

The State Examiner: June 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 (AESAs). It provides legislative monitoring, news articles, and related content gathered from the fifty states. The purpose of the monthly report is to ensure AESA members are aware of the latest state-level education policy, funding issues and trends, and state-level news that are impacting educational service agencies (ESAs), their client schools and districts. Each report also includes advocacy tips to activate and empower our members to be informed, effective education advocates.

STATE LEGISLATIVE ISSUE MONITORING

In each edition of the *State Examiner*, AESA monitors state-level legislation impacting educational service agencies and their client schools and districts. This month's report for June 2024 will examine state-level legislation targeting artificial intelligence (AI).

Inside this Edition

- State Legislative Issues Monitoring
- State Budget & Finance Monitoring
- Statehouse News: Education Policy
- National Education Policy Reports
- Advocacy Tips

The Rapid Emergence of AI in K-12 Education: Policy Challenges and Opportunities

In recent years, the rapid advancement of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked a revolution across various sectors, with K-12 education firmly in the center of this transformative wave. As AI-driven tools become increasingly sophisticated, their potential to reshape K-12 education has become a topic of intense debate and exploration. But, to date, few states have implemented legislation to assist or support educators and districts in navigating the AI landscape in schools.

The integration of AI in K-12 classrooms presents a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities. On one hand, concerns about student privacy, plagiarism, and the ethical use of AI have led some school districts to approach these technologies with caution. On the other proponents highlight AI's potential to revolutionize personalized learning, benefiting both students and educators alike.

This article seeks to identify, in abbreviated fashion, the efforts of some states to tackle this complex set of issues.

A review of online sources including the National Governor's Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Council of State Governments, Education Commission of the States and the Center for Reinventing Public Education revealed that 18 states have implemented some type of legislation or administrative policy related to AI and its use broadly speaking. These states include: Colorado, Utah, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, Montana, New York, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.

Those directly impacting K-12 education, however, are fewer in number with 11 states passing legislation. Leading examples identified by Education Commission of the States include the following:

- Colorado [SB22-113](#) requires government agencies, including institutions of higher education, that use or intend to use facial recognition services, to file with its reporting authority an intent to develop, use or procure facial recognition services. Public schools, school districts and charter schools are prohibited from contracting for facial recognition services until July 1, 2025.
- Illinois [H.B. 3563](#) establishes the Generative AI and Natural Language Processing Task Force, which includes representation from the K-12 and higher education agencies and tasks the group with developing model policies for AI use by students in and out of the classroom.
- North Dakota [H.B. 1003](#) requires a legislative management study during the 2023-24 interim session addressing the potential impacts of AI. The study must include findings and recommendations on the effects of AI on student learning.
- Utah [S.B. 96](#) (2020) requires the Board of Regents to develop and oversee a deep technology talent initiative that includes providing funding for expanded programs. Deep technology may lead to new products and innovations related to artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, robotics and other areas.

There is also legislation still pending in some states like Tennessee. Tennessee has introduced [legislation](#) requiring school districts to develop and implement AI policies. The legislation mandates that public K-12 districts and charter schools establish AI use policies and submit them to the state Department of Education for approval by July 1, 2024. This policy aims to ensure that AI is used responsibly and effectively in educational settings

Other states have sought to take administrative action, utilizing existing authority to support districts with AI policy development and implementation. These include, but are not limited to, the following leading examples:

- Georgia is piloting an elective course for middle school students called Living and Working with Artificial Intelligence. Initial findings discuss the collaborative curriculum development process, the role of professional development and supports for teachers, and best practices for engaging students. Similarly, Georgia State University claims to be among the first institutions to develop inexpensive AI teaching assistants.
- Ohio, under the leadership of Lieutenant Governor Jon Husted has launched an [AI toolkit](#). The toolkit, developed in partnership with non-profit aiEDU, is a practical guide for developing policies and recommendations in response to the proliferation of AI tools. The goal of the toolkit is to help prepare all Ohio students for jobs in an increasingly AI-driven world. The toolkit features several resources for everyone in Ohio's school communities, including district administrators, school leaders, educators, and family members. From an introduction to AI for educators and parents to guidelines and templates for superintendents, this toolkit seeks to help schools develop plans and policies to best fit their learning community.

