

# RSAI Annual Meeting Minutes

Oct. 17, 2023 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

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

1. **Call Annual Meeting to Order.** Paul Croghan, RSAI Leadership Group Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.
2. **Approval of the Agenda.** *Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD & Riceville CSD, moved approval of the agenda. Deron Stender, Creston CSD, seconded. Vote was unanimously approved.*
3. **Introductions of Meeting Attendees.** All meeting attendees introduced themselves, indicated if they were part of the 2023-24 Leadership Group or 2023-24 Legislative Committee, and shared something they loved about rural schools.
4. **Annual Meeting Business:** Margaret Buckton, on behalf of Dan Peterson, Central DeWitt CSD and Secretary/Treasurer of the RSAI Leadership Group, reviewed the financial reports included in the materials packet including the 2022-23 Financial Report & Annual Audit, the 2023-24 Budget and Professional Advocate Payment, and the 2023-24 RSAI Membership Dues schedule.
5. **Amendments to the RSAI Bylaws.** Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, and Chair of the RSAI Legislative Committee, 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 Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, seconded by Rob Busch, Starmont CSD. Vote was unanimously approved.*
6. **Report Results of Election of Region Representatives to the Leadership Group.** Welcome to Dan Maeder, Davis County CSD & Moulton-Udell CSD, who was elected at the RSAI SE Regional Meeting this spring to serve as the RSAI Leadership Group SE Regional Director through September 2026.
7. **Election of RSAI At-Large Representative to the Leadership Group.** The position currently held by Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, is up for election at this meeting. Any board member or superintendent in a member district is eligible for the seat. The at-large members also serve on the Legislative Committee in addition to their Leadership Group duties.

*Nick Trenkamp, Central CSD, nominated Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, for re-election as the at-large representative. Seconded by Dan Maeder, Davis County CSD. No other nominations were brought forth.*

---

*Deron Stender, Creston CSD, moved to cease nominations. Seconded by Will Dible, Alburnett CSD. Unanimous approval to close nominations, with the exception of Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, who abstained.*

---

*Results of the vote were unanimous to elect Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, to serve as the RSAI Leadership Group At-Large representative through 2026, with the exception of Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD, who abstained.*

8. **Presentation on “Shrink Smart” by David Peters, Professor and Extension State Specialist, Rural Policy and Rural Sociology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Iowa State University:** David Peters shared a presentation on how rural communities can lose population but still thrive by being “Smart Towns”. The Presentation slides are posted on the RSAI Annual Meeting webpage at: <https://www.rsaia.org/annual-meeting.html>
9. **2024 Session Preview:** Margaret Buckton, RSAI Professional Advocate, and Dave Daughton, RSAI Grassroots Advocate, provided information about the upcoming 2024 legislative session and likely priorities. The slides are posted on the RSAI Annual Meeting webpage at: <https://www.rsaia.org/annual-meeting.html>.

A brief break for dinner took place at this time.

10. **Report of Aug. 10 Legislative Committee Meeting.** Scott Williamson, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD and Chair of the 2023-24 RSAI Legislative Committee, introduced himself and the other Legislative Committee members, and discussed the process the Committee went through in their meeting on Aug. 10, to prepare the 2024 recommended legislative priorities being presented tonight.

11. **Establish RSAI legislative priorities for the upcoming 2024 Legislative Session**

- **Adequate School Resources:** the increase in SSA provides resources for Iowa schools to deliver an educational experience for students that meets the expectations of Iowa parents, communities, employers and policymakers. **Iowa’s school foundation formula must maintain balanced state and local resources, be predictable, minimally exceed inflation, allow schools to compete for labor, and assure adequate time for budget planning and staffing.**

What schools can deliver is dependent on the level of funding provided, which begins with the 2024-25 school year and requires a consistent and sustainable commitment:

- **World-Class Education:** an investment of at least 10% SSA (\$763 per pupil, or \$4.23 per day of 180 days of instruction) would position Iowa schools and AEAs to deliver a world-class education, lower class sizes, attract and retain qualified staff, increase and individualize internships and other workforce experiences for students, and provide programs to close achievement gaps. Iowa per pupil expenditures, ranked 29th in the nation in 2021, fall \$1,581 short of the national average (source: NCES Finance Tables, May 2023), which does not meet the standard of Iowa’s pride in our foundation of education, as shown on the Iowa state quarter. The 10% investment would be a down payment in closing Iowa’s lagging funding gap, unless other states commit even more to their students’ education.

