Urban Education Network of Iowa

Educating Diverse Students in Iowa's Urban Communities
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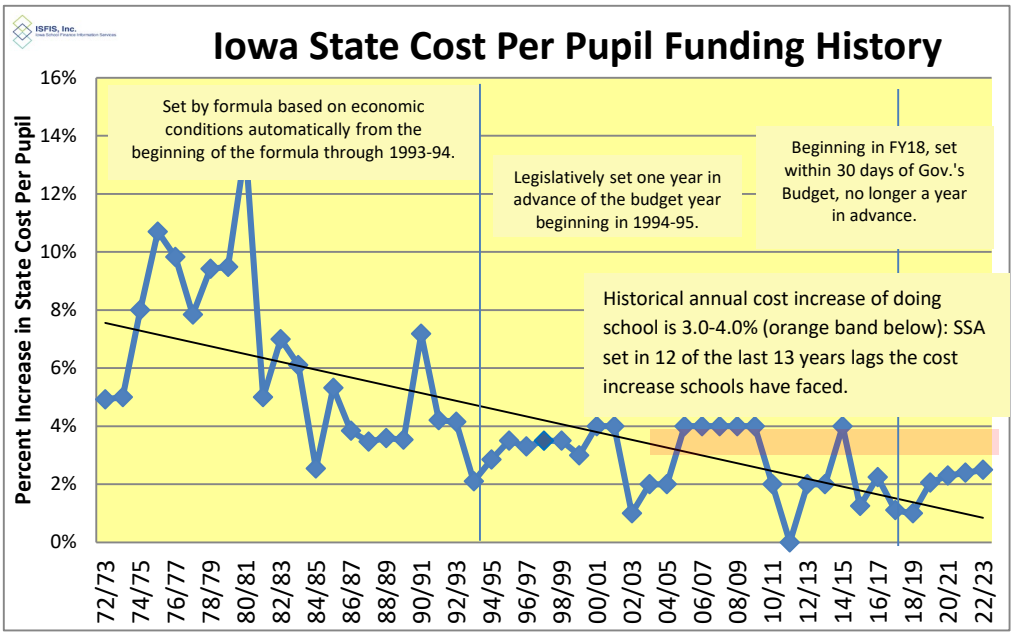
UEN 2023 Priority Issue Brief
Adequate Education Resources

History: This chart shows the historical percentage increase in Iowa's state cost per pupil, called State Supplemental Assistance or SSA, since the funding formula began in 1972-73:



Current reality: Annual formula increases have not been enough to pay salaries and benefits to compete with the private sector, plus other costs of operating schools and meeting student needs. Few or no applicants at all, even in urban areas,demonstrates the inability to compete for human capital in Iowa's thriving economy. SSA impacts the weightings, or multipliers, assigned to students with special education needs, English-language learner supports, college credit courses and preschool, providing resources for student programs.

The SSA funding percentage is also applied to Teacher Salary, Professional Development, Teacher Leadership and Compensation (TLC) and the new Transportation Supplements. Although the transportation funds are for any general fund purpose (considered as reimbursement), other categorical funds are regulated for specific purposes. AEA special education and school improvement are also dependent on adequate increases in the per pupil amount. State and Federal unfunded mandates are paid from this funding. When school costs increase more than funding, program and staff reductions follow. Declining enrollment requires even further reduction. Growing enrollment demands additional staff and supports, both compromised by low SSA.

Staff Shortages: Schools are still striving to replace retirees or hire long-term substitutes when staff are ill or have not returned to teaching since the pandemic. Schools not benefitting much from federal pandemic funds based on the Title I formula still have additional costs and labor shortages. Districts with high poverty have additional educational needs. Without adequate funds, school districts cannot pay a competitive wage and attract quality staff to our schools; this dynamic has intensified over the last decade. See the UEN Staff Shortage position paper for additional data regarding staff shortages.

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Benchmarks/Economic Measures for Comparison: When comparing the state cost per pupil to economic benchmarks and other states, Iowa school funding falls short. Economic benchmarks:

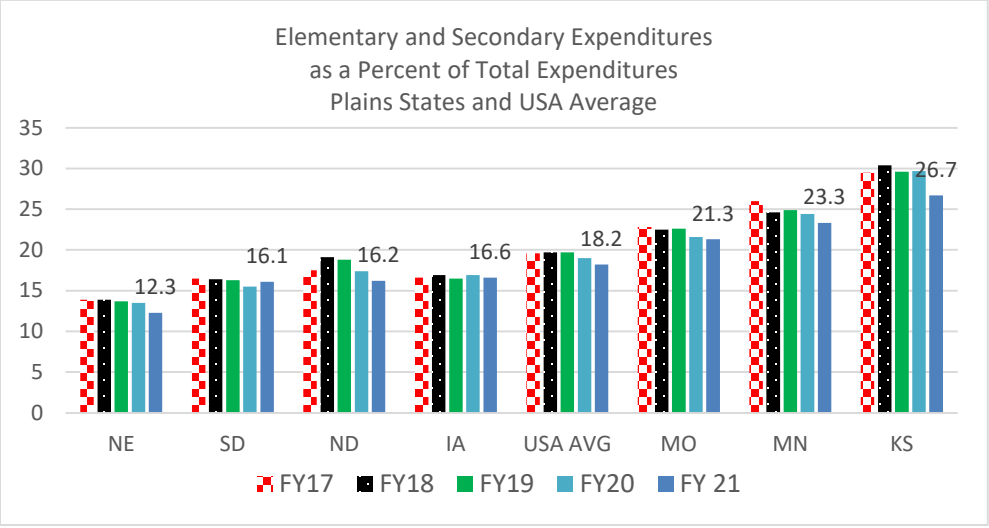
- The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for Iowa grew 30.5%, controlling for inflation, 2011 to 2020, compared to the state cost per pupil, which grew 16.9% over the same period. https://www.bea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-09/qgdpstate1021.pdf
- Expressing the state cost per pupil as a percentage of one billion GDP shows a disturbing trend. In the 1990s, the SCPP ranged between 52-44% of one billion GDP. In the 2000s, the SCPP ranged from 45-37% of one billion GDP. Since 2010, the SCPP has ranged from 37-34% of one billion GDP; the last six years show the lowest comparison in the formula's history.
- Iowa Per Capita Personal Income increased 40%, 2010-2020, while the state cost per pupil increased 19% over the same decade. https://fred.stlouisfed.org/

Other State Comparisons: from 2019 US Census data, May 2021
https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/econ/school-finances/secondary-education-finance.html

- Iowa slipped to 30th in per pupil public elementary and secondary school system expenditures, which is $1,280 below the national average.
- Since 2014, Iowa elementary and secondary education spending has increased 11.6%, while the national average increase has been 19.9%. In the Midwest region, Nebraska is the only state outpaced by Iowa. Iowa ranks 40th nationally in the per pupil expenditure ***increase*** since 2014.
- US Census data from May 2022 shows Iowa now $1,536 below the national average. Contrast this recent trend with Iowa's early history. In the 70s, 80s, and 90s, Iowa schools spent more than the national average per pupil on education. US Census data
- Iowa still ranks 30th in the nation in per pupil expenditures FY 2020.

The State's contribution to school funding is roughly 42% of the state general fund budget. As the State has taken on a bigger share of the formula, lowering property taxes, the 42% benchmark is no longer indicative of a commensurate increase in resources available for educating students. The State has also created other funds (Taxpayer Relief Fund or Healthy Iowans Trust Fund) and lowered taxes, both of which invalidate the benchmark as a meaningful indicator of adequate funding. For true apples-to-apples, compare all state resources spent on education. The NASBO (National Association of State Budget Officers) annual State Expenditure Report shares this comparison:

- In FY 2021, Iowa's education expenditures were 16.5% of total state expenditures. Plains states averaged 18.2%. All states averaged 18.9%.
- Iowa's 2021 drop of 0.3% was not as steep as the national average decline as a percentage of total expenditures (a reduction of 0.8%).



- Iowa's formula has become increasingly state-funded, significantly more so than the national average.
- Iowa's ability to maintain 16.6% in FY 2021 may have been due in most part to the property tax relief portion of the formula (property tax relief payment) and changes to the foundation threshold in the formula, which increased the relative state share of school funding in Iowa.

Impact: Efforts to educate students, prepare a qualified workforce, and deliver the excellent educational outcomes to which Iowans are accustomed will be compromised if the basic foundation of school funding is not sustained. There are not enough qualified applicants to fill jobs, generally indicating that the profession of teaching is being outpaced in the marketplace. Class sizes are going up. Programs are being eliminated. Districts are offering fewer extracurricular and fine arts opportunities for students, especially in middle school. SSA is the lifeblood of Iowa schools. Declining enrollment combined with low SSA means reduced staff, fewer programs, stretched services and ultimately, less opportunities and choices for students.