Seven state governors (California, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Wisconsin) have also signed executive orders establishing state-level task forces or commissions to student the potential effects of generative AI on state and local government, including K-12 education, and to issue related policy and funding recommendations for future implementation.

As state-level policies continue to evolve, it is crucial for education leaders to remain vigilant and actively engaged in the legislative process. By closely monitoring policy developments and fostering open dialogue with legislators and executive branch agencies, educators can help shape AI policies that prioritize student welfare, educational equity, and pedagogical effectiveness. These policies should respect local control and be reflective of individual community priorities and values. The landscape of AI in education is dynamic, and ongoing collaboration between policymakers and education professionals is essential to ensure that AI integration enhances rather than disrupts the learning experience. As we navigate this transformative era, the proactive involvement of education leaders in policy discussions will be instrumental in creating a balanced, ethical, and innovative AI-enabled educational environment that prepares students for the challenges of tomorrow. ESA leaders are uniquely positioned as conveners, facilitators and brokers to make meaningful connections and lead this conversations.

STATE BUDGET & FINANCE MONITORING

AESA monitors state level budget and finance news impacting preschool and primary and secondary education. These curated articles can provide insights into what is happening in your state and collectively across the U.S. The latest state budget and finance-related news for June 2024 follows below.

[State Spending Will Slow For First Time in Years, Report Says](#)

EdWeek Market-Brief

[Why U.S. Schools are Facing Their Biggest Budget Crunch in Years](#)

The New York Times

[Public funds for religious charter school would be unconstitutional, Oklahoma high court says](#)

Baltimore Sun

[Ohio's tax revenue is tight, but lawmakers plan to spend big on capital projects. What gives? - cleveland.com](#)

Cleveland Plain Dealer

[School vouchers in Pennsylvania again up for debate | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#)

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

[Student teaching stipend aims to fill void for aspiring educators, but some say program needs more support](#)

TRIBlive.com

[State budgets returning to normal - Pluribus News](#)

Pluribus News

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:

[Oklahoma Schools Required to Teach Bible Beginning in 2024-25](#)

K12Dive

[Education Department considers IDEA accountability updates as more states miss mark](#)

K12Dive

[What's Going On with Public School Enrollment](#)

EdWeek

[What you Don't Know About Nassau BOCES](#)

LIHerald.com

[Free Summer Meals for Children in Contra Costa County](#)

The Pioneer

[Texas Education Agency Awards over \\$290 Million as Part of the Teacher Incentive Allotment](#)

TEA

[10 New York School Districts to Implement Semiconductor Curricula Including Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES](#)

Government Technology

NATIONAL REPORTS IMPACTING EDUCATION

AESA monitors national reports highlighting state-level information of interest to ESAs. As always, it is important to view these reports through a critical lens with attention to research design, methodology, data sources and citations, peer review, and publication venue. This month AESA spotlights reports and national surveys from Challenge Success and NAEP

- [Challenge Success: 2024 Student Voice Report](#)

Talk to many veteran educators today and their perception will be that students are struggling emotionally more than ever before. But a new report examining high school students' well-being, sense of belonging, and engagement suggests that might not be entirely the case—yes, they are struggling, but no more than they were a decade or so ago. The report by [Challenge Success](#), a nonprofit affiliated with Stanford University's graduate school of education, found a significant number of students do struggle with getting adequate sleep, high levels of stress, and academic worry. But it also found relatively stable trends over time regarding students' sense of belonging and engagement in school. The study analyzed data from more than 270,000 high school students over the course of 14 years. The report paints a detailed picture of student life across demographics and school types. Topics include:

- Sleep and Stress
 - Pressure to Succeed
 - Sense of Engagement and Belonging
 - School Climate and Culture
- **The Nation's Report Card**
Released in April 2024, the latest edition of the Nation's Report Card provides some insights into the state of education across America. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), first administered in 1969, is the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do in subjects such as mathematics, reading, science, and writing. The results of NAEP are released as The Nation's Report Card, and are available for the nation, states, and in some cases, urban districts. NAEP is administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES).