- **Sustain Current Status:** an investment of at least 5% (\$382 per pupil, or \$2.12 per day of 180 days of instruction) would position school districts and AEAs to maintain current status with Iowa's competitive economy, recovering partially from high inflation and increased student needs.
- **Continued Erosion:** an investment of 2.5% (\$191 per pupil, or \$1.06 per day of 180 days of instruction) will partially cover expected increased costs of the next fiscal year, including staff salaries and benefits, but will require schools and AEAs to scale back, provide part-time librarians, counselors and nurses, shift some classes to online learning, or take other actions to squeeze more out of the current system in order to set a salary sufficient to retain existing staff (teachers, bus drivers, custodians, paraprofessionals) and provide a rounded course offering and programs.

*Deron Stender, Creston CSD, moved approval as presented. Rob Busch, Starmont CSD, seconded. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.*

- **Staff Shortages:** In addition to sufficient SSA, strategies to rebuild Iowa's education workforce must address two areas during an unprecedented staff shortage:
  - **Recruitment:** to rebuild the pipeline of interest into education, the Legislature, BOEE and DE must provide additional flexibility for school districts to provide hiring incentives, ongoing investment in CTE programs for high school students to study and experience work in education, provide resources for grow-your-own educators and appropriate certifications including expanded intern licenses, provide means-tested tuition assistance and minimize the economic costs of unpaid student teaching, provide more loan forgiveness, and change the culture of political speech to restore education to a respected profession.
  - **Retention:** to slow the out-migration of staff from schools to other professions or retirement, the Legislature, BOEE and DE must provide maximum flexibility to hire staff to deliver great instruction; use of the Management Fund for recruitment and retention incentives, flexibility to meet offer and teach requirements, opportunities for teaching expanded courses within existing and/or competency-based licensure, institute social studies and other content generalist credentials, define a shorter bona fide retirement period for schools to hire retirees, consider tax incentives for teachers, **increase state funding for teacher salary supplement**, and maintain the commitment to resources for mentoring, training and supporting staff.
  - **Competitive and adequate compensation:** school funding primarily pays for quality staff and employees to provide a great education for students. In 2019-20, Iowa ranked 28<sup>th</sup> in the nation in average teacher pay (including TLC for teacher leaders at the high end) and starting teacher pay was ranked 38<sup>th</sup> (*source: Learning Policy Institute, Understanding Teacher Compensation State by State Analysis*).

In both the short and long term, legislation, policy, and public support provide improved compensation and benefit options for educators. They must also foster respect for the education profession, which is well deserved, to attract more Iowans into teaching and

retain more teachers in Iowa. Only when we are able to do this will Iowa be able to have adequate numbers of quality individuals educating and supporting our children.

*Jay Marley, Tripoli CSD, moved approval of the priority language as presented. Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD & Riceville CSD, seconded. Discussion ensued.*

*Mike Van Sickle, Louisa-Muscatine CSD, offered an amendment to add language “, increase state funding for teacher salary supplement” into the last sentence of the Retention paragraph (as noted in red in the minutes). The motion was seconded by Rob Busch, Starmont CSD. Vote on the amendment was unanimously approved.*

*Vote on the priority including the amendment was unanimously approved.*

- **Public School Priority:** as Iowa public schools will always be the first choice of most Iowa families, they must be adequately funded and supported by the State.
  - 1) Education Savings Accounts, as enacted by HF 68 in 2023, require further legislation to minimize the impact on public students and schools.
    - a. Public schools should be relieved of the mandate to reimburse private school parents or provide transportation for private schools.
    - b. Private school students returning to public school after the October enrollment count date should be funded timely (included in the enrollment count and budget for the next year or added to the class action requests for SBRC modified supplemental amount similar to on-time funding spending authority.)
    - c. ESA (and open enrollment) applications should be submitted and approved by an annual deadline to inform both public and private schools timely for staff and budget planning.
  - 2) ESAs should not be expanded to homeschool students or a weakened accreditation process expanded to more private schools.
  - 3) Equity of expectations and regulations should be applied consistently to both public and private schools under an ESA environment.
  - 4) Many rural school districts do not have a private school in their community today. In the future, the expansion of private online academies, the pressure for the State to support homeschooling and the profit motive to expand private schools without the corresponding costs of oversight and compliance will create lower economies of scale, compounding the challenge for small rural schools to survive rigorous State accreditation compliance.

