

## Legislative Priorities for January 2024

### **Background:**

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

We had the following priority for several years running now:

#### ✓ **Defeat vouchers.**

We were unsuccessful.

This year (2023), IASB's legislative priorities included the following:

### **IASB's 2023 Legislative Priorities**

#### 4. 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.

#### 5. 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.

#### 6. 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.

#### 7. MENTAL HEALTH

Student 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 in-school and telehealth services.
- Increase access to mental health professionals via in-person or telehealth visits.
- 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.

#### 11. 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 for individuals with non-traditional or international education backgrounds.
- Provide research-based pedagogy training in addition to content knowledge in a curricular area.
- 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.
- Use the management fund to offer 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.

#### 12. 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.
- Use the management fund to offer retention incentives to maintain a high-quality teacher workforce.
- Allow flexibility and resources to pay school staff market competitive wages.
- Provide resources to school districts for ongoing cultural competency training.

## Priorities for 2024

IASB is asking school board to identify up to four priority issues for possible inclusion among its 2024 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 our board secretary to complete and submit our priorities by Friday, August 11.

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

Area Per-pupil Amounts are as Follows:

- \$7,372 Lu Verne
- \$7,367 CAL
- \$7,315 Eagle Grove
- \$7,253 West Fork
- \$7,232 Clarion-Goldfield-Dows
- **\$7,227 *Belmond-Klemme***

- ★ 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%.

### **Recommended Action:**

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