



UEN Legislative Update March 20, 2025

This UEN Weekly Report from the 2025 Legislative Session includes:

- SSA Still Stuck
- Floor Action This Week in the House and Senate, including three of the Governor's Bills through the House
- Subcommittee on HSB 311 Management Fund for School Security
- Update to Property Tax Proposals
- Advocacy Actions for the Week and Resources

School Funding / SSA Still Stuck

SF 167 SSA by the Senate sets the increase per pupil cost at 2%. The House proposal amended SF 167 with Amendment **S-3004** awaiting action on the Senate Calendar. The additional investments in the House proposal include: 1) \$10 per pupil applied to the minimum state cost per pupil, to close the district cost per pupil equity gap to \$130, 2) an increase in the transportation equity fund sufficient to reimburse all districts with transportation costs per pupil above the state average, 3) increase in the operational sharing student weighting cap from 21 to 25, and 4) supplemental appropriation of \$23.6 million distributed to districts based on enrollment, estimated at \$47 per pupil, in the 2025-26 fiscal year. This supplemental appropriation is one time and not expected to carry forward into the future. UEN is registered in support of the House proposal and opposed to the Senate proposal. The legislative deadline for enacting SSA was Feb. 14.

Floor Action This Week

Both chambers moved bills through the process this week, getting ready for the April 4 funnel deadline. By that time, bills must not only be approved in their chamber of origin but must also be approved by a committee in the other chamber. Here's what happened this week;

Senate Floor Action

- **SF 273 Student Grooming:** Defines grooming to mean patterns of behavior, in light of the circumstances, to constitute action to entice a student with the intent of taking advantage of the student for the benefit of the person doing the grooming. Specifies that this includes engaging in sex but is not limited to engaging in sex. Approved 45:2. UEN supports.
- **SF 140 Satellite Locations:** Prohibits a satellite voting location at a school if a ballot initiative involves a school bond. Prohibits displays about any ballot measures at a voting place. Approved 33:13. UEN is opposed.
- **SF 448 Bus Driver Education Certification:** Exempts school bus drivers from having to complete an instruction course if the school district does not require it. Allows a driver

whose authorization has been revoked due to a failure to certify having completed a school bus driver safety course to work for another district if that district does not require the certification. Approved 47:0. UEN is undecided.

- **SF 583 School Safety Assessment Teams:** Allows creation of school safety assessment teams, allows sharing of information, creates immunity for individuals operating in good faith, suggests members of the team, allows districts to work together with other districts, nonpublic schools, local law enforcement and/or other service providers (amended to change from threat to safety). Approved 48:0. UEN supports.

House Floor Action on Governor's Bills

HF 794 Math Initiative:

- Requires DE to do the following:
 - Provide family-centered resources to schools to support the development of math knowledge at home
 - Provide math PD to teachers employed by school districts in need of support (based on relative math proficiency and resources available)
 - Develop and distribute a comprehensive state math plan (effective on enactment)
 - Develop and publish a list of valid and reliable screeners that may be used by teachers to determine if students in K-6 may require additional instruction or support
- Requires teacher prep programs to include preparation in math, specifies coursework and a demonstration of competency.
- Requires school districts to:
 - Assess K-6 students at least 3X a year on screener
 - If screener determines student is persistently at risk in math:
 - Assess progress at least every other week and implement interventions and supports
 - Develop in consult with parents an individualized math plan that identifies interventions and supports
 - If the student is meeting expectations related to progress, must provide the student with small group interventions. If not, provide intensive interventions
 - Continue support and interventions until the student performs at benchmark on ISASP or on two consecutive district assessments, whatever is first.
 - Defines persistently at risk to mean not meeting grade-level benchmark on two consecutive assessments.
- Requires the State BOE to adopt rules
- No Money: Specifies that this requirement is not an unfunded mandate since school districts received state foundation aid.
- Approved as amended 82:16, over to the Senate. UEN is undecided.

