



2020 RSAI ANNUAL MEETING

October 21, 2020

**Via Zoom or
FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Campus
Ankeny, IA**

4:30 – 7:30 pm



Table of Contents

Annual Meeting Agenda3

RSAI Essential Values4

Leadership and Contact Information5

Audit Report FYE June 30, 2020, Budget 2020-21, and 2020-21 Dues6-10

RSAI By-Laws 11-17

Draft 2021 Legislative Priorities 18-20

Corporate Sponsors21

Notes22



RSAI Annual Meeting Agenda

October 21, 2020, 4:30 – 7:30 pm

FFA Enrichment Center, DMACC Campus, 1055 SW Prairie Trail Parkway, Ankeny, Iowa 50023 or Via Zoom
(There will be a working dinner during the meeting)

1. Call Annual Meeting to Order: *Dennis McClain, Chair, RSAI Leadership Group*
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Introduction of the 2020-21 Leadership Group and 2020-21 Legislative Committee Members
4. Introduction of meeting attendees: Name, District, Role and something you love about rural schools
5. Annual Meeting Business: *Paul Croghan, Secretary/Treasurer, RSAI Leadership Group*
 - 2019-20 Annual Audit
 - 2020-21 Budget & Professional Advocate Payment
 - 2020-21 RSAI Membership Dues
6. Amendments to RSAI Bylaws: *Justin Daggett, Manson Northwest Webster CSD & RSAI Bylaws Committee*
7. Results of Election of SE and NW Region Representatives to the Leadership Group for three-year term through Sept. 2023. (Welcome back Laurie Noll, Fairfield CSD and welcome to Justin Daggett, Manson Northwest Webster CSD.)
8. Election of RSAI At-Large member for a three-year term through Sept. 2023 (Previously held by Duane Willhite)
9. Iowa Economic Development Update: *Bill Menner, Executive Director, Iowa Rural Development Council*
10. Status of RSAI 2020 Priorities: *Margaret Buckton, RSAI Legislative Advocate*
11. Report of Aug. 14 Legislative Group meeting: *Joel Pedersen, Chair, Legislative Committee*
12. Establish RSAI legislative priorities for the 2021 Legislative Session: *Joel Pedersen, Chair, RSAI Legislative Committee*
13. Vote to approve slate of priorities (Simple majority of districts participating, one vote per member district)
14. Focus Area Prioritization and Plan for grassroots advocacy / legislative contacts: *Margaret Buckton*
15. Press Release Preparation
16. Any other business
17. Adjourn (please note: Leadership Group convenes short organizational meeting upon conclusion of the Annual Meeting)



RSAI Essential Values

Background: The following themes provide a concise 30,000-foot view to help define the organization and drive lobbying responses to proposals outside the boundaries of defined RSAI legislative priorities.

RSAI Essential Values: (Considerations when formulating positions on Legislative Issues):

- **Students First:** State policies and resources should be designed to support schools in providing equal opportunities and success for students in **all districts of all sizes and locations**.
- **State Mandates:** Any new mandates ought to be founded on a principal of state public purpose. If the state compels school district action, the costs of that action must be initially funded and continually supported with a long term sustainability plan.
- **Flexibility:** In education policy, one size does not fit all school districts, classrooms or students. District leaders need maximum flexibility to provide a great education to all students. The state role is to define what outcomes are necessary for all students, leaving flexibility to schools in expenditures and policy to best determine how to deliver those intended outcomes.
- **Recognize Need and Capacity:** Formulas for funding should be based on student needs rather than exclusively defined based on enrollment. Per pupil funding alone does not recognize the challenge of maintaining capacity for supporting and improving education during continuous enrollment decline.
- **School General Fund Revenues Drive Instruction:** General Fund dollars pay for education. Any inequities on the expenditure side of the General Fund deprive districts of resources to pay for education. School transportation costs are a prime example.
- **Local Control:** Local leaders will typically make the best decisions for students, especially when they have adequate flexibility and resources to make those decisions. The state should exhaust other tools to correct local district mistakes when they believe those happen, rather than legislating for all districts (such tools may include but are not limited to DE review, set accreditation expectations, AEA support, SBRC request for a conversation, etc.)
- **State Program Sustainability:** Funding for state initiatives should be defined and planned, including providing a plan for adequately funding the basic cost of education along the way, while defining sustainable sources of revenue for new state reforms and initiatives.
- **School Sustainability:** Decisions about school sustainability should be based on the inability to deliver student success, rather than assumptions about the size of a school district. Sharing, reorganization, consolidation and dissolution decisions are best made locally. The state provides support through the provision of incentives to help eliminate barriers to those conversations.



