**RSAI Legislative Update
May 15, 2020**

Hello RSAI Members. Since our last report prior to the Legislative Session Recess, RSAI has weighed in with policy recommendations to the Governor and DE, has started to hold RSAI regional meetings, and is continuing to work on your priorities. We’ve also advocated on your behalf regarding new issues arising with COVID-19 closure and continuous learning requirements. See RSAI letters to the Governor, Lt. Governor and DE Director here:

* [RSAI Support for Waiver of Mandated School Days/Hours 03.16.2020](http://nebula.wsimg.com/a3040fe694d8f75b73d82562c5687469?AccessKeyId=D081CCCCA2DCE3941176&disposition=0&alloworigin=1" \t "_blank)
* [Letter to Gov. Reynolds and all re COVID-19 - 04.15.2020](http://nebula.wsimg.com/47af4c540cadb896af86f28696b1540e?AccessKeyId=D081CCCCA2DCE3941176&disposition=0&alloworigin=1" \t "_blank)

**Session Timeline:** the Legislature has extended their recess until Wednesday, June 3. Senate Leadership and the Governor have requested the Revenue Estimating Conference to reconvene and provide a new estimate regarding state general fund revenue. The Legislature passed and the Governor signed a continuing resolution type of approach for FY 2021, not knowing how long the recess would extend. They appropriated the equivalent of two-months’ worth of FY 2020 budget for July and August to allow expenditures for the first part of FY 2021 without interruption of state government services.

**State Budget Picture:** for the FY 2020 fiscal year ending June 30, 2020, sales tax is still showing year to date revenue growth, yet expected to soften. Personal and Corporate Income Tax returns have been postponed until July 31, 2020, but are expected to hit close to the previous estimate since based on the 2019 calendar year, prior to any COVID-19 impact. For additional detail, see the LSA Fiscal Update, STATE TAX REVENUE UPDATE: COVID-19 IMPACT, MAY 13, 2020 <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/BL/1136321.pdf>

Revenues in FY 2021 will be impacted, through lower withholding payments due to increased unemployment and predicted sales tax revenue decline, all dependent on unknown variables such as continued social distancing, employees continuing to work from home, development of a virus or effective treatment protocols, and economic recovery. For the state General Fund Budget, the Governor and Legislature are required to use either the December 2019 estimate or the most recent estimate if it is lower, and to budget for no more than 99% of expected available resources (prior year’s surplus combined with budget year revenue estimate.) So far, [SF 2142](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=SF%202142) State Cost per Pupil (SSA) and [SF 2164](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=SF%202164) Transportation and Formula Equity, are the only FY 2021 appropriations bills beyond the two-months continuing resolution [SF 2408](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=SF%202408), signed by the Governor, out of the FY 2021 budget.

***Thank your legislators for already approving SF 2164 and SF 2142 and encourage them to keep those education resources in place as they consider the FY 2021 budget.***

**2020 Session Legislation still pending:** there are several bills that the legislature is likely to move forward when they return on June 3, for a limited/efficient Session conclusion, including some bills that are priorities for RSAI. Contact your legislators in the next week to make sure they know what is on your list of priority actions to support your district and students.

* [**SF 2310**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=sf2310) **Online Learning:** requires AEAs to serve as clearinghouse, requires districts that create online learning coursework submit to DE for confirmation that it aligns to core standards, and corrects a typo in the Iowa Code to allow districts up to two additional offer and teach courses be allowed online under certain conditions. Approved by Senate 49:0 and in House Education.RSAI supports with an amendment to allow schools to develop their own online learning content without DE approval.
* [**HF 2359**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=HF%202359&ga=88) **Teacher Preparation Reports by Education (similar to SF 2010):** removes the requirement that students applying to the college of education must have a minimum test score on the Praxis I to be admitted, eliminates the mandate for teacher prep programs to administer the test before entrance into the prep program. Approved by House 98:0 and in SenateEducation. RSAI supports.
* [**SF 2360**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGR/88/SF2360.pdf) **Classroom Behavior/Therapeutic Classrooms:** addresses many things, including grants for therapeutic classrooms which might be delayed due to FY 2021 budget constraints. Priority language in this bill mirrors federal special education provisions of least restrictive environment and protection from litigation is even more critical in the continuous learning environment.The LRE provisions should be made effective on enactment. Those changes are found in Section 5 of the bill and modify Iowa Code 256B.2 subsection 2. The Senate bill was approved 50:0 in the Senate and is in the House Appropriations Committee. RSAI supports the bill.
* [**HF 2384**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf2384) **and** [**SF 2313**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=SF%202313&ga=88) **Governor Reynolds’ Future Ready Act** bills require a half unit of computer science at high school to meet offer and teach requirements. RSAI supports allowing that requirement, financial literacy half unit and all four sequential units of foreign language, even if offered exclusively online, to meet offer and teach requirements and to eliminate the requirement to seek waivers for those specific courses. Bills in their respective appropriations committees. RSAI supports. This would also be a vehicle for additional offer and teach flexibility to support the current COVID-19 continuous and possibly hybrid learning models this Fall.
* [**HF 2419**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf2419) **ELL Weighting**: createstwo categories for ELL student weighting, .30 for intensive and .25 for intermediate, both above the .22 current weighting for all ELL students. The bill is in House Appropriations where it’s future is uncertain. RSAI supports the bill.
* [**HF 2418**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf2418) **BEDS Error Correction:** requires DE to certify that an error made in BEDS reporting was an error that impacted an employee’s licensure and requires the BOEE to adjust their licensing actions accordingly. The bill was approved by the House 95:0 and the Senate Education Committee and is on the Senate Calendar. RSAI supports it.
* [**SF 2356**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=sf2356) **Dyslexia Provisions:** addresses many areas of instruction involving students with Dyslexia. To see the full description, access the [Fiscal Note](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/FN/1133262.pdf) on the legislative website here. Of primary interest to schools, the bill requires completion of the IRRC Dyslexia Overview module by designated AEA and school district employees. The IRRC Dyslexia Overview [module](https://iowareadingresearch.org/news/dyslexia-education-and-advocacy-tool) is available online and is free for all Iowa in-service K-12 teachers and AEA employees. The module takes about an hour to complete. The bill was approved in the Senate 49:0, and is in the House Education Committee. RSAI is registered as monitoring this bill.
* [**SF 2261**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=SF%202261) **School-based Telehealth** **Services:** makes schools a site for reimbursement for private insurance. This bill is especially critical in light of COVID-19 closures and recovery for students once returning to school. The bill was approved in the Senate 49:0 and is in the House Human Resources Committee. RSAI supports this bill.

