



# Report

## *Education Advocacy*

### **SAI's 2013 Legislative Priorities**

Successful school reform during this legislative session in Iowa is dependent upon several factors.

- Both political parties need to work together in a collaborative manner to develop the vision and details for systemic school reform through policy change at the state level. Well-intentioned one-party policy change alone has not been successful in the past.
- The resources of time and additional money for K-12 education are needed for school reform to be successful in Iowa. Other states and countries that have made serious systemic improvements have recognized the need for resources to closely follow policy.
- A long-term plan must be developed collaboratively with all of the stakeholders in Iowa. This includes legislators, state government administrators, local school board members and administrators, teachers, parents, students, and business and community members.
- With changes in the political leaders and leadership of the state the long-term commitment to educational reform that has been developed must be honored through future policy and financial decisions.
- Any decisions on repurposing of existing funding streams must be done in a collaborative manner by working with school leaders seeking their understanding and support before decisions are finalized.

#### **Allowable Growth**

For 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 we support an allowable growth rate of 4 percent for each individual school year. The allowable growth rate must be established early in the session, and it must be in addition to the additional resources that will be needed for the governor's and Legislature's educational reform initiatives.

#### **Parent Engagement**

Parents are a very important component for the successful education of children. A statewide strategy needs to be developed to help all parents, guardians and significant adults in the lives of children become engaged in the school improvement policy strategy. The Partnering for Student Success (formerly Iowa Sustaining Parent Involvement Network-iSPIN) is a very successful parent engagement program that could be replicated in all schools across Iowa for relatively low cost to the state.

#### **District and School Leadership**

School leadership through school boards, superintendents, district administration and principals must be provided with the authority and responsibility for successful school reform. Accountability rests with these district and school leaders, and they must be provided the tools needed to direct effective changes.

Provide support of "Coaching at the Core" for building principals through policy and financial resources. This proposal is intended to support the professional learning needs of Iowa's principals through the provision of executive coaches for 400 of Iowa's principals over a five-year period. The executive coaches would be trained to help principals "grow" the collective capacity of teachers through their work in learning teams (aka PLCs). Coaches would come primarily from the ranks of retired school administrators and would engage in a rigorous selection, training and ongoing learning team of their own. A commitment to evaluate the project over the course of five years using a randomized control trial methodology has been secured from American Institutes for Research and REL Midwest who will also assume the costs of the research.

Provide financial support for the School Administration Managers project (SAMs). It has proven to be a highly effective and relatively low-cost model to provide building principals with time to be effective instructional leaders.

Provide financial support for new administrator mentoring.

#### **Tax Equity**

We support property tax reform efforts that address both taxpayer and student inequities. This includes lowering the highest school additional levy rate to the state average. The tax reform must be revenue neutral for the districts not receiving the equity adjustment. Commercial property tax reform must be done in a manner to be revenue neutral for all school districts.

#### **School Transportation Equity**

We support legislation that addresses the inequities of transportation per-pupil costs for school districts with higher than the state average per-pupil transportation costs. The transportation equity provided must be revenue neutral for districts at or below the state average transportation costs per pupil.

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## Allowable Growth vs. Educational Reform?

"Iowa's strong economy has bolstered state revenues ..."

~ Des Moines Register 12-13-12

Iowa's state revenues will grow by 3.3 percent in the current fiscal year and by another 3.4 percent in the next, according to recently released state estimates. This means the state will reap \$206 million more this year than it did last year—and another \$227.7 million on top of that the following year. Additionally, there is another \$800 million sitting in the statutorily filled rainy day fund.

This growth comes as a result of gains in personal and corporate income tax and state sales tax collections. It is also built on top of a 10 percent across-the-board state aid cut to schools in 2008 and very low allowable growth to Iowa's public schools over the last three years. The allowable growth has been 2 percent in 2011, 0 percent in 2012 and 2 percent in 2013.

