



2026 2027 Legislative Agenda

ENSURING EDUCATOR AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

SDEA/NEA supports:

- Sufficient funding provided by the state and other sources to ensure that buildings are secure, structurally and environmentally safe and meet 21st century instructional needs.
- A drug-free, tobacco-free, and weapon-free learning environment.
- Funding based on current costs, not averages, for serving those with disabilities (ages birth-21)
- The requirement that school districts provide safe and well-regulated transportation or reimbursement to parents/guardians for transportation of students to and from public school.
- A learning environment free from intimidation, bullying, harassment, and violence.
- A learning environment with access to certified counselors, social workers, mental health professionals, and appropriate medical and nutritional personnel.
- Access to statewide resources focused on meeting the needs of the whole child, including mental, emotional and behavioral needs.
- Equipping education professionals with the skills to recognize the mental, emotional and behavioral needs of the whole child, and the ability to connect their students with the appropriate resources to address those needs.
- A learning environment free from discrimination based on disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.
- SDEA supports funding or programs that empower schools and communities to collaborate in providing critical social services to students and their families who are economically challenged.
- Policies that foster collaboration between communities, school boards, administration and staff in the development of a pandemic preparedness or any other crisis plan.
- Ensure educators are working in buildings which are structurally sound and free from pollutants that may jeopardize their health.

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR JOBS OF THE FUTURE

SDEA/NEA supports:

- Broad-based curriculum and research-based standards supported by a complement of services that prepare students for life-long learning.
- The implementation of career and technical preparation programs that position students for jobs of the future.
- State funding for post-secondary scholarships across a broad spectrum of student abilities and needs.
- Development of a comprehensive plan to determine individual student growth.
- Legislation that provides for an environment that allows for the free exchange of ideas.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC EDUCATION

SDEA/NEA supports:

- Providing school districts, parents, educators and students with the resources and support necessary to ensure an equitable education regardless of disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location or socioeconomic status.
- Providing adequate state funding to South Dakota preK-12 public schools so that South Dakota's school districts can offer competitive salaries and benefits for school employees and can provide students with 21st century opportunities to learn.

- Providing adequate state funding so that South Dakota's post-secondary public institutions can attract and retain high quality faculty, and that will make post-secondary education, including technical, undergraduate and graduate education, affordable for South Dakota students.
- Through existing resources, SDEA/NEA will work with state legislators to ensure that the state's funding formula for k-12 education meets the needs of all school districts in South Dakota and allows all districts to grant meaningful salary and benefit increases to teachers and education support professionals.
- Legislation requiring school district accountability measures for state aid funding.
- Taxpayer dollars that are directed to public schools which are held accountable, address a specific need, are transparent, and allow for innovation without jeopardizing the promise of the state funding formula, i.e., SDEA does not support charter schools or voucher programs.
- The use of accreditation standards by the State Board of Education in the school accreditation process.
- Efforts to have appropriately certified and endorsed educators in all positions.
- The limitation on the amount of money school districts can maintain or carry over in their fund balances.
- A long-term solution, which includes a balanced tax structure, to fund public education in South Dakota.
- School terms that include student contact days and/or hours, professional development/curriculum days and family conferences.
- The rejection of any taxation plans that adversely affect education funding.
- A full-time all-day kindergarten program.
- Sufficient funding for the programs and resources needed to address the change in compulsory attendance.
- Legislation promoting enhanced teacher quality through instructional leadership, rigorous and responsive teacher preparation programs, quality mentoring and sound professional development programs that support South Dakota professional teacher standards.
- Sufficient time, funding, and resources to provide professional development to address changes required by the implementation of state/federally mandated initiatives.
- Efforts to expand Early Childhood Education programs.
- Efforts to ensure all Kindergarten students are at least five years old at the start of the school year.
- Student assessments that inform instruction and improve student learning. Such assessments should provide for multiple measures of learning, including measures that assess higher order thinking skills.
- SDEA supports measures to enhance English language learner programs that provide the necessary tools and resources to give all students access to an equitable education.
- SDEA supports legislation and policies that allows for true academic freedom which ensures that students and faculty are allowed the free exchange of ideas without interference from the State.
- Public schools, and their staff and families, receive the resources to ensure all students have access to the tools, technology and internet required for learning.
- SDEA supports legislation and policies that preserve educators' professional judgment in and prevent censorship of content in classroom and school libraries.

RESPECTING EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

SDEA/NEA supports:

- Increasing the salaries and or compensation of all education employees to the regional average or above.
- Legislation that provides necessary funding for school districts to fund health benefits for public school employees.
- Efforts to strengthen collective bargaining rights and to achieve greater equity at the bargaining table (i.e. binding arbitration.)
- Legislation that would require rationale be given on decisions by the South Dakota Department of Labor regarding bargaining issues.

- Efforts and legislation to maintain and/or increase the South Dakota Retirement System benefit factor and/or to protect the SDRS Pension Trust Fund sustainability while removing the cola maximum. These efforts shall include, but not be limited to, building a coalition including all organized employee groups covered under SDRS.
 - Legislation that ensures that there are collectively bargained salaries and incentives to attract and retain quality educators.
 - Legislation that supports enhanced compensation systems that are locally bargained, based on multiple measures, resulting in improved instruction and/or effectiveness and encouraging teacher collaboration, not competition or merit pay.
 - Providing a negotiated per diem increase in pay for all school employees if there is an increase in the school term.
 - Legislation that would increase wages and benefits for all education support professionals.
 - The representation of all levels of instruction in the planning/development and implementation of educational policy.
 - Maintaining continuing contract provisions in the law.
 - A work environment free from intimidation, bullying, harassment and violence.
 - A work environment free from discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.
 - Efforts that acknowledge and support the mental health needs of education professionals.
 - Respecting school and educator autonomy.
 - Support due process protections for all educational professionals.
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