HF 782 Cell Phone Restrictions Policy:

- Requires DE to distribute model policies (7.1.25)

- Requires school boards, on or before July 1, 2025, to revise emergency plans (effective on enactment)
- Requires School Boards to adopt, beginning July 1, 2025 policies to restrict student use of electronic devices during instructional time. Defines personal electronic devices and specifies exceptions (effective on enactment)
- Allows (but does not mandate) State BE to adopt rules (effective 7.1.25)
- No Money: Specifies that it is not an unfunded mandated

Approved 88:9. UEN is undecided

HF 787 Omnibus Education Including TSS:

- TSS: require the Department of Management to calculate TSS based on the district need to implement the higher teacher salary minimums approved in HF 2612 last year. (Based on Oct. 2024 BEDS plus employer share of FICA/IPERS costs, plus allows error correction for last year's experience errors, and adds SSA growth applied to the state TSS per pupil once SSA is set).
- Reimburses districts for out-of-state placements off the top of state aid, prorated based on budget enrollment
- Reinstates the TeachIowa job postings website
- Provides more flexibility for fewer days of practicum for alternative teacher pathways
- IPERS reemployment: allows paying \$50K to rehired retired teacher regardless of years of experience
- Approved 96:1. UEN supports

Other House Floor Action:

- **HF 190 Online Summative Assessments** allows virtual schools to offer for students in virtual programs. Approved 86:11. UEN supports.
- **HF 522 Therapeutic Classrooms** allowable expenses, including nutritious food and proper lighting. Approved 66:32. UEN is undecided
- **HF 865 Bullying and Harassment Definition:** strikes individual characteristics (IC [280.28](#) subsection 2(c)) and defines bullying as any repeated and targeted electronic, written, verbal or physical act or conduct towards a student that creates an objectively hostile school environment. Approved 64:33. UEN is undecided.
- **HF 870 Religious Courses Exempt Absences:** requires school districts to not count absences for religious instruction by a private entity toward chronic absenteeism. Limits to no more than 5 hours/week, requires proof of attendance to the program, and requires the student to make up any work. House Amendment deleted the requirement that school districts give credit for the course. Approved 96:2. UEN is undecided.
- **HF 856 Defines and prohibits any DEI activity or effort to:**
 - Manipulate/influence the composition of employees or student body with reference to race, sex, color, or ethnicity, apart from ensuring colorblind and sex-neutral admissions and hiring in accordance with state and federal anti-discrimination law.

- Promote differential treatment of or provide special benefits to individuals on the basis of race, color or ethnicity.
- Promote or promulgate policies and procedures designed or implemented with reference to race, color or ethnicity or training, programming or activities designed or implemented with reference to race, color or ethnicity.
- Promote, as the official position of the state entity, a particular, widely contested opinion referencing unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, allyship, transgender ideology, microaggressions, group marginalization, anti-racism, systemic oppression, social justice, intersectionality, neopronouns, heteronormativity, disparate impact, gender theory, racial privilege, sexual privilege, or any related formulation of these concepts.
- Defines “state entity” to include political subdivisions (does not specifically say, but would include school districts.)
- Prohibits state entities from using money from any source to establish, employ or contract for a DEI officer or officer.
- Exempts legal office established for compliance with Title IX, academic departments in public schools that exist primarily for offering courses, an office solely engaged in recruitment, a registered student organization, or an office required to be maintained by the federal government.
- Does not apply to:
 - academic course instruction
 - research or creative works by students, employees or other research personnel, or to dissemination of such
 - Activities of registered student organizations
 - Arrangements for guest speakers and performers with short-term engagements
 - Mental or physical health services provided by licensed professionals
 - Policies, programming, training, practices, activities, or procedures related to DEI required by a contract or agreement with federal government.
 - Doesn’t prohibit bona fide qualifications based on sex reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the state entity.
- Enforcement: any person may notify the Iowa Attorney General who may bring an action and/or a student, alumni or employee may bring civil action for injunctive relief to stop a violation
- Effective on enactment
- Approved 61:37. UEN is undecided
- **HF 189 Nonpublic Student Extracurricular Eligibility** requires public schools to allow nonpublic students to participate in sports programs in public school if the program doesn’t exist in their private school. Approved 63:33. UEN is opposed.
- **HF 389 Child Abuse at Schools:** requires DHHS to complete an initial assessment. Requires employee to be placed on administrative leave until the investigation is concluded. Approved 96:0. UEN is undecided.

- **HF 851 Nutritional Requirements Instruction:**
 - Requires public and private K-12 schools to teach about nutrition, the value of local production, and the importance of animal-based protein, dairy, fruits and vegetables beginning in the 2026-27 school year.
 - Requires DE to request a waiver from federal school breakfast nutrition requirements in order to develop state standards based on Iowa cultural practices.
 - Requires annual reports to the Legislature on the design and effect of standards.
 - Approved 60:36 UEN is registered as undecided. A [fiscal note](#) was published indicating a significant cost to DE regarding the duties required of the Department in the bill, but also indicating the potential loss of federal food and nutrition funds. As such, UEN will change our registration to opposed as the bill moves to the Senate.