JUNE 2024 MONTHLY ADVOCACY TIP

Coalition building is an often necessary strategy in policy advocacy campaigns and becoming increasingly important for traditional K-12 education advocates as rising conservatism in state legislatures and increased public scrutiny has put traditional public education in the middle of the target zone for a myriad of reasons. An ESA or statewide network can join forces with other educational stakeholders and, importantly, non-education interested parties like the business community to advocate for policy and funding priorities that positively impact public education, leveraging the coalition's collective influence to lobby state legislators effectively.

Coalition Building: Leveraging Strategic Partnerships to Effect Positive Change

Coalition building is particularly crucial for Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) due to their unique role in supporting and enhancing the pre-K to 12th grade educational landscape. ESAs are designed to provide specialized services, support, and resources to schools and districts, often bridging gaps in capacity and expertise. Through coalition building, ESAs can amplify their impact, access broader resources, and more effectively advocate for policies that benefit education. Coalitions, particularly with non-education stakeholders, can amplify the ESA voice and expand its sphere of influence. Outlined below are the key aspects of coalition building, the importance of coalition building for ESAs in the advocacy process, the key role ESAs can play in coalitions, and a decision framework that can serve as a tool for determining what coalitions to join or build.

Key Aspects of Coalition Building:

1. Shared Goals and Vision:
 - Coalitions are most effective when built on a foundation of shared goals and a unified vision. This ensures that all members are working towards common objectives, increasing the chances of success.
2. Diverse Membership:

- Including a wide range of organizations and stakeholders brings various perspectives, skills, and resources to the table. Diversity in membership can enhance the coalition's credibility and influence.
3. **Collaboration and Coordination:**
 - Effective coalition building requires strong collaboration and coordination among members. This involves regular communication, joint planning, and the sharing of resources and information.
 4. **Leadership and Governance:**
 - Strong leadership is crucial for guiding the coalition's efforts, maintaining focus, and resolving conflicts. Clear governance structures help in decision-making and ensuring accountability.
 5. **Resource Sharing:**
 - Coalitions benefit from pooling resources such as funding, expertise, and networks. This collective resource base can support more comprehensive and impactful initiatives.

Importance of Coalitions in the State Advocacy Process for ESAs:

1. **Amplified Voice and Influence:**
 - Coalitions can amplify the voices of individual ESAs, making collective advocacy efforts more powerful and persuasive. This increased influence is critical in swaying public opinion and policy decisions affecting education.
2. **Comprehensive Approaches:**
 - By bringing together diverse groups, coalitions can address educational issues more comprehensively, considering multiple facets and perspectives. This holistic approach leads to more effective and sustainable solutions.
3. **Enhanced Credibility:**
 - A coalition representing a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including ESAs, often has greater credibility with policymakers and the public. This makes their advocacy efforts more compelling and trustworthy.
4. **Resource Efficiency:**
 - Sharing resources and expertise allows coalitions to operate more efficiently. This is particularly important for ESAs, where resources are often limited.
5. **Strategic Advantage:**
 - Coalitions can leverage the strengths of their individual members to create strategic advantages. Different organizations can take on specific roles that play to their strengths, creating a more effective advocacy campaign.
6. **Sustained Efforts:**
 - Coalitions can ensure that advocacy efforts are sustained over time. By sharing the workload and maintaining a collective commitment, coalitions can keep educational issues on the agenda for longer periods.

Role of ESAs in Coalitions:

1. Resource Providers:
 - ESAs can offer specialized resources and expertise that enhance a coalition's capacity to design and implement educational solutions to key policy challenges.
2. Facilitators of Collaboration:
 - ESAs often have established networks and relationships with schools, districts, and other educational stakeholders. They can facilitate collaboration and coordination within the coalition, ensuring that efforts are well-organized and cohesive.
3. Advocacy Leaders:
 - Given their understanding of the educational landscape, ESAs can play a leading role in advocacy efforts. They can help shape policy agendas, provide data and research to support advocacy positions, and mobilize stakeholders to take action.
4. Innovative Solution Designers:
 - ESAs can contribute innovative solutions to educational problems, drawing on their experience and expertise. They can pilot new programs and initiatives that, if successful, can be scaled up through the coalition's efforts.
5. Liaisons to Local Communities:
 - ESAs often have strong connections to local communities and can serve as liaisons, ensuring that the coalition's initiatives are responsive to local needs and contexts.