*Michelle Havenstrite, PCM CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Marty Fonley, West Harrison CSD & West Monona CSD. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.*

- **Opportunity Equity, Increasing Student Needs and Mental Health:** resources should be based on at-risk need, in addition to enrollment. All school boards should have the opportunity to access up to 5% dropout prevention funding. School districts should be granted spending authority for FRPL-waived fees. Iowa should study the impact of poverty on educational outcomes and best practices of other states in closing associated

achievement gaps, leading toward a significant and urgent update to Iowa's School Foundation Formula in funding programs for Iowa's neediest students. Investments in programs for at-risk students prepare them for full participation in the workforce, improve school safety for all students, minimize tax increases to remediate social costs later and improve outcomes for students and families. Students in rural areas are often distanced from services. Iowa must continue to address needed access to funded community mental health services for children and the shortage of mental health professionals statewide. The State should provide resources for local districts to train school staff in mental health first aid and awareness and build community capacity to collaborate for a collective solution to the increasing mental health needs of children.

*Sharon Dentlinger, Interstate 35 CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Gary DeLacy, Clinton CSD. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.*

- **Quality Preschool:** funding of quality statewide voluntary preschool **for three-and four-year olds** should be set at the 1.0 per pupil cost for full-time or prorated proportionally. The formula should include PK protections against budget and program impacts of preschool enrollment swings like they do for K-12 (budget guarantee/on-time spending authority). Full-day programming increases the opportunity for parent workforce participation, allows Iowa's limited childcare workforce capacity to focus on younger children, prevents later special education consequences, improves literacy and prepares students for learning. Although all students benefit from quality preschool, Iowa's low-income and non-English speaking students face barriers to half-day programs, making them even more at risk of lower long-term achievement..

*Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD & Riceville CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Michelle Havenstrite, PCM CSD. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.*

*Gary DeLacy, Clinton CSD, offered an amendment to add language "for three and four-year olds" into the first sentence (as noted in red). The motion was seconded by Stephanie Anderson, Riverside CSD. Vote on the amendment was approved with two in opposition.*

*Vote on the priority including the amendment was approved with two in opposition.*

- **Sharing Incentives/Efficiencies:** Whole Grade Sharing, Reorganization and Operational Sharing Incentives should be extended. The 21-student cap should be increased to allow access to new flexibility. Weightings should be sufficient to encourage and support sharing opportunities, with a 3-student weighting at a minimum per position. Reductions in weightings should be restored. The addition of new positions over the last few years, such as mental health counselors, work-based learning coordinators and school resource officers, demonstrates the value of continued sharing incentives for both efficiency and student opportunity. Some positions, such as those to address mental health or school safety, should be exempted from the cap.

*Ken Kasper, Garner-Hayfield-Ventura CSD, moved approval as presented. Jeff Privia, Clarinda, seconded. Discussion ensued.*

*Will Dible, Alburnett CSD, offered an amendment to add language “Creation of a flex position based on unique student needs at a weighting of three students” into the priority language. The motion was seconded by Nick Trenkamp, Central CSD. Vote on the amendment was eight in favor with the remainder in opposition, amendment was defeated.*

*Vote on the original priority language was approved unanimously.*

- **Local School Board Authority:** locally elected leaders closest to the community are in the best position to determine the interests of students, staff, district and stakeholders. District leaders need maximum flexibility to provide a great education to all students. The Legislature, the Executive Branch and the courts should follow Iowa Code 274.3 and liberally construe laws and regulations in deference to local control.

