



REPORT

Educate, then advocate: Invite legislators to your school

You know that outstanding school leaders make for outstanding schools, but elected officials don't always realize the many ways school leaders create the environment necessary for student success. The most powerful way to convey this message to policymakers is to let them see it for themselves.

If you've never hosted a legislator, SAI's national affiliates offer these tips to help plan for a visit. First, review the objectives of hosting a lawmaker in the school:

- See first-hand learning in action.
- Learn more about your school, both its successes and challenges.
- Better understand the multi-faceted role of the school leader in supporting staff, engaging with families, and increasing student performance.
- Witness the impact federal, state and local education policies have in practice.
- Influence future education policy votes and decisions.

It's important for you to become a dependable resource in the eyes of your representative. Therefore, your interactions must be friendly and professional. The more you know about your representative, the better you can connect with them, and the more collegial you are, the more likely you will be able to connect.

Whether you choose to focus the visit on the administrative role or wish to invite legislators in to learn more about the school or district overall, here's an invitation template to get you started that you can customize based on your identified purpose: <https://bit.ly/leginvite>.

- The national organizations also suggest several do's and don'ts for the visit.
- If any situations arise that demand privacy (e.g., if a parent wants to discuss a sensitive issue with you), designate a colleague to step in temporarily (such as a central office administrator, assistant principal, technology director or counselor).
 - Be open, honest and authentic. Share your personal experiences, challenges and successes.
 - Ask a lot of questions and be prepared to answer a lot of questions.
 - Include the policymaker in all routine formal and informal responsibilities, including: morning lineup, building rounds/walk-throughs, leadership/cabinet meetings, and grade-level meetings.
 - Allow your visitor to speak to and interact with teachers, students, and families, when possible.
 - Allow your visitor to view student work.
 - Schedule time at the end of the day to debrief and answer questions, share thoughts, and make connections.
 - Within reasonable limits, have your visitor by your side throughout the day.
 - Look for opportunities to tie what they are seeing in the school into the need for their support on key policy priorities.
 - Don't worry that you'll be judged and don't feel the need to plan a special event for the guest.
 - The visit should focus on real education practice in the school and how it is impacted by public policy.

At the end of the visit, debrief with your visitor. Review your goals for the event and describe any activities that you didn't have time to show them during the visit. Follow up with a written note, email or phone call after your event to thank them for attending and offer to be an ongoing resource on education issues. Consider inviting them to future special events.

Finally, don't forget to thank your staff after the visit. Inviting visitors into your school sends your team the message that you're proud of the work they do each day. Highlight the visit on your website, in your parent newsletter or on social media.

'Iowa Press' focuses on public education

Waukee School Superintendent Brad Buck and Central Decatur and Lamoni Superintendent Chris Coffelt were recent guests on "Iowa Press."

Iowa journalists led the programming by asking the superintendents about Education Savings Accounts, school funding, legislation regarding gender identity and book removals, staff shortages and retention strategies.

Watch the episode or read the transcript at bit.ly/IPBS9123.

An earlier episode featured representatives of Iowa private schools discussing private education. It's available at bit.ly/IPBS81823.

Celebrate Principals Month!



Every October, **National Principals Month** shines a spotlight on the transformative power of school

principals. With your resolute vision and unwavering dedication, you aren't merely running schools — you're molding futures, shaping communities and paving pathways to success for every student.

As highlighted in a report by **The Wallace Foundation**, the principal's role stretches far beyond administrative duties. Leadership has a deep-seated impact on the very heart of education, making principals the second most influential force inside a school, just after effective teaching. Your influence radiates outward, touching all facets of a school and significantly influencing student outcomes.

National Principals Month is more than a celebration — it's a rallying cry. It calls us to address the very real challenges principals face and emphasizes the urgent need to support your resilience and fortify the ranks. This month and beyond, in partnership with SAI's national affiliates, we don't just honor principals, we advocate for you, urging for policy changes and strategic support that equip you to thrive in your pivotal roles.