Invest in Iowa's Future

Fund Iowa's public schools at a level sufficient to deliver the quality education all Iowa students deserve and need to be successful. Adequate funding provides program options, delivery options and individual student place-based choice within their neighborhood public school. The goals of public education are to close achievement gaps, provide career exploration and work-based learning experiences, fine arts, and extra-curriculars to help students uncover their skills and passions. This quality education prepares all students for engaged citizenship, further postsecondary study and/or credentialed workforce participation.

Adequate funding positions public schools to respond to needs deepened by the pandemic, do better for our most at-risk students, provide supports and enhancements for special needs and gifted students, provide more individualized attention and build better relationships via smaller class sizes, provide a more diverse, multi-lingual workforce, and hire and competitively compensate the dedicated teaching and support staff who nurture and challenge today's students, tomorrow's leaders. Iowans expect top-notch public schools with many programming choices for students.

The funding level should demonstrate Iowa citizens' recognition that PK-12 Education drives family decisions for where to live, where to work and where to go to school in every community. Our high-quality public schools in Iowa provide our business community with a great recruitment and economic development tool.

Iowa's funding formula includes meaningful and significant categorical funds which support teachers, school improvement and students. Adequate and timely SSA, at least meeting the inflation rate, is needed to deliver and sustain world-class educational opportunities for students. Funding should be set predictably, timely, sustainably and equitably. Continued progress on inequity within the formula is important. Districts must have adequate funding to address growing inflation and teacher and other staff shortages in Iowa's competitive employment economy.

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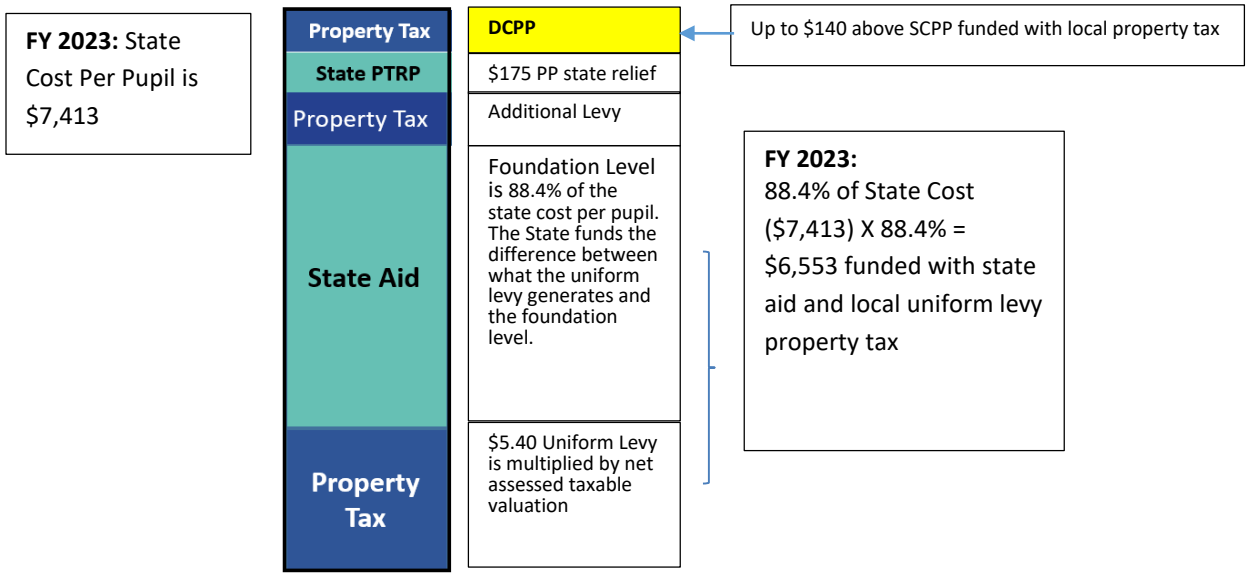
UEN 2023 Legislative Priority: State Cost per Pupil and Instructional Support Formula Inequities

Formula Inequity History: Before the Iowa school foundation formula was created, school districts depended almost entirely on local property taxes for funding. The level of support varied due to many factors, including community attitudes about the priority of education and local property tax capacity. The formula set a State Cost Per Pupil (SCPP) in the mid-1970s and then brought all districts spending less than that amount up to the SCPP. A combination of some local property tax and some state foundation aid provided funding. Those districts which spent more than the newly defined SCPP were allowed to continue for five decades, funded by local property taxpayers. Although the formula was created in the mid-1970s, the difference between the SCPP and a higher District Cost Per Pupil (DCPP) has remained, although narrowed over the last several years by legislative action. This graphic shows the property tax and state aid components of the SCPP and the DCPP above the $7,413 (FY 2022-23 SCPP). In the 2022 Session, the Legislature enacted HF 2316 School Funding (SSA), which set a 2.5% increase per pupil. The bill also closed the formula inequity gap by an additional $5 per pupil. Many of the following details are from the LSA's Fiscal Note.



Current Reality: In FY 2023, 224 districts (69%) are limited to the $7,413 as their District Cost Per Pupil (DCPP). The other 103 districts (31%) have a DCPP ranging from $7,414 to $7,553, or $1 to $140 more per student. When the Legislature determines the increase in the SCPP, that dollar amount is added to the DCPP, so the gap continues at the same dollar amount. On a percentage basis, the $140 is much less today than it was in 1975. However, when school budgets are tight, every dollar matters. This table shows the count of districts based on the range of authority in the formula to exceed the SCPP.

FY 2021 Count of Districts	Amount DCPP is Greater than SCPP
224	$0
20	$1 to $14
21	$15 to $29
20	$30 to $49
20	$52 to $85
22	$88 to $140
Total = 327	

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DCPP inequity impacting students: The amount of funding generated per pupil for regular education is not the same for all districts. Thus, a student, based solely on the historical practice of the district of residence, can generate more or less funding. Inequities are further compounded by the formula's use of multipliers or formula weightings for special student needs. Those multipliers, applied to the DCPP, generate different amounts of support for students, such as special education students, by application of the formula.

ISL inequity impacting students: Another inequity in the formula impacting students is the proration formula for Instructional Support Levy (ISL) State Aid. In short, since the state does not provide the required 25% match for ISL, districts with lowest property values supporting students, who would otherwise receive a proportionately larger share of State Aid, instead suffer an ISL shortfall. Although district school boards or voters have approved an ISL that is 10% of their regular program district cost, only those very property rich districts, such as LuVerne (ISL generated is $734 per pupil) and South O'Brien (ISL generated is $714 per pupil) receive nearly the full amount compared to the property poorer districts of Eagle Grove (ISL generated is $359 pupil) and Sioux City (ISL generated is $288 per pupil). Total Cost to the state of funding the required 25% ISL state match would have $95.9 million in FY 2021. Of that amount, $42.7 million was short funded in UEN member districts. Unlike other elements of the formula, school districts may not request or receive spending authority (modified supplemental amount) from the School Budget Review Committee for the ISL state shortfall.

Solutions: Possible solutions to promote equality without lowering the per pupil amount available for any school district include:

- For either ISL shortfall or SCPP equity, the state could grant all local districts spending authority for the difference and allow school boards to decide locally whether to fund it. This solution maintains the state's funding commitment without increasing it and provides local property taxes to support community schools. Although not all districts have equal political capacity to assess local property taxes, the impact on taxpayers is now buffered by efforts to promote tax equity, such as the Property Tax Equity and Relief (PTER) fund which lowers the highest school property tax levies in the state and phases in property tax relief for all property taxpayers. Additionally, the redirection of sales tax revenue from the State Penny for School Infrastructure, (also known as SAVE), could first be directed to partially match or fully offset the impact on local property taxpayers.
- Set the state cost per pupil at the highest amount but lower the foundation percentage threshold from 88.4% to an amount that balances the impact on the state and on property taxes.
- While the two preceding solutions depend on local funding, many districts have sufficient cash on hand, meaning little or no cash reserve levy impact for several years.
- Phase in a long-term commitment to eliminate the inequality over time. HF 2316 closed the formula inequity gap by an additional $5 per pupil. At this pace ($5 per pupil per year), it will take 28 more years to obtain full equity. A commitment to close the gap by an average of $14 per pupil would get to equity in 10 years.
- A combination of the two options above would also be possible – authority in the meantime, close the gap over the long haul.

Iowa's funding formula includes meaningful and significant categorical funds which support teachers, school improvement and students. Adequate and timely SSA, at least meeting the inflation rate, is needed to deliver and sustain world-class educational opportunities for students. Funding should be set predictably, timely, sustainably and equitably. ***Continued progress on inequity within the formula is important.*** Districts must have adequate funding to address growing inflation and teacher and other staff shortages in Iowa's competitive employment economy.

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UEN 2023 Priority Issue Brief: English Language Learner Supports

Services for ELL Students: The Urban Education Network (UEN) supports additional funding no lower than the national average (0.39) for ELL programming and state/regional capacity to assist districts with ELL students to improve instruction and evaluate programs for best practice. Students should be eligible for service for up to seven years based on their mastery of academic language at grade level. UEN supports flexibility for districts to best use funds to meet the needs of students and recognition of factors such as low income in meeting the learning needs of non-English speaking students.

