

## 2020 RSAI LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- **Adequate Formula Funding** is critical for rural school survival. The cost per pupil increase must keep up with the economy, balance state and local funds, and be set timely to allow budget planning and staffing. The 2020-21 SSA rate should be set no lower than 3.75%.



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

- **Student Mental Health Services** require increased access and funding for children. In addition to funding for AEA services and other providers, an array of services should include telehealth services received at school. Providers should not pass on administrative or billing work to schools and schools should not be providers of mental health services.

- **Educator & Staff Shortage** require maximum flexibility to meet offer & teach requirements. Iowa must allow experience as evidence for Iowa licensure, develop loan forgiveness and promote other solutions to attract and retain school staff to rural Iowa.

- **Formula and Transportation Equity** has progressed, but the \$165 per pupil formula gap should be closed within ten years. Transportation equity support should bring down all districts to no more than the state average per pupil transportation cost.

- **Opportunity Equity for Low SES** demands resources for at-risk students based on need while addressing the inequity of the dropout prevention cap. The formula must recognize the cost of providing equal opportunities to low income students. School districts should be granted spending authority for students' fees waived due to poverty.

- **Sharing Incentives and Efficiencies** should be extended and expanded to provide services and programs in rural schools and build relationships with other districts.

- **Quality Preschool** should generate a 1.0 weighting.

- **School Safety** depends on additional funding for security personnel and training to protect against active shooter and other emergency situations presenting harm.

- **School Bonds** should be approved by a simple majority of voters, 50% plus 1.



Find our full priority descriptions and position papers on our site at [www.rsaia.org/legislative](http://www.rsaia.org/legislative)

## 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](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.

## 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 had no acknowledgement of population sparsity, or its impact on transportation costs, until HF 307 was enacted during the 2019 legislative session.
- 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 positions declared "shortage areas" and even fewer applicants for teachers, bus drivers, substitutes and administrators, is even more difficult in rural communities.

## RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOCUS ON LOCAL CONTROL & FUNDING

- ✓ **Home Rule:** trust local leaders to understand best what students in their communities need
- ✓ **Transportation and formula equality:** funding is now incorporated in the formula
- ✓ **More Board Authority:** through locally-driven dropout prevention plans
- ✓ **State Penny Extension:** extended through 2051
- ✓ **Operational Sharing Incentives:** expanded and extended through 2024
- ✓ **Staff Flexibility:** for CTE options for hard-to-staff content and local offerings of on-line learning
- ✓ **Categorical Funds:** provide options for redirecting funds to needs of students, since one-size does not fit all



## 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
- Research articles and best practices available on website