



# Proposed 2024 Legislative Resolutions

## 1. We believe that literacy is the building block for student achievement and student success.

### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- Iowa students benefit from rigorous content standards and benchmarks that reflect the real-world knowledge and skills students need to graduate from high school prepared for college, trade school, military service, or to enter the workforce. We support state policies to:
- Provide technical assistance for school districts to fully implement the Iowa Content Standards which define what students should know and be able to do in math, science, literacy, social studies, and 21st century skills.
- Ensure research-based professional development that provides educators with training, support and time to work together.
- Support intensive, high-quality tutoring to improve student literacy and math proficiency.
- Continue evidenced-based literacy materials to help improve student achievement.
- Expand programming for career and technical education and apprenticeships.
- Ensure assessments are aligned to high expectations, improve and align instruction, and quality professional development.
- Support curriculum decisions that are made by locally elected school boards.
- Allow a consideration process that engages stakeholders, the Department of Education, and the state board of education in new graduation requirements.
- Provide full access to technology and online learning through Infrastructure investments, including:
  - Provide incentives to expand service with a priority on those areas with access to the slowest speeds.
  - Guarantee minimum download and upload speeds as a condition to receive grant funding or other financial incentives.

### PRESCHOOL

Research demonstrates that children who take part in early childhood education are more likely to succeed in school. We support state policies to:

- Ensure all school districts have the capacity to serve all 4- and 5-year-olds.
- Provide resources for districts to provide services such as full-day programming, transportation and wraparound care.
- Provide support and resources to support the behavioral and educational services for preschool-aged students.

Our Mission: To educate, support, and inspire public school boards in their pursuit of world-class education for all students in Iowa.

## **EARLY LITERACY**

Early literacy programs are the building block for future student achievement. To achieve the goal of all students meeting literacy expectations by the end of third grade, we support state policies to:

- Enhance development and research on best practices for improving proficiency in early literacy strategies.
- Increase support for professional development and classroom intervention strategies focused on implementing best practices for early literacy in grades PK-3.
- Continue to focus on programs funded by the early intervention block grant program with flexibility to use those funds for other PK-3 literacy programs if approved by the school board.

## **ENGLISH LEARNERS**

The demographics of Iowa students are ever-changing, and an increasing number of our students do not speak English as a first language. We support state policies that ensure success for these students with the expansion of programming for English-learners (EL) until the students reach proficiency.

## **AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES**

Area education agencies (AEAs) provide essential services to PK-12 students. We support state policies that provide full and equitable funding across all area education agencies to provide essential services in a cost-effective manner to students and school districts including, but not limited to:

- Special education;
- Technology;
- Professional development;
- Curriculum assessment;
- Student assessment data analysis;
- Teacher training on social-emotional learning and mental health services for students in schools; and
- Online remote learning platform for students.

## **2. We believe that a high-quality teacher workforce is necessary for student achievement.**

### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND LICENSURE**

A highly skilled teacher workforce is essential to student achievement and can be supported by state policies that:

- Ensure high-quality teacher preparation programs, including alternative licensure programs that include in-classroom experiences, pedagogy training, content knowledge in curricular area and mentoring for individuals with non-traditional or international education backgrounds.
- Encourage initiatives and programs that diversify Iowa's teaching profession to better match our student demographic makeup.

- Expand programs such as Teach Iowa Scholar, Teacher Intern Program, and others as approved by the Board of Educational Examiners.
- Create programs for student teaching grants and stipends and expand teacher apprenticeship programs to make education careers a more attractive and affordable option.
- Create a program to provide beginning teacher incentives and recruitment incentives to attract high-quality teachers.
- Create reciprocity agreements with other states that have high-quality teacher preparation programs to increase diversity among certified teachers and administrators.

#### **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION**

- Developing effective teachers and keeping them in every Iowa school district is crucial to student success and can be supported through state policies that:
  - Provide teacher leadership and quality professional development programs.
  - Provide beginning teacher mentoring programs.
  - Maintain Iowa's teacher leadership and compensation program
  - Create a program to fund retention incentives to maintain a high-quality teacher workforce.
  - Allow flexibility and resources to pay school staff market competitive wages.

### **3. We believe that expanded opportunities through public schools will provide students with diverse and engaging educational experiences.**

#### **PUBLIC SCHOOL INNOVATION**

Students and their families benefit most when their public school district has the authority and capacity to innovate. We support state policies that:

- Invest in magnet and innovation schools; expand flexible program offerings; and allow greater partnerships among schools and community organizations.
- Allow charter schools only when under the direction of the locally elected public school board.
- Establish or continue use of accredited online schools or classes.
- Continue collaboration between public and nonpublic schools, provided that no funds are redirected to private schools at the expense of public schools.
- Ensure flexibility to implement these programs without regulatory burdens.

