

2009-2010 Iowa City Community School District Legislative Priorities & Talking Points

1. Support full Spending Authority for the Instructional Support Levy at the board approved program percentage.

- The Instructional Support Levy (ISL) is a voter approved source of general fund resources dedicated to specific purposes. Originally, the state was to allow districts with an ISL to increase their general fund resources up to an additional 10 percent of the district cost per pupil, with the district providing 75 percent of that and the state matching 25 percent. However, since FY 1993, the state match has been frozen at \$14.1 million. This freeze has not only denied districts significant voter approved funding, but also the authority to spend at the full approved level. However, given the growing size of the State's ISL deficit and the present condition of the State budget, we understand that full funding of the ISL in 2009 is not realistic. We do, however, urge that districts be given full *spending authority* at the board approved program percentage. In the case of the ICCSD, this would mean additional spending authority of nearly \$1 million per year and would provide a critical source of spending authority at a time when state foundation formula funding (and spending authority) is in jeopardy. Under current, negotiated contracts, the approximately \$1 million equates to 20.5 first year teachers and 15.7 mid-range teachers. In the likelihood of Reduction in Force (RIF), under contract, the district is required to reduce staff in the order of seniority.

2. Support setting allowable growth at a rate that encourages continuous student achievement and reflects the actual cost increases school districts experience. The allowable growth rate should be set no less than 4% even if the state is unable to fund this rate. The decision to fund 4% allowable growth is then determined by the local school board.

- Adequate funding of public education in Iowa is essential if we are to maintain and improve the quality of our schools and the quality of life which they support. Iowa has made significant investments in education over the past several years, especially with regard to teacher compensation. This was needed; but the gains achieved will soon be lost if we again allow our support to erode. We join the IASB and the UEN in supporting adequate allowable growth (the IASB's Allowable Growth Position Statement is attached). We also recognize that funding allowable growth at 4% or higher, though necessary, may be impossible due to the condition of the State's budget. However, we urge that the rate be set at no lower than 4% even if it cannot be funded at that level. Reducing the rate not only reduces critically needed funding this year, but lowers the bar for all future years. Based on past experience, we know that this will necessarily lead to further decline in Iowa's national ranking and, consequently, a negative impact on student achievement.

3. Support expanded flexibility and use of the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) that would include: all software purchases, software as a service (SaaS), the total cost of contracted school bus services, and energy management services (whether performed by contractor or employee).

- Currently, only a single unit of equipment or technology in the excess of \$500 can be paid from PPEL. Software purchased at the same time as the computer, and only if integral to operation of the computer can be paid from PPEL. Subsequent software purchases and annual licensing fees are not equipment, are generally less than \$500, so are not eligible to be paid from PPEL.
- Software as a Service (SaaS) is generally a web-based software application that replaces the need for the district to purchase both hardware (payable from PPEL) and software (may be payable from PPEL) SaaS eliminates the need for the district to purchase and support both the hardware and software but because it doesn't meet the threshold of cost, it shifts the funding into the General Fund instead of PPEL.
- The district is only able to charge the PPEL Fund for the leasing cost of buses, which is not the full cost of the busing.
- For 2009-10 our estimated busing costs in the General Fund are \$3.5 million, which under current, negotiated contracts, equates to 71.9 first year teachers and 55.2 mid-range teachers. In the likelihood of Reduction in Force (RIF), under contract, the district is required to reduce staff in the order of seniority.

Flexibility of the Physical Plant and Equipment Levy and other possible Special Revenue Funds allow the locally elected school board as the final authority to decide upon utilization and allocation of funding that best meets the needs of students and the district. Allowing the local school boards that flexibility allows the district to become more efficient and make the decisions how to best utilize local funding sources to meet local needs.

The accountability laws in Iowa and the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) provide for the community accountability and responsibility of schools boards in the Comprehensive School Improvement Process (CSIP).

4. Support creation of Special Revenue Fund to pay for all costs of providing school bus transportation services. The funding source shall be a property tax levy.

- For 2009-10 our total estimated busing costs are \$4.8 million, the impact in the General Fund is \$3.5 million, which under current, negotiated contracts, equates to 71.9 first year teachers and 55.2 mid-range teachers. In the likelihood of Reduction in Force (RIF), under contract, the district is required to reduce staff in the order of seniority.

5. Support continued funding for the professional development necessary to implement alignment of district curriculum with the Iowa Core Curriculum, development and use of formative assessment to monitor student progress and evidence-based instructional practices for teaching a rigorous curriculum.

- Iowa Core Curriculum legislation requires that the full implementation occur in high schools by July 1, 2012 and by K-8 in 2014-15.
- Funding for professional development is necessary to continue to make progress toward implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum with integrity within the aggressive timeline.

- Funding in ICCSD is used to insure alignment of the district's curriculum with the state mandated curriculum in math, literacy, science, social studies and 21st century skills (employability skills, financial literacy, health literacy and technology literacy) by teachers
- ICCSD funding will also be used to train teachers on the use of formative assessments in order to monitor student achievement and adjust instruction to insure that all students are receiving rigorous instruction at his/her level
- Funding for professional development is being used to implement differentiated instruction in all content areas. Training started this summer for administrators, coordinators and teachers. Differentiation has been identified as a need by teachers and administrators for all content areas. This funding allows the district to provide the training. The training this summer by our principals and teachers was highly rated and kicked off a very successful initiative.
- Implementation of the 21st century skills is based upon colleges and employers are stating are the skills needed by students to be successful
- The Iowa Core Curriculum is the cornerstone for the State of Iowa to improve student achievement. It holds schools accountable for what matters most-graduating students ready for college and work, doing the right work of teaching and testing the skills that matter most, and doing the right work in new ways to close the achievement gap and improve achievement for all students.
- It is a chance to move all schools forward in Iowa-not only pockets of excellence.