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Listed at sai-iowa.org/representative-council.cfm

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Data reflect the ongoing challenge of teacher recruitment and retention

A quality teacher is one of the most important factors of student success. Teachers lay the foundation for our future, tasked with shaping young minds, igniting curiosity and imparting knowledge that will guide the next generation. However, in recent years, teacher recruitment and retention have become persistent challenges. Some have even said the teacher shortage has become a tsunami.

Teacher recruitment is often the first hurdle to overcome. In much of the United States, there is a shortage of qualified educators, particularly in subjects like science, mathematics and special education. The reasons for this shortfall are multifaceted. Low salaries, a demanding workload, political climate of the state/nation, community perceptions of the education profession, cost of pursuing a degree in education and limited opportunities for professional growth can deter potential candidates from pursuing an education career. To address this, we must recognize the intrinsic value of teaching, change the narrative around education, and invest in competitive compensation packages and robust professional development opportunities.

Attracting the best and brightest into the teaching profession requires not just competitive salaries, but also a supportive and inclusive work environment. Schools and communities must foster a culture of appreciation and respect. Creating spaces where teachers feel heard, valued and motivated is crucial for teacher recruitment efforts to succeed.

Equally important is the need for comprehensive teacher training programs that prepare educators for the challenges of the modern classroom. Providing mentorship, classroom management strategies and training in the use of technology can help new teachers feel more confident and equipped to excel in their roles.

However, recruitment is only half the battle. Retaining qualified teachers is equally essential. The attrition of experienced educators can be devastating, as it deprives schools of valuable expertise and disrupts students' continuity of learning. To curb this issue, we must address the root causes of teacher burnout and dissatisfaction.

One key factor contributing to turnover is the immense workload. Teachers often work long hours, both in and out of the classroom, grading papers, preparing lessons and attending meetings. To prevent burnout, schools should consider reducing administrative burdens and promoting a healthier work-life fit. It is not always easy to reduce workload when schools started the year with open teaching positions and are unable to fill support staff positions.

Ongoing support and opportunities for growth are vital for retaining educators. Schools can facilitate this by offering mentorship programs, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and providing access to workshops and courses that allow teachers to expand their skills and stay updated on best practices.

Another crucial aspect of teacher retention is recognizing and celebrating their achievements. Schools should acknowledge the hard work and dedication of their teachers through awards, promotions and opportunities for leadership roles within the school community. When teachers feel valued and that their contributions make a difference, they are more likely to stay committed to their profession.

SAI surveyed all Iowa superintendents to get a pulse on the number of openings in Iowa at the start of the 2023-24 school year as well as the number of positions filled by not "fully qualified" staff. We had 255 school districts respond (78%). Of those responding, 84.3% (215) identified as rural schools, 8.6% (22) as suburban and 7.1% (18) as urban.

Number of open teaching positions at the beginning of the 2023-24 school year

27% had 0	13% had 4 – 7	6% had 11 plus
50% had 1 – 3	4% had 8 – 10	

Total number of open teaching positions at the beginning 2023-24 = 1,012.5

Positions filled with not "fully qualified" teachers

36% had 0	5% had 4 – 7	2% had 11 plus
55% had 1 – 3	2% had 8 – 10	

Total number of teaching positions filled with not "fully qualified" teachers was 822

Total number of students impacted is projected by respondents to be 37,447

Range of open and/or not appropriately filled support staff positions reported is 0 – 130 with a total number open and/or not appropriately filled of 1,498.

It is time for administrators to educate their boards, staff and community to come together and create plans to present to local/state leaders and push for action.



In Brief September Rep Council highlights

- Association's Annual Meeting featuring Year in Review video;
- Annual Conference survey review and 2024 planning feedback;
- Conflict of Interest policy notice;
- Updated SAI Policies E-2 regarding hospitality and F-2 on legal assistance;
- Financials and membership review;
- National Principals Month and committee sign up reminders;
- Upcoming guidance from SAI, IASB and ISEA on recent legislation;
- IPERS recommendation to change the 1990 dividend for 2005 and earlier retirees;
- Legislative updates; and
- National affiliate reports.