Over that three- to four-year period school administrators were told that the state's financial situation couldn't support higher resources for schools. We were told that reserves needed to be replenished and that revenue projections were too tentative and too fragile to commit additional resources to Iowa schools.

As good stewards and as leaders who are asked to make difficult decisions around limited resources, Iowa's school administrators accepted these decisions. Despite knowing that painful cuts would need to be made that would negatively impact students, programs and staff.

But now, despite the dramatically improved financial condition of the state, the Iowa Department of Education during the week of December 10 included no increase in allowable growth in its budget request to the Legislature. Additionally, Gov. Branstad has been publicly quoted as favoring doing away with allowable growth altogether.

It appears that allowable growth, which has been described as the "bread and butter" of Iowa schools, is being shorted so that resources can be directed toward the reforms proposed by the Task Force on Teacher Leadership and Compensation. A "price tag" of about \$150 million has been placed on this effort. That figure of \$150 million is not for one year, but for multiple years.

To be clear SAI and I, support the recommendations of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation Task Force. I was one of the 25 members of that task force.

SAI's official position on those recommendations is as follows:

We believe, on a conceptual basis, that the recommendations of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation Task Force create a framework for positive change, professionally improve the opportunities in teaching, and have the potential for improving student achievement. In summary, we believe the recommendations of the task force have the potential to:

- Improve the teaching and learning process while positively impacting student achievement.
- Create pathways to attract highly qualified people and top talent to the teaching profession.
- Support a teaching and learning environment improving mentoring and supporting collaboration.
- Expand the role of teaching and professional development opportunities.
- Improve equitability in teaching pay and quality throughout the state.

Recognizing the extremely positive potential of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation Task Force, we ask that as the task force recommendations are reviewed and developed consideration be given to the following.

Funding and Sustainability

- Adequate, sustained funding must be guaranteed.
- Instead of repurposing funds, the program should be fully funded with new funds.
- Any repurposing of funds should be done with a clear understanding of consequences, intended or unintended.
- The funding should not be accompanied with unfunded mandates, which severely restrict local school districts.
- The funding should ensure equitability among districts of all sizes throughout the state.

- continued on page 3



# In Brief

## At its December meeting held via conference call, the SAI Executive Committee:

- in addition to approving the financial statements, was informed SAI's CPA firm has directed credit card expenses to be recorded as they are incurred rather than when the bill is paid. Also, the Association is on target with this year's budget.
- learned Mentoring & Induction program participants have access to multiple web resources via pages on the SAI site;
- reviewed the financials and was presented with the final audit report for 2011-12;
- heard an update on professional learning opportunities, the state's Competency-based Education Task Force, and SAI Annual Conference presenters;
- received highlights of a recent K-12 educators and social networking survey which staff will use in conjunction with SAI needs assessment results to determine future direction;
- approved SAI's legislative priorities, which will also need to be approved by the Rep Council;
- heard that SAI continues work with the governor's office regarding bullying;
- learned the IPERS Benefits Advisory Committee and the Investment Advisory Council met Dec. 3. IPERS' expected rate of return is currently 7.5 percent and will be reviewed in the spring as part of an ongoing process;
- received an update from a task force charged with studying SAI district boundaries.

## Member feedback\*



### December results: Which focus question do your teacher teams spend the most time discussing?

- What should students know and be able to do? 28.13%
- How do we know students have learned what we've taught? 28.13%
- How are we responding when students aren't learning? 21.88%
- How are we responding when students already know what we intend to teach? 0%
- What instructional design will best serve the learning needs of our students? 21.88%

### This month's question: Do you invite legislators to your district/building to view the educational process first-hand?

Provide your answer at  
<http://bit.ly/10Pmc1O>

\* This is an unscientific survey of volunteer participants and is not a valid statistical sample.

Image credit: Crystaljingsr gallery, licensed under CCL

## In Memoriam

Sharon Kurns, Heartland AEA regional director. (12-23-12)

## Making the Most of Iowa Assessment Data

offered at two locations

Feb. 22-Boulders Conference Center, Denison  
March 28-Grant Wood AEA, Cedar Rapids  
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Deepen your knowledge and skill in using and communicating Iowa Assessment data through this learning opportunity!

