

## 2017 RSAI LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- **Fair Transportation Equity Funding Mechanism**
- **Operational Sharing Incentives Extension**
- **At-Risk Funding** based on need, including flexibility in how to best spend the resources
- **Quality Preschool** for three- and four-year olds at 1.0 per pupil cost for up to full-day programming and transportation costs
- **Reading Interventions/Summer School** Flexibility to meet student needs via school-year interventions if the district determines barriers will prevent offering a quality summer school program

- **Home Rule** rather than Dillon's Rule authority for districts to promote flexibility and creative decision-making
- **Standards, Assessment and Technology, Aligned and Funded**
- **Formula Equity:** Raise the state cost per pupil to the maximum district cost
- **State Supplemental Assistance:** the survival of rural schools depends on the return of education as the state's top priority with the timely investment of meaningful new resources to improve opportunities for students. RSAI supports a rate of growth no lower than 6% for the 2017-18 school year and 2018-19 school year. This is especially critical to 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 quality staff in rural Iowa.

[www.rsaia.org](http://www.rsaia.org)



## WE ARE

### RURAL SCHOOL ADVOCATES OF IOWA

#### OUR MISSION

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

#### 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.

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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](http://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.

## TRANSPORTATION CONCERNS

- Large geographic districts with relatively fewer kids combined with mandated busing siphons money from our educational fund.
- In some rural districts, transportation costs exceed 10% of the General Fund Budget.
- Budget pressures including sharing and consolidation efforts demand even more spent on transportation.

*SF 455, Transportation and Formula Equality, approved by the Senate, remains in the House Appropriations Committee for consideration in 2018.*

## 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% from 2000 to 2015, trailing national growth of 15%, and primarily occurring in 15 Iowa counties. The remaining 84 counties lost 3%, or 53,000 people.
- In Iowa, we have 55.2 persons per square mile compared to 85.3 persons per square mile nationwide, yet, unlike other rural states, the Iowa funding system has no acknowledgement of population sparsity, and its impact on transportation costs.
- 41 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 & LOCAL CONTROL

In RSAI's first two years of advocacy, our specific priorities of getting management fund authority to pay for retirements of those over age 65, PEEL flexibility to pay for transportation repair, and additional flexibility in serving at-risk students yielded successful legislation. In this 2017 Session, our focus on expansion of local control allows us to check off the following priorities:



- ✓ **Home Rule:** trust local leaders to understand best what students in their communities need - HF 573 APPROVED
- ✓ **Categorical Funds:** provide options for redirecting funds to needs of students, since one-size does not fit all - HF 564 and HF 565 APPROVED
- ✓ **Local Alternatives to Retention:** for students during the year if there are barriers to summer schools - HF 642 APPROVED

We'll continue to work on Flexibility to meet staffing needs: SF 475 approved by the Senate, in House Education Committee for consideration in 2018.