RSAI Leadership and Contact Information

RSAI Professional Advocates

Margaret Buckton, margaret.buckton@rsaia.org, cell: (515) 201-3755, office: (515) 251-5970

Dave Daughton, dave.daughton@rsaia.org, phone (641) 344-5205

RSAI Leadership Group

The RSAI Leadership Group is comprised of representatives from all four regions of Iowa, plus three at-large members.

- Dennis McClain, Adair-Casey/Guthrie Center CSD, Superintendent (Chair, At-large member) dennis.mcclain@rsaia.org
- Paul Croghan, CAM/Nodaway Valley CSD, Superintendent, (Secretary/Treasurer, SW, Region 3 Director) paul.croghan@rsaia.org
- Justin Daggett, Manson NW Webster CSD, Superintendent, (NW Region 1 Director), Justin.daggett@rsaia.org
- Nick Trenkamp, Central CSD, Superintendent, (NE, Region 2 Director) nicholas.trenkamp@rsaia.org
- Laurie Noll, Fairfield CSD, Superintendent, (SE, Region 4 Director) laurie.noll@rsaia.org
- Dan Peterson, Superintendent, Central DeWitt CSD, (At-large Director), dan.peterson@rsaia.org
- OPEN - election at Annual Meeting (At-large Director)

RSAI Legislative Group

The RSAI Legislative Group is comprised of the above at-large Leadership Group members, plus the following additional legislative representatives

2019-20 Legislative Group

- SW - Tim Mitchell, Superintendent, Riverside CSD tmitchell@riverside.k12.ia.us
- NE – Barb Schwamman, Superintendent, Osage/Riceville CSD, bschwamman@osage.k12.ia.us
- SE – Joel Pedersen, Superintendent, Cardinal CSD, joel.pedersen@cardinalcomet.com
- NW –Scott Williamson, Superintendent, Sioux Central, Laurens-Marathon, and Clay Central Everly CSD, swilliamson@siouxcentral.org

2020-21 Legislative Group

- SW - Tim Mitchell, Superintendent, Riverside CSD tmitchell@riverside.k12.ia.us
- NE – Barb Schwamman, Superintendent, Osage/Riceville CSD, bschwamman@osage.k12.ia.us
- SE – Joel Pedersen, Superintendent, Cardinal CSD, joel.pedersen@cardinalcomet.com
- NW - Brian Johnson, Superintendent, Prairie Valley CSD and Southeast Webster Grand CSD, bjohnson@svjags.org



Memo re Financial Statement Audit

June 30, 2020

TO: RSAI Leadership Committee
FROM: Paul Croghan RSAI Secretary/Treasurer
DATE: September 15, 2020
RE: RSAI Financial Statements for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2020

1. SUMMARY

Rural School Advocates of Iowa (RSAI) concluded its most recent fiscal year on June 30, 2020. During the 2019-20 fiscal year, RSAI consisted of 111 member districts, up from 101 members during 2018-19, and 93 members during 2017-18. Revenues for the fiscal year came entirely from those memberships which totaled \$80,850. Total expenses for the fiscal year were \$79,138, with payments for association management and professional advocate services totaling \$68,723. Net revenue for the fiscal year was positive \$1,712. RSAI assets as of June 30, 2020 totaled \$14,746. Due to the limited number of transactions during the fiscal year, it was decided by the RSAI Leadership Committee to forego the expense of a formal external audit and instead conduct an internal review of the financial transactions.

2. SCOPE

As RSAI Treasurer, I have conducted an internal review of the financial transactions of the Rural School Advocates of Iowa (RSAI). The time period covered by this review is July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. In my opinion, the internal review procedures conducted are sufficient to evaluate the accuracy of the financial report that follows this memo.

2. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

RSAI day-to-day financial transactions are performed by staff members of Iowa School Finance Information Services (ISFIS). The financial review was conducted on the basis of questionnaire, inquiry, observation, and verification of supporting documentation and identified processes.

3. FINDINGS

After the internal review was conducted, I have identified no significant findings requiring adjustments to the financial statements presented.