Use standard score data to analyze student growth, set goals and determine programming.

Get clarity around the changes to the Iowa Assessments, alignment to College and Career Readiness standards, percent proficient and other questions.

Take away tips, templates, and tools for analyzing and communicating Iowa Assessment data to multiple audiences. If you can bring a sample (a single grade level or class) of Iowa Assessment data—both individual student data and group data—for the last two years, you can get started! If not, we will have sample data for you to manipulate. Please bring your laptop.

What some of your peers are saying about this workshop:

"Excellent modeling and use of instructional/learning strategies."

"I appreciated the format – It was extremely useful in modeling what I can use with my staff. I also appreciate the materials and files that you made available to us."

"Thank you for making this relevant for us."

Register today for this learning experience: [www.sai-iowa.org/reghtml](http://www.sai-iowa.org/reghtml).

## Allowable Growth

- continued from page 2

- The funding should also reflect increased student contact time, professional development and reduced class size.
- The funding should be accompanied by adequate allowable growth.
- The funding details should be developed by a team that understands and plans for the impact of collective bargaining.

The importance of adequately funding the task force recommendations must not come at the expense of allowable growth and the regular school program. Both the reform proposals and the regular school program are too important to play them against one another.

## Upcoming Events

### January

8 - Statewide Mentoring Meeting for New Assistant Principals (all levels), SAI Office, Clive

10 - Statewide Mentoring Meeting for New Superintendents, SAI Office, Clive

15 - Statewide Mentoring Meeting for New Elementary Principals, FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny

16 - Statewide Mentoring Meeting for New Middle School and High School Principals, FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny


31 & Feb. 1 - Executive Leaders Meeting, FFA Enrichment Center, Ankeny

### February

19 - SAI School Law Conference, West Des Moines Marriott

22 - Making the Most of Iowa Assessment Data, Boulders Conference Center, Denison

Register online for events at [www.sai-iowa.org/reghtml](http://www.sai-iowa.org/reghtml)



National Harbor, MD  
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## sai REPORT

The *SAI Report* is published for association members and selected community and business leaders by School Administrators of Iowa. The views expressed in the *SAI Report* do not necessarily reflect SAI opinion nor does acceptance of advertising imply SAI endorsement.

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed.  
Tracy J. Harms, editor





# School Safety: No Easy Solution

Whether due to an accident, force of nature, or an act of evil, when tragedy occurs, it often leads to heightened vigilance and reflection on how we might prevent or prepare for a similar future tragedy. Every several years, or perhaps more frequently, we act with renewed vigor to evaluate school safety measures and preparedness due to the evil acts of those cowards who attack a school somewhere in our country. I do not share this as a criticism, but a reality. In fact, from my office in Clive, I have observed an ongoing awareness of the need to update and rehearse school safety plans throughout the state of Iowa. That focus is just sharpened in times such as these.

It truly is not possible to rehearse or prepare too much, and the acts of one disturbed and sick man in Connecticut has led me to again share about some helpful resources, as well as pass along other observations/opinions of my own.

First, I wish to remind you about the 2012 Iowa School Safety Guide, which was developed through the collective work of emergency responders and school personnel. The School Safety Guide may be found here: [www.sai-iowa.org/legalissues](http://www.sai-iowa.org/legalissues), and is provided in a format for your staff to easily revise so it best meets the needs of your district or building. It covers a variety of safety topics, and not just situations relating to school attacks. If you have questions relating to the School Safety Guide, feel free to contact me or Matt Parrino with Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management, 515-725-3231. Mr. Parrino and his colleagues at Iowa Homeland Security are also available to provide assistance visits to your school, in an attempt to assess weaknesses, recommend counter-measures, and review your school's current safety plan. Along with Curt Sullivan, also of Iowa Homeland Security, Matt Parrino presented at the 2012 SAI School Law Conference. I am checking into their availability to again participate in SAI's upcoming Law Conference February 19 in West Des Moines.

