

RSAI Annual Meeting Minutes

Oct. 21, 2020 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Campus
1055 SW Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny, Iowa 50023
Or Via Zoom

1. **Call Annual Meeting to Order.** Dennis McClain, Adair-Casey CSD/Guthrie Center CSD and Leadership Group Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.
2. **Approval of the Agenda.** *Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, moved approval of the agenda. Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt CSD, seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.*
3. **Introductions of Leadership Group & Legislative Committee.**
4. **Introductions of Meeting Attendees.** All meeting attendees introduced themselves, indicated if they were part of the 2020-21 Leadership Group or 2020-21 Legislative Committee, and shared what they believe to be an advantage of rural schools/education.
5. **Annual Meeting Business:** Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, and Secretary/Treasurer of the RSAI Leadership Group reviewed the financial reports included in the packet materials.
 - **2019-20 Financial Report & Annual Audit.** *A motion to approve the 2019-20 Financial Report & Annual Audit was made by Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, second by Nick Trenkamp, Central CSD. The motion was approved unanimously.*
 - **2020-21 Budget & Professional Advocate Payment.** *A motion to approve the 2020-21 Budget and Professional Advocate payment was made by Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, second by Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD and Riceville CSD. The motion was approved unanimously.*
 - **2020-21 RSAI Membership Dues.** The dues schedule for 2020-21 was shared with the group by Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD.
6. **Amendments to the RSAI Bylaws.** Justin Daggett, Manson Northwest Webster CSD, reviewed the proposed changes to the RSAI Bylaws included in the packet, as well as the process for the review of the bylaws that took place. *A motion to approve the amendments to the RSAI Bylaws was made by Justin Daggett, Manson Northwest Webster CSD, second by Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD. The motion was approved unanimously.*
7. **Results of Election of Region Representatives to the Leadership Group.** Dennis McClain, Chair, welcomed back Laurie Noll, Fairfield CSD, elected at the RSAI SE Regional Meeting as the Leadership Group SE Regional Director serving through 2023, and welcomed Justin Daggett, Manson Northwest Webster CSD, who was elected at the

RSAI NW Regional Meeting as the Leadership Group NW Regional Director through 2023.

- 8. Election of RSAI At-Large member for a three-year term.** This is the 3-year at-large term on the leadership group most recently filled by Duane Willhite, North Fayette Valley CSD, who retired June 30, 2020. Any board member or superintendent in a member district is eligible for the seat. The at-large members also serve on the Legislative Group in addition to their Leadership Group duties.

Brian Johnson, Prairie Valley CSD and Southeast Webster Grand CSD, nominated Scott Williamson, Superintendent, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, for the at-large position. Second by Joel Pederson, Cardinal CSD. No other nominations were brought forth.

Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, voted to cease nominations and Nick Trenkamp, Central CSD, seconded the motion to cease nominations. Unanimous approval followed to close nominations.

Results of the election were unanimous approval to elected Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, to serve as the RSAI Leadership Group At-Large representative through 2023.

- 9. Iowa Economic Development Update:** Bill Menner, Executive Director, Iowa Rural Development Council (IRDC), shared with the group an update of economic development issues in rural Iowa, and discussed the importance and impact of schools and educators on the economy of rural communities and as leaders who have a stake in collaborating with other rural leaders for effective economic development growth. Brad Hohensee, Superintendent, BGM CSD and HLV CSD shared his reflections and interactions with the IRDC as well and gave examples of community support of his local school districts as a result of those collaborative connections. RSAI is a member of the IRDC. Information referenced in Bill Menner's presentation is linked on the RSAI Annual Meeting webpage, and more information about IRDC can be found at www.iowardc.org or www.iaruralhealth.org.

A brief break for dinner took place at this time.

- 10. Status of RSAI 2020 Priorities:** Margaret Buckton, RSAI Professional Advocate, provided an update on the status of this past year's legislative session, the status of the current state budget, and on the RSAI legislative priorities and accomplishments, to help set the stage for tonight's conversation. The sides are posted on the RSAI Annual Meeting webpage.
- 11. Report of Aug. 14 Legislative Committee Group Meeting.** Joel Pedersen, Cardinal CSD and Chair of the 2020-21 Legislative Group, introduced himself and the other Legislative Committee members, and discussed the process the Committee went through in their hybrid meeting on Aug. 14, to prepare the 2021 legislative priorities being presented tonight.

