



RSAI Legislative Committee Meeting Minutes August 13, 2024 (10am – 2pm)

ISFIS Office, 1201 63rd Street, Des Moines, IA 50322 or Via Zoom

RSAI Legislative Committee Members & Staff:

In attendance in person: Will Dible, Alburnett, Deron Stender, Creston, Scott Williamson, Eddyville Blakesburg Fremont, Ken Kasper, Garner Hayfield Ventura & RRM, Mike Van Sickle Louisa Muscatine, Bill Watson Martensdale-St. Mary's, Tom Messinger Newton, Stan DeZeeuw, Sibley Ocheyedan, Margaret Buckton and Larry Sigel ISFIS/RSAI and Dave Daughton RSAI.

In attendance via ZOOM: Mark Taylor Centerville, Brent Jorth Central Lyon, Calen Bonjour Gladbrook Reinbeck, Mark DOhmen North Cedar & Olin, Brian Johnson Southeast Valley & Paton Churdan, and Jay Marley Tripoli & Nashua-Plainfield.

1. Introductions, share contact information, discuss key legislative contacts

Legislative Committee Contact Information:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1SgFJqzdEie8S5Rblm0cpmM4RHWMoZMkdBMvJSVG9BC8/edit?usp=sharing>

The Legislative Committee was called to order at 10:03am. Members of the Committee introduced themselves and shared contact information.

2. Review Legislative Committee Responsibilities

Buckton reviewed the responsibilities of members of this Committee.

3. Elect Legislative Committee Leaders (Chair and Vice Chair/Secretary)

a. Chair: Will Dible nominated Ken Kasper. Mike Van Sickle seconded. No other nominations. Approved unanimously.

b. Vice Chair/Secretary: Deron Stender nominated Caleb Bonjour. Will Dible seconded. No other nominations. Approved unanimously.

4. Review RSAI Membership and Organization (Map and Key Values)

Committee members looked at the map and discussed RSAI Essential Values as pairs, then shared out their observations. The Committee members agreed that all of the Essential Values are important, but Students First, State Program Sustainability and Local Control were among the favorites discussed. Buckton and Daughton shared how these Essential Values drive RSAI's lobbying and registrations on legislative proposals. Members also discussed RSAI's influence potential conflicts and how RSAI's member needs are prioritized when there is not perfect alignment with other public education organizations.

5. Consider RSAI Bylaws Committee Recommendation (if applicable)

The RSAI Bylaws were shared in the packet. Buckton shared that the RSAI Bylaws Committee meet and did not recommend any changes. Buckton thanked Nick Trenkamp, Caleb Bonjour and Brent Jorth for their service on the Committee. As no recommendations were brought

forth from the Regional Meetings or the Bylaws Committee, no action was taken by the Legislative Committee.

6. Election Cycle Advocacy

Buckton and Daughton talked about resources for advocacy leading up to the November General Election and shared the Iowa Secretary of State’s website which provides contact information for candidates.

7. Discussion/Report from RSAI Regional Meetings & Legislative Issues Survey Responses

Committee members reviewed the priorities from the various RSAI Regional Meetings, as well as the result of the RSAI Legislative Issues Survey of all members. Buckton reviewed the result of the survey which included 110 responses from RSAI member districts. Results are reflected in the table below, with the averages of individual, district and total responses are shown, with 1 being Low Priority and 7 being High Priority:

Priority	Overall Average	Individual Average	District Average
Adequate School Resources/State Supplemental Assistance	6.7	6.7	6.8
Educator/Staff Shortage and Quality Instruction	6.2	6.2	6.2
Local School Board Authority Generally (oppose unfunded mandates and explicit state directives)	5.9	6.1	5.8
Public School Priority	5.8	6.1	5.6
Opportunity Equity/Increasing Student Needs & Mental Health	5.7	5.8	5.6
Quality Preschool	5.6	5.7	5.5
AEA Services & Supports	5.5	5.9	5.2
Sharing Incentives/Efficiencies	5.5	5.6	5.4
Formula Equity	5.4	5.7	5.2
Bonding Capacity at Simple Majority Vote & Other Restrictions	5.0	5.2	4.8

The group broke for lunch and then came back as discussed issues in the survey that should be added to or considered distinctly in setting the legislative agenda for the 2025 Session. Most discussion centered on TSS Equity, Sustainability and AEA capacity to meet the needs of rural districts/students.

8. Establish 2025 Draft Priorities (Recommendation for RSAI Leadership Group and Annual Meeting)

The group determined that all priorities from 2024 should remain on the list for 2025 and discussed needed changes to language, talking points and strategy. See the priorities worksheet notes for details. Buckton will incorporate suggestions into the priority language

and circulate to the Legislative Committee members in the next few weeks. Feedback will be incorporated and the draft will next go to the Leadership Group at their September meeting.