Of course, beyond updating your safety plan, it is critical that relevant components of the plan are shared with staff members, volunteers and students, and that rehearsal regularly occurs. Keep in mind that there may be aspects of the plan that are not openly shared or available to the public, to ensure that a devious individual does not use intelligence gathering from your plan to prepare for a more lethal attack against your school. In case anyone questions you on this point, Iowa law provides exceptions so that security measures or emergency preparedness documents are not required to be shared upon receipt of an open records request. (Iowa Code §22.7(50))

Now for perhaps a slightly more controversial topic: the role of resource officers in our schools. *The Des Moines Register* has covered this topic repeatedly over the past year. You may find related editorials here: <http://dmreg.co/Yv3U50> and <http://dmreg.co/W1Q8An>. *The Register* no doubt has had a main focus of the sometimes confusing role of resource officers, as well as resulting insertion of many students into the criminal justice system when officers are involved. Surprisingly, *The Register* did, however, reference "overblown fears about student violence." While there undoubtedly may be some school administrators or other school officials who too readily involve resource officers, my experience has been that administrators involve those officers when legitimate issues of student or staff safety are involved. Those who are not in school buildings, or not communicating with school officials on a daily basis may be surprised by the number of student outbursts (sometimes physical) or disruptions that occur outside of resource officer involvement.

*The Register* is raising a fair discussion regarding the impact of criminal records on students, and we may have an intellectual conversation on that point; however, if part of the effort is to remove resource officers from our schools, I wholeheartedly disagree. Not only should resource officers not be removed, I wish we had more of them. The attackers are frequently cowards, often used to facing no real harm as they play their shooter video games at home. It came as no surprise to me that the Newtown, Conn., shooter took his own life, rather than face the officers imminently responding with real weapons.

We have spent millions upon millions to ensure that schools are virtually fireproof, and we, thankfully, do not read of students being killed in school fires as a result. Likewise, after 9/11, our government developed the TSA, which has armed employees at every airport of any significant size in our country. Yet, we probably only have trained and armed personnel at perhaps 1 in every 10-20 school buildings in our state. Certainly, the ratio would be slightly higher in our urban and suburban schools. It is time to have a thorough discussion relating to the role armed resource officers or security personnel may play in protecting students and staff members.

But weren't there armed security personnel at Columbine?! First, the tactics/approach utilized by law enforcement and trained security personnel has changed since Columbine. Second, we do not know the extent to which security personnel mitigated the human loss at Columbine. Finally, I am not asserting that armed personnel will be able to outright prevent all attacks on our schools. They won't. However, schools with no armed personnel are undoubtedly softer targets, and armed personnel on school property provide a faster response time, as well as some level of deterrence, even if they are not complete deterrents in every instance.

Beyond having armed and trained officers in our schools, what else should we be doing to prevent or mitigate school attacks? Some threat assessment and identification undoubtedly is of benefit.

**"Of course, beyond updating your safety plan, it is critical that relevant components of the plan are shared with staff members, volunteers and students, and that rehearsal regularly occurs."**

the Safe School Initiative (2002)” provides information that is not only helpful, but still fairly accurate, if one considers the identifying traits of those who have perpetrated school attacks since 2002. For instance, the 2002 Final Report noted that 41 out of 41 school attackers were male, 95 percent were students at the attacked school (interestingly, the other 5 percent were former students at the school), and 76 percent were white. So, while odds are that a female student will eventually attack a school in the United States, your attention, at least as concerning the prevention of school attacks, should rightfully focus on male students.

As an instructive point of reference, the threat assessment process the Secret Service utilizes “involve[s] three principle steps – all before the person has an opportunity to attack:

- identifying individuals who have the idea or intent of attacking a Secret Service protectee;
- assessing whether the individual poses a risk to a protectee after gathering sufficient information from multiple sources; and,
- managing the threat the individual poses in those cases where the individual investigated is determined to pose a threat.”