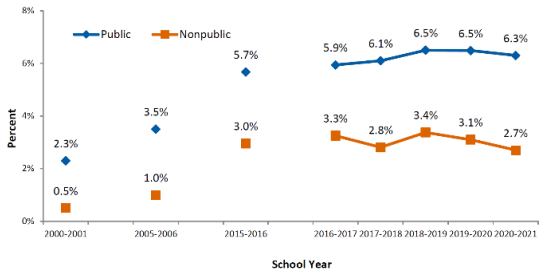
ELL Enrollment Growth

The number of students who are English language learners (ELL) continues to increase. In the 2020-21 school year, 6.3% of students were reported as ELL, up from 2.3% in 2000-01, as reported in the 2021 DE's Annual Condition of Education Report (Dec. 2021). Of the 46 Iowa school districts in FY 2021 with 6% or more of their enrollment eligible for ELL programing, 14 were urban districts and 32 are more rural in nature.

Enrollment of English Learners

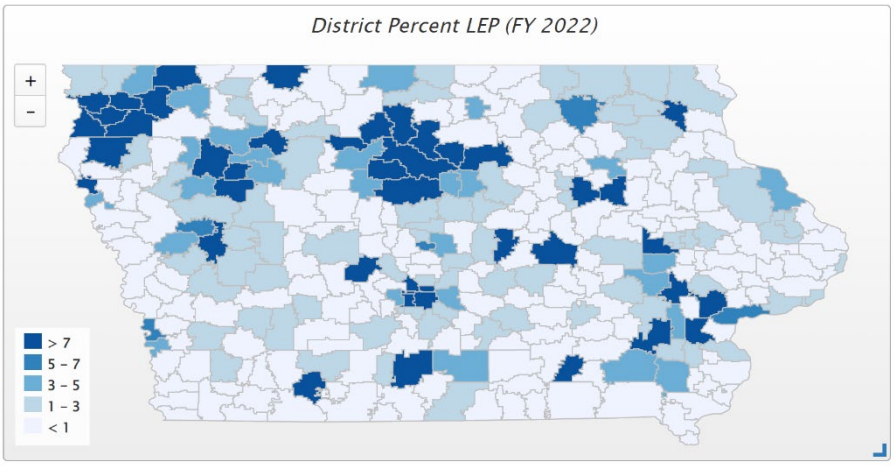
Figure 1-4

Percent of Public and NonPublic School K-12 Students who are English Learners 2000-2001, 2005-2006, 2015-2016, 2016-2017 to 2020-2021



Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Information and Analysis Services, and SRI.

This map from the ISFIS Mapping Tool shows a geographically diverse impact, with the darker blue districts having ELL concentrations above 7% in FY 2022.



Funding History: The ELL Task Force Report, Nov. 2013, tells the history of the formula support for ELL services: "Prior to the 2013 legislative session, students served in an ELL program counted for an additional 0.22 weighting, including state contribution in the formula, for programming for up to four years. During the 2013 legislative session, state contribution was extended to a fifth year, first available to schools in the 2014-15 school year budget. Legislation enacted in 2021 HF 605 set two weightings to generate funding for students served in limited-English proficient programs based on need, which is a beginning to the tiered weighting based on student's ELPA scores (Task Force recommendation): 1) An intermediate level with a weighting of .21 based and 2) An intensive level of .25 (both based on student ELPA test scores).

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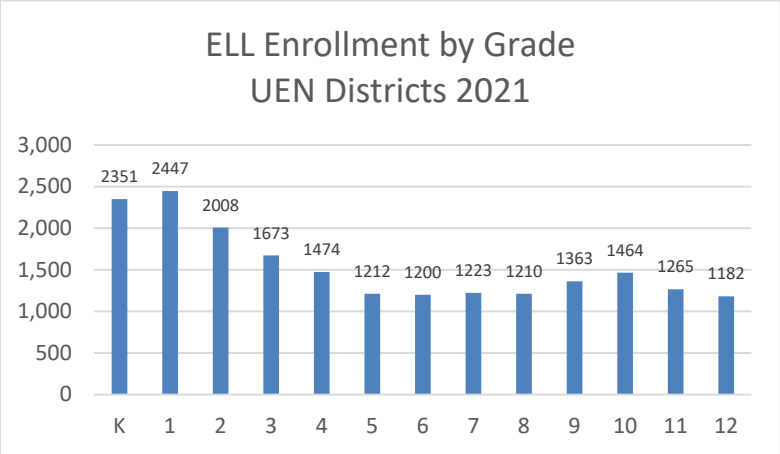
Educational Requirements: The Task Force Report also describes the responsibility of schools to provide services: In addition to federal law, Iowa has educational requirements for ELL students as defined in Iowa Code, Chapter 280.4, Uniform School Requirement: When a student is limited English proficient, both public and nonpublic schools shall provide special instruction, which shall include, but need not be limited to, either instruction in English as a second language or transitional bilingual instruction. Such instruction will continue until the student is fully English proficient or demonstrates a functional ability to speak, read, write, and understand the English language.

Funding Recommendations: The Task Force recommended and the UEN supports LEP weighted funding closer to the national average by increasing to an average of .39 through a phase-in formula over a three-year period. The .39 national average weighting was shown in the Nevada study, Study of a New Method of Funding for Public Schools in Nevada, American Institutes for Research, 2012. The Task Force also recommended extending eligibility for ELL state weighting from five years to seven years, reflecting the research-based timeline sufficient to move LEP students to proficiency: They state, "The extension of years is critical to provide enough time for all students to reach academic language proficiency through ELL educational programming to ensure they don't fall into a subsequent designation of special education requiring an Individualized Education Program."

Success: this chart shows that ELL students served early in elementary years tend to exit the program, as the numbers by grade level decrease dramatically through 6th grade.



How long does it take for ELLs to reach proficiency? The National Literacy Panel, as reported in A review conducted for the Center for Public Education by researchers at Edvantia, concluded that "considerable future research is needed to develop valid and reliable measures" of academic language proficiency (August & Shanahan, 2006). However, studies conducted to date indicate that it takes 4 to 7 years for ELLs to become proficient in academic English." They cite several empirical studies that confirm the statement.

Student Opportunity Equity
Many Iowa students start school behind their peers, some by several grade levels. Iowa's funding formula should include targeted funding based on the actual costs of closing achievement gaps for at-risk students living in poverty. Iowa's preschool program, initiated with strong support from the business community nearly a decade ago, should generate 1.0 weighting for full-day programming, including wrap-around services and child care for low-income or non-English speaking four-year-old students. Such funding delivers a proven return on investment for both student achievement and taxpayers, while also freeing up childcare slots for younger children and allowing parents to fully participate in full-time employment. Increased weighting to provide services for Iowa's English-language learners, low-income and at-risk students will close learning gaps while building a strong workforce.

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UEN 2023 Issue Brief
Preschool

Background: Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SVPP), first implemented in 2007-08, has grown to serve 31,468 four-year-olds in 2019-20. PK enrollment was lower than kindergarten by 8,364, meaning as many as 27% of kindergarteners may not have been served in SVPP. The importance of reading proficiently by the end of third grade is critical, and quality preschool helps students reach that important benchmark. Preschool enrollment dropped from 31,468 to 27,392 (down 4,076 in October 2020 compared to October 2019) due to the pandemic. In October 2021, preschool enrollment rebounded to 29,411, still well short of the pre-pandemic level and still under-enrolled compared to the total relative population of four-year-olds expected to eventually attend kindergarten. Hold harmless budget provisions and programs to support early literacy are more important than ever in supporting Iowa's youngest students to academic success.