Subcommittee on HSB 311 Management Fund for School Security

- A subcommittee met this week on HSB 311, including Reps. Vondran, Meggers and Gjerde, who unanimously moved the bill forward to the full House Ways and Means Committee. The bill allows school districts to use Management Fund to pay for the costs of operating and licensing school safety and security infrastructure, including weapons detection systems and door monitoring systems. The bill also allows the use of Management Fund for an SRO, an individual employed by a private security business, or a reserve peace officer or peace officer. The bill was requested by the Davenport School District. UEN supports the bill. If your district has a representative assigned to the [House Ways and Means Committee](#), please reach out to them and ask for a yes vote in committee.
- Rationale to support HSB 311:
 - School safety costs are new, real and important.
 - Districts are using PPEL and SAVE for Infrastructure Safety Improvements, but there is no funding for staffing those systems.
 - Management Fund is designed to prevent risk. It's appropriate to pay for security system staffing and security staff, both of which will ultimately prevent expenditures out of the Management Fund. Increased Management Fund costs result from both increased insurance premiums, judgments and penalties from lawsuits generated as a result of an incident, which are paid from the Management Fund.

Update to Property Tax Proposals

Bills were introduced last week, [HSB 313](#) and [SSB 1208](#), which make multiple changes to Iowa's system of property taxes that the lawmakers said would provide an estimated \$426 million in property tax cuts. Subcommittees of five members were assigned in each chamber. If your district is represented by one of these legislators, please try to reach out and engage with them sometime in the next week to 10 days. Subcommittee members include:

- SSB 1208 Sens. Dawson, Bisignano, Driscoll, Petersen, and Rowley.
- HSB 313 Reps. Kaufmann, Bloomingdale, McBurney, Wilson and Wulf.

Next steps: We would expect to see a subcommittee scheduled, potentially this coming week.

We discovered something new this week. Division III of the property tax bills refers back to the definition already stated in IC 257.2 subsection 13, which states: “Unexpended fund balance” means a school district’s unreserved and undesignated fund balances.

- If that stays in the bill as the definition through the cross reference, we think school districts could have either a reserved or designated management fund balance for various purposes: 1) maximum deductible 2) insurance premiums, or 3) early retirement plan obligations or any other allowable purpose of the management fund.
- That makes the calculation on the 180% of the prior 3 years' average expenditures a little more generous.
- We originally read the definition that was required to be reported to the SBRC for their review, which specifically said to include the designated and reserved funds as part of the unspent balance in local district reporting. The totals will still be required to be reported by Nov. 15, 2025, to the SBRC, if that provision does not change.

Although school leaders might support some provisions in the bill now (e.g., returns the Sales Tax Infrastructure funds back to SAVE that would otherwise have been property tax relief), the policies in these bills are very much a work in progress and could change with each step through committees and chambers. See possible questions or advocacy steps below. Access the latest [ISFIS Bill Summary](#).

UEN Advocacy Resources

Check out the 2025 Session Advocacy Handbook, which has everything advocacy beginners and experienced pros can use to advocate with legislators, at the Statehouse or back in your district. Find the handbook on the UEN Advocacy Website here: <https://www.uen-ia.org/advocacy-handbook>

Advocacy Actions This Week

Start with a thank you! Find something on the floor action lists above (such as HF 787 Education Omnibus Bill with TSS or SF 583 School Safety Assessment Teams) that you support, and tell them you appreciate that they moved it forward.

Property Tax Relief Proposals:

- Approach the conversation with an open mind. Property taxpayers talked a lot about the issue during the election. They have to (and want to and will) do something. Offer to be a resource.
- Ask how the state will afford the bigger commitment to the school funding formula? How much property tax relief is enough?

- Brainstorm with them about unintended consequences. Can we prevent some bad outcomes (e.g., add in SBRC authority for a school board to levy the Management Fund in spite of the fund balance limitation for unusual circumstances?)
- Network with city and county leaders. Explain how schools are budget-limited through the formula (for schools, tax rates are more about valuation and enrollment changes – and it’s tough, when enrollment declines, cutting the budget. Can you find common ground on the limitations or other provisions?)