*This article is intended only as a reference in regard to the subject matter covered. It is furnished with the understanding that SAI is not engaged in rendering legal advice. If a legal opinion is desired, private legal counsel should be consulted.*

Among the 10 key findings from the 2002 Final Report, several notable findings included:

- Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.
- Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures. Moreover, many had considered or attempted suicide.
- Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack.
- Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.

While the 2002 Final Report notes that there is no outright “profile” of a school attacker, from my observation, it does seem that they are typically described as outcasts of one sort or another. For situations where analysis “determines that there is an articulable and significant threat to the health or safety of a student or other individuals, [school officials] may disclose information from education records to any person whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals.” (34 Code of Federal Regulations 99.36) While hopefully such a situation never arises, just know that warning others about a dangerous student trumps concerns of that student’s confidentiality rights. The federal government adopted this provision after the Virginia Tech massacre.

In the more common scenario where students are identified as risks, but are not yet significant threats, let’s do our best to switch these outcasts to incasts. While mental health issues are likely a significant factor in nearly every case of students attacking schools, it comes as no surprise to me that attackers felt bullied or injured by others before the attack. A good starting point to making that bullied, but potentially dangerous, student feel more like an incast is to ensure they receive a good dose of unconditional love at school. Even if they reach that breaking point, and get violent, perhaps students will not turn that violent bent toward our schools if the schools are seen as a place where the student was unconditionally loved.

Speaking of unconditional love, I all too frequently speak with administrators about truly troubled kids and learn about how even more troubled their lives are at home. I have unscientifically begun asking about the student’s home life when I receive such calls, and can confidently share that probably 90 percent of the students come from a home where the father is absent or is not a positive influence in the student’s life. Our schools and communities would be well-served if fathers also provided the unconditional love I previously discussed. I provide this as more of an observation for additional community discussion, rather than a topic for you to tackle in your schools. Imagine how much less educators would have to focus on behavioral problems at school if every student had two parents who unconditionally loved him/her.

While I am confident that unconditional love would go a long way toward solving many of our problems, in some situations students are facing mental health challenges that are not remedied or prevented by the love of parents or educators. We are making strides in the discussion of mental health no longer being taboo. As I am sure many of you are already doing, openly share mental health resources with students, parents and fellow educators. As a component of mental health, spiritual well-being regarding assistance in a student’s faith community may also serve as tremendous value. While educators are not to be proselytizing students, there is no harm in sharing that spiritual assistance may be part of the mental health toolbox.

Finally, err on the side of sharing or getting assistance whenever you have safety concerns at school or in your communities. Hopefully, staff members, volunteers, and students feel empowered and motivated to share as well when a student’s or an adult’s behavior seems out of place. Let’s call it our Spidey senses. That little feeling we get when we see or hear something that just doesn’t make us feel comfortable. Students should know that when they share such things it may be less about getting someone in trouble and more about getting them help. And when you detect something is unsafe, never hesitate to involve law enforcement. If that results in you facing the ire of *The Des Moines Register*, blame it on me. Better to have law enforcement there and ultimately not need them than the other way around.

Well, I realize I have jumped around a bit in this month’s column. While some of the information provided comes from outside sources, other comments express my own opinions and observations after participating in thousands of calls and email exchanges with school administrators over the past seven years. I certainly don’t have all of the answers, but I thought the points raised were at least worth discussion. I encourage you to share your thoughts and observations, too as student well being and safety should be at the forefront of all of our efforts. Tweet or email me. I am interested in what you have to say.

Until next month, remember to cheer on the Irish January 7! Go Irish, beat ‘Bama!