*Brian Johnson, Southeast Valley CSD, moved approval as presented. Sharon Dentlinger, Interstate 35 CSD seconded. Discussion ensued. Vote was approved with one in opposition.*

- **Formula Equity:** continue investments in formula equity, closing the state and district per pupil gap within ten years. Inequities in the formula, based on no longer relevant historical spending patterns over 40 years ago, must be corrected to support resources for all Iowa students.

*Mark Dohmen, North Cedar CSD & Olin CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Dan Maeder, Davis County CSD. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.*

- **Bond Issue Dates:** the restriction of bond elections to one annual date spikes the demand for providers, architects, bonders, and construction labor, while extending the time of completion, all increasing cost to taxpayers. Bond issues, like other ballot initiatives, should be approved by a simple majority of voters.

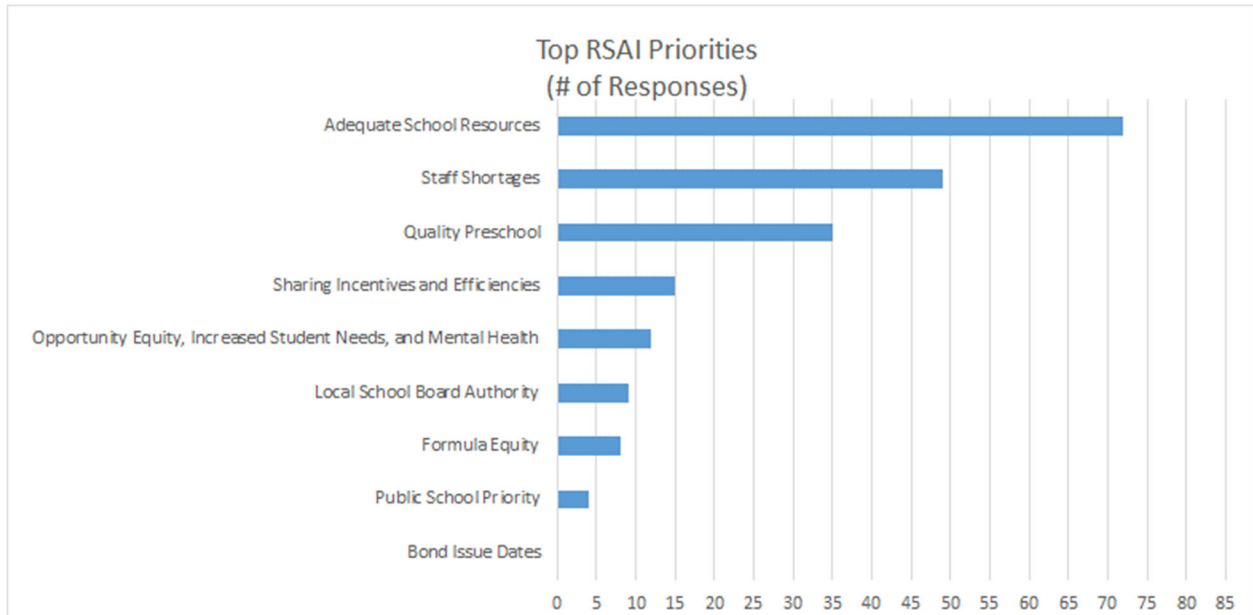
*Mike Van Sickle, Louisa-Muscatine CSD, moved approval as presented. Seconded by Ken Kasper, Garner-Hayfield-Ventura CSD. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.*

- **Other: Support of AEAs:** Gary DeLacy, Clinton CSD, proposed a priority be established in support of the services provided by the AEA, with language to be drafted by the RSAI Leadership Group. Seconded by Mike Van Sickle, Louisa-Muscatine CSD. Discussion ensued. Vote was unanimously approved.

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

12. **Focus Area Prioritization:** Margaret Buckton, RSAI Professional Advocate, explained a process whereby each attendee was provided 6 stickers and asked to place them on the various priorities according to their importance to their school district. 3 stickers were to be placed on their #1 choice. 2 stickers on their #2 choice and 1 sticker on their #3 choice

(although participants were allowed to place all of their stickers on one priority). Results of the prioritization activity are below:



13. **Press Release:** Margaret Buckton, RSAI Professional Advocate, encouraged attendees to submit a press release to their local newspaper regarding the RSAI Annual Meeting and 2023 Priorities. A sample will be circulated via email following the meeting.

