

## Legislative Priorities for January 2022

### **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 (2021), IASB held the following issues among its highest legislative priorities:

### **IASB's 2021 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.

Districts should be given maximum flexibility to assign costs to the 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:

- Increased access for in-school and telehealth services;
- Increased access to mental health professionals via in-person or telehealth visits;
- Creation of a categorical funding stream designated for mental health professionals serving students and ongoing teacher, administrator, and support staff mental health training;
- Equitable 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;
- An ongoing mental health resources clearinghouse for schools and community providers; and
- Trainings that include a referral plan for continuing action provided by mental health professionals outside of the school district.

#### **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 state aid and property taxes.

## **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 2022, by January 29, 2022; and
- For FY 2023 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 and staffing levels in order to provide the best possible education to all students.

IASB supports a formula driven method for establishing the supplemental state aid growth rate if it is not set within the statutory requirements.

## **COVID-19 REMEDIATION**

Supports additional resources to school districts and AEAs to:

- Identify achievement gaps among individual students that have occurred as a result of COVID-19 breaks in instruction; and
- Provide remediation for all students impacted negatively by loss of instruction due to COVID-19 school closings.

**Priorities for 2022:**

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.