In Memoriam

Craig Downing - retired superintendent, Sigourney (9-12-23)

SAI's year in review

The Association's Annual Meeting kicked off the September 13 Rep Council meeting and featured **this four-minute look** at 2022-23.



Legislative notes

from Dave Daughton, government relations director ✉

Wow, is it October already? Seems like time just keeps speeding up. I know a lot of you are busy with Homecoming and other activities, but I also know you are getting into the swing of things and progressing through what is hopefully a "normal" year.

A couple of items on the legislative front to be aware of:

- A **SF 496 FAQ** has been distributed by the attorneys of the statewide organizations, including SAI. Thanks to Matt Carver and the rest for their work.
- The Department of Education released a memo related to HF 604. It is in response to the legislation that required the DE to develop and share model discipline policies. See Matt's column this month for more information.

There should be more to come on a couple of other bills.

I recently attended several AEA Superintendent meetings and as always have been impressed with the intestinal fortitude that I see on display among the frustration. All of you are doing your best to make sure that kids are receiving the best education possible, no matter the circumstances.

I've also been meeting with legislators and other education organizations as well as Director Snow of the DE, as we move forward with the old legislation and prepare for the upcoming session. I am hopeful that this session will be much more positive and have some "good things" for our schools, educators and kids.

We are in the process of finalizing the SAI Legislative Committee and will soon begin identifying legislative priorities for the 2024 session. As we move through the fall, try to connect with your legislators and build those relationships so that you can work with them this spring.

Enjoy the changes in the weather, and make sure that you are taking care of yourself and your staff, both mentally and physically.

As always, contact me with any questions at ddaughton@sai-iowa.org.

Calendar of events

October

- 10 - Fall Legal Lab - virtual learning
- 12 - Differentiated Supervision
- 17 - Fall Legal Lab
- 24 - Speed of Trust Foundations (offered in partnership with FranklinCovey)
- 26-27 - Executive Leaders

November

- 7 - Teacher Evaluation and Assistance within a Supportive, Civil and Professional Culture
- 27-28 - Four Essential Roles of Leadership® with Evaluator Approval in Bettendorf

Register and find more information at bit.ly/SAIevents

Iowa Dept. of Ed. deadlines

Use this link to access critical due dates: bit.ly/DEdeadlines

sai REPORT

The *SAI Report* is published for association members and select community and business leaders by School Administrators of Iowa. The views expressed in the *SAI Report* do not necessarily reflect SAI opinion nor does acceptance of advertising imply SAI endorsement.

Your comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Tracy J. Harms, editor



Model policies for student discipline

Is anyone else having a difficult time keeping up with expectations and changes since last spring's flurry of legislation? If so, not only am I going to write about some of those changes again in this month's column, I will also shamelessly plug SAI's upcoming Legal Labs, virtual on **October 10**, and in-person **October 17**, which will cover some of the most frequent calls and emails I have received since the start of this school year.

In case you have not seen it, the DE shared "**Model Policies for Discipline of Students Who Make Threats of Violence or Cause Incidents of Violence**," dated September 14, to both provide guidance to schools and fulfill one of its statutory duties under HF604. Having read both HF604, as relating to student violence and threats of violence, as well as the DE's sample policies, I wanted to take this opportunity to answer some likely questions. For the second column in a row, I will do so through some questions and answers. Like perhaps a few of you, I rather enjoy answering my questions. There is something truly cathartic and comforting about doing so. With that, here we go.

Q: Are administrators required to recommend that their local school board adopt the DE's model policies on student violence?

