**2021 List of Successes**

Despite the overall funding and school choice policy challenges of the 2021 Legislative Session, there are some notable successes for rural schools and students worthy of mention and significant enough to include when thanking Legislators and the Governor for their service:

* **Empower Rural Iowa** Broadband Grant Fund was created (HF 848) and $100 million was appropriated as a down payment for first-year implementation (HF 867). Access to high-speed, affordable Internet is critical for student and staff access to resources for education as well as for quality of life and entrepreneurial growth in rural Iowa.
* **Equity:** Continued investment in school transportation equity payments and additional reduction of $10 per pupil in the formula equity gap (SF 269).
* **Preschool:** New process, for this fall only, to apply to the SBRC for modified supplemental amount for PK enrollment growth compared to Oct. 2020 provided (HF 868). (*At the time of this writing, we have not yet confirmed the Governor intends to dedicate GEERS federal funding to cover the cost of any awards by the SBRC, which are contingent on a funding source.*)
* **Operational Sharing:** Work-based learning coordinator, special education director, and mental health professional with a statement of professional recognition were all positions added to operational sharing (HF 847 & HF 868) (*This expansion was offset somewhat by reduction of the supplementary weightings for operational sharing beginning in the FY 2023 school year*.)
* **Student Mental Health:** $3.2 million appropriation to AEAs for mental health training and student supports and services ([HF 868](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=89&ba=hf868)). Of that, $83,936 goes to DE to collaborate with a statewide nonprofit health care organization, a children’s grief and loss rural pilot program. The program is to submit a report about expenditures and outcomes by Sept. 30, 2022. New investment of $2.1 million to begin implementation of therapeutic classrooms (SF 2360 in 2020 and HF 868 in 2021). Parity for insurance payments for telehealth services and state funds to reduce property taxes for Iowan’s mental health system (SF 619).
* **Flexibility for Staffing**: to help with education workforce shortages, several actions expanded flexibility, including a greater pool of substitutes (AA degree or 60 hours of post-secondary credit and process to extend beyond 10 days in a classroom in HF 675), allowing occupational therapists to provide concussion management services (SF 466), and direction that BOEE develop a statement of professional recognition for licensed behavior therapists and mental health professionals (SF 532).
* **Local Control:** expanded flexibility to transfer TLC ending balances to the Flexibility Account and creation of a new FS3 (Flexible Student and School Support Program) which allows innovative programs and waivers of some offer and teach and other regulations (HF 847).