



Urban Education Network Legislative Priorities for 2024 Session *Status of Legislative Action*

Invest in Iowa's Future: Adequate funding, ability to pay staff competitive compensation, categorical funds, predictable, timely, sustainable and equitable funding and continued progress on formula equity.

- **[HF 2612](#) AEs, SSA and TSS** set a 2.5% SSA rate, increased teacher salary supplement sufficient to meet new teacher salary minimums, provided \$14 million statewide for hourly staff supplemental pay, and provided school districts with control of education services and media services funds that previously flowed through to AEs.
- Although significant new funds were invested, no progress was made on formula equity.
- With the higher range of TSS per pupil, from a low of \$699 to a high of \$2,852, based on the cost of districts to meet higher teacher salary minimums, additional emphasis on per pupil equity is needed.
- To sum it up, with the increase in teacher salary supplement and considering all investments in public schools, combined district cost grew by over \$192 million, which is a 3.6% increase compared to FY 2024.
- **[SF 2368](#) Charter Schools** directed categorical funds to follow students, including PD and EICS, as well as current-year SPP. This action applied to students enrolled in a charter school or in another district through open enrollment. There are competing views among school districts on whether this action promotes student equity.

Teacher, Administrator, Staff Shortage: positive message about teaching, competitive compensation, ability to recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce, licensure flexibility, intern programs with adequate classroom exposure, grow-your-own programs and tuition support. Specifically mentions funding beyond SSA to increase teacher pay.

- **[SF 2411](#) Work-based Learning** allows a student participating in a 14-week student teaching experience to be credited between 1 week and 10 weeks for prior work experience as a substitute teacher or a para-educator, including prior experience under the TPRA grant program, under specific conditions.
- **[HF 2612](#) IPERS provisions** allow teachers whose first month of retirement benefits is July 2024 or later, but before July 1, 2027, to return to covered employment as a teacher after receiving one month of retirement benefits.
- **[HF 2618](#) Iowa Literacy Initiative** requires new teachers to take the Foundations in Literacy exam, and requires colleges to report scores, but does not condition the teaching license on successfully passing a target score.
- **[HF 255](#) Teacher Intern License/Program** creates a new pathway to teaching with an on-the-job completion component.
- **[SF 2443](#) Standings Appropriations Teacher Minimums:** more clearly defined 12-years of teaching experience for teacher pay minimums, effectively adding \$5 million to the TSS distribution method.
- **[SF 392](#) Teacher Retention and Recruitment** allows the use of the Management Fund for loan forgiveness and recruitment programs. This bill did not receive additional legislative action in the 2024 Session.

Quality Preschool: additional weighting for full-day including wrap-around services and childcare for low-income and non-English speaking students and use of general fund dollars or generate spending authority for PK expansion. Each of these bills received a 3:0 subcommittee passage but did not move forward out of the House Education Committee.

- [HF 2357 PK Instructional Hours](#) would have required full-day PK for a full 1.0 weighting.
- [HF 297 Funding for Low-Income PK](#) would have provided a full 1.0 weighting for PK students in families below 200% of the federal poverty level.

Student Opportunity Equity including targeted funding for actual costs of closing achievement gaps for at-risk students living in poverty.

- [SF 2443 Standing Appropriations:](#) the legislature continued the practice of delaying the \$10 million standing appropriation for high-needs schools first enacted in the 2014 legislative session.
- Although introduced, bills allowing all districts up to 5% of Regular Program District Cost spending authority for dropout prevention did not progress. See [HF 380](#), which did not advance out of House Education, and [SF 246](#), which was approved by the Senate Education Committee, but did not progress further. These two bills were introduced in the first year of the biennium.

English-Learner Programs and Services including increased weighting commensurate with costs.

- No change to ELL funding.
- Iowa's new state plan for ESSA compliance now retains EL students who have reached proficiency and are no longer receiving ELL services in the measure of district progress toward closing achievement gaps.

Literacy including state investment in improved literacy instruction with a solid research base, known as the Science of Reading. This includes options for training, materials and formative assessment tools while respecting local control required to implement initiatives with fidelity.

- [HF 2618 Iowa Literacy Initiative](#) requires new teachers to take the Foundations in Literacy exam, and requires colleges to report scores, but does not condition the teaching license on successfully passing a target score. It also requires literacy instruction to be research-based (i.e. the Science of Reading) and requires individualized reading plans for nonproficient students in K-6, including notice to parents communicating the opportunity to retain the student.

High School Programming supports the expansion of funding and educational opportunities for public school students, including career and technical education (CTE) programs, apprenticeships, career pathways and college readiness experiences, work-based learning, and more student choice in meeting course and core graduation requirements rather than state-mandated one-size-fits-all course requirements.

- [HF 2465 AG Classes Offer and Teach Flexibility](#) provides opportunities to code courses differently to meet offer and teach requirements for math, science, and CTE courses in areas teaching Agriculture.
- [SF 2411 Work-Based Learning](#) allows students to receive high school credit for work-based learning, even when school is not in session.

