IASB®
Iowa Association of School Boards

2027 Legislative Platform

Vision & Voice for Public Education

2027 Legislative Beliefs

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Public education is the foundation of our democratic society and the key to successful futures for Iowa children. Quality public schools strengthen our communities and are the cornerstone of any sound economic development policy. The state must put public education first and provide sufficient funding and support services to provide all students with a world-class education. The state should provide full funding to public schools to meet the evolving needs of public-school students before additional financial support of nonpublic schools is provided.

Iowa's public schools are the backbone of our communities and provide quality education for Iowa students and:

- Operate under the guidance of locally elected board members who are entrusted with taxpayer dollars for the purpose of improving student achievement and skill proficiency for all students.
- Welcome all students regardless of race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or disability.
- Provide parents and taxpayers with accountability and transparency for the use of taxpayer dollars.

All schools that receive any public funds, including property taxes, state aid or federal monies, should be subject to the same governance and educational standards as public-school districts.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

The promise of public education is for every child to succeed. As locally elected leaders, school boards are uniquely positioned to set expectations for educational equity, ensuring that each child is given supports and interventions based on need. Educational equity requires that discriminatory practices, barriers, prejudices, and beliefs be identified and eradicated. Leaders must hold themselves accountable for deliberate actions, including the examination of policies and practices, intentional allocation of resources according to student need, support for rigorous curriculum and instruction, and engagement of families and communities.

GOVERNANCE

Iowa has one of the finest public educational systems in the United States. The federal government, governor, General Assembly, Iowa Department of Education, school boards, professional educators and the public should strive to keep it strong. There must be a proper

© Iowa Association of School Boards

balance of state and federal control designed to ensure quality and a standard of education for all students, with local control which allows local school boards flexibility and decision-making authority to innovate and adapt to local needs and community values.

School districts are governed by boards that, as elected representatives, must be responsive and responsible to the citizens of the school district. Citizen involvement is the key to our representative form of government.

Local boards are, within the guidelines established by state law, vested with the authority to make the final decision on matters pertaining to a school district, area education agency (AEA) or community college. Local board members, who are closely connected to students, families and the communities in which they live, are best capable of understanding student needs and identifying effective solutions. The statutory duties and responsibilities of the local board cannot be delegated to persons who are not elected by the voters of the school district.

Locally elected school boards must have control over the content and management of their educational program, including the calendar and the flexibility for innovation and decision-making. A leadership team composed of the superintendent, principals and supervisory personnel working with the board is necessary for the efficient operation of the school district. Locally elected school boards should have the authority to determine the school calendar to best meet student needs, including but not limited to school start dates, year-round schools, and the use of virtual learning opportunities in response to natural disasters, weather or other emergencies.

SCHOOL CHOICE

Iowa law provides sufficient choice through public charter schools, open enrollment, home school assistance, postsecondary enrollment options and nonpublic school alternatives. Additional investments in tax credits for nonpublic tuition or other options are not necessary to provide educational choice. Charter schools should be allowed only under the direction of the locally elected school board.

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

School districts and board members are entrusted with public funds for the purpose of improving student outcomes including but not limited to student academic achievement and skill proficiency, and the school board is responsible for overseeing such improvement.

Through original research and a close evaluation of highly effective board practices across the country, IASB recognizes the following six essential roles of effective school boards and encourages all Iowa board members to incorporate these principles in carrying out the mission of public education in their communities:

- **Setting Clear, High Expectations:** The board sets a vision which expresses a commitment to high expectations, consistently communicates the expectations, sets clear and focused goals and focuses on improving instruction.
- **Belief that All Children Can Learn:** Effective boards have strong shared beliefs and

values about what is possible for students and their ability to learn. Board members expect to see improvements in student achievement as a result of implemented initiatives.

