

2016 ISEA CANDIDATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Quality Public Education for Iowans

Name & District:

The Iowa Legislature has significant influence over the direction of our public education system. The Legislature has control over funding and great impact on educational programming. An issue which must be addressed immediately is students living in poverty. Students living in poverty require supports such as dropout prevention, at-risk, special education, pre-school, ELL (English language learners), and child nutrition. In addition, addressing issues related to poverty along with providing basic adequate funding in the school finance formula will allow Iowa's public schools to continue to compete nationally and internationally.

The ISEA represents over 34,000 education professionals who are very interested in your views on public education.

1. Do you support creating a new funding source to address student poverty?
2. Do you support increasing funding and duration of programs like ELL, special education, dropout prevention, at risk, talented and gifted and pre-school?
3. If you do not support addressing the issues mentioned in questions 1 and 2 what do you see as priorities for public education in Iowa?
4. Do you think educators should be at the table to assist in policy discussions impacting education programs (i.e. Teacher Leadership Compensation TLC, student assessments, and third grade reading retention)?
5. What is your top priority when addressing education? Home schooling and private schools or public schools.

School Funding

Currently, Iowa law requires the Legislature to set Allowable Growth (now known as Supplemental State Aid – SSA) 30 days after the Governor submits a budget, and approximately 18 months in advance of the school year it impacts. Last year (2015) the Legislature did not take action until over a year after this deadline. In addition the Legislature continued to break the law and did not set the SSA for FY17-18 as required in 30 days of submission of the Governor’s budget. The ISEA encourages future SSA rates of 4 percent or higher and to adhere to the legal time requirement of 30 days after the Governor’s budget is submitted as a way to keep school districts in line with the cost-of-living increases required to keep their doors open, maintain up to date curriculum and equipment, keep their class offerings stable and keep class sizes manageable.

6. Do you support setting SSA at 4 percent or higher?

7. Do you support adhering to the current law that requires setting SSA 18 months in advance so schools have time to plan?

8. If you oppose setting SSA as prescribed by law or at 4 percent or higher please provide what programs you see as higher priorities and what changes you would make to the current law regarding setting SSA?

9. How do you intend to make sure education is a priority in appropriating funds in the state budget?

Community Colleges

Community college funding has not kept up with the needs of providing programs. In fact, the community colleges increase in state funding for fiscal year 2014 finally provided a funding increase over their fiscal year 2008 level. 2015 saw no increase in appropriation. Increased state funding is necessary to allow affordable tuition and faculty salaries to be comparable to salaries

paid in other states. Additional investment is also necessary to maintain staff and programming in order to provide Iowa with a skilled workforce.

10. Do you support increasing community college funding and providing adequate, predictable increases in the future for their general funds?

11. Do you support direct appropriations to be used for salary improvements?

Education Support Professionals

Many of our education employees who provide support services in our schools are not paid a living wage. At the same time, many of these positions now require additional training. When these employees are laid off during the summer they are denied unemployment benefits—unlike their counterparts doing the same job for private businesses for the school districts. A bus driver or lunchroom worker employed by a school district is denied these benefits while a bus driver or lunchroom worker employed by a private company qualifies.

12. Would you support adequate funding for education budgets to allow education support professionals to earn a competitive living wage?

13. Would you support changing Iowa law so education support professionals employed by a school district would qualify for unemployment and be treated the same as other people doing the same work?

Area Education Agencies

Iowa's Area Education Agencies provide important support for the K-12 system. AEA employees provide special education consulting services and professional development support to districts working with federal education requirements and state reform efforts. The current funding provided to the AEAs reduces their full funding required by law for special education by

\$22.5 million a year. The funds for special education provide direct services to Iowa's most needy students.

14. Do you believe the AEAs are an important part of Iowa's education system?

15. Would you support fully funding the AEAs which would eliminate the \$22.5 million annual reduction to special education services?

School Infrastructure Sales Tax

The Legislature passed and the Governor enacted, the statewide sales tax that can be used for school infrastructure and property tax relief. As this statewide sales tax matures it is time to revisit the uses this revenue may be expended. The ISEA supports expanding usage to allow a school district the option to use the revenue for educational purposes. This year the Governor proposed using the school infrastructure sales tax to fund clean water initiatives diverting it from Iowa's schools.

16. Do you support expanding usage of the funds to allow school boards to use them for educational programs?

17. Would you oppose or support an initiative to take school infrastructure sales tax dollars and allocate them to a non-education initiative like clean water?

Fair Share and Expanded Scope of Bargaining

Iowa law requires local affiliates of the Iowa State Education Association to represent all public employees in their employment relations through the duty of "Fair Representation." The actions of the ISEA on behalf of any individual employee have a benefit to all of the employees which is the basis of collective bargaining. Since all employees of the bargaining unit gain value from the actions of the association, we support the notion that non-members pay for their fair share of the value of the benefits they receive from collective representation.

The ISEA believes the bargaining law in Iowa has a very narrow list (scope) of items which are legally allowed to be bargained. We believe this list needs to be expanded to cover issues of

professional development, assignment of duties, and a basic right of discipline and discharge or “just cause” for termination.

18. Do you support implementing a “fair share” fee for non-members of a collective bargaining unit whether a private-sector or public-sector employee?

19. Would you support expanding the list of issues that can be bargained?

Iowa Public Employee Retirement System (IPERS)

IPERS is the largest statewide retirement system and provides coverage to over 300,000 members or 1 out of every 10 Iowans. The system is a defined benefit plan that guarantees retirement benefits to retirees. The trust fund generates funds from investments and contributions from employees and employers (40% employee and 60% employer). The ISEA believes a defined benefit plan best serves Iowa employers and employees rather than a defined contribution plan (401k type plan).

In addition, while the Legislature has served as an outstanding fiduciary, most retirement systems have appointed independent boards that serve this role. The ISEA supports an independent board of governors to be established as the fiduciary body of IPERS.

20. Do you support maintaining IPERS as a defined benefit plan?

21. Would you be willing to establish an independent board of governors for IPERS?

Taxation Policy for Iowa

The Iowa Legislature has enacted a number of tax policies since 2013 that have had a dramatic impact on the state general fund. The legislature has enacted a commercial and industrial property tax credit that costs over \$275.0 million per year, implemented a federal coupling bill that reduced state revenues by \$97.6 million and implemented a sales tax reduction for items used in manufacturing that will reduce revenues by \$21.7 million per year. These tax cuts have had a direct impact on the funding available for education. The members of ISEA continue to hear elected officials state that education is their top priority but when we reflect on legislative actions, it is clear that tax cuts especially for business have been the true priority.

22. Will you take action on funding for education prior to taking action on tax policy legislation that reduces state revenues?

23. How would you address tax policies? What is your most important tax issue?

24. When reviewing future tax policy, would you support legislation that would require transparency, regular legislative review and consideration of clawback provisions, if conditions were not adhered to?

Please respond by June 1, 2016. The scanned response form can be sent to Alana Anderson at Alana.anderson@isea.org

Or you may mail the form to:

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