Special Education Identification and Instruction

Appropriate identification of students' disabilities, provision of the continuum of care, an evaluation of our state's plan with the federal government for compliance, including a thorough investigation by an independent evaluator to determine how such a change to child find/student identification for services related to disability used by other states and allowed under Federal law would impact student outcomes in Iowa.

Additional state investment is required to build and support a full continuum of care. A workable system gives access to all information needed to effectively serve students entitled under IDEA. Mandates from the State of Iowa should not exceed federal requirements for special education services.

- [HF 2612](#) AEA, TSS and SSA did include a task force to study nearly everything about special education and AEA services. As of this writing, the task force has not yet been appointed or scheduled a meeting.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and School Choice opposes any expansion of programs/plans that redirect or designate additional taxpayer funds for private school, homeschooling or other private services. Private school programs must include accountability for expenditures and should be subject to public oversight that accompanies tax dollars. Supports correcting legislation to allow money to follow students back to public school if they leave the private school, to eliminate the requirement for public schools to reimburse private school parents for transportation, and a reasonable deadline for application to ESA.

- No legislation moved forward related to ESAs and school choice, other than reinstatement of the Open Enrollment March 1 deadline contained in the Education Appropriations bill, [SF 2435](#).

Mental Health Services: Iowa children need an improved mental health system, including the structure and funding to eliminate mental health professional shortages, such as loan forgiveness programs. Iowa should engage in every opportunity to maximize school access to Medicaid claiming for health services for all students, not just students with disabilities. The formula should include a categorical funding stream designated for mental health professionals and programs serving students. The Legislature should avoid enacting legislation and education policies that increase pressure on students with mental health challenges and must value inclusion and the diverse lived experiences of all students.

- [HF 2515](#) Therapist, Counselor or Social Worker Authorization Reciprocity
- [SF 2435](#) Education Appropriations included several items regarding mental health:
 - Allows DE to transfer unencumbered or unobligated funds from the FY 2024 General Fund appropriation for Therapeutic Classroom Transportation Claims Reimbursement to the Therapeutic Classroom Incentive Fund established in Iowa Code section 256.25 before the close of the fiscal year.
 - Maintained \$500,000 appropriation for therapeutic classroom transportation reimbursement
 - Maintained \$2,351,382 appropriation for therapeutic classroom incentive grants.
 - Maintained \$3,383,936 appropriation for AEAs to provide for children's mental health school-based training and support to be used for mental health awareness training for educators and provide mental health services and support for students.
 - Maintained \$520,000 appropriation for deposit in the Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment Program fund. The Program provides for the repayment of qualified loans to

non-prescribing mental health practitioners who practice full-time in a service commitment area or teach in Iowa. The annual loan repayment provided to a recipient cannot exceed \$40,000, which is paid in annual installments of \$8,000 towards qualifying loan balances. A recipient is eligible for loan repayment for no more than five consecutive years unless granted a waiver for part-time service.

District Authority Home Rule in Iowa Code 274.3 requires the executive branch and the courts to interpret the Iowa Code impacting schools and school boards and develop administrative rules with deference to local control. The Legislature and Governor should focus efforts on flexibility rather than state-mandated one-size-fits-all action.

- [HF 2398 Insurance for Public Officers](#) allows an insurance policy rather than a bond.
- [HF 2586 School Security Personnel/Armed School Staff](#) maintained the requirement that local board policy must allow staff to carry weapons on school grounds and added to the requirement to employ or retain the services of a school resource officer or a security officer employed by a private security business, that the district could employ security officers in high schools. Also allows the school board to opt out of this requirement.
- There were many other bills introduced that were unfunded mandates or would have limited district authority that did not make it to the Governor's desk.

Safety and Cybersecurity: updated funding sources to protect staff and students, a coordinated effort to support school districts' cybersecurity needs, to create a consortium to curate, vet and establish professional services from which school districts may choose for cybersecurity needs, to create options preserving local decision-making authority of school boards in choosing safety solutions for their community schools. School districts should be able to expense cybersecurity systems, services, improvements, training, costs of cybersecurity staff, as well as the costs of safe entrances, facility safety improvements and safety training to protect staff and students from the Management Fund, as well as from the state penny for school infrastructure (SAVE) fund and the physical plant and equipment levy (PPEL).

[HF 2708 Cyber Security State Responsibilities \(Sec. 45 of bill\)](#) Requires state and local governments to work together to modernize approaches and adopt best practices regarding cyber safety. Requires DOM to create a local government reporting system, including a hotline for reporting cyber incidents and a method of reporting protections in place (multifactor authentication, event logging, data encryption, system recovery, use of .gov internet domain and related practices). Also authorizes DOM to establish a grant system to assist local governments contingent on an appropriation and authorizes DOM to charge fees.

[HF 2652 School Safety](#) requires the DPS, with the DE and the DHHS/DE, to establish a task force on school safety standards and requires a report by December 2024. Prohibits schools from issuing bonds for school building projects if any attendance centers are not in compliance with safety standards. Allows the use of SAVE funds for technology and safety equipment but not for staff (no difference from current law). Requires schools to maintain infrastructure and requires infrastructure be approved as anti-terrorist. This bill originally included an appropriation for school safety and technology grant program, but that was amended out of the bill before final passage.