- **Creating the Conditions that Support Successful Teaching and Learning:** The board creates the conditions for success by showing commitment via board actions, resource allocations, a strong communications structure, and system alignment; provides quality, research-based professional development for educators; builds commitment and focus throughout the system and stays the course, solving problems along the way so improvements have time to work.
- **Holding the System Accountable for Student Success:** The board uses data and monitoring to hold the system accountable and to make decisions at the board table; identifies clear, understandable indicators that the board will accept as evidence of progress and success; and supports and monitors progress regularly at the board table with staff leaders.
- **Building Collective Will:** Within the school staff and throughout the community, the board creates widespread awareness and urgency of the improvement required to meet students' needs, instills hope that it's possible to change, and connects with and engages the community in a frank and ongoing effort to encourage each facet to fulfill its responsibility.
- **Leading and Learning Together as a Board/Superintendent Team:** Effective school boards lead as a united team with the superintendent with strong collaboration and mutual trust. The board also establishes board learning time around school improvement efforts, engages in deep conversations about the implications of learning, and leads thoughtful policy development.

ELECTIONS

Participation in the democratic process is integral to the success of schools. School districts have a responsibility for promoting more community involvement in the election process to foster better- informed citizens and greater ownership in public education. Student achievement should drive decisions that impact school elections.

In keeping with the principles of democracy, IASB is committed to the concept of each vote having equal value and a simple majority vote as sufficient to determine election or taxation decisions.

School board elections should coincide with the opening of school. Due to boundary differences and to help maintain the nonpartisan status of school board elections, they should be separate from any other election.

School board members should be elected in a non-partisan manner in which decisions are based on the best interest of the school and students without regard to party affiliation. Boards should have less than a majority of board members elected in any one year.

School boards should have flexibility to determine when special elections are necessary and to

schedule these to best suit the district's needs. There should be a minimum of four special election dates per calendar year for bond referendums, votes on levies, and revenue purpose statements and filling school board vacancies.

IOWA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

IASB is committed to statewide leadership to ensure high achievement for all Iowa students. IASB recognizes that school boards are in a strategic position to bring about continuous improvement in public education through governance, public policies, and advocacy.

We believe that IASB is the organization most appropriate to deliver training and board development to school board members about their role and responsibilities to contribute to high student achievement.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATION

School boards, and the residents of the school districts involved, have the primary responsibility to determine the makeup and boundaries of school districts and attendance centers.

The school board and the citizens of a school district assess the quality and extent of its educational program and determine whether the school district continues to operate within its present geographical boundaries.

In order to reduce costs and maintain or enrich quality education, IASB encourages school districts to share administrators, teachers, equipment, facilities and transportation, including the scheduling of joint classes and extracurricular activities. Sharing does not necessarily lead to eventual reorganization.

IASB believes school district reorganization, dissolution or sharing may be in the best interest of Iowa's public school students when:

- The best interest of students is the most important factor considered.
- The reorganization or dissolution is voluntary—initiated and voted upon by the citizens of the school districts involved.
- The state offers sufficient incentives to make the reorganization or sharing financially attractive to the school districts involved.

Geographical issues are considered, including minimizing the amount of travel time by students and allowing for continued community participation by the communities involved.

PUBLIC RECORDS AND OPEN MEETINGS

Every citizen has the right to examine and copy all public records. The news media may publish public records unless the law expressly limits the right or requires public records to be kept confidential.

The schools belong to the people - the citizens and taxpayers of the school district. The public has the right to know what decisions are being made regarding the education of their young people and the expenditure of their tax dollars. School districts should have the ability to determine the method of public notice dissemination that maximizes public access to records at a minimal cost to the district.

Although it may not always be easy to publicly consider and discuss some of the tough issues confronting school boards, school boards should be responsive to the open meetings and public records policy established in state law. Compliance with the intent of the public records and open meetings law is best achieved through education, training and consistent enforcement.

SCHOOL FUNDING

School finance decisions, whether at the local, state or federal level, should put student achievement first in all decisions. Iowa's school funding system must provide all Iowa children an equal opportunity to a quality public school education. The funding system must recognize that a high-quality public education is the first and foremost economic engine of our state.

A sufficient funding system provides equitable, sufficient, predictable, and timely funding, based on these foundational principles:

Equity: Iowa should fund public education with a student-driven formula, ensuring Iowans that the education of each student is supported equitably. The formula must provide sufficient revenue to cover the actual cost of the educational program, including on-time funding for districts experiencing increasing enrollment. The state should allow school districts with declining enrollment to maintain sufficient funding so the school district can adjust operations to meet student needs. The state should minimize the disparity for property taxpayers due to variances in property valuation per pupil.

