

Annual Meeting Summary: RSAI members convened on Oct. 15 at the FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny to set our 2025 Legislative Agenda. In addition to approving priorities, members directed the RSAI Leadership Group to consider new language on TSS equity and sustainability, expansion of operational sharing for new positions with AEAs, and simplification of bond elections (simple majority vote and only one vote necessary for the bond levy). Attendees also heard from guest speaker, Ron Cox, Midwest Workforce Strategies, who shared data about the current labor market and encouraged changing the lens to consider unconventional labor solutions through his presentation titled “Midwest Workforce Challenges and Solutions.” A video of Ron’s presentation and his presentation slides are posted on the RSAI website at <https://www.rsaia.org/annual-meeting.html> and available for member review until January 15th.

Interim Update: HF 2545 Comprehensive Standards and Graduations Requirements Review Task Force has started meeting, with their first meeting held on Oct. 23. Additional meetings are scheduled for Nov. 8 and 22 with links to virtual options to be posted on agendas. In addition to the Comprehensive Standards Committee and Graduation Requirements Committee, there is a third Committee to consider a Statewide Literacy Plan. Continued work of the Task Force, including scope of the Committees’ reviews, membership and agendas, is posted on DE’s webpage here: <https://educate.iowa.gov/hf-2545-comprehensive-review-task-force>

Post-Election Advocacy: Thank goodness that’s over!! After all of the ballots are counted and winners announced, advocacy begins again. Send a note of congratulations to winners. Offer to be a resource. Schedule a meeting to talk about key issues impacting your district. Invite legislators (incumbents and newbies) to tour your school. Find “[Show & Tell With Legislators](#)” resources on the RSAI Website. The Secretary of State’s list of General Election Candidates found here <https://sos.iowa.gov/elections/pdf/candidates/generalcandidatelist.pdf> includes campaign or personal email addresses and phone numbers, so you don’t have to wait until the Session starts in January to reach out. Call or email for assistance if you need help getting started.

RSAI Legislative Digest and List of 2024 Successes: see the 2024 Legislative Session website for these tools to help you track what happened last year, what local districts have to change to comply, and the list of successes to lead off advocacy conversations with a thank you to incumbent legislators. <https://www.rsaia.org/2024-legislative-session.html>

RSAI Advocacy Resources: Check out the RSAI Website at <https://www.rsaia.org/2024-legislative-session.html> to find Advocacy Resources such as the 2024 Legislative Digest, sample questions for candidates, guide for a Show and Tell with Legislators, Position Papers, RSAI Weekly Legislative Recap Reports and Videos, RSAI Calls to Action and more. Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work. A new 2025 Session page will be available soon.

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

This summary of RSAI 2025 Legislative Priorities, approved at the RSAI annual meeting, emphasizes the need for sustainable investment in Iowa's education system to meet rural school challenges of staffing, student needs, and equitable funding:

1. **Adequate Resources:** Increased State Supplemental Aid (SSA) is essential for Iowa schools to provide quality education that meets community expectations. The funding must be predictable, exceed inflation, and support effective budget planning.
 - **World-Class Education:** A 10% SSA increase (\$783 per pupil) is necessary to enhance education quality, reduce class sizes, and support staff retention.
 - **Sustain Current Status:** A 5% increase (\$392 per pupil) would help maintain competitiveness and address inflation.
 - **Continued Erosion:** A 2.5% increase (\$196 per pupil) would only partially cover rising costs, leading to potential cutbacks in services and staffing.
2. **Staff Shortages:** Policies must prioritize trust and improved compensation to attract and retain educators. Strategies include:
 - **Recruitment:** Flexibility for hiring incentives, grow-your-own programs, and continuation of apprenticeship grants which must be easier to administer.
 - **Retention:** Increased funding for salary supplements, flexibility and licensure simplification, continued IPERS improvements and support for mentoring and training.
 - **Competitive Compensation:** Addressing salary compaction issues and TSS inequities to ensure fair pay for all staff.
3. **Public School Prioritization:** Public schools should be adequately funded, and changes to Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) should ensure fair treatment between public and private schools.
4. **Addressing Student Needs:** All districts should be able to access 5% dropout prevention funding, and resources must focus on at-risk needs, with additional support for mental health services and poverty-related educational challenges.
5. **Quality Preschool Funding:** State funding for PK should be increased to 1.0 weighting for full time PK or half-time PK with wrap around services to ensure access and quality for all students, especially low-income families, and to empower parents of young children to enter the workforce.
6. **Incentives for Collaboration:** Extend incentives for whole-grade sharing, reorganization and operational sharing to enhance educational opportunities.
7. **Local Control:** Support local school boards in decision-making and provide flexibility to meet community needs.
8. **Equity in Funding Formula:** Address historical inequities in funding to ensure all students receive adequate resources.
9. **Bond Issue Simplification:** Require a simple majority to approve bond issues, offer additional special election dates, and remove the requirement for two votes to approve the total bond levy.
10. **Area Education Agencies (AEAs):** AEAs play a crucial role in supporting rural schools, and their funding and structure must be adequate to ensure continued support for essential services.

A final list of full 2025 RSAI Legislative Priority language will be posted on the RSAI website following the RSAI Leadership Group's November 13 meeting.