**Federal Funds:** The largest influx of federal funds includes $1.25 billion, Iowa’s share of the COVID-19 Relief Act, for state costs of COVID-19. The Legislature will direct expenditure of these funds. There is an anticipated increase in COVID-19 related Medicaid costs (both increased health care costs and with increased unemployment, more people may now be eligible), costs across state government of PPE and virus mitigation efforts, as well as other costs of doing business differently during the closure.

A portion of these federal funds could be dedicated to education for COVID-19 related costs, such as;

* resources for summer school days or starting early in August
* other remediation programs for students falling behind during the closure
* internet connectivity and devices (for staff and students)
* professional development for educators to improve online instruction
* PPE for essential workers
* paying staff typically paid with Enterprise funds such as nutrition and child care
* costs of additional staff if health care screening is required in the Fall before students and staff can enter schools
* extraordinary cleaning costs which may be required once school resumes

Other federal funds specifically related to education include:

**CARES Act funding (also known as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund):** $71.6 million to Iowa, of which $64.4 million was allocated to Iowa districts and

the DE reserved the remaining 10.0% ($7.2 million) for grants and statewide emergency needs, including up to 0.5% for administrative costs at the State level. Out of the $64.4 million, which was allocated based on Title I formula as required in the federal law, nonpublic schools were allowed to apply for assistance. Despite the federal law requiring the Title I formula for distribution, the federal DOE guidance required nonpublic school allocations to be based on total enrollment. If this distribution is negatively impacting your district, please let us know. Advocacy with Congress and the federal DOE is ongoing regarding this distribution anomaly. See DE’s guidance for CARES Act details:

* [CARES Act Guidance: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSER) Distribution and ESEA Waivers](https://educateiowa.gov/documents/pk-12/2020/05/cares-act-guidance-elementary-and-secondary-school-emergency-relief-funds) - Addresses district allocations and the application for emergency relief funds, district reporting and accounting requirements and waivers of current requirements under ESEA for the 2019-2020 school year.
* [CARES Act ESSER Fund Allocations](https://educateiowa.gov/documents/pk-12/2020/05/cares-act-elementary-and-secondary-schools-emergency-relief-esser-fund) - Provides both the total district allocation and the amount of the allocation that is reserved for districts to provide equitable services to the participating nonpublic students, teachers, and families.
* **Governor’s Emergency Education Relief Fund** $26.3 million for Iowa, to be used at the Governor’s discretion for education related expenditures.

Lastly, IPERS is considering the impact of allowing retired teachers to return to teaching after a one-month retirement window. Please fill out this survey to help inform their decision: **IPERS Survey Link--**[**https://bit.ly/IPERSactuarial**](https://bit.ly/IPERSactuarial)

**RSAI Regional meetings**. Thanks to those members in the SW and NE regions for participating in the RSAI regional meetings! These meetings are critical for conducting some business. Members discuss the 2021 Legislative Priority list to inform the work of the RSAI Legislative Group. The NW Region meets
May 19 at 11:00 and the SE Region meets June 9th at noon, both via zoom. Click here to find out more and register: <http://www.rsaia.org/district-meetings.html>

Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work:
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**Find RSAI 2020 Legislative Priorities and Position Papers here:**  <http://www.rsaia.org/2020-legislative-session.html>