Coalition Building Decision Framework

In determining whether to build or join a coalition to advance organizational or network priorities, ESAs may consider using the following rubric or decision framework:

Rubric for Evaluating Coalition Opportunities

1. Alignment with Organizational Mission (0-5 points)

5: Coalition's goals perfectly align with the ESA's mission

3: Coalition's goals partially align with the ESA's mission

0: No clear alignment between coalition goals and ESA mission

2. Potential Impact on Education (0-5 points)

5: High potential to significantly improve educational outcomes

3: Moderate potential to improve educational outcomes

0: Limited or no clear impact on educational outcomes

3. Stakeholder Representation (0-5 points)

5: Diverse representation including education stakeholder (educators, parents, students, and community members) and like-minded non-education stakeholders like the business community

3: Some diversity in representation, but key stakeholders may be missing

0: Limited representation, lacking key educational stakeholders

4. Resource Requirements (0-5 points)

5: Resource requirements align well with ESA's capacity

3: Resource requirements may strain ESA's capacity but are manageable

0: Resource requirements exceed ESA's capacity

5. Collaboration Potential (0-5 points)

5: Strong potential for effective collaboration and shared decision-making

3: Some potential for collaboration, but challenges may exist

0: Limited collaboration potential or history of ineffective partnerships

6. Policy Influence (0-5 points)

5: High potential to influence education policy at state or local level

3: Moderate potential to influence education policy

0: Limited or no clear path to policy influence

7. Communication and Outreach (0-5 points)

5: Strong communication strategies and media engagement plans

3: Adequate communication strategies, but room for improvement

0: Weak or nonexistent communication and outreach plans

8. Sustainability (0-5 points)

5: Clear long-term sustainability plan and funding sources

3: Some consideration for sustainability, but plan may be incomplete

0: No clear sustainability plan or funding sources

9. Evaluation and Accountability (0-5 points)

5: Robust evaluation methods and clear accountability measures

3: Some evaluation and accountability measures in place

0: Lack of evaluation methods or accountability measures

10. Ethical Considerations (0-5 points)

5: Strong ethical guidelines and practices aligned with educational values

3: Some ethical considerations, but may need strengthening

0: Lack of clear ethical guidelines or practices

Total possible points: 50

Scoring guide:

40-50 points: Excellent coalition opportunity, strongly consider joining or building

30-39 points: Good coalition opportunity, evaluate specific strengths and weaknesses

20-29 points: Moderate opportunity, carefully consider potential benefits and drawbacks

0-19 points: Weak opportunity, likely not worth pursuing

This rubric provides a structured approach for ESAs and education-focused associations to evaluate coalition opportunities. It incorporates key elements such as mission alignment, potential impact, stakeholder representation, and resource considerations. The framework also addresses important factors like policy influence, communication strategies, and ethical

considerations, which are crucial for effective advocacy in the education sector and it today's political climate.

When using this rubric, organizations should consider the following:

- *Adapt the rubric to specific organizational needs and priorities.*
- *Use the rubric as a starting point for discussions and further analysis.*
- *Involve key stakeholders in the evaluation process.*
- *Consider both quantitative scores and qualitative factors when making decisions.*
- *Regularly review and update coalition partnerships based on ongoing evaluations.*

By systematically evaluating coalition opportunities using this framework, ESAs and education-focused associations can make informed decisions about which coalitions to join or build, ultimately strengthening their advocacy efforts and impact on education policy and practice.

In the end, coalition building is vital for ESAs to enhance their impact, access broader resources, and advocate effectively for educational policies. This is particularly true given the current political environment and emerging trends impacting public education. By participating in and leading coalitions, ESAs can play crucial roles in resource provision, collaboration facilitation, advocacy leadership, innovation design, and community liaison, ultimately leading to more successful and sustainable educational outcomes.

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

STAY CONNECTED