12. Establish RSAI legislative priorities for the upcoming 2021 Legislative Session

- **Adequate School Resources:** RSAI supports adequate base funding. The increased per pupil cost known as SSA is especially critical to rural students due to distance from school/opportunities, economies of scale, mandates, the need for AEA support, and the ability to attract and retain staff. Rural schools depend on an investment of meaningful new resources to prepare students for a successful future. COVID-19 experience has created additional financial burdens for connectivity, staffing, social distancing practices, virtual curriculum and protective equipment, while potentially diverting resources away from the district due to open enrollment or home school choices which may be temporary. The rate of increase in SSA should be no lower than anticipated growth in state revenue (adjusted for legislated tax cuts), should keep up with other economic factors such as personal income or state gross domestic product over the long term, should maintain a balance of state and local property taxes, provide predictability, and be set timely to assure adequate notice for budget planning and staffing.

Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt CSD, moved approval as presented including authority for the RSAI Leadership Group to revisit the language and whether a particular percentage request should be added to the priority before the start of the 2021 Legislative Session. Mandy Ross, Stratford/Webster City CSD, second. Vote unanimously approved.

- **Assessing and Addressing Staff/Student Social, Emotional and Behavioral Health:** RSAI supports access to and funding for mental health services for children and supports for staff. July 1, 2020 Return-to-Learn Plans required school leaders to determine how to meet an increased demand for social emotional supports anticipated due to school closure. RSAI thanks the Legislature and Governor for addressing telehealth services at school without creating an undue administrative burden for schools and the addition of a social worker position to operational sharing. Despite these advances, our educators are neither prepared nor qualified to become providers of mental health services for children. Iowa needs to address a shortage of qualified mental health professionals and provide resources over the next two years for local districts to determine how best to train school staff based on a local assessment of need and consideration of local community tools and capacity to collaborate for a collective solution.

An amendment was made by Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, to direct the RSAI Leadership Group and staff to coordinate strategy and efforts around this priority with SAI to ensure we are working in conjunction between our two organizations to support a task force to study the root causes of children's mental health challenges and identify prevention strategies. Second by Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD and Riceville CSD. Vote to approve that direction was unanimously approved.

Tim Mitchell, Riverside CSD, moved approval of the priority language as presented, along with the direction on strategy. Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, seconded. Vote unanimously approved.

- **Educator Shortage and Quality Instruction:** RSAI knows that rural school leaders are driven to find the very best staff they can to engage students in rigorous learning. RSAI supports maximum flexibility to hire staff to provide great instruction and support to all Iowa students. RSAI supports 1) district flexibility to meet offer and teach requirements, 2) teacher or other staff shortage loan forgiveness programs and incentives to encourage staff to work in rural schools, 3) a special education generalist credential to teach special education across all grades, 4) creation of a Public Service strand in Iowa's CTE system to prepare Iowa's future teaching workforce and minimize college student loan debt of future teachers, 5) flexibility to hire retirees without negative IPERS impact, and 6) elimination of barriers to licensure for educators. RSAI supports continued BOEE focus on greater flexibility for substitute licensure. Licensure reciprocity with other states is of great benefit. The BOEE should accept evidence other than strict transcripts to show skill mastery for educators from other professions. Colleges of teacher preparation and the BOEE are encouraged to lessen the college course requirements for new teachers, to make them no more burdensome than those of other professions.

Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD and Riceville CSD, moved approval as presented. Laurie Noll, Fairfield CSD seconded. Vote unanimously approved.

- **Formula and Transportation Equity:** RSAI supports formula and transportation equity. The Legislature should continue the commitment to close the \$155 gap between the state and district cost per pupil within ten years and continue transportation equity support, bringing down all districts to no more than the state average per pupil transportation cost, without requiring burdensome reporting requirements from school districts.

Tim Mitchell, Riverside CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD and Riceville CSD. Vote unanimously approved.