A: No. While schools are required to adopt policies relating to student violence, as well as student threats of violence, which include some of the components included in the DE sample, administrators may adopt a policy crafted by IASB, their district attorney, district personnel, or any other source. Again, the emphasis should be placed on ensuring that the policy includes required components, as set forth in HF604.

Q: What are some of those required components to our policy on student violence and threats of violence?

- A:
1. Incorporating strategies designed to correct the student's violent behavior.
 2. Provide for parent or guardian conferences, counseling sessions, or mental health counseling sessions, WHEN APPROPRIATE, as well as obtaining written consent from a parent or guardian prior to requiring a student to participate in a counseling or mental health session.
 3. Ensure that policies are compliant with state and federal law regarding students with disabilities.
 4. Provide for escalating levels of discipline each time the student makes a threat of violence or causes an incident of violence that results in injury, property damage or assault.
 5. ALLOW FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO SELECT THE LEVEL OF DISCIPLINE THAT THE SCHOOL DISTRICT DETERMINES CORRESPONDS TO THE SEVERITY OF THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE OR INCIDENT OF VIOLENCE. (Remember, administrators are not robots. Escalating discipline or bands of discipline are helpful to ensure consistency and to provide a guide but do not need to be rigidly followed in every situation. As an example, extreme violence or threats of violence might call for the district to move to the second or third level of discipline on the first incident. This may certainly be reasonable and justified if the administration can explain why more severe discipline is necessary.
 6. Policies must allow the school district to suspend the student, permanently remove the student from a particular class, expel the student, or place the student in an alternative learning environment, including a therapeutic classroom, when appropriate. Especially when you are dealing with such actions, please don't forget to ensure compliance with disability, as set forth above.
 7. Policies must require an individualized education program meeting if the student who made the threat of violence or caused the incident of violence that resulted in injury, property damage or assault has an individualized education program.
 8. Policies must be published on the school district's internet site and in applicable student handbooks.

Q: What notification requirements are expected of educators under HF604, concerning student violence and threats of violence?

A: The classroom teacher must report the violence or threat of violence to the building principal or lead administrator within 24 hours and MAY notify the parent/guardian of the student who made the threat of violence or caused violence, as well as the parent/guardian of the student to whom the threat of violence was made or incident of violence occurred. Of course, it is reasonable for districts to expect for classroom teachers to inform administrators as reasonably practicable after the incident. The 24-hour notification of administrators is an outside statutory limit. After receiving notice from the classroom teacher, the building principal or lead administrator SHALL, within 24 hours, notify the parent/guardian of the student who made the threat of violence or caused violence, as well as the parent/guardian of the student to whom the threat of violence was made or incident of violence occurred.

When informing parents/guardians of the student who was the recipient of the threat or upon whom the act of violence occurred, administrators SHOULD NOT share the identity of the student who made the threat or committed the act of violence in every instance. HOWEVER, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act does permit sharing the identity of the student if educators have a rational basis to believe that "knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individuals." (34 Code of Federal Regulations 99.36) If you are deciding whether to share the identity of the student who made the threat or committed the violent act, I would encourage administrators to reach out to a school law attorney if time permits.

Q: What is the new notification requirement concerning student handbooks?

- 4 A: In addition to adding the student violence policy language to the student handbook, districts must also annually, prior to the beginning of the school year, provide a copy of the handbook to the parent/ guardian of each student. Districts shall require

that the parent or guardian of each student acknowledge receipt of the applicable student handbook, either in writing or electronically. If parents/guardians fail to acknowledge receipt, I would ensure that the district has evidence that the handbook was not only posted on the district internet site but emailed and/or mailed to the email address or physical address listed on the student information system.

This article is intended only as a reference in regard to the subject matter covered. It is furnished with the understanding that SAI is not engaged in rendering legal advice. If a legal opinion is desired, private legal counsel should be consulted.

Q: What information shall the district provide to teachers, as required in HF604?

A: Districts shall provide new and returning teachers a copy of Iowa Code §280.21, concerning corporal punishment of students, along with the teacher's initial or renewal contract. This notice may occur electronically or by way of a printed copy.