Excellence and Opportunity: School finance must provide for continuous improvement of classroom instruction and promote excellence. A critical attribute of increasing the achievement of all children is the skill level of teachers and administrators in the school. Therefore, the school funding system must provide for the professional training and development of teachers and administrators, and school improvement that will promote Iowa as a national leader in public education.

Stability: The school funding system must continue to be a fair balance between property taxes, which are a stable and reliable revenue source, and other revenue sources. Iowa school boards are grateful for categorical funds but encourage the state to provide resources through the funding formula to maximize local flexibility and provide growth through an equity-based system. School districts should have spending authority for any reduction in state funding.

Efficiency: A diverse system of school finance helps schools control costs. To ensure well-managed and efficient schools, the school funding system must encourage cooperative ventures and the pooling of resources and services. The school funding system must address increased

costs due to inflation and other economic factors.

Local Control: State funding must support local control. Locally elected school boards should have the authority to utilize and allocate funding to best meet the needs of students. If the state decides to intervene in local education policy, any mandated changes, particularly those taking energy and focus away from real comprehensive school improvement and student achievement, must be fully funded by the state without a shift from other education resources.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

The state has a role to ensure that all Iowa public school students have equitable access to high- quality educational programs, provided in safe, efficient, accessible, and technology-ready facilities that promote student learning.

Revenues from the Secure an Advanced Vision for Education (SAVE) fund provide school districts with a stable, long-term, and equitable funding stream for infrastructure purposes and should not be negatively altered or discontinued.

EDUCATION'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Growth focused on economic stability, wealth creation, entrepreneurship and knowledge-based enterprises is a vital objective for the state of Iowa. Our public schools contribute to the growth of Iowa's economy through the education and development of our children and by providing good jobs. Our public-school districts are often the largest employer in many Iowa communities.

A quality public education system is both a key factor contributing to Iowa's quality of life and is a critical attractor of business to Iowa. While education contributes to Iowa's economy, it is also dependent upon economic growth for securing sufficient financial resources to provide quality education services.

Public education and economic growth are interdependent. It is therefore imperative that Iowa invest in viable and sustainable economic development and foster partnerships among public schools, employers, and community partners. These partnerships should help students explore career paths, understand future employment opportunities, and connect learning to postsecondary education and training, military enlistment, apprenticeships, employment, and entrepreneurship.

Collaboration between public schools and the business community can enhance students' knowledge of career paths and future employment opportunities.

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

It is the responsibility of local school boards to ensure that all students are educated for success in a 21st-century global society. Collaboration between Pre-K-12 and postsecondary institutions should be encouraged to help increase student opportunities.

School boards must ensure that their district operates from clear, measurable student learning standards and improvement goals; sufficient resources are allocated to improve instruction; and

there is public accountability for improved results for students.

It is appropriate for the state to establish high and rigorous educational standards for the accreditation of public and nonpublic schools. Standards should be designed to ensure that all students have the opportunity to receive the educational program that meets their needs. The students of Iowa who attend public and nonpublic schools should receive their education instruction from licensed teachers. All public-school accreditation standards must also be applied to nonpublic schools.

Data collection and reporting is necessary to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Data collection and reporting is valuable when:

- It is possible to accurately determine student achievement gains, gaps between subgroups and level of attainment for all students;
- Purposes are clearly understood and worthy;
- Assessments are aligned with the intended purposes;
- Results are easily accessible to maximize school district use of the information to provide quality professional development and improve instruction; and,
- Results lend themselves to widespread understanding and evaluation by all school stakeholders.

The state or federal government must not use single-source data to issue sanctions, make generalizations about student performance or shift resources away from schools that require support to improve learning.

Iowa school districts should have the opportunity to comply with standards using various structures and mediums, including sharing and interactive telecommunications.

IASB supports assessment systems that measure student growth for all students, also known as value-added growth or gain, to improve student outcomes by driving professional development, teacher and administrator evaluation, and school improvement decisions.

EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

Technology is an important tool in providing a quality education. School districts must have equitable access to technology. Access includes provision of hardware and software, technological support staff and access to a variety of Internet, broadband and network services including the Iowa Communications Network (ICN).

