



## UEN Legislative Update February 6, 2025

This UEN Weekly Report from the 2025 Legislative Session includes:

- 2% SSA on Senate Calendar
- Governors Bill on TSS, Out-of-State Expenditure Reimbursement, Salary for IPERS Returning Retirees, etc. Introduced
- Governor's Math Initiative (and Civics) Introduced
- Cell Phone and Chronic Absenteeism Subcommittees in Senate
- Charter School Grab for TSS Funding Subcommittee in House
- Advocacy Actions for the Week
- Bill Tracker Detailing Actions on Committees, Subcommittees & New Bills for the Week (will be posted separately on Friday)

### **SF 167 SSA Increase of 2% on Senate Calendar**

This bill sets a 2% increase in the state supplementary assistance rate, SSA, which is the percentage increase in the state cost per pupil that funds schools through the Iowa School Foundation Formula. The bill continues property tax relief provisions and applies a 2% increase to per pupil categorical funds. See last week's written report for fiscal details about the proposal. The bill has been on the calendar since Jan. 30 and is awaiting some movement in the Senate.

UEN is registered opposed to the bill, since the UEN priority required an SSA level at least meeting the inflation rate (currently reported as 2.6% on the Iowa Employment Appeal Board's chart of the CPI-U ceiling for arbitrator awards). Express some gratitude to legislators for moving this bill quickly so districts can meet budget publication and public meeting deadlines. Talk to senators and representatives about the need to meet the inflation rate to avoid losing ground on competitive teacher pay.

### **Governor's TSS, Student Teaching Requirements, Out-of-State Expenditure Reimbursement, Salary for IPERS Returning Retirees Introduced**

**SSB 1100** was introduced into the Senate Education Committee. A subcommittee of Senators Evans, Pike and Quirnbach is assigned. The bill addresses several policy areas:

**TSS Calculation and Process:** Strikes last year's formula and tiers to calculate TSS per student and instead sets a new process based on what districts need to meet new minimums based on their staffing data. DOM is still required to include the employer's share of FICA and IPERS. The bill applies a 2% increase in the state cost per pupil and adds that dollar per pupil amount to

districts' TSS per pupil amounts. The bill also sets a process to correct errors on Oct. 2023 BEDS that impacted July 1, 2024 distributions.

**Student Teaching Requirements:** Exempts new teachers with substitute teaching experience or a substitute teaching license from the student teaching requirement. And changes the teacher intern program student teaching experience to say interns MAY (not shall) have 50 hours of student teaching. We believe both of these provisions would allow teacher preparation programs and school district mentors (when working with an intern) to determine what level of student teaching is necessary to demonstrate sufficient skill.

**Out-of-State Reimbursement:** Provides reimbursement to districts for costs of medically necessary out-of-state placements that exceed weighting, which could be residential placements such as PMIC, psychiatric medical institutions for children, if the placement includes required instruction. The difference between the weighting generated for the student and the actual expenditures will be reimbursed the next fall through state aid. The bill directs that the total of these reimbursements statewide be subtracted from state aid paid to all districts. However, the small amount of state aid prorated based on enrollment will not be very significant for any one school district and does not look to lower spending authority for any district as a result.

**Other provisions:** Reinstates DE's online jobs posting (doesn't explicitly say Teach Iowa, but that's it) and allows districts to pay IPERS eligible returning teachers \$50,000 minimum salary, even if they have 12 years or more experience.

### **Governor's Math and Civics Initiative Introduced**

[SSB 1092](#) and [HSB 137](#) were introduced this week and assigned to a subcommittee of Senators Evans, Gruenhagen, and Quirmbach and Representatives Gehlbach, Henderson and Kurth, respectively. The bills have requirements for the DE, teacher prep programs, and school districts. First, here are the requirements for the math initiative. The bills require DE to:

- Provide family-centered resources to schools to support the development of math knowledge at home
- Provide math PD to teachers employed by school districts in need of support (based on relative math proficiency and resources available)
- Develop and distribute a comprehensive state math plan
- Develop and publish a list of valid and reliable screeners that may be used by teachers to determine if students in K-6 may require additional instruction or support

Require teacher preparation programs to include preparation in math, specifies coursework and a demonstration of competency.

Require school districts to:

- Assess K-6 students at least 3X a year on screener
- If screener determines student is persistently at-risk in math:

- Assess at least every other week and implement interventions and supports
- Develop in consult with parents an individual math plan that identifies interventions and supports
- If the student is meeting expectations related to increases in the student’s level of math proficiency, must provide the student with small group interventions and if not, provide intensive interventions
- Continue support and interventions until student performs at benchmark on ISASP or on two consecutive assessments in the district, whatever is first.
- Defines persistently at risk to mean the student has not met the grade-level benchmark on two consecutive assessments.
- Requires the state BOE to adopt rules to administer this section

The bills also include a mandate for students to pass the INS Test for citizenship at 60% in order to graduate from an Iowa high school, but unlike the House and Senate versions already through subcommittees, the Governor’s bill:

- Allows modifications of the test for students with IEP or 504 plans, or allows provision of an alternative assessment
- Allows modifications of the test for EL students
- Requires districts to submit results of the test to the DE by June 30 of each year

UEN is currently reviewing this bill to determine our registration. The bill could have subcommittee meetings as early as next week.

### **Governor’s Cell Phone Subcommittee in Senate**

[SSB 1065](#) and [HSB 106](#) were introduced last week and assigned to their respective Education Committees. See last week’s report for policy details in these bills.

UEN explained our concerns with:

- The bill states that DE is to provide professional development and support to teachers for instruction in grades 6-8 about social media impacts on students. We requested the DE work through school district leaders who must allocate time, instructional materials and support for quality PD for the teachers in your district.
- Timelines are backward: DE should provide policy models, the Department of Public Safety and DE should provide guidance on changing emergency plans, State Board of Education should create administrative rules and standards for the social media content, all before school board are required to create board policies and change emergency preparedness plans.

