

# AESA State Examiner

## The State Examiner: April 2025

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, 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.

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### STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUE MONITORING

In each edition of the *State Examiner*, AESA monitors state-level legislation and legislative trends impacting educational service agencies and their client schools and districts. This month's report for April 2025 will examine emerging state policies on student data privacy and artificial intelligence and provide a policy scan of recently enacted and pending legislation of interest.

### Student Data Privacy & AI

The intersection of K-12 student data privacy and artificial intelligence (AI) has become a top priority for state legislators, school administrators, and education advocates with the exponential advancement of generative AI and associated Large Language Models (LLMs). As AI-powered tools become more prevalent in classrooms, ensuring the protection of student data and responsible use of technology is critical. This month's State Examiner article provides a cursory overview of significant state-level legislation enacted in 2024 and key bills pending in 2025, with a focus on both student data privacy and AI governance. It also highlights the broader implications, emerging trends, and recommended actions for education stakeholders like educational service agency personnel and administrators.

## 2024 Enacted Legislation: Establishing Guardrails for AI and Data Privacy

As states recognized the urgent need to address the risks and opportunities posed by AI and student data collection, several took decisive legislative action in 2024. These new laws set important precedents for how schools must manage technology, protect student information, and ensure ethical AI use. Outlined below are a few leading examples of these state-level efforts.

- **Tennessee SB 1711 (AI Policy Framework):** Tennessee now requires school boards to adopt formal policies governing the use of AI by both students and staff. The law emphasizes the importance of ethical guidelines, transparency in procurement, and oversight of AI tools used for instructional purposes.
- **Alabama AI Policy Template:** The Alabama State Department of Education released an eight-pillar framework for AI governance, covering data privacy, risk management, and competency development. The policy notably prohibits AI from being used in high-stakes decisions, such as setting Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and stresses the necessity of human oversight.
- **Texas HB 18 (Student Data Privacy):** Texas mandates that school districts audit the security practices of edtech vendors and block applications that fail to meet state standards. The law aligns state requirements with updated federal regulations, particularly the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), and requires parental consent for the use of student data.
- **Ohio SB 29 (Data Transparency):** Ohio’s new law requires districts to maintain public-facing lists of approved edtech tools and conduct regular privacy assessments, fostering greater transparency and accountability.

The 2024 legislative session saw states taking proactive steps to create clear frameworks for both AI use and student data privacy. These laws reflect a growing recognition of the need for transparency, ethical guidelines, and alignment with federal standards. They serve as models for other states and lay the groundwork for a safer, more responsible approach to technology in K-12 education.

## 2025 Pending Legislation: Next-Generation Protections

Building on the momentum of 2024, several states have introduced bills in 2025 that aim to further strengthen student protections and define AI’s role in education. These pending bills reflect evolving concerns and a desire to keep pace with technological advancements.

- **Georgia AI Implementation Act:** This bill proposes a “Traffic Light” system for AI use in schools, categorizing applications as prohibited (red), allowed with oversight (yellow), or encouraged (green). The approach is designed to provide clarity and flexibility as AI tools proliferate.

- **Nebraska LB 1234 (Biometric Data Restrictions):** Nebraska’s proposal would expand the definition of “personal information” to include biometric data, such as facial recognition, and limit the retention of student data to periods deemed “reasonably necessary.”
- **New Hampshire HB 5678 (AI Ethics in Education):** This bill would require rigorous evaluation of AI tools for bias, accessibility, and educational value before they can be adopted by schools.
- **Ohio House Bill 96 (FY 2026-2027 Budget):** The Executive Budget proposal, still working its way through the legislative process, would require DEW to adopt a model policy by December 31, 2025, to address the appropriate use of artificial intelligence by students and staff for educational purposes, and require each school district, community school, and STEM school to adopt a policy on the use of artificial intelligence by July 1, 2026. Permits a district or school to adopt the model policy developed by DEW.
- **Federal Executive Order on AI Education (April 2025):** While not a state law, this executive order directs federal agencies to promote AI literacy, create public-private partnerships for K-12 AI resources, and establish a White House Task Force to oversee AI integration.

