

CEA Legislative Agenda: 2020

Proposed CEA Priority Issues

Education Funding

CEA seeks legislation to strengthen prohibitions against towns using state education dollars for non-education purposes. CEA also seeks a reliable and guaranteed source of funding to pay for needed student support staff and resources to promote social and emotional well-being among students and school employees.

State funding that is meant for schools is often diverted for other purposes by town officials. We can prevent this by having state education cost sharing (ECS) funds sent directly to the local boards of education like the many other state grants.

Collective Bargaining

CEA, together with other public sector unions, supports legislation that would ensure safe and fair workplaces, and protect the rights of unions and their members. CEA is also exploring legislation to replace the political appointee system for naming labor arbitrators with a process for selecting a neutral third party arbitration service.

Health Insurance

CEA advocates for legislation that would reduce the cost of health insurance and protect benefits for all teachers.

DCF and Workers Compensation

CEA seeks legislation that would resolve issues related to DCF and Workers Compensation that result in hardships for members. Our proposals would guarantee notification regarding the status of DCF complaints; and provide leave time when employees are required to attend depositions.

Sick School Buildings (Indoor Air Quality)

CEA is actively pursuing legislation to address matters related to infrastructure issues, including, but not limited to, acceptable temperature and humidity levels and the accumulation of dust and mold that contribute to poor indoor air quality issues. CEA is proposing legislation that:

1. Establishes school temperature limits between 65 and 76 degrees) and require closings if limits are exceeded.
2. Requires HVAC and Air-Quality Monitoring based on DPH standards.
3. Requires procedures for reporting and addressing “sick building” concerns

Students, Trauma, and Social-Emotional Support

CEA will continue to advocate for legislation that protects teachers and students from repeated disruptions of learning and potential physical harm, and allows all to feel safe and secure while at school.

Ensuring the most positive and healthy school learning environment requires the state to do much more to address the needs of students who have had adverse childhood experiences. CEA calls for comprehensive legislation to ensure every child has access to the key programs and services each needs. Legislation should include:

- **Kindergarten Start Age:** Connecticut law sets the youngest kindergarten start age of any of the other 49 states. We support legislation requiring children attending kindergarten to be at least 5 years old by Sept. 1, unless a parent or guardian of a child under such age attests to their child's developmental readiness.
- **Universal Preschool:** Require SDE and OEC to develop plan for universal preschool and report its finding and recommendations for implementation to the legislature.
- **Acceptable Counselor, Social Worker, and School Psychologist Staff Ratios:** ensure that the ratios of social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors meet national standards. For social workers and school counselors, the student to teacher standard is 250:1; for school psychologists, it's 500-700:1.
- **Reducing Testing:** By prohibiting standardized tests from Pre-Kindergarten through second grade and limiting the amount of time spent preparing for and taking state-required testing.
- **Class Size Reduction in Alliance Districts:** Provide additional ECS funds to Alliance Districts that maintain class sizes at or below the state average for similar classrooms.
- **Special Education Caseload:** Propose a comprehensive study be conducted by the Special Education Advisory Council (with input from parents, educators, board members, and advocacy groups) that results in caseload limits for school districts. Limits should take into consideration intensities of various services, the amount of time students' IEP indicate as classroom inclusionary time, and other key factors.
- **Social Emotional Learning and Revising the Common Core for Grades K-2:** Require districts to incorporate social and emotional learning standards throughout the curriculum and include SEL in the state's accountability framework under ESSA. The state should also create model curricular units to save teachers time and districts money.
- **Addressing Trauma for Students Who Exhibit Need:** Require schools to have plans for helping students whose behavior indicates deeper needs. Plans must:
 1. **Identify a suitable location** where student who has been temporarily removed from class for dangerous behavior so that educational needs can be met.
 2. **Implement interventions to address underlying trauma**, such as therapeutic support; restorative practices with training; trauma-informed instruction; and strategies to improve the school climate, etc.
 3. **Ensure teacher input** into the supports and interventions necessary to support affected students and protect teachers who advocate for their students from workplace retaliation – an all too familiar form of silencing teachers.
- **Flexibility in Teachers Evaluation Law and Guidelines:** Permit more flexibility in teacher evaluation plans to allow for social-emotional learning indicators.
- **Community School Strategies:** Establish pilot program to develop comprehensive community schools that involve parents, educators, and the community in developing solutions to a school's biggest challenges.