



## Urban Education Network Legislative Successes for 2024 Session

Despite funding/policy challenges of the 2024 Legislative Session and inattention to some UEN priorities, some notable successes are worthy of mention. In some cases, the ability to stop or neutralize legislation's negative impacts are important wins accomplished with member outreach and persistence. The following are significant enough to include when thanking Legislators and the Governor for their service:

### Funding

- **[HF 2612](#) AEs, SSA and TSS**
  - Set a 2.5% SSA rate (although still below inflation, this rate ties for the third highest in 15 years).
  - Increased teacher salary supplement sufficient to meet new teacher salary minimums, although UEN would have preferred a per pupil distribution, urban school leaders are hopeful these new salary minimums will encourage more college students to go into teaching, encourage teachers from other states to come to Iowa, and allow schools to hire back retirees that still have the passion and skills to teach our students.
  - Provided \$14 million statewide for hourly staff supplemental pay.
  - To sum it up, with the increase in teacher pay and considering all investments in public schools, combined district cost grew by over \$192 million, which is a 3.6% increase.
- Legislative changes to HF 2612 AEA Overhaul from the original bill introduced by the Governor were critical, including restoration of media and services funding, keeping AEA's ability to provide media and education services as well as school improvement supports, slower implementation timelines, and creation of a task force to study impacts on students. UEN worked with legislators and the Governor to improve this bill and minimize negative impacts on students.
- Student Equity: [SF 2368](#) Charter Schools directed categorical funds to follow students, including PD and EICS, as well as current year SCPP. This action applied to students enrolled in a charter school or in another district through open enrollment. Depending on the school district's open enrollment experience, these actions are either positive or negative. UEN lobbied to keep TSS out of this bill. TSS was calculated in HF 2612 based on funds needed to get to teacher pay minimums, not based on a per pupil distribution. As such, there would be further significant inequities to address if TSS followed students.

### Teacher, Administrator, Staff Shortage Policies and Flexibility:

- **[SF 2411](#) Work-based Learning** allows a student participating in a 14-week student teaching experience to be credited between 1 week and 10 weeks for prior work experience as a substitute teacher or a para-educator, including prior experience under the TPRA grant program, under specific conditions.

- [HF 2612](#) **IPERS provisions** allow teachers whose first month of retirement benefits is July 2024 or later, but before July 1, 2027, to return to covered employment as a teacher after receiving one month of retirement benefits.
- [HF 2618](#) **Iowa Literacy Initiative** requires new teachers to take the Foundations in Literacy exam, and requires colleges to report scores, but does not condition the teaching license on successfully passing a target score.
- [HF 255](#) **Teacher Intern License/Program** creates a new pathway to teaching with an on-the-job completion component.
- [SF 2443](#) **Standings Appropriations Teacher Minimums**: more clearly defined 12-years of teaching experience for teacher pay minimums, effectively adding \$5 million to the TSS distribution method.

**Literacy:** UEN lobbied to remove the high stakes of literacy competency testing for teachers and mandatory retention for students as initially proposed in [HF 2618](#) Iowa Literacy Initiative. UEN welcomes the emphasis on good literacy instruction based on the science of reading, and school districts were already providing individualized instruction and plans for nonproficient readers.

**High School Programming:** two bills were passed to expand the flexibility of counting courses for accreditation and providing credit for students:

- [HF 2465](#) **AG Classes Offer and Teach Flexibility** for math, science, and CTE courses in areas teaching Agriculture.
- [SF 2411](#) **Work-Based Learning** allows students to receive high school credit for work-based learning, even when school is not in session.

**Mental Health Services:** [HF 2515](#) Therapist, Counselor or Social Worker Authorization Reciprocity expanded the pool of professionals to provide services to all Iowans, including students and [SF 2435](#) Education Appropriations continued several significant appropriations for school mental health including the following:

- Transfer of unused Therapeutic Classroom Transportation Claims Reimbursement to the Therapeutic Classroom Incentive Fund and maintained \$500,000 appropriation for transportation and \$2,351,382 for more therapeutic classroom incentive grants.
- Maintained \$3,383,936 appropriation for AEAs to provide for children's mental health school-based training and support to be used for mental health awareness training for educators and provide mental health services and support for students.
- Maintained \$520,000 appropriation for deposit in the Mental Health Professional Loan Repayment Program fund.