



RSAI Legislative Priority Action and Status in the 2023 Session

The following **2023 Legislative Priorities** originated as key priority issues during the RSAI 2022 Summer Regional Meetings. The Legislative Committee reviewed and refined the Regional Meeting activity, then submitted this language to the RSAI membership at the Annual Meeting. The members at the Annual Meeting approved the following slate of priorities on October 25, 2022. The RSAI 2023 Annual Meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2023, at the FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Ankeny Campus, 4:30 p.m., including a working dinner. See the RSAI website for more information: <http://www.rsaia.org/>



Positive Action



Some Action, but More is Needed



No Progress or Negative Action

Adequate School Resources:



- **HF 68 Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** created a categorical funding per pupil for resident students receiving ESAs, averaging \$1,205 per pupil (TSS, PD, TLC and EICS per pupil amounts). Students will first be counted Oct. 1, 2023 for funding beginning July 1, 2024.
- **HF 718 Property Tax Reform** did NOT include additional property tax relief by lowering the uniform levy or limiting growth in property valuation. RSAI lobbied against both of these provisions that were in earlier bills, since additional property tax relief through the formula would be difficult for the state to sustain while also adequately funding public education in the future. However, HF 718 included a limitation of bond elections held only during November elections, which limits the ability of school districts to locally set the best timing for their infrastructure ballot/election conversations with voters.
- **SF 192 3% per pupil increase/SSA set an increase of 3%** on the state cost per pupil, also impacting per pupil categorical funds, AEA funding and growing the transportation equity fund by 3%. Although this falls short of RSAI's call for adequate funding akin to the inflation rate, and well short of what RSAI had suggested would adequately fund a world-class education, this 3% increase in the 2nd highest in 14 years.

Education Staff Shortage (RSAI registered in support of all of the following bills):



- **[HF 256](#) Minimum Age of BOEE Licensure:** requires BOEE to issue a license to an individual at least 18-years of age (current law is 21), if the individual has completed all requirements for the license or credential.
- **[HF 614](#) BOEE Licensure for individuals from Other State/Nations:** requires BOEE to grant licensure to an individual who has completed coursework and necessary requirements for license in another state, except for passing a test (e.g. PRAXIS) or can produce transcripts showing completion of coursework in another nation.
- **[HF 672](#) MA+ 10-years' Experience Teacher Licensure:** requires BOEE to renew licenses, including a background check for educators with at least a masters' degree and 10-years' experience without requiring continuing education units (CEUs). Requires the educator to complete their professional development plan with their evaluator. Still requires CEUs/training for evaluators.
- **[SF 250](#) Computer Science PD Disbursements:** allows recipients of computer science PD grants to use the funds in the fiscal year received plus the first quarter of the subsequent fiscal year.
- **[SF 318](#) Office of Apprenticeship:** establishes an Office of Apprenticeship to work with the Federal Department of Labor, Iowa DOL and Workforce Development in supporting apprenticeships (would modernize and standardize the requirements for and support of apprenticeships such as the Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship TPRA grant program).
- **[SF 391](#) Chapter 12 Flexibility:** several provisions of this bill supporting district flexibility include the ability of staff and courses to more flexibly meet offer and teach accreditation requirements.
- **[SF 392](#) Teacher Recruitment/Retention Omnibus:** including Management Fund for recruiting/retention plans and Intern Pathway to Licensure, was approved by the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee but was rereferred back to Senate Ways and Means at the end of the Session. This bill would have allowed school districts to establish a recruitment and retention plan, fund incentives with the school district's Management Fund, but prohibited funding for both an early retirement plan and recruitment and retention plan in the same year.



Public School Priority:



- **HF 68 Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** established universal access for all to Education Savings Accounts, phased in over a three-year period. This legislation is the opposite of RSAI's call for the priority of public schools. RSAI was registered opposed.
 - The new dollars invested in the 2023-24 school year, a standing unlimited appropriation, exceed the new dollars invested in public schools for the 3% SSA increase by tens of millions.
 - Private schools do not have to accept all students, in direct contrast to RSAI's call for a level playing field.
 - Funding left in an ESA does not return to the public school if the student returns to the public school.
 - Includes the requirement that ESA recipient students participate in state- and federally-mandated assessments, which is the only accountability provision in the legislation. RSAI supported this provision.
- **SF 572 Clean-up and Tax Credit Changes to ESAs** was the first look at clean-up legislation after HF 68 was enacted. This bill would have reduced the cap on School Tuition Organization (STO) Tax Credits, which fund private school scholarships. The bill required funding left in an ESA if the student leaves the private school to be returned to the state. RSAI also advocated for changes to public school administration and subsidization of private school transportation. This bill was approved by the Senate Ways and Means Committee and sent to the Senate Calendar. Upon adjournment of the 2023 Session, the bill was rereferred to the Senate Ways and Means Committee, where it remains alive for consideration in the 2024 Session. RSAI supported this bill.
- **HSB 138 Private School Testing Exemption:** this bill would have eliminated the requirement for ESA recipient students to participate in state- and federally-mandated assessments. RSAI opposed it. The bill received support of a subcommittee 2:1, but did not obtain approval of the House Education Committee. It remains in Committee for consideration in the 2024 Session.

