



# REPORT

## Robyn Jackson to open SAI Annual Conference



Joining us to lead off the 49th Annual Conference is Robyn Jackson, who helps school administrators turn their schools and districts into success stories with the people and resources they already have. Registration opens May 1.

### Aug. 7 Opening Keynote: Stop Leading. Start Building.

We all SAY we believe that every child can succeed but do we really? Does our staff? Do our students? Unfortunately, the answer is often no. Every year, we accept that some students won't make it and we settle for "good enough." But what is "good enough" doing to your staff's capacity to take on more challenge and ownership of the work? What message is it sending to your students? And, what is it doing to your own motivation? The good news is that there is a better way. In this keynote presentation, discover how to conquer the obstacles that keep us and our teachers from believing that EVERY child can be successful and discover how to build a 100% culture where every staff member has the capacity to help 100% of your students achieve success.

### Aug. 7 Follow-up Session: Helping every teacher in your school grow at least one level, in one key domain, every single year.

We all know that the key to improved results for students is effective teaching, but is it really possible to help every teacher, (even your most resistant or ineffective teachers) show consistent and tangible growth each year? The answer is yes, and in this interactive session, you'll discover how. Learn how to create a system to help every teacher grow at least one level in one key domain, each and every year. Find out how you can effectively differentiate your feedback and support for teachers, overcome resistance, build their will and their skill, and inspire every teacher to invest in their own growth and development. Whether your teachers are currently struggling, or are already doing an amazing job, discover how to create a school or district where everyone continues to grow in order to ensure success for ALL your students.

Dr. Robyn R. Jackson is passionate about building better educators. As the CEO of Mindsteps® Inc., she has helped thousands of K-12 administrators and teachers become Master Teachers and high-performing principals who can help any child and any school be successful.

With over 25 years in the profession, Dr. Jackson is a National Board Certified high school English teacher, an award-winning middle school administrator, author, internationally recognized keynote speaker, and highly sought-after consultant in thousands of schools and districts worldwide. Her work has helped teachers and administrators develop rigorous, equitable instructional programs that provide every student with the support and motivation they need to reach or exceed the standards.

Dr. Jackson is the best-selling author of 13 books, including the award-winning *Never Underestimate Your Teachers* and the international best-seller *Never Work Harder Than Your Students*. She also hosts the popular podcast "School Leadership Reimagined" where each week she offers free training on how to use Buildership® to build a bigger vision, develop a better process, and achieve a brighter future for your schools.



Nominations accepted until April 1

Celebrate educational leadership with Iowa's Administrator of the Year awards which recognize educators who are making a difference and have demonstrated dedication, leadership and innovation to improve education.

The awards also serve to spotlight student, faculty, staff and community contributions to the school or district, and the great things happening in Iowa schools overall.

### 8 award categories

- Arts Administrator
- Assistant Elementary Principal
- Assistant Secondary Principal
- Central Office Administrator (includes AEA directors)
- Elementary Principal
- Middle Level Principal
- Secondary Principal
- Superintendent (includes AEA chiefs)

Learn more and nominate a deserving colleague: [sai-iowa.org/awards.cfm](https://sai-iowa.org/awards.cfm)

## FAFSA submissions are down 42%; help students apply

The USDE is aware of students' challenges in completing FAFSA. To that end, resources have been created for students/families experiencing issues and educators/staff who are supporting them. Share this information with all involved:

- [Educator guide](#)
- [Students and Families guide](#)



## Generative AI for School Leaders | April 25, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., SAI Office

This workshop introduces school leaders to Generative AI — a transformative technology that is poised to change teaching and learning. It goes beyond theory, offering hands-on experience with AI tools, and their application in innovative and engaging planning and teaching methods. Participants will also dive into the ethical implications of GenAI and best practices for building AI guidance.

Facilitator Amanda Bickerstaff is co-founder and CEO of AI for Education. A former high school biology teacher and EdTech executive with over 20 years of experience in the education sector, she has a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities that AI can offer.

Register: [bit.ly/SAIevents](https://bit.ly/SAIevents)

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### SAI Representative Council

Listed at [sai-iowa.org/representative-council.cfm](http://sai-iowa.org/representative-council.cfm)

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Joe Stutting (SAI president-elect, see above)

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## Scanning the horizon

I have several opportunities throughout the year to meet with my counterparts from other states. Most recently, I attended the Executive Director meeting which was held during the AASA National Conference on Education in San Diego. Over my first year and a half, I have appreciated getting to know my colleagues and learning from them. As each of you knows, it is nice to have colleagues to whom you can reach out with questions when they arise.

During the meeting, each executive director shared what was on the horizon in their state. Due to the time of the year, most of the reports focused on what was happening legislatively. As each person shared, I started noticing the similarities in the reports. In fact, if it is happening in Iowa, it has most likely already happened in other currently Republican-run states or legislation is being introduced. So the "playbook" we hear about is real and impacting public education all over the United States.