Why does preschool matter? The Perry Preschool Project, 40 years later, documents $17 savings for every dollar invested (earlier findings of $8 saved for every dollar invested are also often cited). Once considered a strategy just to support working parents with childcare needs, the majority of states now view access to high-quality PK programs as a critical long-term economic investment in the future workforce. Education Commission of the States, http://www.ecs.org/docs/early-learning-primer.pdf Oct. 2014: *Six rigorous, long-term evaluation studies have found that children who participated in high-quality preschool programs were:*

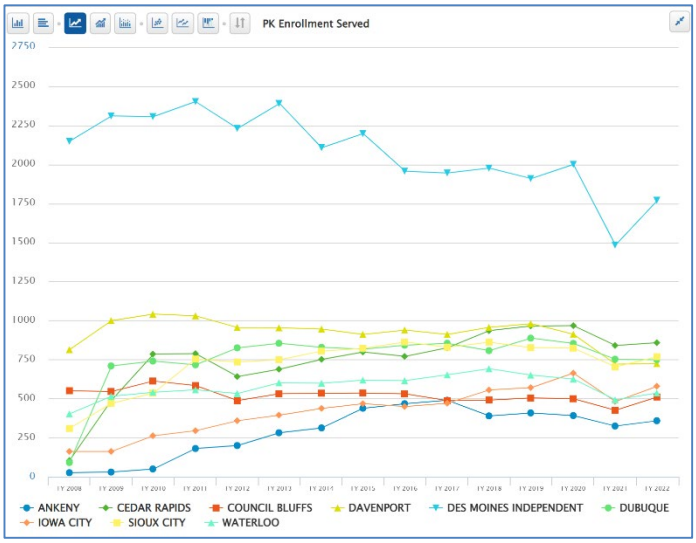
- *25% less likely to drop out of school.*
- *40% less likely to become a teen parent.*
- *50% less likely to be placed in special education.*
- *60% less likely to never attend college.*
- *70% less likely to be arrested for a violent crime.*

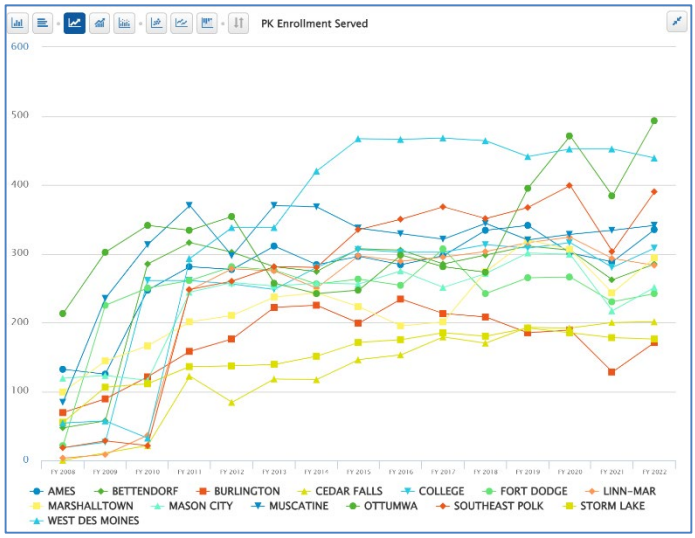
Sarah Daily, *Initiatives from Preschool to Third Grade: A Policymaker's Guide*, shows reductions in costly outcomes that quality preschool prevents. (Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, October 2014) http://www.ecs.org/docs/early-learning-primer.pdf. The National Conference of State Legislatures quotes studies on long-term return on investment. http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/new-research-early-education-as-economic-investme.aspx

Another study shows improved behavior and social skills: the Journal of Research in Childhood Education, The Long Term Benefits, 2017, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2016.1273285 demonstrates for low-income students in quality preschool compared to low-income students without the PK experience, the PK group had fewer behavior issues, referrals, better attendance, initially more special education in kindergarten (identified earlier) but less special education services by fourth grade than the control group.

Barriers to Expansion. Preschool funding in the formula is paid entirely with state funds, based on the prior year's enrollment of 4-year-olds in the program on October 1. Although 3-year-olds and 5-year-olds may be served, they are not counted for weighting/funding purposes. Unlike the regular program

enrollment for K-12 budget purposes, there is no adjustment for enrollment growth known as on-time funding modified supplemental amount if more PK students are served than in the prior year. Districts are also prohibited from using general fund dollars to pay for PK expenses leaving parent pay or grant funding as the only remaining options. Additionally, 4-year-olds from low-income families may need other supports, such as full-day programs or wrap-around care to allow families full employment. For non-English-speaking families, preschool is critical, yet the 0.5 weighting is not enough to cover the costs of translators, staff and additional materials to support immigrant families to fully engage with their students, let alone the full-day programming that would jump-start their language development.





These charts show the rebound in PK enrollment in the 2021-22 school year following the pandemic and how far many districts still remain under pre-pandemic higher totals; on the top are UEN districts with two or more high schools (these 9 districts combined are still 11% below FY 2020 PK enrollment) and the lower chart shows the other 14 UEN districts (still collectively 3% below).

Workforce and Childcare: Full-day preschool with a 1.0 weighting for lower-income and non-English-speaking 4-year-olds is a win-win-win; 1) a win for students with improved academic success down the road, 2) a win for the business community when parents can fully engage in employment and freed up childcare slots can serve waiting lists so other parents can work, and 3) a win for taxpayers as students with quality preschool are 50% less likely to experience the costs of long-term special education typically borne by property taxpayers. Quality preschool is an excellent example of the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Quality Preschool: Iowa's preschool program, initiated with strong support from the business community nearly a decade ago, should generate 1.0 weighting for full-day programming, including wrap-around services and child care for low-income or non-English speaking 4-year-old students. Such funding delivers a proven return on investment for both student achievement and taxpayers, while also freeing up childcare slots for younger children and allowing parents to fully participate in full-time employment. Increased weighting to provide services for Iowa's English-language learners, low-income and at-risk students will close learning gaps while building a strong workforce.

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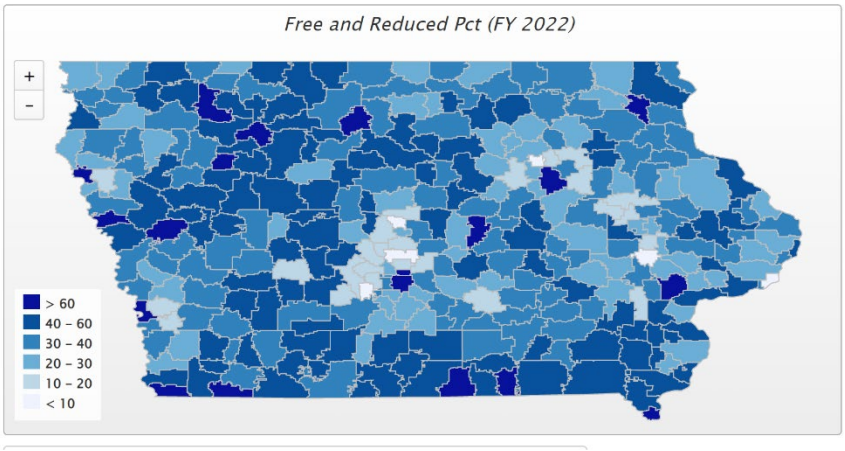
2023 Priority Issue Brief:
Opportunity Equity for High-Poverty Students

Background: Iowa's funding formula does not sufficiently recognize poverty as a driver of at-risk student programing. In 2001, about 27% of students were eligible for Free/Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL). Dropout Prevention funding is based on total enrollment, not the percentage of students at-risk. Although flexibility for the use of DoP funds has been expanded, DoP capacity is still limited to 2.5% of the total regular program district cost or up to 5% of regular program district cost based on historical practice.

The December 2019 School Finance Interim Committee passed a unanimous and bipartisan recommendation to study the impact of poverty on educational outcomes. The committee saw this presentation by ISFIS reporting on other states, the national average of 29%, and the shortfall in Iowa compared to best practice. Here's a link from the Committee Legislative Website showing the presentation. The study was directed to review other states' formulas that provide resources for students from low-income families which are showing successful student achievement outcomes for at-risk students. HF 2490 Poverty Weighting Study was approved with strong bipartisan support in the House Education Committee in the 2020 Session, but the issues have received no action since. This bill serves as a good starting point for continued conversation.



Current Reality: In FY 2022, 40.7% of students were eligible for FRPL (*2022 enrollment may be understated with free lunch temporarily available to all students due to COVID-19 federal directives)*. Of the 63 districts with more than half of their students on FRPL, 19 are urban, leaving 54 rural. 18 districts have more than 60% of students eligible for FRPL. ***Districts above 70% include Postville, Storm Lake, Council Bluffs, Waterloo, South Page, Hamburg, and Des Moines, which was the state high of 77.8%.*** Poverty is now found throughout the state. It is no longer just an urban challenge. The map's darkest color shows 78 districts with more than half of their student eligible for FRPL, and 31 districts have more than 60% of students eligible for FRPL. Those above 70% include Council Bluffs, Sioux City, South Page, Hamburg, Storm Lake, Clay Central-Everly, Denison, Marshalltown, Waterloo, Des Moines, LuVerne, Rock Valley, Postville and Stratford (6 of which are UEN member districts.)

- Poverty is now found throughout the state. It is indeed a statewide challenge, however, the UEN districts, which enroll 42% of Iowa's public-school students, educate 52% of low-income students.