Administration of the ICN should continue to prioritize educational access above other users. The state has a role in ensuring equitable access to technology and should provide sufficient resources to purchase technology, support school technology plans and include professional

development for educators on how to use technology to improve instruction and student outcomes. The use of artificial intelligence can enhance both the student experience and the work of school staff. School boards should develop thoughtful policies to govern the use of artificial intelligence by students, teachers, and staff.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Exposure to education in the first years of life is critical, and young children have an innate desire to learn. That desire can be supported or undermined by early experiences.

Research indicates that high-quality early childhood education promotes intellectual, language, mathematical, physical, social, emotional, and creative development, cultivates a child's curiosity and desire to learn, and builds a strong foundation for later academic and social success. The state plays a critical role by defining and supporting quality early childhood education programs.

STUDENTS

All students can achieve at high levels when the state, local school boards and communities provide resources and support to ensure each child's success in school. It is the responsibility of school boards to meet the needs of every student. School boards should work to engage and seek partnerships with parents/guardians and communities to work collaboratively with school districts to meet the needs of every student.

SCHOOL SAFETY

IASB believes that schools must be a safe environment for all students, staff, and visitors.

Each member of the school and community must take a holistic approach to school safety by providing schools with resources, quality leadership, and united support for the development of a locally determined approach to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for all children. IASB supports a comprehensive view of safety that considers threats such as:

- Crime and violence;
- Hazards such as natural disasters or accidents;
- Health risks such as pandemics; and
- Internal threats such as bullying, unintentional biases and adverse childhood experiences.

Security planning efforts must include prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts. These planning efforts must be practiced, evaluated, and updated on an ongoing basis. All individuals in the school community must be well-trained and knowledgeable of the best practices in school safety.

While all members of the school community benefit from accurate and timely information on safety efforts, school boards must have the authority to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality to protect security plans and measures.

TEACHER QUALITY

IASB believes, and research confirms, that teacher quality is the most important factor in determining a child's academic success.

It is the responsibility of the school board through the superintendent and administrators to ensure teachers in their district are qualified for the job they are hired to do. School boards have the authority to set high performance standards and expect demonstrated academic and instructional excellence from their teachers.

Therefore, boards need to ensure teachers, as a part of their job, continuously and collaboratively study content, instruction and the effect on students based upon identified student needs.

It is a board responsibility to expect and confirm that the district is fully implementing the Iowa Core Standards and Iowa Professional Development Model for the purpose of improving instruction measured by improved student achievement.

Quality teaching is essential to high student achievement. In order to recruit the best and the brightest teachers into Iowa and the profession, keep the best and the brightest teachers we now have, and increase respect for the profession that most impacts our children's future, IASB strongly advocates for school funding levels sufficient to pay competitive wages. In addition, IASB believes school boards must focus on ensuring a school culture that supports engaging educators in decision making, providing teachers with leadership opportunities and professional development, and exploring compensation and evaluation systems designed to enhance performance and retention.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND LICENSURE

IASB supports improved alignment between teacher preparation and the PK-12 education systems. Preparation programs should be evaluated continually with the objective of providing training that reflects innovative and proven education methods designed to assess and maximize student achievement. Student needs must drive preparation programs. School boards, teacher preparation institutions, and the state must cooperate to ensure teachers obtain the knowledge and skills they need to teach to ensure all children can learn. Educators should be prepared to effectively teach the wide variety of students in Iowa classrooms. All Iowa educators must have the appropriate licensure, endorsements and accreditation from the board of educational examiners.

PERSONNEL EVALUATION

School employees must be accountable for raising student achievement. An objective evaluation of all employees, performed on a regular basis, benefits the employee and the community and assists students in obtaining a quality education. IASB supports the right of school boards to exercise their authority to set standards of performance and establish rules of conduct for all employees.

Administrators or their designees must have the authority and resources to evaluate personnel whom they supervise.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Labor and employment laws should balance the rights of the employees with the rights of management, with an emphasis on student achievement and student safety. Positive labor relations enhance the ability of employees and school boards to work together for improved student achievement. Ideally, collective bargaining should end in a voluntary settlement between parties.

