




UEN 2023 Legislative Priorities & Status

The following **2023 Legislative Priorities** originated as key priority issues for the Urban Education Network of Iowa. The UEN Legislative Subcommittee drafted the priority language for approval by the full UEN Steering Committee. These priorities were then shared with the full UEN membership at the Annual Dinner in November 2022. The UEN 2023 Annual Dinner is scheduled for Nov. 15, 2023, at the Hilton Des Moines Downtown. See the UEN website for more information: www.uen-ia.org

- Key:**  Positive Action Taken  Some Action, but More is Needed
-  No Progress Made

Invest in Iowa's Future:

- **HF 68 Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** created a categorical funding per pupil for resident students receiving ESAs, averaging \$1,205 per pupil (TSS, PD, TLC and EICS per pupil amounts). Students will first be counted Oct. 1, 2023 for funding beginning July 1, 2024.
- **HF 718 Property Tax Reform** did NOT include additional property tax relief by lowering the uniform levy or limiting growth in property valuation. UEN lobbied against both of these provisions that were in earlier bills, since additional property tax relief through the formula would be difficult for the state to sustain while also adequately funding public education in the future. However, HF 718 included a limitation of bond elections held only during November elections, which limits the ability of school districts to locally set the best timing for their infrastructure ballot/election conversations with voters.
- **SF 192 3% per pupil increase/SSA set an increase of 3%** on the state cost per pupil, also impacting per pupil categorical funds, AEA funding and growing the transportation equity fund by 3%. Although this falls short of UEN's call for adequate funding akin to the inflation rate, and well short of what UEN had suggested would adequately fund a world-class education, this 3% increase in the 2nd highest in 14 years.
- **SF 192 3% per pupil increase/SSA** effectively increased the pot of transportation equity funding to school districts by 3% but did not additionally close the formula gap between the minimum state cost per pupil and the higher district cost per pupil funded with local property tax dollars in over 100 school districts, which is included in UEN's funding priority.

Student Opportunity Equity:



- **SF 560 Education Appropriations** and **SF 578 Standings Appropriations** were both approved, with neither bill extending or eliminating the standing appropriation of \$10 million to the DE for high-needs schools. The state Board of Education's definition for High Needs Schools included concentration of poverty, minority, ELL and students requiring special education services AND low relative student performance and large achievement gaps. UEN supported the \$10 million standing appropriation in the 2013 Education Reform Legislation and every year since. School Year 2023-24 will be the first time this appropriation has ever been funded.
- **SF 246 Dropout Prevention Equity** would have phased in all districts to the full 5% regular program district cost cap for dropout prevention modified supplement amount (MSA< or spending authority). This bill was approved by the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee but was rereferred back to Senate Ways and Means at the end of the Session. UEN has long included this equity policy in our legislative priorities but realizes this is just a small start to equity for students from low-income families. Iowa does not have a poverty factor or weighting in our school funding formula, which is necessary for districts with concentrated poverty in order to provide the programs and opportunities to support all students toward success. A companion bill, HF 380 was introduced and assigned to the House Education Committee but did not move forward.
- **HF 477 Poverty Work Group** was introduced in the House Education Committee but was offered too late to survive the first legislative funnel deadline. This bill would require the DE to convene a task force to study the impact of poverty on education and other state funding formulas to address the disparity of outcomes for low-income students. UEN helped to author this bill and strongly supports it.
- **HF 297 Preschool Weighting Increase** would have established a 1.0 weighting for PK students from low-income or non-English speaking families (current weighting for all PK is 0.5). The bill was approved unanimously by a subcommittee of the House Education Committee but did not advance. UEN strongly supports this policy.
- **HF 68 Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** gets (dis)honorable mention in this category since in other states, the existence of ESA private school programs has resulted in concentrated poverty in the public schools where private schools are located.



Opposition to ESAs/Vouchers & Expanded School Choice:

- **[HF 68](#) Education Savings Accounts/School Choice** established universal access for all to Education Savings Accounts, phased in over a three-year period. This legislation is the opposite of UEN’s call for the priority of public schools. UEN was registered opposed.
 - The new dollars invested in the 2023-24 school year, a standing unlimited appropriation, exceed the new dollars invested in public schools for the 3% SSA increase by tens of millions.
 - Private schools do not have to accept all students, in direct contrast to UEN’s call for a level playing field.
 - Funding left in an ESA does not return to the public school if the student returns to the public school.
 - Includes the requirement that ESA recipient students participate in state- and federally-mandated assessments, which is the only accountability provision in the legislation. UEN supported this provision.
- **[SF 572](#) Clean-up and Tax Credit Changes to ESAs** was the first look at clean-up legislation after HF 68 was enacted. This bill would have reduced the cap on School Tuition Organization (STO) Tax Credits, which fund private school scholarships. The bill required funding left in an ESA if the student leaves the private school to be returned to the state. UEN also advocated for changes to public school administration and subsidization of private school transportation. This bill was approved by the Senate Ways and Means Committee and sent to the Senate Calendar. Upon adjournment of the 2023 Session, the bill was rereferred to the Senate Ways and Means Committee, where it remains alive for consideration in the 2024 Session. UEN supported this bill.
- **[HSB 138](#) Private School Testing Exemption:** this bill would have eliminated the requirement for ESA recipient students to participate in state and federally-mandated assessments. UEN opposed it. The bill received support of a subcommittee 2:1, but did not obtain approval from the House Education Committee. It remains in Committee for consideration in the 2024 Session.

