

2019 RSAI LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- **State Penny for School Infrastructure Extension:** supports extending the state penny for school infrastructure
- **Teacher Shortage and Quality Instruction:** rural school flexibility to meet licensure requirements, elimination of licensure barriers and a public service CTE track.
- **Transportation and Formula Equity:** supports a mechanism covering transportation costs and closing the \$170 gap between state cost per pupil and district cost per pupil
- **State Supplemental Assistance:** formula funding is especially critical to students in rural Iowa due to transportation costs, economies of scale, unique needs of students, mandates and compliance, the need for quality AEA services, and the ability to attract and retain staff in rural Iowa

- **Student Mental Health Supports:** including increased access to and funding for mental health services for children
- **Whole Grade Sharing and Reorganization Incentives Extension:** maintains opportunities to achieve efficiencies, share capacity to operate, and redirect resources to educational programs
- **School Safety:** provide the resources, training and support necessary for Iowa student and staff safety at school
- **Funding Equity for At-Risk Students:** supports serving at-risk students based on need and addressing inequity of dropout prevention cap
- **Quality Preschool:** for three- and four-year olds at 1.0 per pupil cost for up to full-day programming and transportation costs

www.rsaia.org



Find our full priority descriptions and position papers on our site at www.rsaia.org/legislative

WE ARE

RURAL SCHOOL ADVOCATES OF IOWA

OUR MISSION

Advocate for students in rural schools to assure a fair, equal and quality education.

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WE WILL

Collaborate with others to promote legislation that strengthens rural education for students.

OUR COMMITMENT

Telling the stories of success and opportunity that rural schools provide to students.

Our collective voices are stronger together.



We represent the students, staff, taxpayers and communities in rural Iowa.

Lend your voice to the movement for quality rural education.

RSAI is Iowa's state affiliate of NREA

www.nrea.net



WE WILL

Educate others about the value of rural education to the state's economy and future of Iowa as an educational leader in the nation and the world;

Build the capacity and understanding of other groups with similar interests on legislative and educational issues to create a strong voice;

Share best practices of great education programs while under the budget constraints of fewer students, how best to innovate, share and promote efficiency;

Secure adequate resources, academic and financial, to provide first class educational opportunities for students in rural communities;

Maintain local control through the flexibility and authority of locally elected School Boards.

How



Locally through the advocacy of like-minded individuals and groups with our Legislators at home

AND

At the Capitol through the services of a Professional Advocate to organize our collective voice and keep members informed.

RURAL CONCERNS

Funding of education is based on enrollment, which has been declining in rural Iowa for many years. As enrollment declines, funding follows.

- Iowa population grew 6.8% from 2000 to 2015, trailing national growth of 10.7%, and primarily occurring in 15 Iowa counties. The remaining 84 counties lost 3%, or 53,000 people.
- In Iowa, we have 54.5 persons per square mile compared to 86 persons per square mile nationwide, yet, unlike other rural states, the Iowa funding system has no acknowledgement of population sparsity, or its impact on transportation costs.
- In 1980, only 15 Iowa counties had a population of less than 10,000 people. In 2015, there were 24 counties that fit that category. 44 districts in Iowa in 2000 no longer exist. They have been reorganized or dissolved, and they were all districts serving rural communities.
- The challenge of attracting and retaining great teachers and staff, with many teaching positions declared "shortage areas", is even more difficult in rural communities.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOCUS ON LOCAL CONTROL

- ✓ **Management Fund Authority:** to pay for retirements of those over age 65
- ✓ **Home Rule:** trust local leaders to understand best what students in their communities need
- ✓ **PPEL Flexibility:** to pay for transportation repair
- ✓ **Categorical Funds:** provide options for redirecting funds to needs of students, since one-size does not fit all
- ✓ **More Board Authority:** through locally-driven dropout prevention plans
- ✓ **Staff Flexibility:** for CTE options for hard-to-staff content and local offerings of on-line learning
- ✓ **Progress on transportation and formula equality:** funding without strings attached
- ✓ **Operational Sharing Incentives:** expanded and extended through 2024
- ✓ **State Penny Extension:** through the 2018 Iowa House and positioned for success in 2019 Senate



RSAI MEMBER BENEFITS

- Weekly Legislative Report with concrete and timely advocacy action steps
- Weekly Capitol Recap Video: a short video of legislative action critical to RSAI members
- Grassroots policy development with regional meetings and local conversations
- Position papers, talking points, and advocacy tools to more easily connect with legislators
- A voice at the table, with RSAI representatives appointed to key task forces and committees
- Local advocacy supports, editing of letters, media, district-specific talking points and data
- State networking with other rural schools sharing common interests and challenges
- National networking, as RSAI is the state affiliate of the National Rural Education Association
- Representation on issues in D.C. as National Rural Education Consortium members
- Free NASDTEC licensure checks of prospective employees, saving hundreds of dollars