

**2024 Legislative Session Information:** RSAI priorities for the 2024 Session are now available on the RSAI website and linked here [2024 Approved Priorities](#). Updated RSAI Position Papers for each priority and other advocacy materials will be available soon. The 2024 Legislative Session kicks off on Jan. 8, and RSAI will resume weekly legislative updates and Capitol Recap Videos that week. Annual Meeting Attendees also directed the RSAI Leadership Group to add a new priority in support of AEA services, which reads:

Iowa schools are critically reliant on Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs), rural schools in particular, not only for special education services to students and training and support to staff, but also for instructional and media services. In many instances, if it wasn't for the AEAs, rural schools would not be able to find or afford specialists to meet student needs or assist staff with the curriculum and materials necessary for student learning. In addition, the economies of scale of the AEAs provide savings which schools would not otherwise be able to achieve. The AEAs also provide many needed services for schools, just to name a few: emergency support when a district loses a superintendent or school business official mid-year, virtual learning content, printing of materials at affordable fees, training when districts undertake new instructional math or literacy initiatives, crisis/emergency supports and mental health services, among many others. The Legislature should work closely with schools and AEAs in updating expectations and changing the funding or structure of AEA services, in order to fully understand the impact on students and schools before any changes are made that will negatively impact services to rural students, schools, and communities.

**Public Hearings on Library and Age-Appropriate Material;** [SF 496 Proposed Rules](#) will be held Jan. 3, from 2:30 to 3:00 and Jan. 4, from 10:30 to 11:00 at the Grimes State Office Building. They often include a ZOOM option, but that is not yet available or confirmed. Comments may also be submitted in writing to Thomas Mayes, [thomas.mayes@iowa.gov](mailto:thomas.mayes@iowa.gov), before 4:30 on Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Dropout Prevention and At-Risk Task Force:** [SF 560 Education Appropriations](#) directed the DE to convene a task force to study how districts are using funding for At-Risk students and DoP, the effectiveness of those programs, whether state funds should be reallocated to the iJAG program, and to report findings to the legislature by Dec. 31, 2023. DE is seeking comment on recommendations from the Task Force. Responses will be collected through Dec. 1. The At-Risk Task Force will consider all public comments before finalizing its recommendations, which are due to the general assembly by Dec. 31. Access the survey link [here](#).

**Definition of At-Risk:** [Iowa Administrative Code](#) defines an at-risk student as "any identified student who needs additional support and who is not meeting or not expected to meet the established goals of the educational program (academic, personal/social, career/vocational). At-risk students include, but are not limited to, students in the following groups: homeless children and youth, dropouts, returning dropouts and potential dropouts."

Thanks to many of you who have met with your area Senators and Representatives. We encourage schools to invite legislators to see innovative or time-tested programs in your schools, meet students and talk to local leaders about what they can do to help you educate students. Look to the [2023 RSAI Advocacy Handbook](#) for ideas or just call us for help in creating a quality local conversation. Reach out to RSAI advocacy staff for assistance: [margaret.buckton@rsaia.org](mailto:margaret.buckton@rsaia.org) or [dave.daughton@rsaia.org](mailto:dave.daughton@rsaia.org).

**Thanks to all of you for your energy and voice on behalf of the students in your schools!**