UEN is registered as undecided but mostly concerned about the timelines or district authority over professional development and instruction.

### **Chronic Absenteeism Clean-up Subcommittee in Senate**

Sen. Evans, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, held a subcommittee on [SSB 1077](#) to fix some issues with chronic absenteeism. The bill includes the following provisions:

- Directs DE to work with the County Attorneys Association to develop and distribute to county attorneys and school districts (and private schools, too) a model policy that county attorneys may reference when determining whether and to what extent to enforce truancy law.
- Expands exceptions to include military application, military service, funerals and weddings and requires board policy or rules to describe how the exceptions may be met by a student, and must include reasonable consideration for travel time.
- Removes the certified mail delivery of notice (allows many others)
- Changes the mandate for a school engagement meeting, when 15% of absences in the grading period trigger the mandated meeting, to only apply if the school official determines the child's absences are negatively affecting the student's academic progress.

Approved in Senate Subcommittee on Wednesday, now assigned to the Full Senate Education Committee. UEN is registered in support.

### **Charter School Grab for TSS**

A subcommittee in the House Education Committee of Reps. Gehlbach, Madison and Shipley, considered [HSB 108](#), which would require the state TSS per pupil to follow students to charter schools (does not apply to open enrollment). UEN shared that, unlike the other per pupil categoricals of PD, TLC and EICS, the TSS allocations to school districts are not based on enrollment. They are based on the fall BEDS report of FTE teachers paid below the mandated minimums, including the district cost of FICA and IPERS. The total amount needed for the district to meet mandated teacher salaries is divided by enrollment, effectively backing into a per pupil TSS. There is a huge range, from \$699 per pupil to over \$2,400 per pupil. If TSS followed students to charter schools, primarily impacting urban districts where charter schools are springing up, those school districts may not have enough TSS to meet contracted salary amounts and minimum salaries without staff and program reductions elsewhere in the budget. For charter schools that are recruiting dropouts, which is worthy work if they are successful, it's possible that the public school did not count that student in Oct. 1 headcount, so that student did not "generate" any TSS. The bill was approved to move forward, 2:1. UEN is opposed.

### **UEN Advocacy Resources**

Check out the 2025 Session Advocacy Handbook, with everything advocacy beginners and experienced pros can use to advocate with legislators, at the statehouse or back in your district. Find the handbook on the UEN Advocacy Website here: <https://www.uen-ia.org/advocacy-handbook>

### **Advocacy Actions This Week:**

**Adequate School Funding:** Contact legislators regarding SSA. SF 167, which sets an increase of 2.0%, falls short of inflation. The teacher salary investment last year was a really good start, but SSA has to keep pace or our staff and programs for students will be compromised. See the UEN Adequate Funding Issue Brief (link below) for additional information. The deadline for deciding

SSA is Feb. 13, so the advocacy window is tightening. Reach out to Senators and House members about why your school needs more than 2%.

Additional Supports:

- Download the [UEN 2025 Adequate School Funding Issue Brief](#), providing education funding history, comparing total Iowa education expenditures per pupil, which most recently ranked our state as 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation, now spending more than \$2,000 per student LESS than the national average, and including some talking points to help you advocate with your legislators. *UEN's Legislative Priority supports an SSA rate that at least matches the inflation rate schools are experiencing.*
- [ISFIS New Authority Calculator](#) allows users to set the SSA rate and calculate the impact for all districts for FY 2026 on your regular program (not including special education or other supplemental weightings or categoricals). Enter the SSA percentage increase and your Budget Enrollment and you can compare to the new money you'd receive if the SSA rate matched inflation (either 2.9% for CPI and 3.2% for Core Inflation) compared to the Governor's Recommendation of 2.0%.

**Unfunded mandates and Implementation Timelines:** remind legislators that any bill requiring staff training or rewriting curriculum costs districts time and money. Unfunded mandates such as the mandatory Civics Test and Career Education curriculum in middle school require resources that take away from math, literacy or other key issues of district focus. Each mandate should bring with it the funding to implement or at least an increase in SSA so school districts do not have to make tough choices. So many new requirements are on our curriculum directors' and teacher plates. State BOE has approved new standards (ELA, Science, Math) and the new literacy initiative is currently being implemented. Any additional mandates for changing instruction that require training need thoughtful time and compliance expectations. Recent examples include cell phone policy/social media instruction, adding career exposure, planning and experience to middle school grades, a new math initiative or civics initiative, seizure disorder training and plans, and the list goes on with every new bill.) Please stress the time it takes to do good work, to benefit students.

**Connecting with Legislators:** To call and leave a message at the Statehouse during the legislative session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221 and the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371. You can ask if they are available or leave a message for them to call you back. You can also ask them what's the best way to contact them during session. They may prefer email or text message or phone call based on their personal preferences.

Find out who your legislators are through the interactive map or address search posted on the Legislative Website here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

**Other UEN Advocacy Resources:**

Check out the UEN Website at [www.uen-ia.org](http://www.uen-ia.org) to find Issue Briefs, these UEN Weekly Update Reports and Videos, UEN Calls to Action when immediate advocacy action is required,

testimony presented to the State Board of Education, the DE or any legislative committee or public hearing, and links to fiscal information that may inform your work. The latest legislative actions from the Statehouse will be posted at: [www.uen-ia.org/blogs-list](http://www.uen-ia.org/blogs-list). The 2025 UEN Advocacy Handbook will be available and posted shortly.

**Bill Action This Week**

Bill tracker will be posted on Friday.

**Contact Us**

Stay tuned for a thorough explanation of Statehouse actions this week .

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