The 2025 legislative landscape demonstrates a more nuanced, future-oriented focus on student data and privacy related protections. For example, states are considering comprehensive frameworks that address not only traditional privacy concerns but also the unique challenges posed by AI, such as biometric data and algorithmic bias. These bills, if enacted, will further elevate the standards for student safety and responsible technology use.

### **Implications for K-12 Education: Balancing Innovation and Security**

The surge in legislative activity underscores the dual imperative facing K-12 education: harnessing the benefits of AI while safeguarding student data. It also reflects that stark reality that legislatures generally react and seldom lead having waited until many of these tools were already in use before crafting appropriate policy to guide their use. Schools must now navigate a complex web of federal and state requirements, including FERPA, COPPA, and a growing patchwork of state laws. The new and proposed regulations demand robust processes for vetting edtech tools, clear communication with families, and ongoing professional development for educators. This is an area where educational service agencies (ESAs) can be particularly helpful.

As legal requirements evolve, K-12 leaders must be vigilant in updating policies, training staff, and engaging families. Effective implementation can empower schools to leverage AI for personalized learning while maintaining public trust and minimizing risks.

### **So, What Do These Legislative Activities Reveal: Emerging Trends**

Recent legislation reveals several key trends shaping the future of K-12 technology:

- **Ethical AI Frameworks:** States are moving beyond blanket bans or unrestricted adoption, instead developing nuanced frameworks that specify where and how AI can be used.

- **Alignment with Federal Standards:** Many new laws mirror or anticipate updates to federal statutes, such as COPPA 2.0, ensuring consistency and clarity for districts operating across jurisdictions.
- **Emphasis on Transparency:** Requirements for public lists of approved tools and regular privacy assessments are becoming standard, fostering greater accountability.
- **Focus on Biometric and Sensitive Data:** Lawmakers are increasingly attentive to the risks associated with biometric identifiers and algorithmic bias.

These trends indicate a shift toward proactive, collaborative governance of technology in schools. By prioritizing transparency, ethical use, and ongoing review, states are laying the foundation for responsible innovation.

### Recommendations for ESA Advocates: Action Steps for the Year Ahead

ESA advocates play a crucial role in shaping and supporting effective policy implementation. To ensure student data privacy and responsible AI adoption, advocates should:

- **Monitor Legislative Developments:** Stay informed about state and federal policy changes and share updates with local stakeholders.
- **Promote Policy Alignment:** Encourage districts to update their own policies to reflect new legal requirements and best practices.
- **Support Professional Development:** Advocate for training that equips educators to evaluate and use AI tools ethically and effectively.
- **Champion Funding Initiatives:** Push for increased funding to support cybersecurity, privacy audits, and AI literacy programs.

By remaining engaged and proactive, education advocates can help schools navigate the evolving landscape of data privacy and AI, ensuring that the promise of technology is realized without compromising student safety or parent and community trust.

### 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 April 2025 follows below.

[IDEA Services Brace for Budget Impact](#)

K-12 Dive

[What Federal Chaos Means for State Budgets](#)

Pluribus News

[States That Enshrined Medicaid Expansion in Their Constitutions Could be in a Bind Stateline](#)

[Colorado's 2025-26 budget has more money for schools, but it's less than was promised](#)

Colorado Public Radio

[Alaska Legislature Passes \\$1000 Per Student Funding Boost Despite Veto Threat](#)  
Juneau Empire

[Ohio House Passes State Budget: The Highlights](#)

WEWS 5 News

[State budget talks at the capitol begin as Minnesota stares down deficit in future](#)  
CBS News

[Kansas governor vetoes bill that would extend state budget if lawmakers fail to pass one](#)

