



2012-13 Issue Brief: Student Learning & Evaluation

In collaboration with instructional staff, districts should develop a process for including student learning as one factor in the evaluation of teachers and administrators. We approach evaluation with the following principles:

- Iowa educators should continuously demonstrate effectiveness toward increased student achievement.
- School districts must support educators toward improved instruction as part of a continuous improvement cycle: evaluation should not be an isolated or separate single event.
- Student achievement growth or gain should be one indicator among multiple learning measures included in educator evaluation to acknowledge that students come to school with widely different levels of skill and achievement.
- Evaluation informs and drives professional development for educators as individuals and collectively in groups.
- Although a critical component, student learning should never be the only factor considered in evaluation and a single test score or proficiency should not be used to penalize individuals or buildings in the context of evaluation or school improvement.
- Collective study, potentially including peer review, is necessary for school improvement, but will require both time and training to do it well and must be focused on student learning and instructional response to student learning.



2012-13 Issue Brief: Local Control & District Flexibility

District Authority to Lead School Improvement and Innovation

The state has an interest in establishing outcomes for students and regulating school quality and equity of opportunity. The state role should focus on provision of resources, insuring equity and strong educational programs for all students.

The state (including the legislature and the state Department of Education) and federal government (including Congress and the federal Department of Education) must allow local districts the flexibility necessary to organize educational systems to deliver on those expectations.

Too many distractions, mandates (unfunded and otherwise), reporting requirements, expenditure requirements and other additions to the burden of administration take time, energy and money away from real school improvement and focus on student learning.

UEN leaders overwhelmingly support efforts to legislate Home Rule for school operations. Schools currently operate under Dillon's rule, a Supreme Court ruling from the late 1800s which says that municipalities may only do what is expressly authorized in state or federal law. Many other states now allow Home Rule for school districts, either by constitutional amendment or legislative action. Iowa's constitution has been changed to grant Home Rule to cities and counties, but schools are still restricted. Home Rule legislation would not automatically repeal any limitations currently in Iowa Law. Limits such as those on taxing authority would continue to prohibit districts from taxing their constituents above the current limitations.



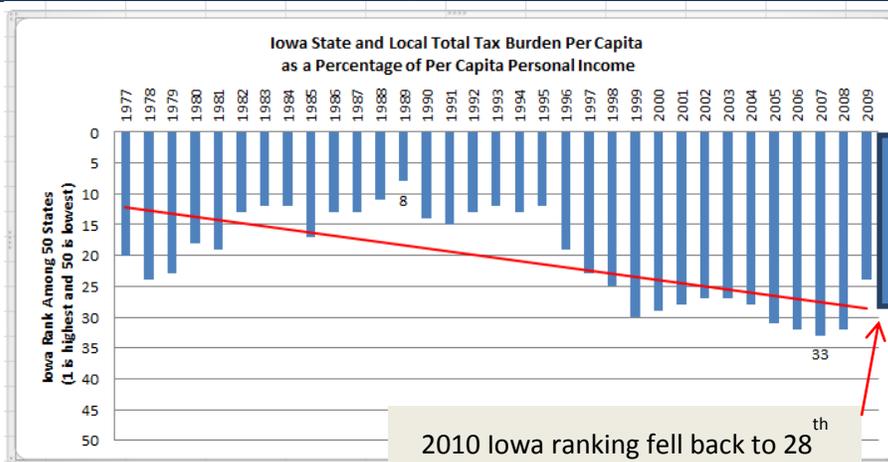
2012-13 Issue Brief: State Funding Comparisons of K-12 Investment

Other states have passed Iowa in some measures of student success since Iowa's first in the nation stature about a decade ago. Iowa's commitment to funding has similarly slipped:

- Iowa now ranks 31 in the nation in per student funding (all sources of revenue), \$970 short of the per pupil national average. Allowable Growth of 16% (\$459 million) would move funding for Iowa students to the national average. (See 2012 table below) The dollar shortfall has doubled and the percentage of shortfall has tripled since 2001-02.
- UEN supports increasing teacher pay, but knows that a 25th ranking in average teacher pay and a 31st ranking in total education investment means other areas of critical support have fallen far behind other states.
- Iowa ranked 8th in the nation as a percentage of per capita personal income invested in State and Local government in 1989. As recently as 2007, Iowa's ranking on this indicator had slipped to 33 (see chart below)
- Over this same decade, Iowa students are experiencing greater need: ten years ago, 27% of Iowa students were living in poverty (eligible for free and reduced lunch) whereas now 40% of Iowa students are living in poverty.
- At Iowa's Education Summit, summer of 2011, presenters from comparison states stressed their state's commitment and investment of resources to reform education.

Iowa Education Funding is not keeping pace with the Nation: Iowa's per pupil expenditures in 2010-11 ranked Iowa as 31st in the nation, \$970 per pupil below the national average (over \$450 million annually). According to the LSA's 2011 Iowa FACTBOOK, published in February 2012:

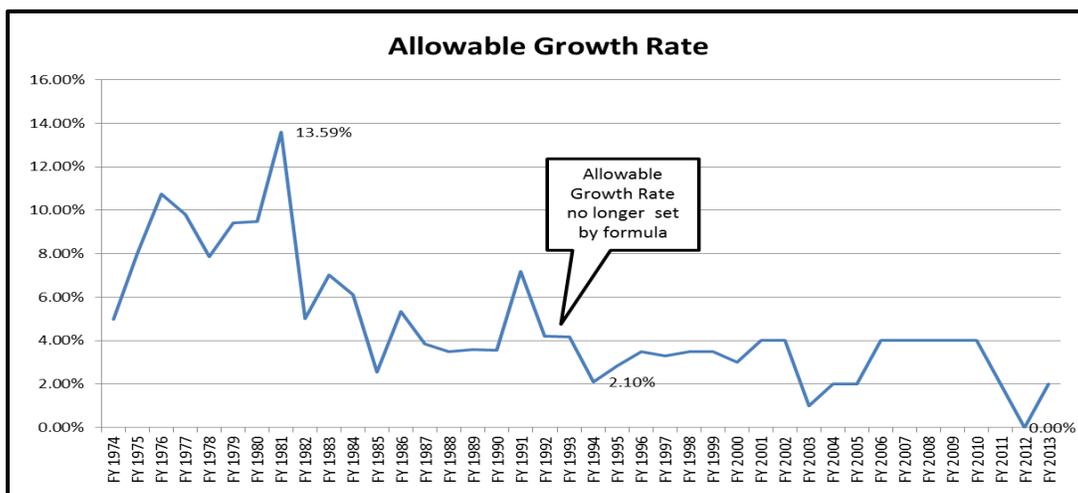
	2010-11 Total Expenditures per pupil	% of USA Average	Rank
USA Average	\$10,826	100%	
Iowa	\$ 9,856	91%	31
Per Pupil Shortfall	\$970		
Total \$\$ to Reach National Average	\$459 million		



www.taxfoundation.org analysis based on Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Census Bureau, the Council on State Taxation, the Travel Industry Association, Department of Energy, and others.

2012-13 Issue Brief: Allowable Growth and Timing

- Allowable growth is the bread and butter of public school budgets. The 2013 legislature and governor should set both **the FY 2014 and FY 2015** allowable growth rates in the first 30 days of the legislative session so school districts can craft their budgets and staffing needs with sufficient time to plan.
- Every weighting designed to meet the needs of specialized student populations depends on an adequate allowable growth to keep pace with increasing costs.
- Shortfalls in special education weightings (\$37 million in FY 2011) and English-language learning weightings are reimbursed to the district general fund from local property taxes (or cash reserve that may be replaced by local property taxes.)
- Budgeting and bargaining timelines commence in winter, with budget certification requiring a published budget in late March to allow sufficient time to meet publication requirements in weekly papers 10-20 days prior to board action.
- Lack of an allowable growth rate set prior to budget development significantly increases the complexity and time required to plan and creates stress and anxiety for school leaders and staff.
- Allowable growth has experienced record low increases in recent years, compared to the rates set by formula using economic indicators prior to 1993.
- Allowable growth preserves local flexibility for districts to then determine their budgets.