Opportunity Equity:



- **SF 560 Education Appropriations** and **SF 578 Standings Appropriations** were both approved, with neither bill extending or eliminating the standing appropriation of \$10 million to the DE for high-needs schools. The state Board of Education’s definition for High Needs Schools included concentration of poverty, minority, ELL and students requiring special education services AND low relative student performance and large achievement gaps. RSAI supported the \$10 million standing appropriation in the 2013 Education Reform Legislation and every year since. 2023-24 will be the first time this appropriation has ever been funded.
- **SF 246 Dropout Prevention Equity** would have phased in all districts to the full 5% regular program district cost cap for dropout prevention modified supplement amount (MSA< or spending authority). This bill was approved by the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee, but was rereferred back to Senate Ways and Means at the end of the Session. RSAI has long included this equity policy in our legislative priorities. Companion bill, HF 380 was introduced and assigned to the House Education Committee but did not move forward.
- **HF 477 Poverty Work Group** was introduced in the House Education Committee but was offered too late to survive the first legislative funnel deadline. This bill would require the DE to convene a task force to study the impact of poverty on education and other state funding formulas to address the disparity of outcomes for low-income students.
- **HF 68 Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** gets (dis)honorable mention in this category since in other states, the existence of ESA private school programs has resulted in concentrated poverty in the public schools where private schools are located.

Quality Preschool:



- **HF 297 Preschool Weighting** Increase would have established a 1.0 weighting for PK students from low income or non-English speaking families (current weighting for all PK is 0.5). The bill was approved unanimously by a subcommittee of the House Education Committee, but did not advance.

Sharing Efficiencies and Incentives:



- **HF 68 Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** included an extension of Operational Sharing Incentives through the 2024-25 school year. RSAI supported this extension. The bill did not address the weightings or apply the incentives to any additional positions.
- **HF 459 Operational Sharing Weighting and Cap** would have repealed the roll-back of weightings currently in law (positions that would generate 3-student count only generate 2 and positions that would generate 5-student count only generate 4.) Iowa Code section 257.11(5)(d) limits the maximum amount of additional weighting for a school district to 21 additional pupils per year. The bill would have increased the maximum number of additional weightings a school district may receive from 21 to 25 pupils. The bill also added an information technology specialist to the positions that could generate weighting and increased the weighting associated with the special education director from 3 to 5 students. This bill was approved by the House Education Committee, but did not advance, so it was rereferred back to the Committee at the close of the Session. RSAI supported this bill.

Student Mental Health:



- **SF 560 Education Appropriations** maintained the current level of funding for Therapeutic Classroom Incentive Grants and Therapeutic Classroom Transportation, created a new appropriation of \$520,000 for the Mental Health Practitioner Loan Repayment program, and maintained the level of funding for the children's mental health school-based training and support line item at \$3.4 million, to be used by AEAs for mental health awareness training for educators and to provide mental health services and support for students. Additionally, **SF 253 and HF 244 Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment Program** would have established the program and defined parameters. These bills remain rereferred to the Senate and House Education Committees, respectively, but the appropriation included in SF 560 will get the program rolling. RSAI was registered in support of SF 253 and HF 244.

Local School Board Authority:



- **SF 391 Chapter 12 Flexibility** was the Governor’s bill to grant additional flexibility to local school boards. The bill provided several mechanisms for local districts to more flexibly use staff to meet accreditation requirements and to flexibly meet the needs of students. RSAI supported this bill.
- **SF 482 Use of Bathroom by Gender** mandated that schools allow bathroom use only by the gender assigned at birth. This mandate may conflict with federal Title IX requirements and limits school board authority to determine how best to meet the needs of students, staff and community members locally. RSAI was opposed to this bill.
- **SF 496 Transparency and Parents’ Rights included** several mandates regarding posting of information on district websites, limited curriculum and library content, and required school boards to have boards policies on parents and resident request to review instructional materials and parent requests to reconsider libraries. RSAI opposed the Governor’s bill, but thanks the legislature for many amendments and improvements made along the way.
- **SF 251 Administration Expenditure Limitation** would have limited school district expenditures for school administration to 5% of general fund expenditures, with a new definition that significantly expanded what was to be included in administrative expenditures. This bill was approved by the Senate Education Committee and the full Senate, but died in the House Education Committee. RSAI opposed the bill, which would impact the ability of rural school districts to meet student needs and comply with many state mandates requiring administrative work.

Formula and Transportation Equity:



- **SF 192 3% per pupil increase/SSA** effectively increased the pot of transportation equity funding to school districts by 3% but did not additionally close the formula gap between the minimum state cost per pupil and the higher district cost per pupil funded with local property tax dollars in over 100 school districts. RSAI was undecided on this bill.