Kansas Reflector

[Q&A: State budget director on NC's projected 'fiscal cliff,' governor's budget](#)

WFAE

[Income Tax Cuts and Enacted Across GOP-Run States](#)

Forbes

## 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:

[Voter Across Parties Want Action on Education](#)

Inside Higher Education

[ISTE & ASCD Partner with Instagram, Pinterest to Address Online Safety](#)

Gov Tech

[Texas Poised to Create the Largest Voucher Program in the Country](#)

Governing

[South Dakota turned to paraprofessionals to attack a teacher shortage](#)

Argus Leader

[As reading scores fall, states turn to phonics — but not without a fight](#)

Stateline

[Governor Hochul visits Albany campus of Capital Region BOCES, discusses childcare support](#)

WRGB

[With the threat of federal funding cuts looming, here's what's at stake in Michigan schools](#)

Chalk Beat | Detroit

[Utah judge declares private school choice program unconstitutional](#)

K-12 Dive

## STATE & NATIONAL REPORTS IMPACTING EDUCATION

AESA monitors state and national reports highlighting state-level information of interest to ESAs. As always, it is important to view these reports through a critical lens with attention to research design, methodology, data sources and citations, peer review, and publication venue. This month AESA spotlights reports from the CoSN, RAND, NASBO and the Learning Policy Institute:

- **CoSN Releases First-of-Its-Kind National Student Data Privacy Report: [The CoSN 2025 National Student Data Privacy Report](#)**

The CoSN 2025 National Student Data Privacy Report provides results of an extensive survey of district representatives about their privacy expertise and district privacy practices. This one-of-a-kind report, divided into two parts, provides an unprecedented look into how districts are managing the critical task of safeguarding student data. The full report, downloadable in two parts, is accessible here: <https://www.cosn.org/edtech-topics/student-data-privacy/>.

- **[More Districts Are Training Teachers on Artificial Intelligence: Findings from the American School District Panel](#)**

A nationally representative RAND survey found that by fall 2024, about half of U.S. school districts had provided training to teachers on generative artificial intelligence tools, doubling from 23% the previous year; another quarter of districts planned to begin such training in the 2024–2025 school year. However, significant disparities persist, with low-poverty districts much more likely to offer AI training than high-poverty districts (67% vs. 39%), and most initial trainings focused on addressing teachers' anxieties and confusion about AI rather than direct classroom applications. Many districts developed their own training programs due to a lack of external expertise, and nearly all made participation voluntary, highlighting ongoing challenges in ensuring equitable and comprehensive professional development on AI for educators.

You can find a summary of findings at:

[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA956-31.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA956-31.html).

- **[Summaries of Governors' 2025 State of the State Addresses](#)**

NASBO, the National Association of State Budget Officials, has release a state-by-state and overall analysis of Governor's State of the State addresses and implications for state budgets. Governors are proposing a wide range of tax policy changes for FY 2026 - ranging from broad-based tax cuts, targeted relief, and revenue-raising measures as well as far-reaching policy priorities. Learn more at: <https://tinyurl.com/7urfj2v9>

- **[Funding Student Needs: A Review of State Funding Policies for English Learners and Students From Low-Income Backgrounds](#)**

The report analyzes how states fund schools to address the unique needs of English learners (ELs) and students from low-income backgrounds. It finds that while nearly all states provide some form of additional funding for these groups-most commonly through weighted funding formulas or designated per-student amounts-the level and method of support vary widely, and only some states provide dual funding for students who fall into both categories. The report underscores the importance of updated costing studies to ensure funding formulas are sufficient to meet diverse student needs and recommends that states consider both the distinct and overlapping needs of ELs and low-income students to promote equitable educational outcomes. The full report can be found at:

[https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/4555/download?inline&file=Funding\\_Student\\_Needs\\_REPORT.pdf](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/4555/download?inline&file=Funding_Student_Needs_REPORT.pdf)

