

2010 Legislative Session Priorities

Statement of Collaboration: The School Administrators of Iowa's platform was developed in the context and with consideration of the needs of the other members of the PK-16 educational community as well as the overall state budget. We believe that public education is a significant factor in Iowa's economy and a key component to the quality of life we enjoy in this state. A good education is a powerful economic development tool. As a major segment of the state's budget, education is an investment in our future.

Mission Statement: SAI's mission is to support, encourage and develop Iowa's leaders and learners.

Major issues:

Allowable Growth: This is the most important funding priority for public education. It is essential to keep Iowa's allowable growth rate at a point that the state does not continue to fall further behind the national average per pupil expenditure. The Legislature needs to develop a plan to accomplish this goal as they have done to get teacher salaries to the national average. With this in mind, SAI recommends that the 2 percent allowable growth authority for 2011 be maintained to allow for district budgeting. Due to the present economic conditions, it may be better to hold off setting the 2012 allowable growth/categorical funding until there is a clearer picture of the economy. A figure set low to be safe would hurt students and may cause unnecessary layoffs to staff, which the state has invested significant funds in developing.

Core Curriculum: SAI recognizes the value of and supports the Iowa Core Curriculum initiative. It is important that substantive changes are not made to the Core during the session so that districts may continue their current work toward implementation. AEA funding is critical to provide technical assistance to districts to help implement this initiative.

Area Education Agency Funding: Additional funds should be allocated whenever the AEAs are asked to perform more tasks. The AEAs face the same difficulty as PK-12 districts in securing staff, and thus need a mechanism to help secure staff to replace the deleted market factor legislation.

Funding Formula: SAI would like to thank the Legislature for adding items to the funding formula. Full funding of the formula is still an issue as the number of requirements continues to increase. The need to address transportation costs is one item that has historically been debated due to the large variance in costs between districts. Other areas where the increases have exceeded allowable growth for a number of years are health insurance, energy costs, technology and vocational training equipment/supplies.

Collective Bargaining Issues: When bargaining-related areas are raised, all parties affected by any proposed legislation should be involved in the discussion. Extra items to negotiate bring additional financial implications. With districts trying to maintain programs with minimum allowable growth, this would be very difficult.

PPEL/PERL Funds: SAI supports the expansion of PPEL uses to include major transportation costs and the purchase of computer software. It also supports PERL being added to the list of Board-initiated levies. This could provide districts with a way to address funding before- and after-school programs and other programs that work in concert with state-funded early childhood initiatives.

Other key issues for consideration:

Professional Development: Quality professional development is a significant contributor to improved student performance. The Legislature needs to continue to support additional contract time, funding for developing quality professional development activities, and funding for the DE and AEAs to allow them to coordinate and deliver quality teacher/administrator professional development. If the budget does not allow the expansion of this program to continue, we feel strongly that present levels of funding should be maintained until the economy improves.

Educator Quality/Compensation: The current law, which includes teacher and administrator mentoring and induction programs, should be maintained. Administrator mentoring and induction should be extended to two years, as is currently the case for teachers. Also, the Legislature should provide funding for a Principal's Academy to promote best practice among Iowa principals.

Incentives: SAI feels that financial incentives can be very effective for expediting high school reinvention, regionalizing high schools, voluntary district reorganizations, creating administrative efficiencies and fostering collaboration with community colleges. Curriculum directors and human resources staff are high-need areas where incentives could be developed to foster collaboration among districts. Provide a process for districts to secure support to address these areas.

Early Childhood Education: SAI continues to support the current law and supports alternative funding sources until the program meets the guidelines to become part of the formula. Results should continue to be quantified and the best methods developed to deliver this programming. The rewards in student performance will be identifiable and significant, and savings in special education and human services costs should more than pay for the investment.

Before- and After-School Programming: As early childhood programs increase, the demand for programs before and after school will also increase. Incentive funding should be allowed to assist community collaborative programs that pool resources to provide before- and after-school programs that support early childhood, childcare and program enrichment.

IPERS: SAI supports legislation that would provide a method to fully fund the IPERS program. It favors the current 60 percent being paid by the employer and 40 percent by the employee. Necessary increases for the employer should be allowed to be paid from the management fund. The solution should not be an instant fix, but a long range plan that protects the fund and makes it better. This is a concern of public employees and is a retention factor.

Market Factor Pay: With the loss of this program, districts are concerned about being able to address staffing needs. There need to be funds that districts have authority to use for signing bonuses, additional professional development to help existing staff with a certification needed by the district, to supplement shared staff and other staffing issues. This is an item on which the educational community needs to work together to enable the selection and placement of qualified staff.

Safety/Security: As more agencies become involved in developing community and area initiatives, the role of school districts should not be overlooked. Districts currently provide emergency shelter, food, transportation and other emergency supports. Thus, they need to be involved in the organization and planning.

SAI strongly supports the concept that adequate funding for programs, professional development, facilities, equipment, supplies, salaries and benefits is the best way to attract and retain the best and brightest educators and provide the highest quality education to students.