Adequate School Funding: Contact legislators regarding SSA every week until it’s done. Find teachable moments to trigger a message. For example,

- School districts sent budgets to the county on March 5 to create taxpayer statements and notify taxpayers of public hearings. The information in those notices is not likely accurate pending the final SSA decision.
- School districts will hold public hearings to get input from taxpayers on the proposed budget. The information sent by the county to taxpayers is not likely accurate pending the final SSA decision.
- Decisions to continue teaching contracts and settle negotiations are dependent on knowing the TSS per pupil for your district. That is part of the SSA bill.
- There are many bills surviving the funnel deadline that include unfunded mandates. Schools depend on the very best funding the state can provide to be able to fulfill any new legislated expectations.

The House’s 2.25%++ is a preferable policy and UEN is registered in support. The teacher salary investment last year was a really good start to attract future teachers, but SSA has to keep pace or our staff and programs for students will be compromised. Diverting the small increases that UEN districts will get for TSS to charter schools would further stress public school budgets (See the March 6 report for details on [HF 789](#) TSS for Charter Schools which UEN opposes). See the [UEN 2025 Adequate School Funding Issue Brief](#) for additional information.

Preschool: Encourage both Representatives and Senators to not forget public schools when considering the Governor’s Child Care Continuum bills. Public schools need funding for initial preschool programs to expand access to preschool. Research shows that quality preschool for enough hours has great benefits (Perry Preschool Project, with \$17 returned benefit for every \$1 invested, had a minimum of 15 hours a week, which is 50% more time than Iowa’s current SVPP funds). Your own district data on the benefits for those students in full-day preschool is really important to share. Iowa’s neediest students not currently accessing either PK or child care might be best served in an all-day PK program. Serving these neediest students well will go far in achieving state priorities, including literacy and math outcomes. The Governor’s grants and 1.0 weighting for most at-risk 4-year-olds are compatible policies, both necessary to establish a full continuum of care and instruction. Express thanks to House HHS and Senate Education Committee members for amending the bills to require licensed teachers in the new community provider authorized programs. See the [UEN 2025 Quality Preschool Issue Brief](#) for additional information.

Unfunded Mandates and Implementation Timelines: remind legislators that any bill requiring staff training or rewriting curriculum costs districts time and money. Unfunded mandates such as the mandatory Civics Test, creating individual math plans with intensive interventions, creating a new tracking software to catalog all instructional materials (including teacher time weekly to update the database) and Career Education curriculum in middle school require resources that take away other key issues of district focus. Each mandate should allow time and include funding to implement or at least an adequate increase in SSA so school districts do not have to make tough choices. Many new requirements are already on our curriculum directors' and teacher plates. State BOE has approved new standards (ELA, Science, Math) and the new literacy initiative is currently being implemented. Any additional mandates for changing instruction that require training need thoughtful time and compliance expectations. Recent examples include cell phone policy/social media instruction, adding career exposure, planning and experience to middle school grades, a new math initiative or civics initiative, seizure disorder training and plans, gun safety training courses, and the list goes on with every new bill. Please allow the time it takes to do good work, to benefit students.

Connecting with Legislators: To call and leave a message at the Statehouse during the legislative session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221 and the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371. You can ask if they are available or leave a message for them to call you back. You can also ask them what's the best way to contact them during session. They may prefer email or text message or phone call based on their personal preferences.

Find out who your legislators are through the interactive map or address search posted on the Legislative Website here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

Other UEN Advocacy Resources:

Check out the UEN Website at www.uen-ia.org to find Issue Briefs, these UEN Weekly Update Reports and Videos, UEN Calls to Action when immediate advocacy action is required, testimony presented to the State Board of Education, the DE or any legislative committee or public hearing, and links to fiscal information that may inform your work. The latest legislative actions from the Statehouse will be posted at: www.uen-ia.org/blogs-list.

Bill Action This Week

Check out our separate Bill Tracker for all the bill actions and details for the week.

Contact Us

Keep in touch with your questions, comments, and let us know about your advocacy actions.

Margaret Buckton

UEN Executive Director

margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com

515.201.3755 Cell

Thanks to our 2024-25 UEN Corporate Sponsors:

Special thank you to your UEN Corporate Sponsors for their support of UEN programs and services. Find information about how these organizations may help your district on the Corporate Sponsor page of the UEN website at www.uen-ia.org/uen-sponsors.

 <p>Solution Tree Transform education worldwide to ensure learning for all</p>	<p>www.solutiontree.com/st-states/iowa</p>
--	---