2012-13 Issue Brief: Education Reform Principals

Member districts of the Urban Education Network believe the following principles are critical to drive real and meaningful school reform and improvement:

- Student learning needs must be at the very center of transformation.
- Meaningful and aligned assessment should first and foremost inform instruction. Although the state has a role in collecting evidence of student learning to ensure equity and educational quality, the accountability role is secondary to the purpose of improving educational systems.
- State policies must be grounded in research demonstrating improved student outcomes
- Meaningful change requires adequate and equitable resources: repurposing existing funds or demanding change without additional resources is problematic:
 - School district budgets have been stretched for several years.
 - There are still requirements to spend existing resources in specific ways.
 - State investment signals real commitment and priority.
 - *“Don’t tell me where your priorities are. Show me where you spend your money and I’ll tell you what they are.”* – James W. Frick, Former Vice President for Public Relations, Alumni Affairs, and Development, University of Notre Dame
- Truly significant change won’t happen without the resources and time for professional development for educators.
- Lasting commitment: strong bi-partisan legislative support must focus on long-term improvement that both political parties will support. Too often, legislative efforts are viewed as temporary, with a “this too will pass” perception. Educators, parents, students and state supporting structures will all build on the commitment. UEN members are calling on all legislators to find common ground and move education forward.
- Incentives for innovation rewarding early adopters are preferable and more effective than unfunded mandates in bringing about meaningful transformation.



2012-13 Issue Brief: Property Tax Equity and Relief

Recent efforts at property tax relief and commercial property tax equity haven't reached consensus. There is another way to deliver property tax equity and relief that the UEN supports based on the following principles that should guide property tax efforts:

- Proposals must advance student equity and taxpayer equity as the first priority. In FY 2013, school tax rates vary from a low of \$8.33 to a high of \$23.06 per thousand dollars of net assessed taxable valuation.
- Similar treatment of like properties within similar classes of property is a priority. Commercial property taxes in the high rate districts are nearly triple those in low rate districts (179% deviation) and residential property taxes in high rate districts are higher than commercial taxes in low rate districts. Scarce state dollars are better targeted at lowering the high end rates for all taxpayers in those districts.
- State efforts to lower property taxes must be affordable without sacrificing the state's ability to adequately fund education in the future. The state cannot afford to completely tax over the additional levy in the formula.
- Efforts to lower the valuation of one class of property force an increase in school district property tax rates due to functions of the school foundation formula. School district leaders have little faith that future legislatures will keep a commitment to hold local governments harmless for reduced valuations based on history.

Policy Solutions within the UEN proposal for reforming Iowa school funding:

- The Property Tax Equity and Relief Fund provides a working mechanism to deliver both student and taxpayer equity, first to taxpayers in school districts with the highest rates and then to all taxpayers. Increased appropriations to the PTER fund will accomplish the objectives of tax equity and relief.
- Other inequities in school funding provide possible state investment opportunities that meet the above principles:
 - State investment to offset special education deficits by either increasing the weightings or providing some reimbursement of property taxes paid on special education deficits.
 - State contribution to dropout prevention program funding, currently funded with all property taxes. Either students at risk of dropout should be assigned a weighting, suggested at 0.3, or state reimbursement of property taxes paid for dropout prevention.
 - Increasing the state share of English-language learner funding in the fifth year and increasing the weighting.
 - Equalizing the district cost per pupil. Half of school districts are held to the state average which is lower and half of school districts have a higher cost per pupil paid entirely with property taxes. Setting the state cost per pupil at the highest district cost per pupil delivers student equity to the first half and property tax relief to the second half.
 - State contribution to budget guarantee and on-time funding property taxes.