### **4. We believe that student, educator, and staff mental health needs must be addressed and supported to improve student achievement, reduce dropout rates, and maintain a high-quality workforce.**

#### **DROPOUT/AT RISK**

School boards strive to provide every student with the services they need to remain in school, progress, and graduate to become productive citizens. We support state policies to:

- Include dropout prevention and funding for at-risk students in the foundation formula and the socio-economic status as a factor in determining a student's at-risk status.
- Equalize the ability of all districts to generate dropout prevention funds.
- Increase district participation in statewide programs that serve at-risk students.

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health issues are increasing and impacting student achievement. To address these concerns, we support state policies that would establish comprehensive school and community mental health systems to offer preventative and treatment services to:

- Increase access to mental health professionals via in-school, in-person, or telehealth visits.
- Expand the capacity for therapeutic classrooms to provide short-term solutions to behavioral issues.
- Improve awareness and understanding of child emotional and mental health needs through ongoing teacher, administrator, and support staff training.
- Integrate suicide prevention and coping skills into existing curriculum.
- Support the mental health needs of educators and staff.
- Provide a comprehensive mental health resources clearinghouse for schools and community providers.
- Expand training that includes a referral plan for continuing action provided by mental health professionals outside of the school district.
- Designate a categorical funding stream for mental health professionals serving students and ongoing teacher, administrator, and support staff mental health training.
- Support development of a mental health workforce to provide services to children.

## **5. Iowa school boards are elected by our communities to oversee public schools. Working closely with parents, communities, and educators, our locally elected school boards are in the best position to determine the needs of their communities and students.**

### **LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND DECISION-MAKING**

Locally elected school board members are closely connected to students, their families, and the communities in which they live, and are in the best position to understand student needs and identify effective solutions. Restrictive limitations on decision-making authority inhibit innovation, efficiency, and the ability of school boards to make locally based decisions about student achievement.

Local accountability and decision making include:

- **Student Achievement:** As locally elected officials, school boards should have the ability to set priorities, customize programming, and maximize community strengths to improve outcomes for all students;

- **Accountability & Reporting:** Data collection for state accountability should enhance the ability of school boards to focus on student learning and school improvement. IASB supports streamlining state-level reporting on management operations and eliminating duplicative or inefficient reporting processes;
- **Funding flexibility:** School boards should have the ability to maximize existing resources to meet local needs;
- **Transparency:** School boards should have flexibility to provide public access to records in ways that promote transparency for citizens while balancing the cost to taxpayers; and
- **Flexibility on Health and Safety Measures:** School boards should have the ability to make decisions, in partnership with local officials, regarding the health and safety needs of students, staff, families and the community.

### **PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Parents and/or guardians and families are an integral part of a student's education, and the partnership between schools and families is essential to students' success in the classroom. We support policies that encourage:

- Meaningful, two-way communication between parents and/or guardians and school districts, including teachers, administrators, and school boards.
- Parent and/or guardian and family engagement through inclusion in decision-making and on advisory committees.
- Parents and/or guardians to be partners in their children's education.

### **SHARING AND REORGANIZATION**

Many school boards face the difficult task of providing educational opportunities to every student because of declining enrollment. Rural districts rely on sharing and reorganization incentives to provide a world-class education to their students. We support state policies that will:

- Continue sufficient incentives and assistance to encourage sharing or reorganization between school districts, including the establishment of regional schools.
- Continue reorganization incentives past their current expiration date of July 1, 2024.
- Expand maximum supplementary weighting and increase the number of positions eligible for operational sharing incentives.

## **6. We believe schools must be open and welcoming to all students, and fully accountable and transparent in order to receive taxpayer dollars.**

### **PRIVATE SCHOOL CHOICE**

Accredited private schools who accept education savings account funds should be required to accept all students regardless of race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, and disability. Accredited private schools who accept education savings account funds should be held to the same standard as public schools with respect to accountability and transparency. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- Make public the annual audit of the accredited private school
- Adhere to the same reporting requirements on student achievement as is required of public schools
- Reimburse the pro-rated amount of educational savings account funds for a student who is expelled or voluntarily withdraws before the conclusion of the semester.

**We support the following:**

- Elimination of the tuition and textbook tax credit for those who receive an education savings account;
- Limiting the amount a student may receive from a school tuition organization grant to the difference between the educational savings account tuition payment and the actual tuition.
- Closure of educational savings accounts and all unspent deposited funds returned to the state's general fund for eligible students who did not enroll in an accredited private school.
- Eliminate state funding for the purchase of textbooks by accredited private schools.
- Requiring that a nonpublic school must be in operation for at least one school year and provides either:
  - A letter from a certified public accountant that the school is insured and has sufficient capital or credit to operate in the upcoming school year OR
  - A surety bond or letter of credit to be filed with the Iowa department of education that the school in the amount equal to the funds needed for the upcoming school year.
- Payment to the AEAs for services provided to students at nonpublic schools.

**We continue to oppose state policies that:**

- Establish educational savings accounts, vouchers or any other program that uses taxpayer dollars to fund private schools.
- Provide direct payment of taxpayer funds to private schools, parents, or for home school education.
- Increase tax credits or deductions directed toward private schools or home school education.