- **Opportunity Equity:** RSAI supports resources for at-risk students. Resources should be based on need, such as the percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), in addition to enrollment of the district. The current disparity in dropout prevention capacity, (some districts held to 2.5% and others allowed to access up to 5% of regular program district cost) is arbitrary, based on history no longer relevant to supporting student needs. All school boards should be able to realize the full 5% dropout prevention funding. The formula must further recognize the disproportionate cost of providing equal educational opportunities to low-income students. School districts should be granted spending authority for FRPL eligible students' fees mandated to be waived by state and federal law. The COVID-19 experience has also shown us glaring differences among student home support. This includes both the ability to engage in learning based on lack of internet connectivity, as well as parents not being able to stay home to support required continuous learning because of work requirements to support their families. Experts anticipate a COVID-19 ripple effect which will increase achievement gaps. RSAI supports full attention to and implementation of the December 2019 School Finance Interim Committee recommendation to study the impact of poverty on educational outcomes, including other states' formulas that provide resources for students from low-income

families which are showing successful student achievement outcomes for at-risk students. [HF 2490](#) Poverty Weighting Study was approved with strong bi-partisan support in the House Education Committee in the 2020 Session serves as a good starting point for continued conversation.

Joel Pedersen, Cardinal CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Eric Trager, Audubon CSD and Coon Rapids Bayard CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **Sharing Incentives and Efficiencies:** RSAI supports extension of sharing and efficiency incentives. Rural students benefit from opportunities to achieve efficiencies, share capacity to operate, and redirect resources to educational programs. The 2019 addition of a licensed social worker position to qualify for operational sharing incentives is appreciated. RSAI supports additional critical school staff, such as additional mental health professionals, school safety personnel and work-based learning coordinators. Additional positions are welcomed, but the cap of 21 students should be increased to allow all districts to access any new flexibility. Whole Grade Sharing, Reorganization, and Operational Sharing Incentives should be extended.

Brian Johnson, Prairie Valley CSD and Southeast Webster Grand CSD, moved approval as presented. Paul Croghan, Nodaway Valley CSD and CAM CSD, seconded. Unanimous approval.

- **Quality Preschool:** RSAI supports full funding of quality preschool. Quality preschool has been proven to minimize negative student outcomes (special education, dropout, limited lifetime wages, home and car ownership, for example) while maximizing student academic success. Preschool is the ounce of prevention that is saves future taxpayers a pound of cure. Additionally, expansion to provide quality preschool for three-year-olds would benefit parents, the business community and the economy, in addition to the student. Due to changing demographics in rural Iowa, significant transportation costs, and lack of quality day care, preschool should be fully funded at the 1.0 per pupil cost. The 2020 bill, [HF 2490](#) Poverty Weighting Study, should be moved forward in the 2021 Session and include a discussion of weightings which should be applicable to preschool students' programs.

Tim Mitchell, Riverside CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Chris Bergman, Clarinda CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **School Safety:** RSAI supports school safety investments. Rural schools need the resources, training and support necessary for Iowa student and staff safety at school, including additional funding for security personnel and training to protect against emergency situations presenting harm. For rural schools in particular, distance from emergency support compounds an already stressed situation lacking sufficient resources to fully train staff and provide security supports.

Brian Johnson, Prairie Valley CSD and Southeast Webster Grand CSD moved approval as presented. Seconded by Michelle Havenstrite, PCM CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **Bonding Capacity:** RSAI supports a simple majority, 50% plus 1, voter approval for school bond issues. Additionally, RSAI supports the 5% calculation of property valuation which limits a district's bonding capacity to be limited to property tax debt issues and not include debt backed by the school infrastructure state sales tax revenues.

Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Janet Stutz, Grinnell-Newburg CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **Internet Connectivity and Access:** RSAI supports continued state and federal efforts at expanding access to high-speed internet geographically to all lowans for student and staff access to critically needed information. Access to virtual learning and information is required for rural students to fully experience quality STEM programs. The future of rural quality of life, entrepreneurship and access to a whole host of critical services depend on citizen access to high-speed internet. RSAI supports incentives, investments, and creative solutions to close the technology gap for all students, their families, and businesses and community members in rural Iowa. Lack of sufficient income should not be a barrier to internet access.

Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD and Riceville CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Nick Trenkamp, Central CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **Remote Learning and Instructional Time:** RSAI supports the ability for local leaders to determine when school should close, for emergency situations and safety, including but not limited to weather cancellations, emergency infrastructure conditions, or for purposes of public health, as long as engagement in virtual learning opportunities is required for students and staff and needs of all students are anticipated and met. Under such conditions, instructional time delivered during the closure counts toward minimum instructional days or hours and is not required to be made up at the end of the school year.

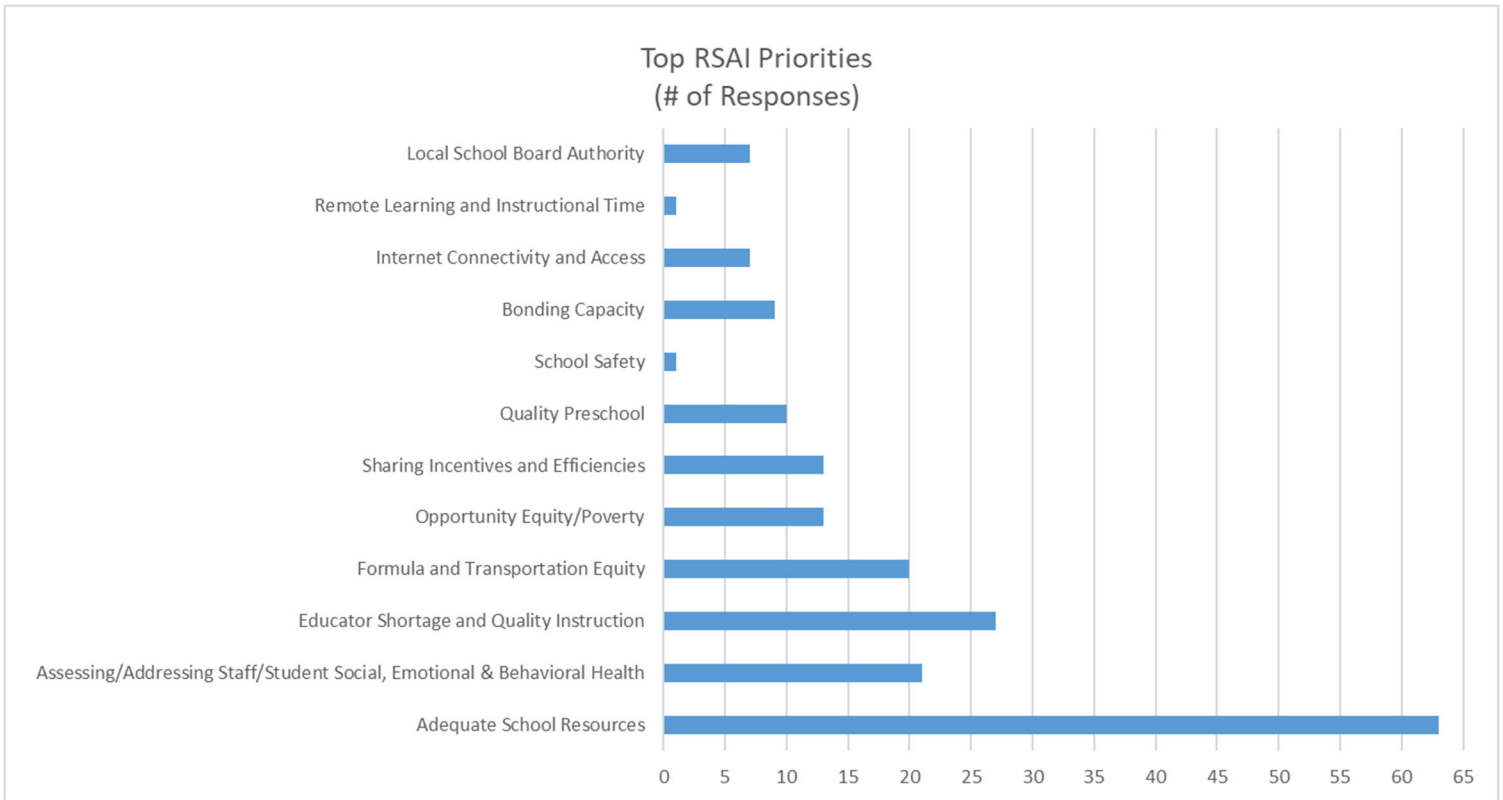
Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Mandy Ross, Webster City and Stratford CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **Local School Board Authority:** RSAI believes that those locally elected leaders closest to the community care most about those impacted by their decision making and are in the best position to determine the best interest of students, staff and stakeholders. In education policy, one size does not fit all school districts, classrooms or students. District leaders need maximum flexibility to provide a great education to all students. The state role is to define what outcomes are necessary for all students, leaving flexibility to schools in expenditures and policy to best determine how to deliver those intended outcomes. Statutory Home Rule, articulated in Iowa Code 274.3, gives locally elected school boards broad and implied authority. The Legislature, the Governor/executive branch and the courts should follow the law and liberally construe the Iowa Code and legislation to effectuate local control.

