



MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

OUR STUDENTS, OUR SCHOOLS, OUR VOICE 2025 Legislative Focus

The Educator Shortage

MEA supports bills to recruit and retain educators to make the profession more attractive, emphasizing improving workplace conditions, fair pay, and professional development as key strategies to elevate the profession.

Teacher Pay

Maine teachers earn 23% less than other college-educated professionals with similar experience and ranks #37 in the US and last in New England for starting teacher salaries. To attract and retain qualified educators, MEA supports proposals to raise the starting teacher salary to at least \$50K to boost salaries for Maine's teachers up and down the scale, help address the educator shortage, and recruit and retain highly qualified educators to the profession.

Paid Student Teaching

In the past decade, the number of people completing educator preparatory programs in Maine has dropped 50%, far exceeding the national decline. Some aspiring educators are forced to forgo student teaching because they are unable to take on the financial burden of paying tuition and living expenses while working in the school full-time. To reduce the financial burden of student teaching and attract more preservice teachers, MEA supports legislation to compensate student teachers while they are working in our schools and provide additional support for cooperating teachers.

Mental Health Supports

Student mental health continues to be a top concern for MEA members, which highlights the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support in our schools. MEA supports proposals to increase the presence of mental health professionals— school psychologists, counselors, and social workers—and comprehensive school counseling and student services in our schools.

Strengthening Support for Early Career Educators

Last year, nearly 500 teachers chose to leave the profession— nearly double the numbers from 2015-2018. MEA supports proposals that focus on retaining early career educators by strengthening mentoring requirements for teachers in their first two years and providing mentor teachers with a robust annual stipend.

De-escalation and Behavior Intervention Training

Maine students and educators deserve to feel safe at school, yet members cite challenging behaviors as the top issue they face in their schools because of lack of training, staffing shortages, and lack of resources to meet students' complex needs. MEA supports enhanced professional development training opportunities for all educators and school staff focused on de-escalation techniques and positive behavior interventions to help educators meet the complex needs of Maine's students.

Paid Training for Hourly Employees

Our Education Support Professionals (ESPs) deserve job-specific training that complements the essential and important support they give to our students. MEA supports proposals that require districts to provide paid professional development for ALL hourly school employees, covering essential skills such as school roles, safety procedures, and the implementation of IEPs.

Community Schools

Community schools empower students, educators, and families to thrive in their communities by integrating essential services like food pantries, mental health counseling, and health care. MEA supports integrating elements of the community school model across the state to expand the key services students need to thrive and succeed academically and personally. Maine should focus on the expansion of services in areas with the greatest need and target services to match the unique needs of student populations.

Funding for K-12 Schools

School Construction

Maine students and educators deserve to attend schools that are safe and healthy, but too often school buildings are unsafe. Maine must find a way to provide stable funding for the capital needs of our school buildings, which is why MEA is in favor of removing the debt service from the school funding formula (EPS) and finding alternative ways to augment state support for our schools' critical capital needs.

Property taxes

Property tax sensitivity has made it increasingly difficult for school districts to pass school budgets and left too many districts without the resources they need to provide for students. MEA is in favor of an increase in Maine's Homestead Exemption and Property Tax Fairness Credit to help reduce pressure on school budgets and property taxpayers.

Funding for Higher Education

Fund Maine's Future

MEA supports an increase of the state appropriation to the University of Maine system to provide critical funding to our state's public, four-year university system. Our entire state benefits, economically and socially, from a public higher education system that is affordable, robust, and comprehensive. MEA members in the UMaine System are ready to lead an effort to increase the state appropriation for the UMaine System to at least keep pace with inflation. Additionally, we want to make sure all employees in the UMaine System earn a living wage and can meet basic needs with their full-time earnings without relying on state-funded services.

Retirement Benefits

To address the educator shortage, Maine must invest in fair pay— from day one through retirement. Educator pension plans are a tool for employers to attract skilled workers and get them to stay in the profession. MEA supports the enhancement of retirement benefits that recognize and reward educators' hard work on behalf of students, including an increase of the state's share of retired teacher healthcare, strengthening the pension system (MEPERS), and raising the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA).

School Funding

MEA will engage with the school funding study (EPS) currently underway by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute to advocate for equitable distribution of state funding for schools and continue to advocate for maintaining 55% state funding for public schools.



Learn More about MEA's Priorities at maine.org/actioncenter/