9. Discuss Plans for Annual Meeting on Oct 15th (select Leadership roles for priorities)

Legislative Committee members discussed the agenda for the RSAI Annual Meeting in October and volunteered for leadership and backup advocacy responsibilities to discuss at the meeting. Buckton explained what advocacy supports would be available to them prior to the meeting.

10. Advocacy Supports

Buckton highlighted various RSAI advocacy supports available or in the works.

11. Next Steps/Other Business

None were brought forth for discussion.

12. Adjourn

The Committee meeting adjourned by mutual consent at 2:05pm.



RSAI Legislative Committee Discussion on Legislative Priorities

Aug 13, 2024 Meeting

2024 Legislative Priorities:

	2024 RSAI Legislative Priority	Delete	Keep	2025 Changes/Notes
1	<p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (<i>source: NCES Finance Tables, May 2023</i>), 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 <i>partially</i> 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 <i>partially</i> 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. 		X	<p>Focus on sustainability – relationship with raising teach pay. Ensure sustainability.</p> <p>Dissolving AEA capacity, impact on adequacy is even more important.</p> <p>Emphasize timeliness. Need time to plan and implement.</p>

	2024 RSAI Legislative Priority	Delete	Keep	Changes/Notes
2	<p>Staff Shortages: In addition to sufficient SSA, strategies to rebuild Iowa's education workforce must address these areas during an unprecedented staff shortage:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 28th in the nation in average teacher pay (including TLC for teacher leaders at the high end) and starting teacher pay was ranked 38th (<i>source: Learning Policy Institute, Understanding Teacher Compensation State by State Analysis</i>).</p> <p>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 lowans 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.</p>		X	<p>Lead with fostering positive environment: Move honored profession to the first bullet. Must improve the narrative on public education.</p> <p>TSS Issues: equity, sustainability, compaction, support . IPERs flexibility to other positions.</p> <p>Support staff too: funding for competitive salary, necessary to the success of students. Continue support staff supplement.</p>

	2024 RAI Legislative Priority	Delete	Keep	Changes/Notes
3	<p>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.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Education Savings Accounts, as enacted by HF 68 in 2023, require further legislation to minimize the impact on public students and schools. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 		X	<p>Public school priority: draw the line and no further expansion to home school or private schools that are not accredited.</p> <p>Eliminate public school burden to administer private transportation for parents.</p> <p>Align timelines for application to open enrollment timeline (Mar. 1).</p> <p>Money follows student back to public school.</p> <p>Concern about sustainability of 480K+ public school students with half a billion for private school.</p> <p>Financial accountability and public oversight.</p> <p>Timing – study, plan and implement new state initiatives</p>

	2024 RSAI Legislative Priority	Delete	Keep	Changes/Notes
4	<p>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.</p>		X	<p>Clarity – poverty. Tie to operational sharing.</p> <p>Promote collaboration with other entities to prepare and recruit MH professionals to Iowa schools.</p> <p>Reciprocal license, virtual counseling from out of state providers.</p>
5	<p>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.</p>		X	<p>Mention poverty – get a small step toward full day PK.</p> <p>Start up or real time funding in the first year of program expansion.</p> <p>Counting 5-year olds in PK (for young 5-year-olds) Parent choice. If student is immature and behind, does parent keep them home or retain them in PK, or do we retain later? (only for districts without TK capacity, since half day isn't enough for these 5-year-olds and only in PK once)</p>
6	<p>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</p>		X	<p>Increasing total capacity. Flexibility to assign the weighting. Focus on MH professionals Exempt positions (e.g., safety? SBO, social</p>

	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.			worker, etc. as work based learning coordinator is exempt) Add tech director. Could exempt sup? Increase SRO weighting?
	2024 RSAI Legislative Priority	Delete	Keep	Changes/Notes
7	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.		X	Timing – need time to thoughtfully study, plan and implement new state initiatives
8	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.		X	Assign leaders to advocate at annual meeting based on data
9	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.		X	Language change: Since it's a super majority vote, should be more than one date.
10	Area Education Agencies: 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.		X	Study implications before further change. Sustainability. Capacity. Sped 90% stay with AEAs. Change the language about respecting the profession. Concerns about rural district needs for education services and media services and equity of services geographically. Do not commit to FFS model until we understand it. Need time to study, plan and implement.

				LTRS example on scalability state program costs may be more than AEA.
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New Legislative Priorities for 2025:

none

Issues needing more information:

- *Statewide student information system: biggest concern is down the road, setting up a funding system that penalizes declining enrollment districts. Districts need flexibility to school the SIS that aligns with their grading practices, community capacity and parents' ability to fully access. Huge training needs for any shift. Lack of confidence in DE's ability to implement with enough expertise and lead time to deliver a smooth transition. How does this tie to tracking attendance and ESSA plan? Talking points: free market, state shouldn't support monopoly, local control, and scale differences in districts needing different features.*
- *Cell phone policies: how do we distinguish when rural schools want local control/flexibility or when it's appropriate or helpful for state policy to provide direction? This may be one area.*
- *School start date: easy to determine position with students first and local control guiding principles. Should we have a specific priority?*