RSAI Financial Statements





RSAI Budget



RSAI Membership Pricing Schedule (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)

Standard Pricing:	\$750 per district
Whole Grade Sharing: (approx. 25% discount)	\$550 per district if both join
Final Year of WGS before Reorg: (approx. 50% discount)	\$375 per district if both join

DISCOUNTS

Negative Spending Authority 100% discount off membership fee
(fee waived with approval from RSAI Leadership Group for financial hardships)

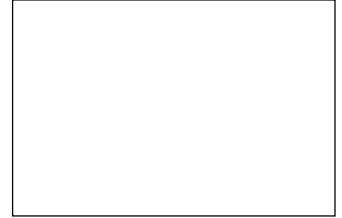
ISFIS Policy/Negotiations Subscriber Discount \$100 discount off membership fee
(discount paid by ISFIS on district's behalf)

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Pricing: \$750 per district



RSAI By-Laws



Name: The name of the organization shall be the Rural School Advocates of Iowa and shall be referred to below as "RSAI".

Mission:

RSAI will advocate for students in rural schools to assure a fair, equal, and quality education.

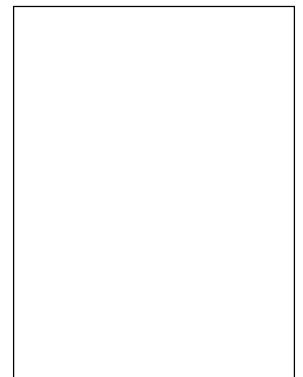
Vision:

Member schools will collaborate to promote legislation that strengthens rural education for students, by;

1. Educating others about the value of rural education to the state’s economy and future of Iowa as an educational leader in the nation and the world and unique challenges rural schools and communities face;
2. Building the capacity and understanding of other groups with similar interests on legislative and educational issues to build a stronger voice;
3. Securing adequate resources, academic and financial, to provide first class educational opportunities for students; and
4. Maintaining local control through the flexibility and authority of locally elected School Boards.

Membership:

Membership of RSAI shall be open to School Districts in Iowa that share the values and mission of RSAI in advocating for students in rural schools to assure a fair, equal, and quality education. Affiliate membership is extended to other organizations/entities sharing the values and mission of RSAI, as approved by the RSAI Leadership group. Input from affiliate member organizations is valued but such organizations are non-voting affiliate members of RSAI. Affiliate membership shall be open to Governmental Entities, AEAs, and Community Colleges.



Membership in RSAI shall not be considered in lieu of membership in other organizations serving students in the state of Iowa. RSAI will work closely with all organizations sharing its Mission, Vision and Legislative priorities.

Member School Districts shall be responsible for advocating for students; creating local networks to support RSAI identified Legislative priorities; and assisting Legislators in gaining a better understanding of rural student and school needs.

Member School Districts are encouraged to create a Liaison responsible for Legislative advocacy from among its Board members to fulfill its RSAI responsibilities and act as a direct contact within the School District for RSAI.

Membership dues shall be provided each year at the Annual meeting of RSAI. Dues shall be the same for all member school districts regardless of certified enrollment. However, school districts engaged in whole grade sharing prior to the final year preceding reorganization may receive a discount of 25% each. Districts sharing in the final year prior to reorganization may each receive a 50% discount. In both cases, the two districts may determine the ratio of responsibility for payment. The leadership group may waive dues for districts with financial hardship. Affiliate membership fees shall be set by the Leadership Group for each year, and shall not be less than school district membership dues.

Affiliate membership fees are set by Leadership Group. FYI, for this initial request, fee suggested was \$750.

Member School Districts can withdraw membership at any point through written notification to the RSAI Leadership Group. Dues paid are non-refundable.

Member School Districts shall be entitled to participation in RSAI as follows in these By-Laws.

Voting:

Unless otherwise specified in these By-Laws, all voting is to be done in person and may be done electronically if identity of the individual is determined. Active electronic attendance is permitted via internet technologies or in response to survey or other electronic communication as approved by the RSAI Leadership Group. Proxy voting ~~between and~~ by School Districts is not allowed. Each District in attendance shall be entitled to one vote on all issues addressed at the RSAI Annual Meeting or as needed between RSAI Meetings as determined by the RSAI Leadership Group.

Due to COVID-19, anticipate virtual or hybrid annual meeting. This clarifies virtual voting process.

Quorum:

Unless otherwise specified in these By-Laws, Quorums are not required.