UEN Member Districts: Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Iowa City, Sioux City, Waterloo

Associate Members: Ankeny, College, Fort Dodge, Mason City, Linn-Mar, Marshalltown, Muscatine, Ottumwa, Southeast Polk, West Des Moines



2012-13 Issue Brief: Instructional Time

Time is an important variable in delivering a high quality education and ensuring students master skills and knowledge needed for their future success. The Instructional Time Task Force studied issues concerning time and its' relationship to student learning.

- Iowa's state law mandates a minimum of 180 student instructional days with a minimum of five and a half hours of instructional time to constitute a day.
- Additional time, whether whole days or hours added to the day, is a subject of collective bargaining negotiation with teachers and support staff. On a statewide basis, an additional day is estimated to cost between \$15-20 million.
- The task force suggested staggering staff time to avoid having to negotiate additional time. This action will avoid increased staff costs but will also increase class sizes for students absent any other action, which may or may not be acceptable for some districts. Transportation costs might also be impacted by requiring students to start and end their days at different times. As a result, state resources to encourage staff staggering to create additional student contact time are necessary.
- The gap in the learning cycle which occurs during summer vacation is more prominent for children that are less advantaged (Cooper's (1996) study (as cited in Graham, McNamara and VanLankveld, 2011, pg. 575). Children who are the most susceptible are those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic minorities and students with exceptionalities (Graham, 2011; Guryan & Kim, 2010; & Kim, 2006). It is predominantly literacy related skills that are affected the most (Graham, 2011).
- The Intensive summer school program opportunity for students not proficient in reading and not eligible for any exception should be funded by the state. Although SF 2284 anticipates creation of summer school programs to promote early literacy, the action is contingent on future funding. UEN encourages the legislature to fund it.
- UEN support increased minimum instructional and professional development and collaboration time for educators and requests that the state provide the resources to pay for it.
- The determination of a school district calendar is best set by local leaders based on needs of the community, parents and students. The legislature should not mandate a repeal of early school start date waivers granted by the DE.



2012-13 Issue Brief: Teacher Career Pathways and Compensation

The UEN supports changes to teacher compensation that elevate the teaching profession, encourage teacher leadership, and differentiate teacher responsibilities focused on student learning. These investments must be accompanied by increased time for professional development and student instruction, driven by student needs at the local level.

- Iowa's existing teacher salary system based on hours toward an advanced degree and teaching experience has served us well for many decades, but it is time for a compensation system that is tied to student learning and the teaching skills and behaviors most closely associated with increasing student learning and improving instruction.
- Whether funding an increase in teacher minimum pay or providing resources for career pathway compensation for teacher leaders, the UEN supports a system of state funding based on enrollment.
- Sufficient resources must accompany a significant investment in teacher pay, as local budgets do not have the resource to absorb implementation costs. As an aside, teacher pay would be closer to the minimum of \$38,000 if allowable growth rates had approached the increased cost of doing business for schools over that last three years.
- Districts will require sufficient time to work out details with employee groups and implement significant changes to compensation over several years. A fast mandate will not allow a cooperative process to set up the new compensation system for success.
- Allowable growth helps districts to continue to do business by preserving their relative purchasing power compared to the economy and inflation. Allowable growth set at a reasonable level (4-5% range annually for several years) cannot absorb significant increases in teacher pay. An allowable growth rate of 6.15%, or it's equivalent, IN ADDITION TO NECESSARY ALLOWABLE GROWTH FOR FY 2014 would generate the estimated \$177 million to fund minimum teacher salaries of \$38,000 and costs of teacher leadership roles as proposed.
- The original Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Act of 2001 envisioned 10 additional days of teacher professional development beyond the existing teacher contract. One and a half days were funded. The School Instructional Time Task Force recommended that some students may need additional instructional time. Local districts should be given the flexibility to add 10 days of teacher time for either collaborative professional development to improve instruction or student instructional time as teacher pay is elevated based on the new minimums and career pathways.