



School Funding

Every citizen benefits when schools are strong and children succeed. Businesses take into account a state's public education system when deciding where to move their employees, and studies show a strong correlation between a well-educated community and a strong local economy. Nevada schools have been chronically underfunded for years, remaining one of the lowest in education funding while operating on an outdated funding formula that ignores the cost of educating students. We can and must do better for our kids and state.

What can we advocate for to make a difference for our kids?

1. Fully fund the needs of our students.

Our state lawmakers need to responsibly update Nevada's 50-year-old funding formula, the Nevada Plan, and fully fund a formula that is based on providing the resources necessary for ALL students to achieve.

This is possible! Other states have moved to formulas based on the actual cost of educating their children. Nevada legislators have already commissioned experts to determine what they would need to do to make things right, but have failed to follow through on their own recommendations.

A 2006 study by Augenblich, updated in 2014, recommends about \$1.8 billion in additional funding each year. A 2014 legislative task force recommended creating "weights" that provide additional per-pupil funds to meet the specific needs of English language learner (ELL), low income, special education, and gifted and talented (GATE) students.

We must hold legislators responsible for providing appropriate resources to our schools to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed. Legislators must create and fully support a school funding formula that is not only adequate but moves the needle on the quality of education in Nevada.

Did you know?

Nevada lawmakers have commissioned multiple studies and a task force that recommended:

- *Modernizing the Nevada Plan;*
- *Significantly increasing funding to education (\$1.8 billion per year);*
- *Creating weights (funding multipliers) for certain students*

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2. Quit balancing budgets on the back of our kids.

Nevada lawmakers have notoriously used new tax revenues for everything *but* increasing education funding, even when new taxes are specifically meant to increase funding and resources for our students.

In 2009, voters proposed a bill to increase the room tax to increase funding specifically for teachers and to increase student achievement. Even though lawmakers agreed to enact the bill, they later broke their promise to Nevada taxpayers. Lawmakers decided instead to fill budget holes rather than increase or “supplement” school funding (as the bill expressly intended).

Since 2011, the room tax increase has produced \$1.2 billion that were supposed to increase fund for students and teachers but has instead filled budget holes.

Many finance experts and districts have known for years that this is a common practice. They expect that new revenue, such as marijuana taxes, will simply replace other education funding sources and essentially leave the K-12 finance budget flat with no increase. It’s like we’re filling up a bucket with a hole at the bottom. This explains how even with “new funding” for education, districts are struggling to keep pace with dwindling budgets. In Nevada, new funds for education don’t always mean more funds.

And despite the expectation that all marijuana tax revenue would support schools, we have already seen lawmakers put retail taxes from marijuana into a “rainy day fund” rather than passing a proposed bill that would have dedicated the funds to Nevada schools.

Let your legislator know you care about fully funding the needs of Nevada students, and using your tax dollars how they were intended. Every child deserves the opportunity to succeed!



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