Meeting Procedures:

The latest version of Roberts Rules of Order shall be used to determine procedural questions except as otherwise directed by the membership.

Agendas:

Unless otherwise specified in these By-Laws, agendas must be forwarded to participants no later than 7 days prior to meetings and must include a date, time and location in addition to actions required at each meeting as per these By-Laws. Unless otherwise specified,

creating agendas will be the joint responsibility of the Secretary/Treasurer and Chair of the Leadership Group and must be posted by the Secretary/Treasurer or the Secretary/Treasurer's designee.

Vacancies:

If the Leadership Group determines it is unnecessary to appoint to fill a vacancy, a vacancy shall remain vacant until the next election cycle.

Representation:

RSAI shall strive for diversity in representation of all leadership and elected positions within RSAI, including both elected Board members and Superintendents.

Good Standing:

Only School Board members and Superintendents in Good Standing in their respective School Districts are eligible to hold elected office in RSAI. Changes in status such as but not limited to failure of Board members to gain reelection to their local School Board or changes in School District employment in the case of Superintendents shall be deemed vacant.

RSAI Regions:

Member School Districts shall be divided into 4 Regions known as RSAI Regions. These Regions shall be defined as per the map in Appendix A - "RSAI Regions". Should a merger between one or more districts occur and both districts do not occupy the same RSAI Region, the reorganized district shall be included in the RSAI Region of the district which had the greatest land area prior to the reorganization.

RSAI Regions shall meet annually in the summer and as deemed appropriate and necessary by the RSAI Leadership Group. Each District shall be entitled to one vote on all issues addressed at RSAI Regional Meetings. A shared superintendent present at the meeting may cast one vote for each member district he/she represents.

The RSAI Region meeting participants shall elect an RSAI Region Representative to serve a term as specified later in these By-Laws on the RSAI Leadership Group and shall act as Chair of the Region meetings during their term. The RSAI Region Representative will be responsible for making all arrangements necessary for RSAI Region meetings during their term, ensuring that staff share an Agenda with members at least 30 days in advance of the meeting.

The RSAI Region meeting participants shall elect an RSAI Region Liaison to the RSAI Legislative ~~Group~~Committee. It shall be the responsibility of the RSAI Region Liaison to present the RSAI Region's Legislative priorities at the Legislative ~~Group~~Committee meeting each year. The term of office of the

Starting here and throughout the by-laws, changes Legislative Group to Legislative Committee.

RSAI Region Liaison shall be one year.

At the RSAI Region meeting, amendments to these By-Laws may be presented for consideration. In order for an amendment to move forward to the RSAI Legislative Group Committee for consideration, a 2/3 majority is required.

At the RSAI Region meeting, Legislative priorities for the upcoming Iowa Legislative Session shall be established and forwarded for consideration to the RSAI Legislative Group Committee. Determination of Legislative priorities shall be based on a simple majority vote.

RSAI Legislative Group Committee:

RSAI Region Liaisons shall gather with the At-Large Leadership Group members as the RSAI Legislative Group Committee annually, but in no event later than 4 weeks prior to the RSAI Annual Meeting.

The Legislative Group Committee will select a Chair and Vice-Chair/Secretary from among its members to conduct the RSAI Legislative Group meeting. The term of office for both will be one year.

The RSAI Legislative Group Committee will be responsible for reviewing, amending as necessary and finalizing the Legislative Priorities as identified at the RSAI Region meetings.

The RSAI Legislative Group Committee shall present a set of recommended Legislative Priorities for consideration at the RSAI Annual Meeting. The recommended legislative priorities are presented as a draft with responsibility for finalizing the determination of RSAI's legislative priorities on the body of the RSAI annual meeting participants.

The RSAI Legislative Group Committee shall present any Amendments to these By-Laws for consideration at the RSAI Annual Meeting. In order for an amendment to be included on the agenda at the RSAI Annual meeting for consideration, a 2/3 majority of the RSAI Legislative Committee is required. Such proposed amendment shall be submitted to the RSAI Leadership Group at least 14 days prior to the Annual meeting.

RSAI Annual Meeting

All member School Districts shall gather annually as determined by the Leadership Group. This meeting shall be known as the RSAI Annual Meeting. An Agenda of the Annual Meeting shall be sent to all member school districts no less than 30 days in advance of the Annual Meeting by the RSAI Leadership Group Chair.