Q: Are districts required to use the grade bands (PK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) set forth in the DE's model policies?

A: No. These are merely suggested bands for escalating discipline and are not mandated under HF604 or any other Iowa law. While following these particular bands is not required, some form of grade bands is strongly encouraged, as the legislation does specifically reference policies for "different grade levels."

Q: What is the advantage of adopting the bands and escalating responses as set forth in the DE's sample policies?

A: While it is certainly possible that the DE would uphold the application of a district policy that used different grade bands, or included different escalating responses to student acts of violence or threats of violence, a district could have near certainty that the policy itself would be upheld as reasonable if the DE's grade bands and escalating responses are used. I trust you understand my confidence on this point. Of course, I am not asserting that every challenge to a district's application of said policy would be upheld simply because you adopt the DE's policy, as decision-makers would not only consider the reasonableness of the policy but also the actions of employees as they apply that policy to a particular student situation.

Q: What escalating responses under the DE's policies deserve further discussion?

- A: 1. Suspension of transportation privileges, if misconduct occurred in a school vehicle. It may not be a surprise to any of you that the DE affirmed the ability for districts to suspend students from transportation under certain circumstances, however, the escalating responses, showing that students might be suspended in bands PK-2, 3-5, and 6-8, at Level 2, while students in grades 9-12 might be suspended in grades 9-12 at Level 1, does provide some insight regarding what the DE finds reasonable in the typical situation of student violence or threats.
2. Potential permanent removal of a student from a particular class at Level 2 for all grade bands of students. This is not to say that the DE is encouraging districts to permanently remove a student from a class at Level 2, but it does at least convey that permanent removal might be appropriate in certain situations. Of course, do not forget the discussion of complying with state and federal disability laws, as mentioned multiple times above.
3. Temporary or permanent removal of a student from extracurricular activities at Level 2 for all grade bands of students. There is no reference that the behavior must have occurred in the extracurricular activity itself. While participation in extracurricular activities typically benefits students regarding their academic performance and social development, there are some situations during which the potential temporary or permanent loss of those activities might serve as a deterrent for many students, hopefully resulting in fewer threats or acts of violence.
4. Expulsion of a student is not referenced until Level 3 for every grade band under the DE's sample policies. Again, there might be particularly significant acts of violence or threats that could lead to expulsion at an earlier time, but the DE is clearly sending a message that expulsion should truly be a last resort and not considered too quickly for the most common incidents of student threats or violence.

As always, I trust I haven't answered all of your questions, but hopefully, you are better prepared to address situations of student threats or violence in your schools. If I didn't answer your question, call me at 515-267-1115 or [email me](#).

And yes, I know the Irish only had 10 players on defense for the last two plays in their loss to Ohio State. No need to remind me.



Build Iowa's Future Design Challenge

Iowa Workforce Development and the Iowa Department of Education announced the second round of the Build Iowa's Future Design Challenge, a unique opportunity for K-12 students to create innovative projects, connect to careers and compete for up to \$1,000 in prizes for their schools.

The Iowa Clearinghouse for Work-Based Learning and the Home Builders Association of Iowa are hosting the challenge to provide a framework for professional project development as well as resources for participating schools, including activities and videos about careers in building trades and the challenge's alignment with Iowa's K-12 math and science standards.

Who can participate: Elementary and middle school students can participate by constructing a model home using toy plastic construction bricks, wood blocks or other materials of their choice. High school students can participate in a challenge which involves conceptualizing and designing a project that could improve the quality of life in their community. High school students will seek feedback on the project's feasibility from people who would be impacted, and create a design based on their findings. Construction is not a requirement but great engagement by communities may encourage high school students to take it further.