School boards should be guaranteed sufficient management rights necessary to operate the school district efficiently and effectively. Labor and employment laws should balance the rights of the employees with the rights of management, with an emphasis on student achievement and student safety.

The results of collective bargaining should be to:

- Advance excellence and equity in public education with the outcome of improved student achievement for all.
- Reflect sound research and proven best practices with a demonstrated positive impact on improving student achievement.
- Promote accountability by all for improved student outcomes.
- Include a regular evaluation of the impact of changes on student achievement.
- Preserve the constitutionally protected due process rights of school boards.
- Promote safe, healthy, effective, and respectful work environments for students and staff.

BENEFITS

It is important to establish employee benefits necessary to attract and retain qualified employees. Benefits paid and contribution rates should maintain the actuarial soundness and affordability of employee benefit programs.

Unemployment compensation benefits should be reserved for those who experience sudden and unexpected job loss. It should not be extended between academic terms to employees who have contracts for less than 12 months or who have reasonable assurance of continued employment.

Substitute employees should not be eligible for unemployment compensation.

School district employees whose employment is terminated because of a reduction or

realignment of staff, or for other reasons that would qualify them for unemployment compensation benefits, should be eligible to receive such benefits on the same basis as employees in private sector employment.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A State Board of Education, made up of laypersons, determines and adopts necessary rules and regulations for the proper enforcement and execution of the provisions of school laws, and adopts and prescribes standards for carrying out the provisions of the school laws. The State Board of Education must seek advice and counsel from a broad range of citizens and educational organizations in the formulation of rules and policies.

The Department of Education (DE) plays a significant role in facilitating school improvement efforts and supporting school districts, area education agencies and community colleges.

The DE should cooperate with IASB, area education agencies, community colleges, the federal government and state to streamline requests for information.

The DE should consider other student achievement measures, such as value-added or growth measures, for all students, in defining and negotiating the Iowa plan for school district compliance with federal requirements.

By its very nature, the DE is a state regulatory agency; however, Congress and the General Assembly should carefully consider the number and size of the regulatory tasks assigned to the DE and financially support the tasks assigned, including the provision of sufficient staff.

AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES

AEA assistance to local schools in the areas of special education, emerging technology, professional development and curriculum assessment is of vital importance to assist schools with the mandates of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act.

AEAs are established to provide school districts with specified services in special education, media, and other educational areas. Apart from special education, the Legislature and the Department of Education must not require these agencies to perform services that are regulatory in nature.

AEAs must retain their primary function as support agencies for local school districts, including developing and delivering services and programs to support local school improvement plans.

School improvement is a key strategy to meeting economic, political, and societal needs. AEAs can assist public schools with career development and transitions to facilitate business/community collaborations offering further opportunities for students.

The governance structure of AEAs must continue to be tied closely to PK-12 public school districts with students who receive the benefits of AEA services. AEAs should not be merged with community colleges. Directors of PK-12 school boards should continue to elect AEA directors.

AEAs should be assured of equitable, consistent, and timely funding and receive adequate funding for mandated programs and services.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Community colleges are an integral part of public education and are strong partners with Pre-K-12 schools in the delivery of career and technical education and of enhanced educational offerings at the high school level through concurrent enrollment. As such, they must be funded by both state and local sources in a consistent and equitable manner.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Generally, IASB opposes a centralization of decision making on local and state educational issues in the federal bureaucracy and the United States Congress. Iowa citizens have the ability and desire to make decisions affecting the education of their young people. IASB urges Congress, the President of the United States and the U.S. Department of Education to support local control of school districts, continue the commitment to local flexibility, and reward local efforts to improve student achievement. If the federal government decides to intervene in state and local education policy, any mandated changes, particularly those taking energy and focus away from real comprehensive school improvement and student achievement, must be fully funded by federal dollars without a shift from other education resources. Any federal funds should be distributed equitably among public school districts based on a per pupil count.

Iowa schools should receive the federal commitment to help with the cost of educating students with special education needs combined with the federal support equal to other states, based on student needs, to maintain our level of educational excellence. The federal government should not impose intrusive or unnecessarily restrictive or prescriptive laws governing our community schools.