## **APRIL 2025 MONTHLY ADVOCACY TIP**

### **The Power of Forecasting: Building Proactive State Education Advocacy**

In a rapidly shifting education landscape, the ability to forecast state policy and funding trends is not just a strategic advantage - it is a necessity for effective advocacy. As a responsibility left largely to the states, state legislatures wield significant influence over education funding, governance, policy and standards. Education advocates must look beyond the present to anticipate what's next. Proactive forecasting empowers advocates to shape policy, secure resources, and advance student success, rather than simply reacting to legislative developments as they unfold. Controlling the narrative is critical to building and sustaining support for the issues one cares about most.

### **Why Forecasting Matters**

State education policy and funding is entering a new era. After several years of robust spending, often buoyed by federal stimulus dollars, states are now projecting a slowdown in general fund growth. For example, in 2025, state K-12 spending is expected to fall about 6% below the

previous year, with revenue projections essentially flat. This “return to normal” means districts and advocates must be more vigilant than ever, as small changes in enrollment or funding formulas can have outsized impacts on school budgets and student services.

Forecasting is more than number crunching; it is about understanding the underlying assumptions, demographic shifts, and economic factors that drive policy decisions. By regularly updating forecasts and scenario plans, advocates can identify challenges early, craft compelling narratives, and propose solutions before issues reach a crisis point.

## Top Tools and Resources for Effective Monitoring & Forecasting

Education advocates seeking to monitor and forecast likely legislative activity in education have access to a range of powerful tools designed to track, analyze, and respond to policy developments at the state and federal levels. The best tools offer real-time updates, comprehensive bill tracking, and user-friendly features tailored to the unique needs of education policy professionals.

To stay ahead, education advocates should leverage a suite of resources designed for monitoring, analysis, and scenario planning:

- **Legislative Tracking Tools:** Proprietary platforms like Bill Track 50 and LegiScan allow advocates to monitor state legislative activity in real time, track bill progress, and receive alerts on issues of interest. Many state legislatures also offer their own bill tracking services. Other leading free examples include:
  - **KnowledgeWorks High Interest Bills Tracker:** This tool is specifically designed for education leaders and advocates. It allows users to: Filter and explore legislation by state; Access high-level summaries and full-text versions of bills; Track the real-time status of legislation as it progresses through the legislative process; and the tracker focuses on policies that support personalized and competency-based learning, making it especially valuable for those interested in learner-centered reforms.
  - **Education Commission of the States (ECS) State Education Policy Tracking Database:** ECS offers a comprehensive, interactive database covering 42 broad education policy issues, from early learning to workforce development. Key features include: Tracking of enacted and vetoed legislation across all states; Analysis of policy trends and emerging issues; and A watchlist for following key topics from introduction to final action. This resource is ideal for spotting trends and understanding the broader policy landscape.
- **Policy and Funding Forecasts:** The National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO) provides regular updates on state budget projections and trends, offering valuable context for advocacy planning.
- **Policy Monitoring Alerts:**
  - **Google Alerts:** Set up alerts for key legislative terms or bill numbers to receive news and updates directly to your inbox.
  - **Social Media Monitoring:** Follow elected officials and policy influencers on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook for real-time insights and updates.



- **Advocacy Toolkits:** Organizations like AESA, NASFAA and the American Library Association offer comprehensive toolkits with step-by-step guides, communication strategies, and tips for engaging with policymakers and the public.
- **Scenario Planning Guides:** Structured approaches, such as the 10-step advocacy plan from the National Council for the Social Studies, help advocates map out possible futures, set measurable objectives, and evaluate outcomes.

### Forecasting Matrix

There are also simple practical tools that one can use to monitor policy trends, anticipate future actions, track status of initiatives and strategize. The Policy Forecast Matrix below allows one to break down policy areas, responsible parties, timelines, and implications for schools.

