



RSAI Essential Values

(Considerations when Formulating Positions on Legislative Issues)

Background: The following themes help define the organization and drive lobbying responses to proposals outside the boundaries of defined RSAI legislative priorities.

- **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 principle 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's 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. School districts should be trusted to exercise local authority via Statutory Home Rule.
- **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 above the state average are a prime example.
- **Local Control:** Local leaders make the best decisions for students, especially when they have adequate flexibility and resources to make those decisions. If local stakeholders don't agree, elections have consequences. 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 oversight, etc.)
- **State Program Sustainability:** Funding for state initiatives should be defined and planned, including 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.