

Instructional Support Program Levy

Background:

The Instructional Support Levy (ISL) was designed to supplement school districts who wanted to implement a special program or do something above and beyond what other districts were doing. However, years of underfunding public education have forced nearly all Iowa schools to put an ISL into place just to meet routine needs. Out of 327 public school districts in the state, only one district, Allamakee, does not have an ISL in place. An ISL boosts district budgets by up to ten percent.

Instructional Support is vital.

Since it is now July, we have entered into Fiscal Year 2021. Our district's ISL will expire at the end of FY 2022. It can be renewed for five years by a vote of the school board, or it can be renewed for up to ten years by a public vote on a November ballot.

School districts must certify their intent to participate in the ISL no later than April 15 of the fiscal year prior to the fiscal year in which the participation will be included in the budget. So for us, if we want to participate in the ISL for fiscal year 2022-2023 (i.e., fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022 and ending June 30, 2023) then we must certify our intent to participate no later than April 15, 2022 to the Department of Management.

Recommended Action:

Although we have time before the levy expires, I recommend the board develop an action timeline for renewing our ISL. This timeline will vary depending on whether we want to consider a board only vote on the ISL, a board vote and then public vote if needed, or simply a public vote.

Side Note: Instructional Support is Underfunded

Like most state-supported programs, the Instructional Support Levy (ISL) is underfunded. Since an ISL is funded by local revenue sources, the state originally created an equity fund to provide additional funding to those districts whose sources are not as prosperous as others.

For the fiscal year just ended (FY2020), Belmond-Klemme received \$416,528 in ISL funds. \$312,260 came from local property taxes and \$104,268 came from our local income surtax. However, \$128,024 promised to our district by the State of Iowa never arrived.

Because of this underfunding, wealthy districts receive much more ISL money than poor districts.