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- Iowa's funding for at-risk (.48%) and dropout prevention (2.5-5%) combined are well short of the national average 29% weighting for low-income students. (AIR, Study of a new Method of Funding for Public Schools in Nevada, Sept. 2012). Since Iowa spends $1,536 less per student than the national average (US Census data from May 2022), the weighting per low-income Iowa student, applied to a lower base, is inadequate to provide needed supports.
- Students from low-income families are more likely to begin school academically behind, exhibit nonproficient literacy skills, especially in early elementary, and fall further behind over summer breaks, unless schools have the resources, staff and programs to meet their needs.
- Low-income students are an important piece of Iowa's workforce puzzle, will stay in Iowa, and either be the backbone of our communities' potential or a drain on future resources.
- Districts must waive fees for FRPL-eligible families, meaning districts with concentrated poverty have fewer resources for textbooks and drivers' education, further stressing the general fund.
- High-poverty School Investments boost achievement. Education Week, Student Outcomes: Does More Money Really Matter? *Fresh research bolsters the case for K-12 cash—and a rough road without it*, Daarel Burnette II, June 4, 2019 reports: "More money does, in fact, make a difference, they (researchers) say—provided that you spend enough, and in the right manner. They point to research in the past five years that provides examples of instances where politicians and taxpayers invested more money in teacher salaries, school construction, and schools with high populations of low-income students and saw students' test scores jump."
- The McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown, FutureEd, State Education Funding; The Poverty Equation, March 2020, states, "What's more, when poverty is concentrated in a school—that is, when a significant portion of students in a school come from low-income households—the impact on performance is compounded. A body of research suggests that there is a 'tipping point,' somewhere between 50 to 60 percent of a school's students living in poverty, where performance for all students there drastically declines."
- UEN's priority on student opportunity equity includes a long-term goal for Iowa's formula to include a poverty factor weighting so districts with concentrated poverty have resources aligned to the needs for staffing, programs and supports for all students to reach success in postsecondary education or the Iowa workforce.

Student Opportunity Equity

Many Iowa students start school behind their peers, some by several grade levels. Iowa's funding formula should include targeted funding based on the actual costs of closing achievement gaps for at-risk students living in poverty. Iowa's preschool program, initiated with strong support from the business community nearly a decade ago, should generate 1.0 weighting for full-day programming, including wrap-around services and child care for low-income or non-English speaking four-year-old students. Such funding delivers a proven return on investment for both student achievement and taxpayers, while also freeing up childcare slots for younger children and allowing parents to fully participate in full-time employment. Increased weighting to provide services for Iowa's English-language learners, low-income and at-risk students will close learning gaps while building a strong workforce.

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UEN 2023 Issue Brief
School Choice and the Priority of Public Schools

Current Reality: Iowa has a wide range of school choice options for parents and students, including:

- **Within District Transfer:** A neighborhood public school or a public school in another neighborhood within the school district (transfers regulated by the local school board).
- **Open enrollment to public school in another district**: 36,412 Iowa students exercised this option in the 2021-22 school year. This total includes: 1) Open enrollment to another district or open enrollment to an Iowa public virtual academy online program. Note: Legislation in 2022 removed the requirement to meet a March 1 deadline, so students can now open enroll to another public school district at any time.
- **Charter Schools:** HF 813 and HF 847, effective July 1, 2021, created new charter school options for school boards or independent founding groups.
- **Strong nonpublic schools:** with 36,636 students enrolled in 2021-22. Millions of state tax dollars support private schools and parents for school tuition organization scholarships, tuition and textbook tax credits, transportation/textbook funds to private schools, public school and AEA support for special education in private schools, and public/private partnerships for private preschool tuition in the statewide voluntary preschool program.
- **Home School Options**: competent private instruction or independent private instruction. HF 847 in 2021 applied the tuition and textbook tax credit to home school for the first time.
- **Public funding for private education:** In 2018, over $66 million of state dollars supported education of Iowa students in private and home schools, according to the Iowa Fiscal Policy Project Analysis Nov. 2018. The additional fiscal impact of HF 847 expanding tax credits to home school would raise that total to $91 million.
- **Recent Iowa Expansion of Private School Support:** In the 2021 session, School Flexibility and Choice, HF 847, accelerated the prior year's increase of the annual cap for School Tuition Organization (STO) Tax Credits to $20.0 million from CY 2025 to CY 2022 and the credit was expanded from 65% to 75% of the contribution. These scholarships support private school tuition for students from families below 400% of the federal poverty level ($111,000 income for a family of 4). The bill also doubled the Tuition and Textbook Tax Credit to 25% of $2,000 spent and applied it to home school for the first time in CY 2021.

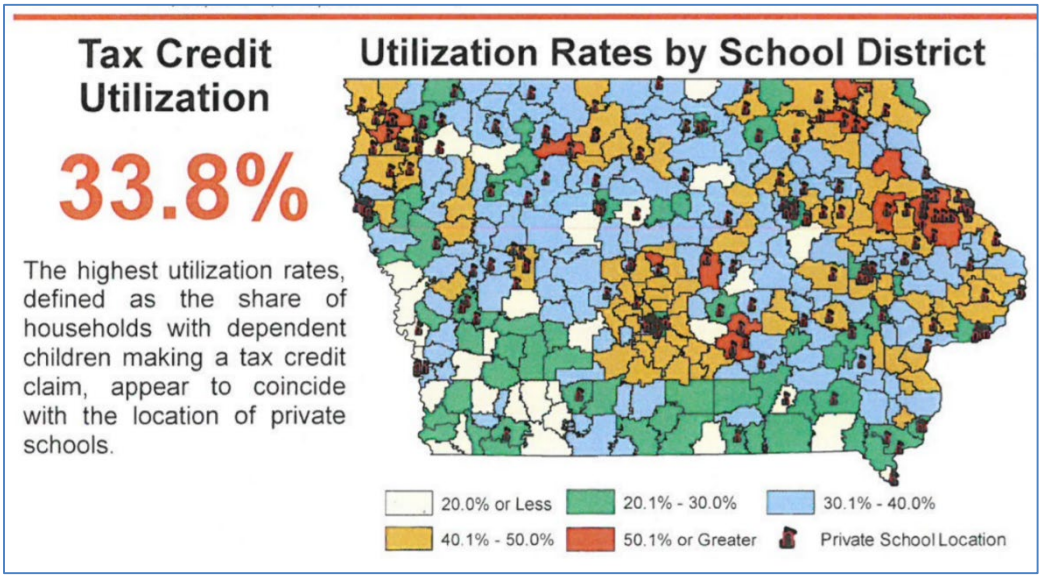
The Heritage Foundation's Education Freedom Report Card shows Iowa ranked 9th in the nation in school choice: this ranking predated the expansion of charter schools, tax credits for home school and elimination of an open enrollment deadline.

Vouchers or Education Savings Accounts Costs Outweigh Benefits: Increasing Iowa's public investment in private schools will not add benefits and will negatively impact public school students:

- Iowa has competition to pressure schools to perform (if the assumption is that competition provides positive pressure). According to the Economic Policy Institute Report, Feb. 28, 2017,

"Research does not show that vouchers significantly improve student achievement."

- That report concludes there are more effective ways to increase graduation and college attendance rates, that voucher/ESA programs have hidden costs including shrinking the pipeline into teaching, and that support for privatization detracts from more proven methods of improving student learning. Rural schools already find it hard to compete for employees and are concerned that increased demand for teachers in private schools, even if just in urban areas, will make it harder for rural schools to find teachers, already in short supply.
- Diverting funds to private education further stresses public school resources. From *State Tax Subsidies for Private K-12 Education*, Oct. 2016; "30 neovouchers across 20 states are draining over $1 billion in public revenues from state coffers every year. Every dollar of revenue diverted toward private schools is revenue that cannot be invested in the public education system."
- **Programs Start Small but Expand:** school choice programs in other states tend to start small, often with eligibility available to low-income or students with disabilities. Though, over time, eligibility expands to include all students. For example, Ohio's private school vouchers began as a pilot program, but has grown from $42 million a year in 2008 to $350 million in the 20-21 school year. With Iowa's historic income tax cuts hitting the balance sheet with an anticipated $1.8 billion revenue reduction, the commitment to increase state support for private school will bump up against budget cuts in just a few short years.
- **Few Rural Private Schools:** the survival of rural schools and variety of educational options for students depend on adequate state funding. There are few private schools available for rural parents to exercise choice, as this map from Iowa's Department of Revenue presentation to the Tax Expenditure Committee measuring participation in tax credits, Jan. 2019, shows. As a result, the fiscal estimate for SF 2369 from the 2022 Session, anticipating a loss of $79 million to Iowa public schools, is expected to impact primarily urban school districts. Meanwhile, student poverty and minority concentration, particularly in urban areas, are exacerbated when families with means are encouraged to leave the public school for a private school program.



- **Education Savings Accounts and Voucher programs reduce funds for public schools:** Iowa school funding is enrollment based. If a student leaves the public school and enrolls in private school, the public district no longer counts the student in enrollment. Here are the fiscal impacts in FY 2023 dollars: Loss of $7,413 state cost per pupil (higher in 103 districts). Loss of state categorical funds

estimated at $1,200 per pupil (professional development, teacher salary supplement, early intervention class size and teacher leadership and compensation). Loss of Dropout Prevention and Instructional support authority estimated at $874 per pupil but varies). Loss of State Penny for School Infrastructure of $1,133 per pupil. These combine for a minimum loss of $10,616 for each student, not including supplementary weighting for special education of English-language learner services. Federal funds and grant funds are also sometimes tied to student enrollment. The budget challenge for public schools comes in continuing to provide services when a few students leave from each grade, but not enough to reduce a teacher or course offering. Schools still have to be heated and buses still run the full routes.