Education Staff Shortage (UEN registered in support of all of the following bills):



- **[HF 256](#) Minimum Age of BOEE Licensure:** requires BOEE to issue a license to an individual at least 18-years of age (current law is 21), if the individual has completed all requirements for the license or credential.
- **[HF 614](#) BOEE Licensure for individuals from Other State/Nations:** requires BOEE to grant licensure to an individual who has completed coursework and necessary requirements for license in another state, except for passing a test (e.g. PRAXIS) or can produce transcripts showing completion of coursework in another nation.
- **[HF 672](#) MA+ 10-years' Experience Teacher Licensure:** requires BOEE to renew licenses including a background check for educators with at least a masters' degree and 10-years' experience without requiring continuing education units (CEUs). Requires the educator to complete their professional development plan with their evaluator. Still requires CEUs/training for evaluators.
- **[SF 250](#) Computer Science PD Disbursements:** allows recipients of computer science PD grants to use the funds in the fiscal year received plus the first quarter of the subsequent fiscal year.
- **[SF 318](#) Office of Apprenticeship:** establishes an Office of Apprenticeship to work with the Federal Department of Labor, Iowa DOL and Workforce Development in supporting apprenticeships (would modernize and standardize the requirements for and support of apprenticeships such as the Teacher and Paraeducator Registered Apprenticeship TPRA grant program.)
- **[SF 391](#) Chapter 12 Flexibility:** several provisions of this bill supporting district flexibility include the ability of staff and courses to more flexibly meet offer and teach accreditation requirements.
- **[SF 392](#) Teacher Recruitment/Retention Omnibus** including management fund for recruiting/retention plans and Intern Pathway to Licensure, was approved by the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Ways and Means Committee, but was rereferred back to Senate Ways and Means at the end of the Session. This bill would have allowed school districts to establish a recruitment and retention plan, fund incentives with the school district's Management Fund, but prohibited funding for both an early retirement plan and recruitment and retention plan in the same year.



Student Mental Health:



- **SF 560 Education Appropriations** maintained the current level of funding for Therapeutic Classroom Incentive Grants and Therapeutic Classroom Transportation, created a new appropriation of \$520,000 for the Mental Health Practitioner Loan Repayment program, and maintained the level of funding for the children's mental health school-based training and support line item at \$3.4 million, to be used by AEAs for mental health awareness training for educators and to provide mental health services and support for students. Additionally, **SF 253 and HF 244 Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment Program** would have established the program and defined parameters. These bills remain rereferred to the Senate and House Education Committees respectively, but the appropriation included in SF 560 will get the program rolling. UEN was registered in support of SF 253 and HF 244.

Local School Board Authority:



- **SF 391 Chapter 12 Flexibility** was the Governor's bill to grant additional flexibility to local school boards. The bill provided several mechanisms for local districts to more flexibly use staff to meet accreditation requirements and to flexibly meet the needs of students. UEN supported this bill.
- **SF 482 Use of Bathroom by Gender** mandated that schools allow bathroom use only by the gender assigned at birth. This mandate may conflict with federal Title IX requirements and limits school board authority to determine how best to meet the needs of students, staff and community members locally. UEN was opposed to this bill.
- **SF 496 Transparency and Parents' Rights included** several mandates regarding posting of information on district websites, limited curriculum and library content, and required school boards to have boards policies on parents and resident request to review instructional materials and parent request to reconsider libraries. UEN opposed the Governor's bill, but thanks the legislature for many amendments and improvement made along the way.
- **SF 251 Administration Expenditure Limitation** would have limited school district expenditures for school administration to 5% of general fund expenditures, with a new definition that significantly expanded what was to be included in administrative expenditures. This bill was approved by the Senate Education Committee and the full Senate, but died in the House Education Committee. UEN opposed the bill, which would impact the ability of rural school districts to meet student needs and comply with many state mandates requiring administrative work.

Cyber Security Support and Protections:



- **HF 143 Ransomware Prohibited:** this bill prohibits individuals from participating in unauthorized access to computers, known as ransomware, defines terms and establishes penalties. The bill also permits a person injured by a violation of the bill to bring a civil action. UEN was registered in support. Although this legislation is a good start, UEN’s legislative priority also requested authority to use non-general fund sources of revenue for cyber security expenses including staff. That policy was not addressed by the 2023 Session, so work remains to be done.