At the RSAI Annual meeting, three At-Large members will be elected for membership in the RSAI Leadership Group who in conjunction with the 4 RSAI Region Representatives shall

comprise the RSAI Leadership Group. RSAI Region Representatives and At-Large members will take office at the conclusion of the Annual meeting in the year in which they were elected.

At the RSAI Annual Meeting, members will approve a slate of Legislative Priorities for the upcoming State Legislative Session.

At the Annual Meeting, amendments to these By-Laws may be adopted by a 2/3 majority vote.

At the Annual Meeting, the budget for the upcoming fiscal year shall be shared with membership. The budget shall include the payment for association member services including advocacy for the upcoming year.

At the Annual Meeting, the RSAI Leadership Group Secretary/Treasurer shall present an Annual Audit or an annual financial report for the most recently completed fiscal year.

RSAI Leadership Group:

As specified, 4 Region Representatives and 3 At-Large members shall comprise the RSAI Leadership Group.

The Election cycle shall be:

- RSAI SW Region & 1 At-Large: upon ratification, 3-year term; 3 years thereafter
- RSAI NE Region & 1 At-Large: upon ratification, 2-year term; 3 years thereafter
- RSAI NW Region, RSAI SE Region & 1 At-Large: upon ratification, 1-year term; 3 years thereafter

It shall be the responsibility of the RSAI Leadership Group to direct operations of RSAI; select, retain and evaluate the services of the Professional Advocate; establish dues for the upcoming fiscal year, coordinate local network efforts with member school districts and the Professional Advocate; create and conduct School District network training; conduct the RSAI Annual Meeting; coordinate annual legislative -activities and encourage membership in affiliate associations where appropriate.

Members of the RSAI Leadership Group will select the following positions from among its membership by vote annually: Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary/Treasurer.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to create agendas for meetings as required in these By-Laws; act as the official spokesperson for RSAI; sign warrants and preside at meetings.

It shall be the responsibility of the Vice-Chair to act as temporary Chair when the Chair is absent, or in the case of the Chair vacating the office, to act as Chair until the next election of officers.

Clarifies VC role to include assuming Chair for remainder of term.

It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary/Treasurer to monitor all appropriate records and warrants or drafts drawn from the treasury; conduct an annual audit or annual financial report for presentation at the Annual Meeting; maintain minutes of each meeting; and file any reports necessary with the Iowa Secretary of State and State Legislature regarding non-profit status and lobbying activities as required.

A majority of members is required in order to conduct business at the RSAI Leadership Group meetings.

A vacancy in the Leadership Group ~~shall~~ may be filled by the Leadership Group at its next regular meeting or subsequent meeting by majority vote. Vacancy of a Region Representative must be filled by a member school district in the same RSAI Region. At-Large vacancies may be replaced by any member school district. Notice of vacancy and intent to appoint a replacement shall be sent to all appropriate member districts soliciting interest.

Aligns with language under vacancies on page 3, that LG may fill a vacancy. Specifies a longer timeline to allow for adequate notice to members.

The RSAI Leadership Group shall be responsible for determining legislative positions responding to legislation that arises between annual meetings that the RSAI Legislative ~~Group-Committee~~ and list of legislative priorities did not anticipate or address.

The RSAI Leadership Group may appoint Committees as deemed necessary. These Committees shall be tasked with a specific objective. The duration of the Committee shall be limited and end with a report to the Leadership Group on a specific date to be established at their inception. Committees shall make recommendations to the RSAI Leadership Group, but shall not adopt policy, take independent action or endorse any entities that will do either.

Regular meetings of the RSAI Leadership Group shall occur monthly or as otherwise directed. A meeting schedule of all meetings shall be developed by the RSAI Leadership Group for the year following the Annual Meeting. At the discretion of the RSAI Leadership Group, regular meetings may be held electronically but must include an interactive format and may be recorded.

An Agenda including the time and location of a Regular meeting shall be forwarded to all members of the Leadership Group at least 1 week in advance of the meeting by the Chair of the Leadership Group or the Chair's designee.