**“In the more common scenario where students are identified as risks, but are not yet significant threats, let’s do our best to switch these outcasts to incasts.”**



## We Make It Look Easy

My thoughts the past two weeks have repeatedly returned to a question my son posed during our traditional holiday cooking and baking adventure. Watching me mix the sugar cookie dough, he asked if I always just knew how to cook. Laughing, I told him about when I was 9 and baking my first cake from a boxed mix. I remember reading the directions on the box several times to ensure I could do each step. Feeling confident, I had added the egg, oil, and cake mix. Next, I was to “mix by hand,” which seemed simple enough. I washed my hands thoroughly and then proceeded to dip them into the bowl. Raw egg and oil along with flecks of dry mix clung to my fingers as I struggled to get those ingredients to combine into a batter. Seated at our kitchen table, my mom and her sister halted their conversation when they noticed my efforts to “mix by hand,” and my aunt asked, “What is she doing?” To which my mom replied, “I have no idea.” I pointed to the box and explained, “It says right here ‘mix by hand.’” To my horror, they burst into laughter. Thirty-five years later, my son and I were laughing, too. “So, no,” I said, “I did not always know how to cook; I learned—much through trial and error.”

My son’s question caused me to think about how in our leading and teaching we become so practiced in our craft that we make things look easy or misleadingly simple. What we know and do becomes so familiar and routine to us that we risk forgetting what we were thinking and doing when we first learned the task or concept. We take for granted how we know what we know; and we unintentionally cause our learners to perceive the learning of the concept or task as mysterious or miraculous. My son, for example, thought I was just born with a natural instinct for cooking; and miraculously, I could cook. Not so surprisingly, I remember my students having this same perception about writing. They believed that some students just had a natural inclination to organize and communicate their thinking in writing. Something magical apparently happened in the minds of real writers.

Granted, some may have a unique talent or skill in a particular area, but everyone can learn at high levels. In reflecting on my cooking experience, I am even more convinced of our role as educators to demystify the learning process by making visible our own learning. This is true for both leaders in working with staff and students as well as for teachers working with students and each other. Making learning visible according to John Hattie, author of *Visible Learning*, means modeling and thinking out loud as we share our own metacognitive processes with students. We might begin by asking ourselves how aware are we of our own mental processes? When was the last time you thought about your thinking and shared those thoughts? For example, why did you choose a particular article for your staff to read? Why did you choose the discussion strategy you chose? How will the strategies for processing that you chose help your staff? How could you share your rationale for your choices with your staff?

When we share our thinking with our audience, we provide insight to our own learning. We make visible our learning about not only the concept or skill but also about our audience as learners. For example, let’s say I noticed that most of the assessments administered in my building were multiple choice. Collaborating with my building leadership team, I decide to collect a random sample of assessments to get a better sense of the type and variety of assessments my staff is using. Additionally, four building leadership team representatives have indicated their learning teams want more information regarding performance-based assessments aligned to the Iowa Core. At our next staff meeting, I explain to my staff what I have learned from their feedback and the data we have collected related to assessment. Consequently, I share an article regarding performance-based assessments. I choose a specific processing strategy like concentric circles to engage all voices in the room in discussion of the article as well as to model a way in which they might engage all voices in their classrooms. In thinking out loud with my staff about my choices of content and strategy for processing and the rationale for both, I am making my learning and thinking visible. I am modeling intentional planning using the categories of content, process, and rationale.

By sharing my thought processes with my staff, I am able to demystify the planning and learning in which I have engaged. The result is to make the learning of the content and skills accessible to all audiences. When learners see and hear how we chunk content, approach a reading, start an essay, or conduct an experiment, they have a sense of how to do the same; and eventually, they’ll make it look easy, too.

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“... I am even more convinced of our role as educators to demystify the learning process by making visible our own learning.”

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## SAI Annual Conference, Aug. 7 and 8



Speaker  
Freeman  
Hrabowski

One of the most popular learning opportunities SAI offers is its Annual Conference. Be there Aug. 7 when Freeman A. Hrabowski III, president, University of Maryland, Baltimore County addresses creating a climate of success for all students.

