board policy, and legal guidance. The objective is public education and relationship-building, not campaign activity.

This month's action list

- Create or update a transition map within 30 days. Identify open seats, likely turnover, returning members with possible leadership roles, relevant staff, district connections, and the appropriate ESA contact for each person.
- Prepare a concise regional profile. Include a map, district count, student and community context, core ESA services, two local proof points, and an invitation to learn more through a visit or briefing.
- Pre-draft post-election outreach. Prepare a neutral congratulatory message, a one-page introduction, and two possible site-visit options so outreach can occur promptly after results are certified.

Elections change names and titles, but they also create an opening to establish trust. ESAs that prepare now will be ready to help newly elected policymakers move from campaign promises to practical, workable policy.

Practical tools and takeaways

Use these templates as a 30-day transition-planning packet.

1. Transition Map Template

Contact / office	Status	District profile	Likely role or committee	ESA connection / messenger	Priority issue or interest	First contact	Next step / date

2. District Profile Checklist

- ☐ Legislative district number and a simple regional map
- ☐ Districts, students, communities, and counties served
- ☐ Key local context: district(s) and ESA typology, enrollment trend, workforce needs, poverty, or other relevant facts

- ☐ ESA services used by districts in the area
- ☐ Two measurable examples of regional value or implementation capacity
- ☐ A short district or student-centered story, with appropriate permissions
- ☐ One clear contact name, title, email, and phone number
- ☐ A specific invitation: briefing, listening meeting, program visit, or regional roundtable

3. First-Contact Message Template

Subject: Congratulations and an introduction to *[ESA name]*

Dear ***[Title and Last Name]***,

Congratulations on your election to represent *[district/region]*. We appreciate your willingness to serve the communities, students, and families in our region.

[ESA name] supports *[number]* school districts and their students through *[two or three services or areas of support]*. We work with districts to help turn state policy into practical services, particularly in areas such as *[locally relevant examples]*.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide a brief, nonpartisan introduction to the region's schools and the work of our ESA. We would also value hearing about the education issues you heard most often during the campaign.

If useful, we would be pleased to arrange a short briefing or a visit to *[program/site]*. Thank you again, and we look forward to working with you in service to students and communities.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[ESA name]

[Contact information]

4. ESA Site-Visit Invitation Template

Subject: Invitation to see regional public education services in action

Dear ***[Title and Last Name]***,

We invite you to visit *[program/site]* on *[date options]* to meet educators and see how *[ESA name]* supports students and school districts across *[region]*. The visit will provide a brief overview of *[service or program]* and an opportunity to hear directly from district and ESA staff about local needs and regional solutions.

The visit would last approximately *[length of time]*. We will provide a concise regional briefing and reserve time to hear your questions and priorities. Please let us know whether one of the proposed dates works for you, or whether we should identify another time.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

[ESA name]

[Contact information]

5. Post-Election 30-Day Workflow

Timing	Action	Owner
Days 1–3	Confirm results; update the transition map; identify new officeholders and priority returning members.	Executive director / advocacy lead
Days 4–7	Send neutral congratulatory messages and a short ESA introduction.	Executive director / communications
Days 8–21	Schedule listening meetings, briefings, or site visits; engage appropriate local messengers.	Advocacy lead / program leaders
Days 22–30	Document contacts, interests, questions, and follow-up commitments; refine the January outreach plan.	Advocacy team

CUSTOMIZED AESA ADVOCACY TRAINING

AESA empowers education leaders to become effective advocates through its customized advocacy trainings, designed to meet a variety of needs and schedules. Whether you're seeking an in-depth exploration or a concise overview, AESA offers three levels of workshops to build your legislative knowledge and confidence:

- 1) The **comprehensive three-day workshop** provides a step-by-step immersion into state advocacy, covering the legislative landscape, policy and rule-making, and hands-on advocacy strategies.
- 2) For those with limited time, the **one-day workshop** delivers essential advocacy skills and actionable insights in a focused format.
- 3) Looking for a **customized training** solution? AESA can do that too. Additionally, AESA offers tailored, one-hour presentations ideal for regional or local events, with expert speakers addressing state-specific challenges in politics, finance, and education policy.

Each training is designed to equip participants with practical tools and strategies to make a meaningful impact in the state legislative process. For more information contact [Joan Wade, Executive Director](#).

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

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

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

