

# Our Children, Our Future



## Education Fact of the Week:

### Deadlines: It's All About Timing

**Timing:** Current law requires the state cost per pupil to be determined within 30 days of release of the governor's budget in the year prior to the budget year. That deadline passed on Feb. 13, 2014 for the upcoming school year. The legislature should follow the law, set the cost per pupil for FY 2016 ASAP and for the 2016-2017 school year ASAP during this legislative session. A timely decision allows school districts to meet planning, budgeting and bargaining deadlines, as well as fully engage in school reform efforts. Delay in setting the rate stymies meaningful school improvement.

**Planning:** School district and attendance center staff, school boards, and community members are often engaged in budget planning. Careful budgeting of the billions of dollars spent on behalf of Iowa students should not be rushed. If the state cost per pupil is not known when all the deadlines listed below come due, it is impossible to plan and project needs for the following year. Guesswork is used instead of factual information. Energy is spent on scenario planning, and negotiations are very difficult to reach. Settlements are also hard to come by. Tax rates are set as high as possible with varying assumptions in order to preserve flexibility. Much lies in limbo waiting on the legislature. Delayed decisions ripple through the process, creating unnecessary tension for school boards, staff, and students.

**Deadlines:** State and federal laws impose various deadlines on school districts, involving budgeting, bargaining and staffing. Why doesn't it work to set a cost per pupil a few months before the start of the school fiscal year in July? Schools must follow the law and should carefully plan their budgets, program offerings, and staffing levels. The following table shares several dates and deadlines to which schools must adhere and upon which sound planning principles depend:

Deadline or Activity	Date	Notes
Pink Slips Issued	April 30	Notice to teachers whose contracts may not be renewed
Budget Certification	April 15	
Budget Guarantee Resolution	April 15	School board must approve before April 15 to claim the spending authority for the budget guarantee

Board Meeting to Approve Budget	April 6-14	Typically second Monday or Tuesday of the month (this year, second Tuesday is April 14)
Teachers Return Contracts	April 5	21 days after receipt of contract
Retirement Incentives	April 1	Deadline for teachers to submit intent to participate
Notice for Public Hearing to Approve Budget	March 17=27	10-20 day publication requirement in newspaper of general circulation in the district
Offer contracts to teachers	March 15	Earliest day to offer
Notice to Newspaper for Public Hearing	March 13	For weekly newspaper, 6 days' notice may be needed to meet above publishing deadline
Notice to Teachers of Early Retirement Program	Feb 15	Federal law requires 45 days' notice to employees of retirement incentive
Students select high school courses	Jan-Mar	Timelines vary, but especially in larger districts, students make course selections to inform staffing decisions
Aid and Levy worksheet software available	Jan 31	Department of Management distributes software so school districts prepare budgets and analyze tax rates. Instructions to fill out budget to certify are 12 pages long
Bargaining Impasse procedure deadline	Jan 31	Impasse begins no later than 120 days prior to May 31 (unless both parties agree to delay).
Attendance Center Budgets	Nov – Jan	Principals request building budgets, plan staffing requirements and develop high school class schedules
Budget Planning	November-January	Districts determine cost increases, program requirements and cuts based on resources available
Dropout Prevention Plans	Dec 15	This year, FY 2016 budget was based on FY 2015 cost per pupil, since a rate hasn't been set.
Property Valuations	December	Valuations ready for planning property tax rate changes
Certified Enrollment	Oct 15	Counts are submitted to DE to determine the number of students to which the cost per pupil is multiplied to determine budget

The Education Coalition calls on our Legislature and Governor to set at least a 4% growth rate per student for the 2015-2016 school year and set the 2016-2017 rate at 6%, within 30 days of release of the Governor's budget, returning to the practice required by Iowa Code 257.8.

Schools need sufficient notice to anticipate revenue, make timely staffing decisions, and thoughtfully plan to invest the funds wisely for student learning. The future of Iowa's students and our state's continued success depend on a solid investment in the priority of public education.

Brought to you by the joint efforts of Iowa Association of School Boards, School Administrators of Iowa, Iowa Area Education Agencies, Iowa State Education Association, the Rural Schools Advocates of Iowa, and the Urban Education Network of Iowa in support of adequate and timely school funding.

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