- **No Oversight:** The Economic Policy Institute also finds insufficient budgetary oversight of voucher programs. There is no publicly elected school board or Department of Education regulation of allowable expenditures. The public does not have access to records or public meetings. Good stewardship of tax dollars requires transparency and clearly articulated expectations. The state of Florida's ESA legislation requires an audit of private school expenditures if the private school receives at least $250,000 from parents' ESAs. Iowa's proposals of the past did not include any such oversight.
- **Level the Playing field:** Public schools are accountable to taxpayers, parents, communities (the public), and serve all students. Unlike public schools, private schools can refuse to enroll or later expel students not meeting expectations or refuse enrollment based on specific student needs, such as students with disabilities, non-English-speaking, minority, low-income or transgender students. If additional state dollars are used to fund ESAs, the private schools receiving those tax dollars should also be required to comply with testing, reporting, enrollment and service requirements.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) and School Choice

Iowa already has significant school choice. UEN opposes the creation or expansion of programs/plans that redirect or designate additional taxpayer funds for private school, homeschooling or other private services, regardless of whether those funds are provided indirectly through education savings accounts or directly through appropriations or tax credits. The priority of public schools demands adequate funding and support by the state. Investments in education savings accounts, voucher programs, school tuition organizations or homeschool remove resources from public schools in four ways:

1. Iowa's funding formula is enrollment based. Fewer students mean fewer resources for staff, programs and courses for the vast majority of students remaining in the public school. For urban schools, students remaining in the school after some exercise a private option tend to be in neighborhoods with greater needs, such as higher poverty, more non-English speakers and higher minority concentration. Providing incentives for private schools has the effect of re-segregating our urban centers. The students who attend a private school with the ESA take with them not just the state funding estimated at $79 million by legislative staff, but also lower the public district's resources by other significant sources of enrollment-based funding.
2. Carving Iowa's education funding pie into more pieces necessarily means a smaller piece of pie for Iowa's public school students. Urban school leaders, looking ahead to the implementation

of the 2022 historic tax cuts, anticipate the inability of the state to adequately fund public schools, let alone, take on the commitment to fund a second educational delivery system.

3. School choice programs typically start small, but quickly expand eligibility criteria (increased income eligibility, support for home school, or even eventual public support of private tuition for any student at any private school that will take them). Although most of Iowa's nonpublic schools today are religious, in the future, private online academies, the pressure for the state to support homeschooling and the profit motive to expand private schools without the corresponding costs of oversight and compliance will create additional budget pressures for our public schools and compete for teachers and other staff already in short supply.
4. Private for-profit schools may selectively enroll high-performing and low-cost students and are allowed to operate on an uneven playing field without fiduciary oversight or publicly elected representation.

UEN opposes all forms of education savings accounts/voucher programs/additional public funds appropriated for private or home school. Public funds should be used for public schools. Private funds should be used for private schools. Private school programs do not include accountability for expenditures, are not required to educate all children or provide special education services, and are hidden from the public oversight that should come with tax dollars. With unlimited open enrollment to any public school in Iowa, students and parents already have choices for which taxpayers have transparent access and accountability. Since private and home schools in Iowa already cost the state over $80 million annually, even small demonstration programs or pilot projects should be resisted.

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UEN 2023 Priority Issue Brief
Teacher, Administrator, Staff Shortage

Background: Iowa's largest schools have traditionally been full of excellent teachers dedicated to student success. Competitive economic conditions, however, are making it difficult to attract and retain great teachers, indeed school employees in many different job roles, and it's getting worse.

Many content areas are experiencing a shortage, especially at the secondary level. The Iowa DE compiles a list of areas with staff shortages annually. The list for 2022-23 includes the following, with new content areas this year underlined: deaf or hard of hearing impaired, visually impaired, special education (both II BD/LD and ID and I mild/moderate K-8 and 5-12), family consumer sciences 5-12, all world language, industrial technology, agriculture (5-12), all science (5-12), business (5-12), school counselor (K-8 and 5-12), mathematics (5-12), physical education, teacher librarian (K-8, 5-12 and K-12), early childhood education, earth science, physics (5-12), English language arts, music, art and all social studies. https://educateiowa.gov/pk-12/educator-quality/practitioner-preparation/teacher-shortage-areas. Almost all districts in Iowa are also struggling to find bus drivers, paraprofessionals, office staff, and food service workers.

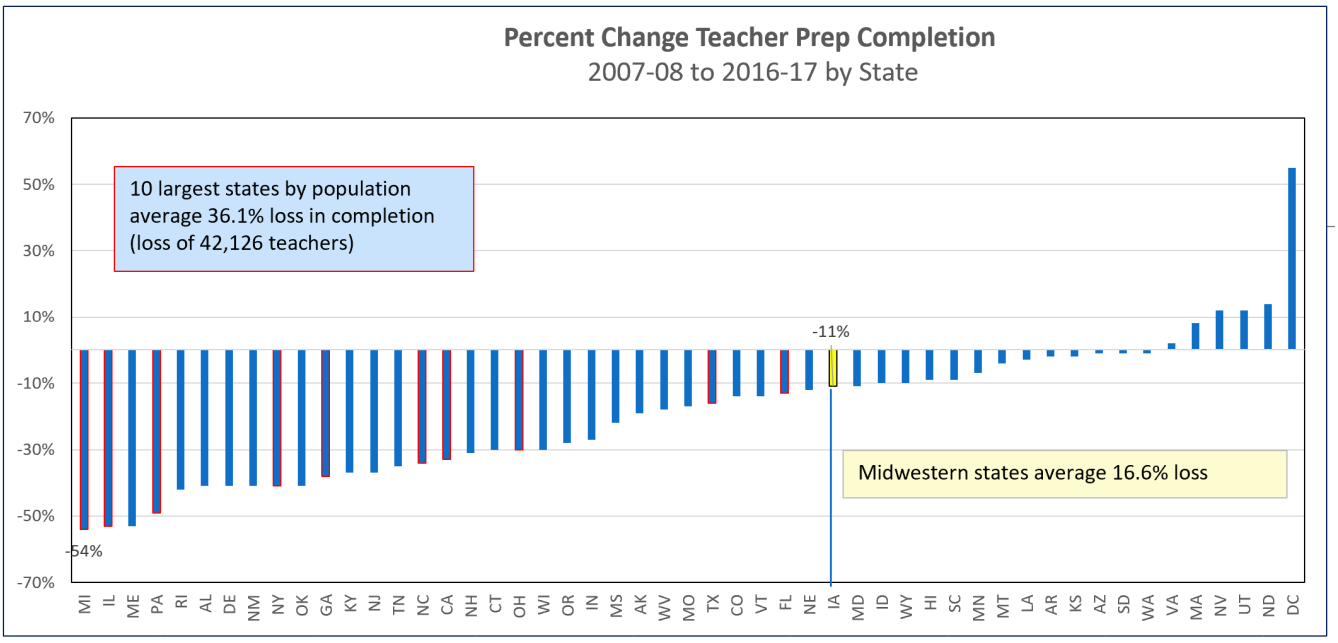
When there are shortages, fewer qualified candidates apply to fill vacant and mandated positions, and sometimes no candidates at all. For example, as of Nov. 30, 2022, Des Moines Public Schools was still attempting to hire about 65 teachers and 30 special education associates (all but two associates in the area of special education), which means everyone else is doing double work. Private-sector competition is also compelling. Iowa's employers are looking for a strong work ethic, communication skills, and the ability to get to work on time. The Future Ready Workforce list of High-Demand Jobs includes educators. Iowa was facing a teacher shortage before 2020; however, the effects of the global pandemic have amplified the shortage with staff retiring earlier than planned, retired teachers more reluctant to return as substitutes, increased needs for qualified staff to cover when teachers are sick, combined with increased educational and mental health needs of students.

Teacher Shortage Data:

- UEN member districts have experienced rapid growth in diversity and minority student populations. According to the DE's Annual Condition of Education Report, 25.6% of students enrolled in public school were minority students. The UEN member districts enroll over 77% of all minority students in Iowa. Although statewide, 2.8% of teachers identify as a minority, for UEN districts, our teaching staff is 4.6% minority. The importance of additional recruiting resources and grow your own programs are necessary to continue to build a teaching force in which students see themselves, to building better relationships and improve student results. According to the Brookings Institute, The Importance of a Diverse Teaching Force, "Minority students often perform better on standardized tests, have improved attendance, and are suspended less frequently (which may suggest either different degrees of behavior or different treatment, or both) when they have at least one same-race teacher." The article's conclusion states, "As a consequence, the underrepresentation of minority teachers relative to the proportion of minority school-aged students could be having the effect of limiting minority students' educational success. This has large potential effects for students and taxpayers alike: In addition to the strong economic and social benefits accruing to the students themselves when they graduate from high

school, Levin and Rouse argue that the net benefit to taxpayers associated with each new high school graduate is well over $100,000."