**HOME SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Parents and guardians have school choice in many forms, including through home school education.

We support state policies that:

- Continue Home School Assistance Programs (HSAP) provided by public schools to help home-schooled students achieve success.
- Require registration of all home-schooled students within their district of residence to facilitate assistance through the HSAP.

We oppose expanding the state's educational savings account program to students who are receiving competent private instruction or independent private instruction.

## **7. We believe supplemental state aid is a critical component in student success by providing districts with adequate general fund resources.**

### **SUPPLEMENTAL STATE AID**

The school aid formula is the biggest driver in providing resources for a high-quality education that translates to a successful future for our students and economic growth in our state. A school's general fund supports a high-quality teacher workforce, critical for student achievement. We support state policies on supplemental state aid rate that:

- Sufficiently supports the ability of local districts to meet parent and community expectations and provide a world-class education for all students.
- Provides the resources to recruit and retain a high-quality teacher and staff workforce.
- Incorporates inflation and cost-of-living increases to minimize the negative impact on a district's general fund from these increased costs.

### **SCHOOL FUNDING POLICY**

Schools and school boards have a longstanding commitment to provide students with the programs and services they need to be successful. We support state policies on public school funding that:

- Sufficiently supports the ability of local districts to meet parent and community expectations and provides a world class education to all students.
- Equalize per-pupil funding for all program areas.
- Equitably funds all Area Education Agencies (AEAs).
- Maintain the funding mechanism for transportation costs that reduces the pressure on the general fund and addresses inequities between school districts.
- Include factors based on changes in demographics, including socio-economic status, remedial programming, and enrollment challenges.
- Reflect actual costs for special education services.
- Support flexibility in the use of voter and board-approved special levy funds.
- Incorporate categorical funding in the formula within three years.
- Include a mix of state aid and property taxes.
- Increase the budget guarantee to 103% to provide additional stability to support student achievement for districts with declining enrollment.

### **PROPERTY TAXES**

A strong connection between school districts and the community is important to ensure local accountability. Property taxes provide a stable form of financial support for public schools. We support state policies that:

- Ensure efforts to minimize property tax disparities created by the additional levy rate without compromising additional resources to school districts.
- Maintain the ability of districts to determine discretionary levies
- Improve transparency and limits on the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) including:
  - Input from all affected taxing bodies before creation of a TIF district; and

- A limit on the duration of all TIF districts.

## **TAX BASE**

A stable and growing tax base is essential to ensure sufficient funding to school districts to support a world class education for all students. We oppose a constitutional amendment that would limit taxes, spending, or local control impacting education. We support state policies to:

- Conduct a non-partisan annual review and analysis of all current income, sales, or property tax exemptions and any other tax credits or deductions currently, including an analysis of the impact on Iowa's economy and state and local tax revenues.
- Conduct a non-partisan cost-benefit analysis, including the impact on Iowa's economy and state and local tax revenues prior to the creation of a new tax credit.
- Eliminate any tax credits that are proven ineffective.
- Limit the authority to approve any tax law changes that restrict future tax bases or provide additional tax breaks to the legislature.
- Ensure transparency of current tax laws and proposed tax law changes on the direct and indirect impact on public school funding.

## **BOND ISSUES**

Local community investment in world-class education facilities is an important part of providing the best opportunities for student achievement. We support state policies to:

- Allow school bond issues to be passed by a simple majority vote.
- Provide the authority to levy a combination of property taxes and income surtaxes to pay the indebtedness.
- Clarify that revenue bonds do not count toward a 5% statutory debt limit.
- Allow bond issues to be on the ballot during any special election date.

## **UNFUNDED MANDATES**

Mandates on school districts that are imposed without funding put pressure on the school's general fund budget and can negatively impact efforts to provide a high-quality education for all students. We oppose any mandate that does not provide adequate and direct funding for successful implementation.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

All students deserve a world-class education, regardless of disability. To ensure the success of students receiving special education services, we support policies that will:

- Ensure predictable and timely state funding that is reflective of the actual cost and needs of these students, including educational programming and healthcare.
- Support federal funding that covers 40% of the cost of educating students receiving special education services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Modernize and fully fund IDEA by emphasizing improved outcomes for students with disabilities.



## **8. We believe that every student deserves to learn, and every staff member deserves to work, in a safe and secure environment.**

### **SCHOOL SAFETY**

Every student and staff member should have a safe and secure environment in which to learn and work. We support state policies to:

- Expand resources and evidence-based training for staff and adults working with students to address behavioral issues.
- Provide early identification, intervention, and school violence prevention programs.
- Enhance flexibility for schools to work with parents, the community, law enforcement and emergency personnel to institute safety measures in and around schools.
- Provide evidence-based school safety training for students and staff.
- Allow maximum flexibility and equitable distribution of resources to meet student, staff and building safety needs.