The matrix serves as an “environmental scan” of the policy and political landscape to be populated with what advocates can be reasonably sure is coming down the path including but not limited to the following:

- Congressional action (reauthorizations, budgets, likely legislative initiatives);
- US Dept of Ed (regulations, guidance, Secretary/President priorities, etc);
- State Legislature (legislative priorities or actions);
- Office of the Governor (Executive Actions or Priorities); and
- State Departments of Education (regulations, guidance, state board actions).

Issue/Funding Area:	Responsible Party	Recent Trends & Context	Short term (Present – 6 mos)	Medium term (6 mos – 18 months)	Longer term (18 months – 3 years)	Advocacy Next Steps
FEDERAL						
STATE						

This tool can be completed as a way to forecast federal and state education activity advocates know, or have reason to believe, will be coming down the road over a certain period of time. Once completed, one can use the matrix as a way to gather feedback from leaders about opportunities to pursue via federal and state advocacy efforts. This structured approach helps prioritize advocacy efforts and respond strategically.

### Strategies for Forward-Thinking Advocacy

Advocacy is most effective when it is proactive, collaborative, and informed by real-world experiences. In this section, we highlight key strategies that empower educational leaders and advocates to make a lasting impact. By building relationships early, coordinating with partners, leveraging compelling data and stories, engaging diverse stakeholders, and committing to

continuous learning, you can strengthen your advocacy efforts and ensure that education remains a priority in policy discussions. The following best practices are designed to help you navigate the evolving landscape of education policy and amplify your voice for positive change:

- **Build Relationships Early:** Establish credibility and trust with lawmakers and their staff before critical decisions are made. Regular communication and participation in hearings keep education issues on the agenda.
- **Coordinate and Collaborate:** Join forces with allied organizations and campaigns to amplify your message and create broad-based support for your priorities.
- **Leverage Data and Stories:** Combine rigorous data analysis with compelling real-world narratives to humanize policy debates and illustrate the impact on students and communities.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Involve educators, parents, and community members in the forecasting and advocacy process to ensure diverse perspectives and build grassroots momentum.
- **Continuous Learning:** Stay informed about emerging trends, policy innovations, and legislative developments through webinars, workshops, and professional networks.

Forecasting state education policy and funding trends is the cornerstone of proactive, effective advocacy. By embracing data-driven tools, scenario planning, and collaborative strategies, education advocates can anticipate change, influence outcomes, and secure a brighter future for all students.

## UPCOMING AESA ADVOCACY WEBINARS

Navigating the ever-changing policy landscape is critical for ESAs to remain effective and influential. AESA is proud to present a three-part webinar series designed to equip ESA leaders with the knowledge and strategies to understand, build, and implement effective advocacy efforts! The first event, “Understanding & Influencing Policy Context” took place on April 29. Updating sessions are outlined below:

### **Session 2 (May 14): Building a Winning Advocacy Strategy to Maximize Impact**

Find Opportunities in Complexity – Discover how to turn policy challenges into wins for your ESA.

- **Break Through Bureaucracy** – Learn how to work effectively with state education leaders.
- **Find New Funding** – Explore creative ways to secure funding outside the usual sources.

### **Session 3 (June 3): Turning Strategy into Action - Executing Your Advocacy Plan**

- **Make the System Work for You** – Understand how to influence legislative decisions.
- **Meet with Legislators** – Learn how to advocate effectively in person.
- **Craft Your Message** – Perfect a short, powerful pitch to get your point across fast.

This webinar series will give you the tools to help shape education policy and funding for your ESA.

Each 90-minute session will begin at 2:00 pm Eastern Time (1 pm Central; 12 noon Mountain; 11 am Pacific; 10 am Alaska). If you still wish to register, the workshop series price is \$250 (which will include the recording of the April 29 session. Sessions will be recorded and shared with registered participants.

### **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](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)

### **JOIN THE CONVERSATION**