- The gap between Iowa Average Teacher Salary and the National Average, as reported in the 2021 Iowa Condition of Education Report, in 2020 was $5,949 (in 1988, the gap was $3,182). The estimated gap for 2021-22 places Iowa's average teacher pay at $7,135 below the national average. Higher pay for teacher leaders, paid as much as $10,000 more for additional work through TLC plans, has helped to improve our average pay ranking since 2015. Iowa ranked #22 in 2018, however, Iowa slipped to #24 by 2021. From *the 2021 Iowa Condition of Education Report: "Iowa's average regular teacher salary increased slightly to $58,771 in 2020-2021 compared to $58,110 in 2019-2020. Iowa's average salary is 24th in national rankings and 6th when compared to other Midwestern states in the 2019-2020 school year.*" Urban school leaders are concerned that the gap continues to widen, with the Iowa teacher pay gap now 49% more behind the national average than in 2018-19.
- With significant teacher shortages across the nation, beginning teacher pay is critical in keeping Iowa graduates in Iowa and attracting graduates from other states. Iowa is in the second to lowest quintile and has slipped 8 places in recent years, now ranking 38th in starting teacher pay. *Source: Understanding Teacher Compensation: A State-by-State Analysis*
- Fewer teacher preparation candidates are graduating from colleges and universities of education, as reported in **Teacher Retention and Recruitment:** Shortages in Iowa/Nation, 50-state Comparison of Strategies, Education Commission of the States. In the Midwest states alone, between 2008-2017, there were 8,183 fewer graduates, for a loss of 17%. The following chart, compiled by Iowa School Finance Information Services, shows the nationwide data, which is even more drastic and predates COVID pandemic stressors on teacher supply.



Current Reality: The qualified worker challenge impacts all schools in Iowa:

- The implementation of the teacher leadership and compensation system increased the demand for teachers to fill vacant positions to replace teacher leaders. TLC may also have slowed the pipeline of individuals willing to take on the work of school administration.

- Some urban schools have been able to help willing and capable teachers obtain certification in a shortage area of content, but the rules limit provisional licensure status to two years. Tuition and costs of coursework may be unaffordable on a teacher's salary and nearly unattainable for new teachers, given the level of starting pay relative to ongoing college loan payments. Several UEN districts are excited to be participating in Gov. Reynolds Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship Program, through which programs are accessing federal pandemic funds to help participants become certificated or degreed over the next 2-3 years. Other urban grow-your-own programs are promising. State appropriation may be necessary to keep this program going.
- Some community members, dedicated to the urban community in which they live, may be willing to teach in areas of their expertise but can't afford to quit working for two years to become certified in teaching. Some programs in CTE areas have provided avenues to on-the-job training, a good model which could be expanded. Other teacher-intern models would be helpful but must include student teaching and ongoing mentoring and support. Urban centers are rich with educated adults from all over the world who are bilingual, but there are many barriers to obtain licensure before employment in schools for these qualified adults.
- Beginning January 1, 2022, educators new to the state receive licensure reciprocity for their teaching, administrator or coaching license with a valid out-of-state license. This should help urban district recruit from historically black colleges and universities but competitive pay and benefits packages will be necessary to compete with districts from across the nation also vying for qualified minority teachers.

Teacher, Administrator, Staff Shortage

Adequate funding is essential for public schools to compete with the private sector in hiring new and retaining experienced employees. Recent steps to simplify licensure reciprocity with other states and eliminate IPERS barriers to rehiring retirees are welcome relief, but insufficient to eliminate staff shortages urban schools experience today. New policies should be implemented to help schools meet the challenge of attracting and retaining tomorrow's educators and recruiting teachers that mirror our diverse students. UEN supports flexibility in certification requirements such as a K-12 special education credential, minimizing barriers for educators with international experience to teach in our schools, additional teacher intern programs that include adequate pedagogy/on-the-job classroom exposure, and continued support for grow-your-own programs, para and teacher apprenticeships, tuition support and loan forgiveness programs. Iowa's Future Ready Workforce efforts should include an educator focus to replenish the talent pool and attract high school and college students to a career in education. UEN supported last year's discussion in the Iowa Senate to use the Management Fund for loan forgiveness and recruitment programs. Of critical importance is the dedication of state and local leaders to generate enthusiasm for teaching by speaking about and treating educators with the respect the profession deserves and keeping great Iowa teachers in classrooms in Iowa.

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UEN 2023 Priority Issue Brief: Mental Health Services

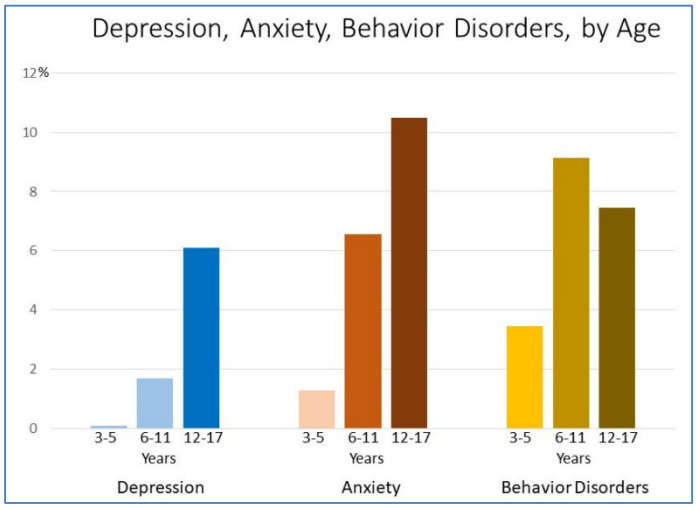
Background: Mental health challenges for students have increased in all school districts in Iowa, including urban schools. DE's website shares how mental health conditions impact a large number of youth. A National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) infographic includes the following statistics:

- 1 in 5 children ages 13-18 have or will have a serious mental illness.
- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.
- The average delay between the onset of symptoms and intervention is 8-10 years.
- Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older with a mental illness drop out of high school.
- 70% of youth in state and local juvenile justice systems have a mental illness.

In addition, in 2011, suicide became the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24 in the U.S. In 2014, suicide was the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-14 in the U.S., though it dropped to the third leading cause in 2015. By 2019, suicide is again second. Leading Causes of Death and Injury Charts, CDC

The CDC's Statistics for Children Mental Health Website indicates conditions commonly overlap. For example, among children aged 3-17 years in 2016:

- Having another mental disorder was most common in children with depression: about 3 in 4 children with depression also had anxiety (73.8%) and almost 1 in 2 had behavior problems (47.2%).[3]
- For children with anxiety, more than 1 in 3 also had behavior problems (37.9%) and about 1 in 3 also had depression (32.3%).[3]
- For children with behavior problems, more than 1 in 3 also had anxiety (36.6%) and about 1 in 5 also had depression (20.3%).[3]

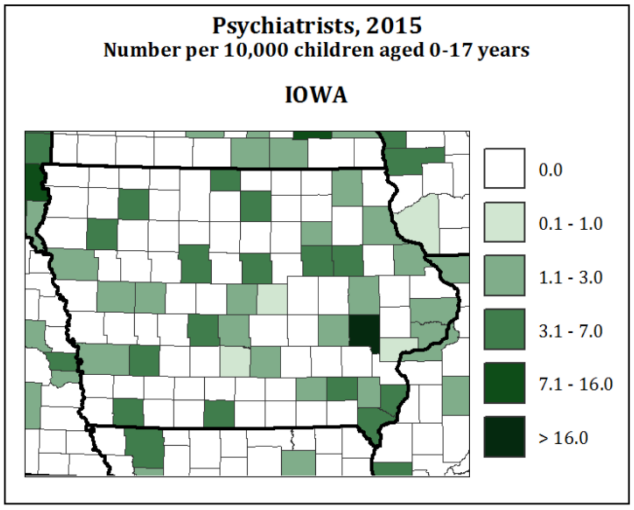


Unless a student is receiving special education services, mental health treatment at school is not funded. Even though services are more readily available in urban areas, there are long wait times. Parents have transportation barriers or job conflicts in getting children to needed care. During the pandemic, family job loss, quarantine requirements and illness added stress to families with mental illness. The need to continue this important work is more urgent than ever.

The good news: Research shows treatment works. Treatment for mental illness is effective. Like physical health conditions, it's clear the earlier you get treatment for mental illness, the better.