Application process: Teachers are invited to submit a form letter of intent to participate on the [Clearinghouse website](#) by Oct. 20, 2023. Submission of the form letter by the deadline is required. In early May 2024, three awards – \$1,000 for first place, \$500 for second place and \$300 for third place – will be made to schools in each of the K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 grade bands. Outstanding designs may be shared on Clearinghouse and HBA of Iowa websites and through other publications and events.

A flyer can be found at [this link](#). Learn more about the design challenge: clearinghouse.futurereadyiowa.gov/challenge.



Minding the (lifespan-healthspan) gap

How are you minding the gap this year? Though achievement gaps, opportunity gaps, and learning gaps deserve our time and attention, I am referring to a different kind of gap — the **lifespan-healthspan gap**. Lifespan refers to the actual length of your life from birth to death, and healthspan refers to the number of years of your life you spend healthy without chronic and debilitating disease, namely, your quality of life. With many years of advancements in nutrition, medicine, and technology, people live longer, but longer doesn't necessarily mean better. According to a 2021 perspective article published in the **Regenerative Medicine Journal**, the average gap between lifespan and healthspan is nine years. Nine years! That's living nearly the last decade of your life being unable to do what you've always enjoyed doing.

Though I've been in conversations where the topic of aging well and enjoying life in retirement crops up, that's also where it stays — relegated to casual small talk. Unless your health and vitality have been interrupted, you have too many other pressing things to consider in the whirlwind of your day-to-day leadership to give deep and contemplative thought as to what the last nine to 10 years of your life will feel like — the potential gap between your lifespan and your health span. If you're like me, this language is new to you, but the concept is not. I watched a close family member live the last seven years of his life confined to a chair because of the loss of feeling in his feet, and I continue to visit a family friend unable to leave her house without assistance because of her loss of mobility — her gap will exceed the nine-year average.

In both examples, they accepted their declining health as an expectation of the aging process, which **research** shows most of us do. Harvard social psychologist Ellen Langer explains that the mindless decisions we make and our willingness to accept diagnoses without question, as well as the way we talk about our illnesses can have drastic effects on our physical well-being. Reshaping our vision to focus on a gapless lifespan-healthspan can change this narrative, and being intentional about a quality leadership-life fit can pave the way.

I have long been a champion of a leadership-life fit for reasons related to experiencing health, well-being, and joy in the everyday, in the here and now; but I had not reflected on the significance of living a preferred leadership-life fit in the present for the benefit of my health and well-being in the distant future. It seems obvious, but until now, my intention has been to invite us to abandon the construct of work-life balance and consider how to integrate our leadership and life as we navigate our various life roles in the present. Understanding the lifespan-healthspan gap has provided me a more compelling vision and purpose for pursuing a quality leadership-life fit. The stories of healthy and vibrant long-living people captured in the **Blue Zones** research have inspired me to keep lacing up my shoes, hitting the road, hydrating, and eating well.

Make those adjustments to your current leadership-life fit that will contribute to a desired healthspan. You have lots of options for minding the gap: spend time with the people you love doing what you love, move your body, fuel your body with nutritious foods, drink water, get your sleep, keep stress at bay (practice gratitude, take a walk, engage in breathwork), schedule preventive doctor visits, and laugh. Start small, but start — it's the amalgamation of 1%. What's your next littlest thing?

Differentiated Supervision

Oct. 12, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., SAI Office

Have you ever worried that some kids were getting better instruction than others in your school? As a leader how can you balance the needs of individuals and teams in an efficient, manageable, impactful way so all kids get what they need? Learn about a model of differentiated supervision that helps support teachers so they can support students. Leave this session with practical leadership moves that help everyone grow.

Participant Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify how to connect school improvement to supervision
- Learn how to differentiate supports to teachers so the whole school moves forward
- Identify feedback practices that lead to action
- Articulate how to create an infrastructure of support for teachers so their work can be focused on student learning

Facilitators: Authors of the book, *Differentiated Supervision*, Ann Mausbach and Kim Morrison Kazmierczak

Register: bit.ly/Oct1223

