

Thanks to all who attended the RSAI Annual Meeting on Oct. 9, 2025!

Guest speaker, Dr. Melissa Sadoft, Executive Director of the National Rural Education Association, presented information on NREA's new "Why Rural Matters", an annual analysis of the condition and quality of the nation's rural education soon to be released. The 2025 report is posted here: <https://nrea.net/wrm-2025/>

The state by state analysis shares information specific to Iowa. It's found here: <https://nrea.net/wrm-2025/state-rankings/>. Dr. Sadoft shared that, with so many Iowa students in rural areas, student outcomes for the state of Iowa are dependent on a good rural educational system. The report sets the context for the importance of rural quality to students in Iowa, with 40.4% of Iowa students in rural areas compared to 16.7% of US students. Iowa moved up six rankings since the last report.

Members participating in the meeting set the legislative agenda for the 2026 Session. See the list of priorities approved at the meeting on [RSAI's website](#). The Leadership Group will review at their meeting on Nov. 13. Expect advocacy resources to begin development in the coming months. The 2026 Session will begin on Jan. 12. Since it is an election year, the Session is scheduled to last 100 calendar days.

Congrats to Sup. Justin Stockdale, Dike-New Hartford, for presenting at the NREA Annual Forum in Salt Lake City on Oct. 13, regarding strategies to build community support and engagement.

UAB Limitations:

School Budget Review Committee members discussed UAB limitations at their October 28 work session. They heard reports from several school districts about UAB and local context. Members of the SBRC wanted to hear from some smaller districts and others who are outliers with very larger percentages of UAB. See the [ISFIS Memo to the SBRC re UAB - 08/2025](#) regarding better understanding local district UAB increases over the last decade and appropriate roles for state and local leaders in school finance policy. Check out your own district accumulated UAB and discuss financial goals with your school board.

Next Advocacy Actions:

Check RSAI Website for additional advocacy resources, including a strategy to build coalitions and engage community members in advocating for public school funding. <https://www.rsai.org/annual-meeting.html>. Also, find a [Legislative Update & Interim Advocacy Actions PPT](#) from Oct. 3 sharing RSAI 2025 successes and advocacy steps in preparation for 2026.

Reach out to your local legislators and discuss implementation of new policies approved over the last several years (examples: attendance policy, cell phone policy, new reading and math initiatives, civics test mandated for graduation, etc.). Let them know how it's going. We encourage school advocates to specifically ask legislators for adequate timelines for implementing anything new. Something becoming law on July 1 provides very little preparation

time to coordinate with the many plans schools already have in place for a school year that starts just 6-7 weeks after the start of the fiscal year.

Is the Staff Shortage Over?

Continue to share information about staffing challenges and keep reminding legislators that Iowa's work in attracting and retaining school staff is not done. Google Iowa Teacher Shortage 2025 to see many news stories as school started, reporting 660 vacant positions this Fall. Remind legislators about the issue of salary compaction related to new teacher salary minimums, too, which may impact on your school's ability to keep the teachers you have.

DOGE Recommendations.

After six months of study, the [Iowa DOGE committee recommendations](#) have been released. Gov. Reynolds and legislators have stepped back from IPERS recommendations. The Governor has also responded to the merit pay recommendations by saying that Iowa already has a pay for performance pilot project.

Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work.

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