



RSAI Call to Action

State Cost per Pupil Must Be Adequate and Set Timely In the 2015 Legislative Session

The Issue: The Legislature should follow the law which requires setting the cost per pupil within 30 days of today's release of the Governor's budget. RSAI is calling for immediate action this Session to set the per pupil cost for FY 2015-16 ASAP, no lower than 6%, and the per pupil cost for FY 2016-17 by Feb. 12, 2015, no lower than 6%. Legislators are hearing from school advocates and that contact needs to continue through the next week.

Old News: During the 2014 Legislative Session, the Senate affirmed a 6% increase in the cost per pupil multiple times, but no action was taken in the House. [Iowa Code 257.8](#) requires action within 30 days of the release of the Governor's budget. The Legislature is out of compliance with Iowa law to prioritize education by setting the rate nearly 18 months in advance of the budget year (FY 2016 decision was due Feb. 12, 2014). For a complete history of Iowa's per pupil increases, see the Jan 13 Education Coalition Fact of the Week found here: <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html> The House passed their school funding bills on Jan. 27, including HF 80, which sets 1.25% for FY 2016 including the property tax replacement, and HF 81 which sets 1.25% increase for categorical funds, echoing the Governor's budget recommendation.

Update this week: The Senate Education Committee passed bills on school funding on Thurs., Feb 5, setting a four percent increase for regular program and categorical funds for FY 2016 and a four percent increase for both in FY 2017. The bills were approved on a party line vote in committee with all democrats in favor and all republicans opposed. Bill numbers follow (RSAI is registered as indicated):

- [SF 171](#) Sets state cost per pupil increase at 4% for FY2016 (RSAI supports)
- [SF 172](#) Sets categorical increase at 4% for FY 2016 (RSAI supports)
- [SF 174](#) Sets state cost per pupil increase at 4% for FY 2017 (RSAI supports)
- [SF 175](#) Sets categorical increase at 4% for FY 2017 (RSAI supports)

The committee also passed [SF 173](#) to replace property tax associated with the 4% increase with state aid in FY 2016 and [SF 176](#) which does the same only if a growth rate for FY 2017 is approved by the House. Those bills were approved unanimously and RSAI is registered as undecided.

TALKING POINTS: This Legislature must set the 2015-16 cost per pupil at 6%.

- Iowa ranks 35th in the nation in per pupil funding, \$1,612 below the national average per student in expenditures. Schools haven't recovered from the economic downturn and record low funding rates of recent years. For rural schools with high transportation costs and districts with declining enrollment, this series of low funding levels has been particularly challenging as we strive to maintain programs for students.
- In the 44-year history of the formula, in only two instances has the per pupil increase been lower than the House recommendation. World-class schools take something more than third-rate funding.
- Iowa's economy is strong, state coffers are full. Although we can never be certain about the future, we are certainly well positioned to sustain any significant economic challenge in the next several years. Iowa ranks 9th in the nation in reserve funds on hand, has the 12th highest growth rate in gross domestic product nationally, and ranks 9th in growth of per capita personal income nationwide.



- Thanks to legislators for their quick work. Iowa Code requires legislative action within 30 days of the governor's budget (the deadline for FY 2016 passed 11 months ago and deadline for FY 2017 is Feb. 13.) Schools should already be working on budgets, analyzing staffing needs to meet student needs, planning for education reform changes in staffing and practice, and determining pay increases with teachers and other staff, but since the per pupil rate for the school year starting July 1, 2015 isn't known, this work today is all hypothetical. School timelines require more than a few months' notice to be good stewards of over \$4 billion in combined state and local funds.
- Increased costs typically run 3-3.5% annually, just to keep doing the business of school, such as keeping on the lights, meeting expectations in the Iowa core curriculum, paying staff, covering increased costs of insurance, transportation, retirement, books, technology and programs.
- Setting a low rate is devastating to schools. Setting a higher rate is preferable, even if it means a future ATB cut. The state's reserve funds are full, estimated to be \$750 million in FY 2017 and school cash reserves are healthy, so we can withstand a future ATB cut if it happens. It's time to prioritize resources for our students.
 - Iowa schools are elevating student outcomes and opportunities. See the Jan. 19 education coalition fact of the week for details: <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html>

Ask all of your legislators, both Senators and Representatives, in both parties, and the Governor, to prioritize funding for educating Iowa's children and set a 6% increase for both years. If they believe that is not possible, insist on no lower than 4% as proposed by the Senate Committee.

Virtual petition on adequate school funding: go here to let the legislature know that education funding should be the priority and share this link with others in your school district or other Iowans you know supportive of funding education. <https://www.change.org/p/the-iowa-legislature-provide-adequate-funding-for-iowa-s-public-schools?>

Parents, grandparents, staff and neighbors, you can help!
Call or email Gov. Branstad and Lt. Gov. Reynolds and your legislators and leave a message that schools need sufficient school funding, at least 6% per pupil, determined this session.

Office of the Governor: State Capitol | 1007 East Grand Ave. | Des Moines, Iowa 50319,
Phone: 515.281.5211 | [Contact Us \(https://governor.iowa.gov/contact/\)](https://governor.iowa.gov/contact/)

To reach members of the Iowa House and Senate:

- Find your legislator's contact information: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/find.aspx>
- Email your legislators. firstname.lastname@legis.iowa.gov
- Call the House Switchboard. Leave a message for your representative at 515.281.3221
- Call the Senate Switchboard. Leave a message for your senator at 515.281.3371

Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining the information above in this call to action or share details from any of the education coalition funding facts of the week.