Named one of the “100 Most Influential People in the World” in 2012 by Time magazine, Freeman A. Hrabowski III will share his thoughts about educating students in the new century. His research and publications focus on science and math education with special emphasis on minority participation and performance. He chaired the National Academies’ committee that produced the recent report *Expanding Underrepresented Minority Participation: America’s Science and Technology Talent at the Crossroads*. Hear more from Dr. Hrabowski in this *60 Minutes* interview: <http://cbsn.ws/WepbN>

Dr. Hrabowski is also presenting on the national level as keynote speaker for the ASCD and NAESP Annual Conferences.



## Creative Commons

### In an open access world, are you giving back or just taking?

The notion that the wealth of all human knowledge would be available to most Americans for free would have been unthinkable just a couple of decades ago. In our Internet-suffused culture of today, of course, most of us are unsurprised that nearly anything we want to know or learn is available to us, usually for free. Not only do we now take this capability for granted, many of us get downright offended when information we want online is hidden behind a paywall. If a website puts up login, registration, or price barriers to information access, we quickly click away and try to find what we want elsewhere. With few exceptions, we have normed ourselves around the idea that news, knowledge, and learning resources should be ours for no cost or low cost.

This idea that we expect most information to now be free is true for our web sites, online videos, screencast tutorials, and even the apps for our smartphones and tablet computers. Textbooks and academic research journals are starting to become available for free. Many of the world's leading universities are experimenting with massive open online courses (MOOCs), serving tens or even hundreds of thousands of students per class. Services like Coursera, Udacity, edX, and FutureLearn are racing to collect our attention, build goodwill, and grow their brands. The registration and tuition costs for these courses? Zero. In addition to more formal tools and websites such as iTunesU, TED, BigThink, Fora.TV, and Academic Earth, numerous informal learning channels have emerged, including Mahalo, Instructables, P2PU, and SkillShare. These latter services generally feature the wisdom of knowledgeable 'amateurs' rather than credentialed 'experts.' When combined with the millions of blogs, video channels, podcasts, and other Web resources that are floating around, our ability to be powerful learners has never been greater. It's an amazing time to be a learner or a teacher.

The same movement that we are seeing toward open educational resources (OER) in higher education also is permeating P-12. Sites like the Khan Academy, HippoCampus, Connexions, and Curriki are beginning to capture the attention of school teachers and administrators. Many educators have happily tapped into the incredible learning opportunities that are available to them and their students.

Lost in all of the eagerness around OER consumption, however, is a concurrent felt need to contribute. Many educators are willing to take and use free resources as they find them, but far fewer create and share resources for the benefit of others. This lack of reciprocity undercuts the ethos of sharing that helped create—and now sustains—the vigor of our new online information landscape.

One of the best things we can do to improve our local and virtual learning communities is to take seriously our ability and obligations to be contributors to our shared global information commons. We should do this ourselves as educators and we should have our students do this, too. How often do you, your staff, and/or your students contribute something online to benefit others? What can you do as a leader to foster an environment of sharing and giving back, not just taking and using? Drop me a note if you're ready to think seriously about this. I'd love to chat with you.

EdCampIowa.org: There are just a few dozen slots available for both EdCampIowa East and EdCampIowa West. Let's get 'em filled. Hope to see you on February 16!

As always, stay in touch and let me know how I can be of support to you: 707-722-7853 or dr.scott.mcleod@gmail.com.

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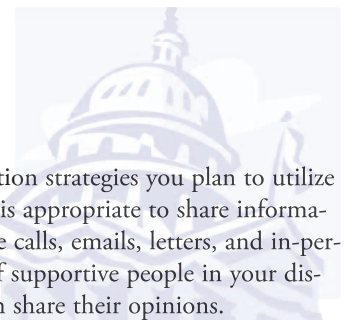
## Legislative Notes

from SAI Government Relations Director Tom Narak

**W**ith the legislative session set to open January 14, this is a very good time to review the communication strategies you plan to utilize with your legislators. Remember that school resources cannot be used for political purposes, but it is appropriate to share information to help legislators understand issues that may have an impact upon your schools and students. Phone calls, emails, letters, and in-person communication are all very important. It is also very important to be sure that you have a network of supportive people in your district and community to call upon when the extremely important issues are pending in order to have them share their opinions.

