



Legislative Priorities for the 2020 Iowa Legislative Session

Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs) work collaboratively with local school districts, families and educators to positively impact the lives of over 519,000 Iowa children, birth through age 21. Our organization is advocating for financial support and policies that provide critical needs for Iowa students including student behavior and mental health well-being, access to equal supports through the AEA. We believe a solid foundation in these areas will position Iowa students for a life well-lived.

PRIORITY: Well-being

Iowa's Area Education Agencies (AEAs) are committed to supporting schools in promoting healthy learning environments that address the social, emotional, behavioral and mental health needs of students. Iowa's AEAs can ensure that services are aligned equitably to every student, in every county, and every school.

- ▶ A \$2.1 million appropriation is requested to enhance current efforts provided through the Children's Mental Health bill. Additional funding of \$6 million would allow for expansion focusing on areas of need identified by school administrators and educators.

PRIORITY: Future Ready

Iowa's Area Education Agencies can support a Future Ready vision for every child, in every county, in every Iowa school. Our agency is equipped to support teachers and districts with access to resources like the Work-Based Clearinghouse and ready them to embrace performance and work-based learning opportunities.

- ▶ Support \$2.25 million investment for the AEAs to lead school-based learning professional development for Iowa educators.

PRIORITY: Updated and Equitable Funding

Just as school districts operate at different funding levels, the same funding challenge is hindering the effectiveness of the Iowa AEA system. The current funding formula for the AEAs was established by the Iowa legislature in 1974, and needs to be updated to reflect per pupil inequities and changes in student populations.

- ▶ Support future changes to Iowa Code that equalize the AEA funding and costs per pupil.

PRIORITY: Supplemental State Aid (SSA)

To truly provide the children of our state with the education they deserve, we have to move beyond the rhetoric about world-class education and fund education appropriately.

- ▶ Support an increase to SSA that provides adequate resources for students and teachers, and is reflective of overall state revenue growth.

PRIORITY: Fully Funding Iowa's Area Education Agencies

Each year the Department of Management reduces the annual appropriation designated to the AEA system. This shortfall has been in place since 2002 and is impacting service delivery for Iowa's students.

- ▶ Oppose this annual de-appropriation of funding for Iowa's AEA system.



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- ▶ Support \$2.25 million investment for the AEA's to lead school-based learning professional development for Iowa educators which will be used to:

Empower educators with future-ready data and solutions

- Collect and distribute timely and relevant postsecondary readiness data to PK-12 districts including the creation of a statewide postsecondary data dashboard with district-specific data.
- Provide a resource center for K-12 educators to improve postsecondary readiness, including the latest research, evidence-based practice, webinars, presentations, and other relevant materials.
- Develop a statewide network of postsecondary readiness leads with specialized training in leading and implementing postsecondary readiness initiatives and programs.
- Provide data analyst leadership and support, responsible for all aspects of data collection, warehousing, and software development of data dashboards.

Enhance services that help students successfully transition to postsecondary programs

- Decrease the number of students who take remedial courses after high school.
- Increase the number of students who successfully complete the FAFSA.

Expand authentic, work-based learning opportunities

- Iowa's AEA's played a key role in the launch of The Iowa Clearinghouse for Work-Based Learning.

Engage more communities in the Portrait of a Graduate process

- The Portrait of a Graduate process creates a collective vision that articulates the community's aspirations for all students by asking these questions:
 - What are the skills and mindsets that our children need for success in this rapidly changing and complex world?
 - What are the implications for the design of the learning experiences—and equitable access to those experiences—we provide in our school systems?

As of Nov. 6, there are **63 known districts in 8 of the 9 AEA's** that are engaging in the Portrait of a Graduate, with **12** of those already implementing and **12** more deep in the design process. This number is only those districts who have made their interest or design known to The Center's Leadership Council, mostly through the AEA's, which means many more could be taking steps.

Additional funding will provide training, facilitation of the process, graphic design for the Portraits, strategic planning for the implementation, job-embedded coaching for teachers and leaders, and the development of a systemic dashboard that includes the full range of future-ready data (system, district, building, teacher, student with a public-facing side that business/industry/community partners find valuable for establishing and maintaining partnerships).



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Expand Crisis Intervention Mental Health Counseling

One AEA, through a consortium of its 11 rural school districts, has been piloting the Juvenile and Family Assistance and Stabilization (J-FAST) program. J-FAST works with youth and families who are at risk of hospitalization, committal, or residential placement to provide community-based support. Schools participating in the expanded J-FAST partnership can contact the J-FAST response team who assist in de-escalating a student situation. Three other AEAs are in the beginning stages of contacting community programs similar to JFAST for comparable services.

Expand Therapeutic Classrooms

The Therapeutic Classroom may be offered to families who child has struggled to manage mental health issues within the classroom and would benefit from a structured classroom, with staff who are trained in a variety of mental health diagnoses and childhood trauma. Daily social skills group activities address social skills such as decision making, anger management, relationship skills, emotional control and soft skills. Pilot programs have been established between three AEAs and Four Oaks Family and Children Services to create classroom sites in Marshalltown, West Des Moines, and Dubuque.

Site (School) Base Mental Health Options

Four AEAs have formed consortiums to facilitate agreements between local mental health providers to help meet the requests from their districts share caseloads in a manner that is cost-effective for both the community providers and for participating districts.

Professional Development

Thanks to training through Iowa's AEAs, over 2,800 educators have received Youth Mental Health First Aid training during the 2019-20 school year. That equates to about 30 percent of Iowa's licensed educators. An investment of \$3 million for the next three years will ensure that all of Iowa's teachers are trained.

During the 2018 legislative session, a new requirement was put in place to require a one-hour, annual training for all educators in suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention. The AEA system developed AEA Learning Online Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Training in response to that requirement.

Online Clearinghouse of Resources

A team with representatives from the nine AEAs is in the process of designing a functional, comprehensive website for parents/families, school staff, and community partners. The team is collaborating with the Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Department of Education, Mental Health Regions, and many other state organizations to understand their needs, as well as, to collaborate for an innovative repository for state and national mental health resources. An inventory of existing resources is underway.

- ▶ *This is being funded through the 2019 appropriation.*



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