



Urban Education Network Legislative Priorities for 2022 Session

(Approved by Steering Committee Nov. 17, 2021.)

- **Invest in Iowa's Future:** provide adequate school funding with SSA set at 5.0% including a minimum of 3.75% SSA for inflationary costs and competitive wage and benefits for staff and additional 1.25% SSA for childcare and workforce pipeline challenges for 2022-23 school year. Funding should be set predictably, timely, sustainably and equitably. Continued progress on the inequity within the formula is important. Districts need adequate funding to address growing inflation and teacher and staff shortages in Iowa's competitive employment economy.
- **Student Opportunity Equity:** close achievement gaps by increasing resources in the short term for English-language learners, minority students and early childhood/preschool with a long-term focus on low-income and at-risk students. Preschool budget protections from enrollment swings; including state funding for 2021-22 PK enrollment growth if federal funding is not forthcoming.
- **Teacher, Administrator, Staff Shortage:** promote staff diversity and talent, waiver of one-year experience for licensure reciprocity in recruiting diverse staff to better reflect diversity in student populations, flexibility in hiring, loan forgiveness programs and hiring retirees without negative IPERS implications. Iowa's Future Ready Workforce should include an educator focus to replenish the talent pool and attract high school and college students to a career in education.
- **Mental Health Services:** structure and funding to eliminate the shortage of professionals. Funds to provide case management and service coordination is 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.
- **District Authority:** Home Rule in Iowa Code 274.3 requires liberally construing the laws affecting schools to effectuate the purposes of local control. UEN makes a strong statement that the legislature and governor should focus their efforts on flexibility rather than state-mandated one-size-fits-all action. A specific ask: request flexibility to use school general fund to pay for expanded preschool slots.