The 2013 SAI Legislative Platform is on the front page of this issue. It will be a road map for many of the issues that are important for education in Iowa's schools. Please be sure to utilize them and contact us if you have any questions. Undoubtedly, there will be other issues that will require our attention, and we will keep you posted on issues as they arise through our SAI Facebook page and in our weekly Legislative Updates. Please be sure to check the Facebook page on a regular basis to keep up-to-date with our most current information on legislative activity.

Thank you for the great work that you are doing for the students in Iowa's schools. Your dedication to your students and outstanding leadership are greatly appreciated. You are on the front lines of the most important work in our communities and state. Your safety and the safety of your students and staff are very important. As we proceed, we will be looking for collaborative solutions to the most concerning safety issues that have ever been encountered in our profession.





## 2013 Priorities

- continued from page 1

### AEA Support

We support the AEA system in Iowa, and we believe it should be funded appropriately to support students and school districts across the state. Past reductions to the funding for AEAs have created fewer services to students and schools. If Iowa is going to successfully transform K-12 education, then long-term financial support for K-12 school districts and the AEAs is crucial.

### Teacher Leadership and Compensation

We believe, on a conceptual basis, that the recommendations of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation Task Force create a framework for positive change, professionally improve the opportunities in teaching, and have the potential for improving student achievement. In summary, we believe the recommendations of the task force have the potential to:

- Improve the teaching and learning process while positively impacting student achievement.
- Create pathways to attract highly qualified people and top talent to the teaching profession.
- Support a teaching and learning environment improving mentoring and supporting collaboration.
- Expand the role of teaching and professional development opportunities.
- Improve equitability in teaching pay and quality throughout the state.

Recognizing the extremely positive potential of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation Task Force, we ask that as the task force recommendations are reviewed and developed consideration be given to the following.

#### Funding and Sustainability

- Adequate, sustained funding must be guaranteed.
- Instead of repurposing funds, the program should be fully funded with new funds.
- Any repurposing of funds should be done with a clear understanding of consequences, intended or unintended.
- The funding should not be accompanied with unfunded mandates, which severely restrict local school districts.
- The funding should ensure equitability among districts of all sizes throughout the state.
- The funding should also reflect increased student contact time, professional development and reduced class size.
- The funding should be accompanied by adequate allowable growth.
- The funding details should be developed by a team that understands and plans for the impact of collective bargaining.

We believe these key areas of importance must be incorporated into the review prior to effective implementation of comprehensive Teacher Leadership and Compensation legislation:

- A clear understanding of the use of the proposed funding by the legislature, educators statewide, and SAI Executive Leaders and an opportunity for feedback on the potential impact prior to final approval.
- An understanding of the impact on collective bargaining, which is fully realized prior to legislative approval, and a maintaining of the rights of local Boards of Education in the bargaining process.
- Prior to implementation, a full review of Chapter 20 rules and regulations and an understanding of the impact of related legislation pertaining to any change in teacher assignment or functions.
- Final legislative action that supports a comprehensive leadership and compensation program that will effectively impact teaching and learning.

The model recommended by the task force appears to limit management's right of assignment. We are concerned and would not support a plan that takes away this administrative authority. We believe administrators are hired to assure the quality of teaching and learning in their schools and should have the necessary personnel assignment responsibility to achieve this.

### School Calendar

We believe that school calendar decisions are best made by local school boards in collaboration with their local district and community.

### Preschool Program

We believe that current preschool programming and the funding formula should be continued.

### Statewide Sales Tax for School Infrastructure

The current SAVE funding should be continued as implemented through the expiration date of 2028.



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