2027 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 durable skills.
- Support adoption of curriculum content standards by the Department of Education with stakeholder input rather than through the legislative process.
- 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 evidence-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 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 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 behavioral and educational services for preschool-aged students.
- Cooperate and coordinate with community partners to ensure all 4-year-olds have access to quality preschool programming including accredited nonpublic schools, Head Start, Shared Visions, Early Childhood Iowa, and other qualified providers.
- Expanded access to the state's voluntary preschool program should supplement, not supplant, existing state and federal funding sources.

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. English learners should have access to highly trained teachers to create a quality learning environment.

AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES

Area education agencies (AEAs) provide essential services to PK-12 students. To accomplish this, we support the following:

- No fee for service for special education.
- Maintain the levy that generates funding for education and media services.
- Define a standard set of core services to be provided by the AEAs.

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.
- Support increased funding and more equitable distribution for the Teach Iowa Scholar loan repayment program.
- Create programs for student teaching grants and stipends and expand teacher apprenticeship programs, including paraeducator to teacher pathways, 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.
- Provide flexibility and resources to pay school staff market competitive wages and benefits.

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:

- Expand flexible program offerings; and allow greater partnerships among schools and

community organizations.

- Establish or continue use of accredited online schools or classes.
- Continue collaboration between public, public charter, and nonpublic schools, provided that no funds are redirected to public charter schools or 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:

- Increasing access and resources 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.
- Provide state funding to support research-based entities that work to provide students and

staff with mental health resources and services.

ABSENTEEISM

Attendance at school is essential for students to succeed, and we want to ensure chronic absenteeism continues to decline in our schools. We support reasonable and appropriate state policies that address and improve attendance across grade levels, including:

- Locally-elected school boards should have the authority to identify chronic absenteeism that has the potential to, or already is, negatively impacting student achievement.
- School districts shall collaborate with the appropriate school staff, outside experts and county attorneys to address those problems, including determining appropriate and consistent supports and enforcement for students who are deemed chronically absent or truant.
- Providing resources for school districts to address attendance issues early through collaboration with parents, early intervention and dedicated staff.

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;

- 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; and
- School Calendar: School boards should have the ability to determine their school calendar, including use of a four-day school week.

For school boards and school administration to successfully implement new legislative or regulatory requirements, the Department of Education must provide sufficient guidance within reasonable timelines. Any legislation that imposes new requirements on school districts shall require the Department of Education to issue guidance promptly or provide a waiver process if that guidance is not received.

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.
- Continue reorganization incentives to provide financial incentive for districts to enter into reorganization agreements.
- 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 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 regarding 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 semester ends.

We support the following:

- Adequate compensation for costs incurred by public school districts for nonpublic school student participation in activities and programs.
- 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.
- The 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.
- Participation in school activities by nonpublic school students not offered by the private school must have public school board approval or a sharing agreement approved by the public school board

We 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.
- Provide educational savings accounts to a nonpublic school not accredited by the state or an independent accrediting body approved by the Department of Education.

- Expand the state's educational savings account program to students who are receiving competent private instruction or independent private instruction.

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 with their district of residence to facilitate participation in HSAP.

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:

- Preserve the fiscal stability of public school districts by providing adequate and timely funding that 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.
- 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.

© Iowa Association of School Boards

- 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.

We oppose any limitation on the rate of growth of the total property tax rate and property tax collections for school districts.

We oppose strict limitations on the management fund. These limits negatively impact school districts' ability to have proper reserves to meet the needs of allowable expenditures from the fund.

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.

We oppose any limitation on the amount of a bond issue that may be submitted to the voters for their approval.

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 ability. To ensure the success of students receiving special education services, we support policies that will:

- Ensure predictable and timely state funding reflective of these students' actual cost and needs, 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.

IN-SCHOOL MEDICAID SERVICES & FUNDING

Medicaid provides essential services to many students in Iowa's schools. The ability to provide these services and to have adequate reimbursement impacts student achievement. We support maintaining the level of services and funding that is currently available.

EFFICIENT USE OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS

Health insurance is an essential benefit provided to school district employees. As the cost to provide this benefit continues to increase, we support a non-biased, statewide study to determine if establishing a statewide pool for school district employees or adding school district employees to the state health insurance plan is cost effective and efficient.

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.
- Protect school staff from physical or verbal abuse from parents and/or guardians and students.