Brian Johnson, Prairie Valley CSD and Southeast Webster Grand CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt CSD. Unanimous approval.

- **Other:** No other priorities were raised by the group.

13. Focus Area Prioritization: Margaret explained a process whereby each district was asked to select their top 3 priorities and results will be tabulated with a weighting of 3 for most important, 2 for second most important, and 1 for third most important. Results of combined votes of those attending in person and via ZOOM are as follows:



14. No Other Business.

15. Adjourn: Dennis McClain, Chair, closed the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

RSAI Annual Meeting Attendees:*Yellow = 2020-21 Leadership or Legislative Committee Member; Gray = Non-Members/Guests*

	District(s)	Attendee
In-Person	Adair-Casey CSD/Guthrie Center CSD	Dennis McClain
Via Zoom	Audubon CSD/Coon Rapids Bayard CSD	Eric Trager
Via Zoom	Cardinal CSD	Joel Pedersen
In-Person	Central CSD	Nick Trenkamp
In-Person	Central DeWitt CSD	Dan Peterson
Via Zoom	Chariton CSD	Larry Achenbach
Via Zoom	Clarinda CSD	Ann Meyer
Via Zoom	Clarinda CSD	Chris Bergman
Via Zoom	Clinton CSD	Jenifer Green
Via Zoom	Clinton CSD	Gary DeLacy
Via Zoom	Davenport CSD	Daniel Gosa
Via Zoom	Decorah CSD	Mark Lane
In-Person	East Union CSD/Murray CSD	Ken Kasper
In-Person	Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD	Scott Williamson
Via Zoom	Edgewood-Colesburg CSD	Rob Busch
Via Zoom	Edgewood-Colesburg CSD	Jeff Hoeger
Via Zoom	Fairfield CSD	Tim Bower
In-Person	Fairfield CSD	Laurie Noll
Via Zoom	Grinnell Newburg CSD	Janet Stutz
In-Person	HLV CSD/BGM CSD	Brad Hohensee
In-Person	Manson Northwest Webster CSD	Justin Daggett
Via Zoom	Moravia CSD	Sam Swenson
Via Zoom	Mount Ayr CSD/Bedford CSD	Jason Shaffer
Via Zoom	Murray CSD	Sarah Dinham
In-Person	Nodaway Valley CSD/CAM CSD	Paul Croghan
In-Person	Osage CSD/Riceville CSD	Barb Schwamman
In-Person	PCM CSD	Michelle Havenstrite
In-Person	Postville CSD	Tim Dugger
In-Person	Prairie Valley CSD/Southeast Webster	Brian Johnson
In-Person	Riverside CSD	Tim Mitchell
Via Zoom	Sioux Central CSD	Lory Krummen
Via Zoom	Sioux Central CSD	Kevin Wood
Via Zoom	Tri-Center CSD	Angela Huseman
Via Zoom	Webster City CSD/Stratford CSD	Mandy Ross
Via Zoom	Guest - Classroom Clinic	Sue Gehling
Via Zoom	Guest - Green Hills AEA	Lolli Haws

RSAI/ISFIS Staff Attendees

Professional Advocate, Margaret Buckton, margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com

Larry Sigel, larry@iowaschoolfinance.com

Jen Albers, jen@iowaschoolfinance.com

Susie Olesen, susie@iowaschoolfinance.com

Dave Daughton, dave.daughton@rsaia.org

Minutes respectfully submitted, Oct. 21, 2020 by Margaret Buckton and Jen Albers