Appendices:

~~A. Statewide RSAI Region map~~

~~B. RSAI Organizational Flow Chart~~

~~C. RSAI Professional Advocate Job Description~~

Adopted: January 18, 2014

Amended: October 25, 2014

Amended: June 15, 2015

Amended: October 12, 2016

Amended: October 25, 2017

Amended: October 24, 2018

Proposed: October 21, 2020



2021 DRAFT Legislative Priorities

(As recommended by the RSAI Legislative Committee and the RSAI Leadership Group, for discussion and approval by membership at the RSAI Annual Meeting on October 21, 2020)

Adequate School Resources: RSAI supports adequate base funding. The increased per pupil cost known as SSA is especially critical to rural students due to distance from school/opportunities, economies of scale, mandates, the need for AEA support, and the ability to attract and retain staff. Rural schools depend on an investment of meaningful new resources to prepare students for a successful future. COVID-19 experience has created additional financial burdens for connectivity, staffing, social distancing practices, virtual curriculum and protective equipment, while potentially diverting resources away from the district due to open enrollment or home school choices which may be temporary. The rate of increase in SSA should be no lower than anticipated growth in state revenue (adjusted for legislated tax cuts), should keep up with other economic factors such as personal income or state gross domestic product over the long term, should maintain a balance of state and local property taxes, provide predictability, and be set timely to assure adequate notice for budget planning and staffing.

Assessing and Addressing Staff/Student Social, Emotional and Behavioral Health: RSAI supports access to and funding for mental health services for children and supports for staff. July 1, 2020 Return-to-Learn Plans required school leaders to determine how to meet an increased demand for social emotional supports anticipated due to school closure. RSAI thanks the Legislature and Governor for addressing telehealth services at school without creating an undue administrative burden for schools and the addition of a social worker position to operational sharing. Despite these advances, our educators are neither prepared nor qualified to become providers of mental health services for children. Iowa needs to address a shortage of qualified mental health professionals and provide resources over the next two years for local districts to determine how best to train school staff based on a local assessment of need and consideration of local community tools and capacity to collaborate for a collective solution.

Educator Shortage and Quality Instruction: RSAI knows that rural school leaders are driven to find the very best staff they can to engage students in rigorous learning. RSAI supports maximum flexibility to hire staff to provide great instruction and support to all Iowa students. RSAI supports 1) district flexibility to meet offer and teach requirements, 2) teacher or other staff shortage loan forgiveness programs and incentives to encourage staff to work in rural schools, 3) a special education generalist credential to teach special education across all grades, 4) creation of a Public Service strand in Iowa's CTE system to prepare Iowa's future teaching workforce and minimize college student loan debt of future teachers, 5) flexibility to hire retirees without negative IPERS impact, and 6) elimination of barriers to licensure for educators. RSAI supports continued BOEE focus on greater flexibility for substitute licensure. Licensure reciprocity with other states is of great benefit. The BOEE should accept evidence other than strict transcripts to show skill mastery for educators from other professions. Colleges of teacher preparation and the BOEE are encouraged to lessen the college course requirements for new teachers, to make them no more burdensome than those of other professions.

Formula and Transportation Equity: RSAI supports formula and transportation equity. The Legislature should continue the commitment to close the \$155 gap between the state and district cost per pupil within ten years and continue transportation equity support, bringing down all districts to no more than the state average per pupil transportation cost, without requiring burdensome reporting requirements from school districts.

Opportunity Equity: RSAI supports resources for at-risk students. Resources should be based on need, such as the percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), in addition to enrollment of the district. The current disparity in dropout prevention capacity, (some districts held to 2.5% and others allowed to access up to 5% of regular program district cost) is arbitrary, based on history no longer relevant to supporting student needs. All school boards should be able to realize the full 5% dropout prevention funding. The formula must further recognize the disproportionate cost of providing equal educational opportunities to low-income students. School districts should be granted spending authority for FRPL eligible students' fees mandated to be waived by state and federal law. The COVID-19 experience has also shown us glaring differences among student home support. This includes both the ability to engage in learning based on lack of internet connectivity, as well as parents not being able to stay home to support required continuous learning because of work requirements to support their families. Experts anticipate a COVID-19 ripple effect which will increase achievement gaps. RSAI supports full attention to and implementation of the December 2019 School Finance Interim Committee recommendation to study the impact of poverty on educational outcomes, including other states' formulas that provide resources for students from low-income families which are showing successful student achievement outcomes for at-risk students. [HF 2490](#) Poverty Weighting Study was approved with strong bi-partisan support in the House Education Committee in the 2020 Session serves as a good starting point for continued conversation.