Recent Strides: in 2020, the Legislature created a pilot grant process for additional therapeutic classrooms. Funding for implementation was initiated in 2021 and increased in 2022. An appropriation of over $3 million to the Iowa AEAs in both 2021 and 2022 provided mental health awareness training for educators and mental health services. Additionally, the 2020 Iowa Legislature set schools as

originating sites for virtual mental health counseling. This minimizes absenteeism, getting students needed help while at school when virtual counseling is appropriate. This CDC map shows the shortage of Iowa psychiatrists which can delay therapy. To address this shortage, the Legislature also created a mental health professional forgivable loan program beginning in 2022. UEN experts met in 2021 and agreed a collaborative approach is necessary to get students to services. However, no funding is provided for team-based case management to identify services not billable to private insurance, Medicaid or special education. This group also suggested an audio connection as a viable alternative when students lack the bandwidth to connect to telehealth services without video.



Appropriate Roles: Child mental health policies overlap areas of authority, intersecting human services, health care, county and state government and law enforcement. Education has a role in identifying students with needs (mental health first aid) and connecting students to services, but schools are not and should not be mental health providers. Schools are on the team, however, as student success depends on transitions returning from placements or scheduling and educational supports when treatment is ongoing. Schools should have the resources to educate students and staff about mental wellness, embedded throughout the curriculum where it is topical.

Mental Health Services: UEN leaders understand that mental health challenges must be addressed through a system that recognizes students and families with mental health needs are experiencing symptoms not only in school, but during the 17 hours a day and full days when they are not in school. Iowa needs an improved mental health system for children, including the structure and funding to eliminate the shortage of professionals. Schools should be partners to serve students and families, but educators are not trained providers of mental health care, nor do they have the capacity to meet the mental health needs of students. Students who have no outward indicators of mental illness suffer quietly, even leading to suicide. Well-known risk factors many Iowans already recognize include but aren't limited to: students adjudicated or in residential placements, students with refugee trauma, and students experiencing adverse childhood experiences. Providing appropriate mental health services would position these students and their families for better academic, social and economic success. Iowa should engage in every opportunity to maximize school access to Medicaid claiming for health services for all students, not just students with individual education plans. Funds to provide case management and service coordination are required when Medicaid, special education or other categorical funds do not cover it. School districts require capacity and/or funding to provide:
1) transition support and services for students returning to school after a mental health placement,
2) ongoing teacher, administrator, and support staff training to improve awareness and understanding of child social-emotional, behavioral and mental health needs, 3) actionable classroom strategies to address student needs, and 4) integration of mental health promotion into instruction when appropriate.

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UEN 2023 Priority Issue Brief:
Home Rule District Authority

Background and History: American democracy is built on the assumption that local leaders, closest to students and communities, will make the best decisions for their communities. This is in contrast to Dillon's Rule, a court case from the 1800s, which stated that schools can only do what is expressly authorized in state law. Iowa cities and counties were granted home rule via Iowa constitutional amendment. Those amendments excluded taxing authority, which remains heavily regulated by the State. Background on the change to Home Rule for Iowa is found in the Legislative Guide to Iowa Local Government Initiative and Referendum, LSA, December 2008.

HF 573 granted statutory Home Rule to schools during the 2017 Session. Differences in interpretation remain about the role of pre-existing administrative rules and the DE's authority to pre-approve district actions. Home Rule does not eliminate any current laws but grants clearer flexibility in the areas not written. School districts are still required to follow laws that compel actions as well as avoid actions prohibited by law.

Flexibility Provides a Good Result without Irreparable Harm
School districts are called upon to deliver results but often cannot exercise local authority to implement new practices or think creatively. Professor Richard Briffault, Columbia Law School, in a presentation to the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Oct. 2003, explains why local control is necessary for school governance: "To be sure, greater state standard-setting, oversight, and interventions in cases of poor local performance have been accompanied in some states with measures giving local school boards greater operational discretion in achieving state educational goals. States may conclude that their purposes may be better attained by a degree of school district home rule rather than by state-directed micro-management of school operations."

If a school board takes an unacceptable action under Home Rule, the legislature may later prohibit it or local voters may replace their school board members.

Local Control Furthers Democracy: Alexander Hamilton explains: "It is a known fact in human nature that its affections are commonly weak in proportion to the distance or diffusiveness of the object. Upon the same principle that a man is more attached to his family than to his neighborhood, to his neighborhood than to the community at large, the people of each State would be apt to feel a stronger bias towards their local governments than towards the government of the Union; "Federalist, no. 17 Federal v. Consolidated", Dec. 5, 1787. Principles of Home Rule for the 21st Century by the National League of Cities in 2020 explains Hamilton's point; "At the heart of the concept of local democratic self-government is the accountability of local officials to the local community that results from local popular election of local lawmakers. Local election distinguishes local self-government from rule by state appointees, or from control by an electorate outside the locality."

District Authority: Home Rule in Iowa Code 274.3 requires the executive branch and the courts to interpret Iowa Code impacting schools and school boards and develop administrative rules with deference to local control. UEN members strongly believe the legislature and Governor should focus efforts on flexibility rather than state-mandated one-size-fits-all action. UEN supports two specific areas of expanded flexibility: 1) flexibility to use school general fund to pay for expanded preschool slots, and 2) management fund flexibility to cover safety and security costs, including security personnel and cyber security measures (both of these most certainly qualify as risk management and litigation cost avoidance, which are current goals of the management fund).

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UEN 2023 Issue Brief
Cybersecurity

Background: Cyber criminals and malicious threat actors continue to pose a significant threat to the instructional delivery and operations of Iowa school districts. When school districts are the target of these nefarious attacks, it is the children, families, and communities that are most impacted. While school districts have made efforts to increase cybersecurity measures, there is much more that could and needs to be done to help Iowa school districts be better prepared to protect against cyber criminals. It takes all players and entities of state and local government to coordinate efforts and services needed for protection from cyber security threats.

LEADERSHIP & COORDINATION: The State of Iowa should take a leadership role in engaging school districts directly to make recommendations and resources available to help address systemic issues that make cybersecurity risk management a challenge for Iowa school districts.

Such coordinated efforts should be made through various state agencies and offices (e.g., Iowa Department of Homeland Security, Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa General Assembly, the Iowa Governor's Office, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and the Area Education Agencies) to create a consortium that curates, vets, and establishes professional services and supports that school districts can elect to use and/or purchase for cybersecurity needs.

Technology services directors of the UEN reviewed the scope of needed services and support contracts and recommended that the following services should minimally be made available to schools, but as the world of technology is quickly changing, this list should not be limited:

- Virtual Chief Information Security Officer (vCISO),
- Cyber-liability Insurance,
- Vulnerability Scanning and Penetration Testing,
- Security Awareness Training,
- Security Information and Event Management (SIEM),
- Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR),
- Statewide Incident Reporting System, etc.

FUNDING AND SUPPORTS: Iowa Code limitations on the usage of funds was written long before cyber security was necessary. School districts currently expense cybersecurity costs out of a patchwork of funds, but staff costs must be borne by the general fund, meaning less is available for teachers and curriculum. School districts should be allowed to expense eligible cybersecurity systems, services, and improvements from the Management Fund, the Secure an Advanced Vision for Education (SAVE) fund, and the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL). Professional development fund purposes could be expanded to allow staff training in minimizing cyber threats. Absent this expansion of levy flexibility, the Iowa General Assembly

could consider additional supplemental state aid as a cybersecurity per pupil supplement to help school districts offset cybersecurity costs and increase Information Technology (IT) staffing to better support their cybersecurity posture.

Much like the physical security of a school district, the Iowa Governor's Office should allocate federal dollars and/or other discretionary funding available to Iowa school districts to purchase additional cybersecurity resources and/or services.

State agencies should build capacity to provide outreach to Iowa schools to help them make decisions on professional service and support contracts and provide a template for a Security Policy Framework exclusively tailored for K-12 schools. Communication of best practices and trends, movement on federal legislation/policy, and other items related to cybersecurity would be beneficial for Iowa school districts. The aforementioned agencies and departments should help coordinate and streamline communication, points of contact, and the procedural demands of state and federal law enforcement. Iowa school districts need clear and concise guidance regarding best practices and actions in the event of cybersecurity incidents, including when law enforcement agencies should be notified.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: The state should provide model policies, implementation checklists, provide funding for, and provide training and support to school districts to ensure districts have various cybersecurity essentials in place, including insurance, multifactor authentication, incident response plans and security awareness training. Without the provision of funding for these efforts, there are two bad outcomes; either diversion of general funds from education or inability of districts to protect staff, families, and students.

Cyber criminals pose a malicious threat to the instructional delivery and operation of school districts. When school districts are the target of nefarious attacks, students, families and communities are most impacted. The Iowa Legislature and executive branch should coordinate efforts to support school districts' cyber security needs, to create a consortium that curates, vets and establishes professional services and supports from which school districts may elect to use or purchase for cybersecurity needs. To the maximum extent possible, the consortium should create options and preserve the local decision-making authority of school boards and districts in choosing services and supports needed for their community school. School districts should be able to expense cybersecurity systems, services, improvements, and training from the management fund, the state penny for school infrastructure (SAVE) fund and the physical plant and equipment levy, including the costs of cybersecurity staff.