14. **Adjourn:** Rob Busch, Starmont CSD, moved to adjourn the RSAI Annual Meeting. Second by Barb Schwamman, Osage CSD & Riceville CSD. Unanimous approval. The meeting was concluded at 7:30 p.m.

**RSAI Annual Meeting Attendees:***Yellow = 2023-24 Leadership Group/Legislative Committee Members;**Gray = Non-Voting Affiliate Members/Non-Member Districts/Guests*

<b>District Name</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>RSAI Member 2023-24</b>
Alburnett Community CSD	Will Dible	Yes
Belmond-Klemme CSD	Chris Bergman	Yes
CAM CSD & Nodaway Valley CSD	Paul Croghan	Yes/Yes
Cardinal CSD	James Craig	Yes
Central CSD	Nick Trenkamp	Yes
Central Lee CSD	Andy Crozier	Yes
Chariton CSD	Brad Baker	Yes
Clarinda CSD	Jeff Privia	Yes
Clinton CSD	Gary DeLacy	Yes
Clinton CSD	Wes Golden	Yes
Creston CSD	Deron Stender	Yes
Davis County CSD & Moulton-Udell CSD	Dan Maeder	Yes/Yes
East Sac CSD & Ar-We-Va CSD	Nathan Hemiller	Yes/No
Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont CSD	Scott Williamson	Yes
Garner-Hayfield-Ventura CSD	Ken Kasper	Yes
Interstate 35 CSD	Sharon Dentlinger	Yes
Louisa-Muscatine CSD	Mike Van Sickle	Yes
Manson Northwest Webster CSD	Justin Daggett	Yes
Marshalltown CSD	Theron Schutte	Yes
Midland CSD	Terese Jurgensen	Yes
Missouri Valley CSD	Christi Gochenour	Yes
Mormon Trail CSD & Seymour CSD	Brad Breon	Yes/Yes
North Cedar CSD & Olin Consolidated	Mark Dohmen	Yes/Yes
Osage CSD & Riceville CSD	Barb Schwamman	Yes/Yes
PCM CSD	Michelle Havenstrite	Yes
Pekin CSD	Derek Philips	Yes
Riverside CSD	Stephanie Anderson	Yes
South Tama CSD	John Cain	Yes
Southeast Valley CSD	Brian Johnson	Yes
Starmont CSD & West Central CSD	Rob Busch	Yes/No
Stratford CSD & Webster City CSD	Matt Berninghaus	Yes/Yes
Tripoli CSD	Jay Marley	Yes
West Fork CSD	Mike Kruger	Yes
West Harrison CSD & West Monona CSD	Marty Fonley	Yes/Yes
Green Hills AEA	Jason Plourde	Affiliate
Heartland AEA	Cindy Yelick	Affiliate
Prairie Lakes AEA	Dan Mart	Affiliate
Iowa State University	Joanne Marshall	Affiliate
University of Iowa	Jen Collins	Affiliate
University of Iowa	Mark Hopkins	Affiliate
University of Northern Iowa	Amanda Schmidt	Affiliate
SAI	Lisa Remy	Guest
Denovo Construction	Patrick Denovo	Sponsor
Denovo Construction	Russ Reiter	Sponsor



## **RSAI/ISFIS Staff Attendees**

RSAI Professional Advocate, Margaret Buckton, [margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com](mailto:margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com)

RSAI Grassroots Advocate, Dave Daughton, [dave.daughton@rsaia.org](mailto:dave.daughton@rsaia.org)

RSAI Accountant, Jen Albers, [jen@iowaschoolfinance.com](mailto:jen@iowaschoolfinance.com)

ISFIS Partner, Larry Sigel, [larry@iowaschoolfinance.com](mailto:larry@iowaschoolfinance.com)

*And helpers*

*Minutes respectfully submitted, Oct. 17, 2023 by RSAI Staff, Margaret Buckton and Jen Albers*