

NSEA SEEKS AMENDMENT ON AB330

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 120 years.

NSEA appreciates language in AB330 to ensure educator safety. We seek amendments to maintain educator authority to temporarily remove a student from a classroom or other school premises, to ensure a balance between maintaining order and the rights of students, to maintain the role of elected school boards in the review of discipline practices, and to create a Restorative Justice Monitoring Committee.

In the wake of the horrific event at El Dorado High School in 2022, Vicki Kreidel, a teacher and President of the NEA of Southern Nevada said, “The young woman who was attacked, her life will never be the same. You can’t cross your fingers and hope for the best.”

High-profile school violence events are not new and not limited to Clark County or the 2013 shooting at Sparks Middle School, which took the life of teacher Michael Landsberry. NSEA has consistently heard alarming concerns about personal safety from our members across the state. That’s why we have a long history of engagement on the issue of educator safety and student disciplinary practice. NSEA spearheaded the creation of the progressive student discipline system decades ago and during the 2019 session, we were the only stakeholder group raising public concerns about the implementation of restorative justice in AB168. We believe a strong restorative discipline system could reduce incidents where educators sustain injuries. However, this system would need to be proactive, implemented district-wide across all districts, and would require significantly more training, attention, and resources.

In 2020, NSEA proposed an Educator Bill of Rights to improve educator safety and to respect educator voice, but our proposal was largely disregarded. Since the pandemic the situation in schools has deteriorated further. The pandemic exacerbated mental health issues. And a historic educator shortage, with thousands of vacant positions across the state in addition to the structural shortage with the largest class sizes in the country, makes it nearly impossible to implement even the best plans for school safety and student discipline. Unfortunately, AB168 had a delayed and poor statewide implementation leaving many schools and school districts unsure about the student discipline system, opting for little to no student discipline at all. Educators coined the phrase “restore at the door” to describe the approach many administrators have taken, opting to send disruptive students back into classes after a brief conversation in the hall. This has only made classrooms and schools less safe. Meaningful resources for student mental health and significant investment in the implementation of restorative justice are absolutely necessary for the system to have a chance to work. And this needs to go hand in hand with commonsense changes like the ones proposed in AB194 and AB285.

NSEA’s Respect Educators Act aims to elevate the safety, well-being, and autonomy of educators in their work. This includes real accountability for any violence committed against educators and giving educators the tools necessary to deal with disruptive behavior. This is why NSEA supports Assembly Bills 194 and 285 and Senate Bill 152. The Respect Educators Act is also about the better incorporation of educator voice in decisions impacting them. In 1999, NSEA advocated for the right of educators to temporarily remove a student if they believed that student’s behavior *seriously* interfered with the learning of other students or with the ability of the staff member to discharge their duties. Language in AB330, would allow a principal to take this ability away, making educators’ jobs more difficult and less safe.

NSEA asks that language added in Section 7, subsection 6 be struck from the bill. In its stead, NSEA would be open to requiring data of these removals be reported to the board of trustees and a newly formed Restorative Justice Monitoring Committee.

Ensuring a safe working environment for our members is a top priority. At the same time, educators are often the biggest advocates for their students, especially when students are from disadvantaged backgrounds. While we appreciate language to prioritize educator safety, we believe there are examples of first-time offenses covered in amendments in Section 10 that do not warrant an automatic expulsion. This could include a low-level drug offense or even a very young student who bites a school employee, even without malice.

NSEA asks that language in Section 10, subsection 1 (after the addition of “for the first occurrence,” on page 18, line 43) be changed to, “be suspended, expelled and provided an appropriate alternative education in the least restrictive environment possible pursuant to NRS 392.4673, or be assigned to a temporary alternative placement pursuant to subsection 2 of NRS 392.4645...”

NSEA has long advocated the role of democratically elected school boards to bring the greatest levels of accountability and responsiveness to the communities they serve. To that end, NSEA believes school boards should be included in the review of student discipline practices.

NSEA asks that “board of trustees” in Sections 4, 6, 9, and 10 not be stricken.

The Respect Educators Act also calls for the creation of a monitoring committee including educators from across the state, legislators, restorative justice advocates, and NDE to gain a clear understanding of the impact of the laws, ensure consistent implementation, and secure protection for all students and educators.

NSEA asks that Section 15 repealing the development of the statewide framework for restorative justice, instead replace the development of the framework with the Restorative Justice Monitoring Committee that would be charged with monitoring the implementation of the statewide restorative justice framework and making recommendations to the legislature for improvements to the system.