Sharing Incentives and Efficiencies: RSAI supports extension of sharing and efficiency incentives. Rural students benefit from opportunities to achieve efficiencies, share capacity to operate, and redirect resources to educational programs. The 2019 addition of a licensed social worker position to qualify for operational sharing incentives is appreciated. RSAI supports additional critical school staff, such as additional mental health professionals, school safety personnel and work-based learning coordinators. Additional positions are welcomed, but the cap of 21 students should be increased to allow all districts to access any new flexibility. Whole Grade Sharing, Reorganization, and Operational Sharing Incentives should be extended.

Quality Preschool: RSAI supports full funding of quality preschool. Quality preschool has been proven to minimize negative student outcomes (special education, dropout, limited lifetime wages, home and car ownership, for example) while maximizing student academic success. Preschool is the ounce of prevention that is saves future taxpayers a pound of cure. Additionally, expansion to provide quality preschool for three-year-olds would benefit parents, the business community and the economy, in addition to the student. Due to changing demographics in rural Iowa, significant transportation costs, and lack of quality day care, preschool should be fully funded at the 1.0 per pupil cost. The 2020 bill, [HF 2490](#) Poverty Weighting Study, should be moved forward in the 2021 Session and include a discussion of weightings which should be applicable to preschool students' programs.

School Safety: RSAI supports school safety investments. Rural schools need the resources, training and support necessary for Iowa student and staff safety at school, including additional funding for security personnel and training to protect against emergency situations presenting harm. For rural schools in particular, distance from emergency support compounds an already stressed situation lacking sufficient resources to fully train staff and provide security supports.

Bonding Capacity: RSAI supports a simple majority, 50% plus 1, voter approval for school bond issues. Additionally, RSAI supports the 5% calculation of property valuation which limits a district's bonding capacity to be limited to property tax debt issues and not include debt backed by the school infrastructure state sales tax revenues.

Internet Connectivity and Access: RSAI supports continued state and federal efforts at expanding access to high-speed internet geographically to all Iowans for student and staff access to critically needed information. Access to virtual learning and information is required for rural students to fully experience quality STEM programs. The future of rural quality of life, entrepreneurship and access to a whole host of critical services depend on citizen access to high-speed internet. RSAI supports incentives, investments, and creative solutions to close the technology gap for all students, their families, and businesses and community members in rural Iowa. Lack of sufficient income should not be a barrier to internet access.

Remote Learning and Instructional Time: RSAI supports the ability for local leaders to determine when school should close, for emergency situations and safety, including but not limited to weather cancellations, emergency infrastructure conditions, or for purposes of public health, as long as engagement in virtual learning opportunities is required for students and staff and needs of all students are anticipated and met. Under such conditions, instructional time delivered during the closure counts toward minimum instructional days or hours and is not required to be made up at the end of the school year.

Local School Board Authority: RSAI believes that those locally elected leaders closest to the community care most about those impacted by their decision making and are in the best position to determine the best interest of students, staff and stakeholders. In education policy, one size does not fit all school districts, classrooms or students. District leaders need maximum flexibility to provide a great education to all students. The state role is to define what outcomes are necessary for all students, leaving flexibility to schools in expenditures and policy to best determine how to deliver those intended outcomes. Statutory Home Rule, articulated in Iowa Code 274.3, gives locally elected school boards broad and implied authority. The Legislature, the Governor/executive branch and the courts should follow the law and liberally construe the Iowa Code and legislation to effectuate local control.



Thanks to our RSAI Corporate Sponsors

RSAI offers businesses serving Iowa schools the opportunity to share information about programs and services with RSAI members through Corporate Sponsorships. These Sponsorships help RSAI accomplish its mission and build capacity, keeping membership dues low, while helping RSAI member staff build name recognition with vetted RSAI Sponsor businesses and their programs. Such Sponsorships also strive to provide quality products and services at a savings to RSAI member districts whenever possible. Learn more about RSAI's Corporate Sponsors by reaching out to them or visiting www.rsaia.org/corporate-sponsors.html



Boardworks provides interactive and engaging content for K-12 Math, Science, ELA, History, and Spanish, all aligned to state learning standards. With thousands of editable slides, animations, formative assessments, and virtual labs available in an easy-to-use format, Boardworks resources help teachers save time, engage students, and maximize the use of existing classroom technology. Discounts available to RSAI members. Download [Boardworks Software Flyer](#). Contact inquiries@boardworksed.com for more information. www.boardworksed.com

Notes