

## Legislative Priorities for January 2021

### **Background:**

The Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) each year asks each School Board it represents to provide to them the Board's recommendations for including in IASB's political agenda and lobbying efforts.

This year (2020) IASB held the following issues among its highest legislative priorities:

### **PRESCHOOL**

Supports continued funding to ensure that all 4 and 5-year-olds have access to the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

Supports an increase in funding from the current weighting of 0.5 to 1.0 full-time equivalent to increase the ability of districts to provide services such as full-day programming and transportation to ensure that all 4 and 5-year-olds have the ability to attend the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

### **MENTAL HEALTH**

Supports efforts to establish comprehensive community mental health systems to offer preventative and treatment services and comprehensive school mental health programs that include:

- In-school and telehealth access for students to mental health professionals;
- Creation of a categorical funding stream designated for mental health professionals;
- Reimbursement by Medicaid and private insurers for in-school services;
- Ongoing teacher, administrator, and support staff training to improve the awareness and understanding of child emotional and mental health needs;
- Integration of suicide prevention and coping skills into existing curriculum;
- Expanding state-funded loan forgiveness programs to include mental health professionals who agree to provide services to schools; and
- An ongoing mental health resources clearinghouse for schools and community providers.

### **SCHOOL FUNDING POLICY**

Supports a school foundation formula that:

- Provides sufficient and timely funding to meet education goals;
- Equalizes per pupil funding;
- Provides a funding mechanism for transportation costs that reduces the pressure on the general fund and addresses inequities between school districts;
- Includes factors based on changes in demographics including socio-economic status, remedial programming, and enrollment challenges;
- Reflects actual costs for special education services;
- Incorporates categorical funding in the formula within three years; and
- Includes a mix of property taxes and state aid.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL STATE AID**

Supports setting supplemental state aid:

- At a rate that sufficiently supports local districts' efforts to plan, create and sustain world-class schools;
- For FY 2021, by January 31, 2020; and
- For FY 2022 and future budget years, at least 14 months prior to the certification of the school's district budgets.

Setting supplemental state aid within the statutory requirements allows districts to make sound financial decisions on programs, staffing levels, and providing the best possible education to all students.

**Priorities for 2021:**

IASB is asking school board to identify up to four priority issues for possible inclusion among its 2020 legislative priorities. IASB asks boards to please reserve time during May, June, or July board meetings to discuss and complete the *Call for Legislative Priorities* survey. IASB asks that our board secretary to complete and submit our priorities by Friday, August 7.

Last year, the Belmond-Klemme school board established its legislative priorities. They were

- ★ Funding and support for mental health services in Iowa schools and across the state.

(IASB Resolution 7) Supports efforts to establish comprehensive community mental health systems to offer preventative and treatment services and comprehensive school mental health programs that include in-school access for students to mental health professionals and provisions for reimbursement by Medicaid and private insurers.

- ★ Fund all schools on the same per-pupil amount.

Area Per-pupil Amounts are as Follows:

- \$6,880 Belmond-Klemme
- \$6,888 West Hancock
- \$6,897 Garner-Hayfield-Ventura
- \$6,905 Clarion-G-D
- \$6,926 West Fork
- \$6,988 Eagle Grove
- \$7,040 CAL

- ★ Defeat vouchers
- ★ Remove the arbitrary cap on Dropout/At-risk funds. Other school districts get 5% of their per-pupil budgets to spend on dropout prevention. Belmond-Klemme was arbitrarily capped at 4%.
- ★ Raise the maximum salary under IPERS from \$30,000 to \$50,000.

Employees age 55 to 65 who return to work in an IPERS-covered position, are subject to an earnings limit. They are required to pay back a portion of their IPERS benefits if they earn more than \$30,000 a year. (The Iowa minimum teacher salary is \$33,500.) Moving up this cap could alleviate slightly the strain of the current teacher shortage.

**Recommended Action:**

I recommend the Board discuss this item with the intention of finalizing their choices during our July Board meeting.