Here is what may be on the horizon or you'll recognize as what Iowa has already experienced:

**School Choice and Charter Schools:** Republicans have traditionally been proponents of school choice initiatives, which aim to give families more options outside of traditional public schools. This includes support for charter schools, voucher programs and tax credits for private school tuition.

**Push for "Traditional Values" Education:** Some legislators advocate for a return to what they see as traditional values in education, including an emphasis on American exceptionalism, patriotism and religious teachings. This often involves opposition to certain educational reforms or curriculum changes that are perceived as progressive or liberal.

**Resistance to LGBTQ+ Inclusive Education:** There have been instances where lawmakers have sought to limit or prohibit the teaching of LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum in public schools. This includes measures to restrict discussions about gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as efforts to ban or regulate books with LGBTQ+ themes in school libraries.

**Emphasis on "Parental Rights" in Education:** There has been a growing emphasis among some policymakers on empowering parents to have more control and oversight over their children's education. This includes support for policies such as parental opt-outs for certain curriculum topics or materials, as well as increased transparency and accountability measures for schools.

When did public education get so political? The conversations we engage in today have become more difficult and tense. Has technology played a role in this? I believe it is much easier today than in the past to build walls around yourself. You fill your social media feed with voices that are angry about the same issues and believe as you believe. Before long, you're isolated in your own personalized bubble. It is time to ask questions, listen to opposing views, and then in a respectful way share our viewpoints.

In confronting these challenges, let's remember to stay curious and open-minded. Let's talk things out respectfully, even when we disagree. By listening to different perspectives and creating a space where we can discuss things constructively, we can bridge the gaps and build a community of understanding and trust in education. As educators, we must be active participants in shaping the conversation surrounding education. Let us use our combined knowledge to tackle these tricky issues with understanding and kindness, striving toward a future where public schools bring us all together. You may also want to read Dana Schon's column on **Conversational Intelligence** on page 6 to learn new and effective conversational rituals that prime the brain for trust, partnership and mutual success.

## In Brief



## February Rep Council highlights

- Conference exhibitor fee set;
- Legislative activity;
- Proposed ESSA accountability changes and member input;
- Membership numbers and review of financials;
- Mentoring, Annual Conference planning and professional learning opportunities;
- Vice president candidate approval;
- "It's been SAId" podcast surpasses 1,000 downloads;
- Transition to new Association Management System and website update;
- Volume of legal calls relating to interpretations of last year's legislation; and
- National affiliate reports.

## Women in Educational Leadership

March 21, 5 - 8:30 p.m. | March 22, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.  
West Des Moines Marriott



We are so excited to host Staci Danford whose focus is Think Better, Feel Better, Live Better and Lisa Brouwer whose topic is From Armor to Grounded Confidence: The Making of a Daring Leader (based on Brené Brown's work).

Join us for this learning and networking experience intended especially for practicing and aspiring female leaders.

Register: [bit.ly/SAIevents](https://bit.ly/SAIevents)

## Legislative notes

from Dave Daughton, government relations director ✉

And just like that, it's March. February was once again dominated by legislation regarding the AEAs, although it did slow down toward the end of the month as legislators worked on their version behind the scenes. There was a public hearing and an Iowa PBS show focused on the issue as well as several public forums in which a few SAI members participated. We thank them for their efforts and leadership. On Feb. 29, the House presented an amendment to **HF 2612** and passed the bill on to the Senate. Time will tell where it will go from here. There are many individuals who have worked extremely hard to get the best possible result from a very difficult situation. Now the bill moves to a different stage, and we'll see where it goes.

The House also moved forward with an SSA bill, **HF 2613**, with a 3% increase, as well as **HF 2611** which presented a plan for salary increases for teachers and other support staff.

As I stated above, the Senate now has all three of the larger, more important bills, and we will see where they take these vital issues.

The next Revenue Estimating Conference meeting is March 15. Experts will provide data on state revenues, which impact the overall state budget. Legislators may be waiting for those figures to decide on some of the budget issues, including the bills mentioned above.

There are quite a few bills that legislators will discuss in the next month, including curriculum (**HF 2554** and **HF 2617**), School Security (**HF 2586** and **HSB 692**), a statewide student data system, Charter Schools, and many more. Some bills will never get to the floor for discussion, others will be discussed, amended, and passed on to the governor; and others will have a lot of discussion and then disappear. I will never tell you that we know exactly what will happen, but we do the best we can to educate and inform, and hopefully, there will be more "right" decisions than wrong.

Hang in there and continue to advocate for students.

## Calendar of events

### March

- 7 - SAI Northwest District Meeting
- 19 - SAI Great Prairie District Meeting
- 21 & 22 - Women in Educational Leadership Conference
- 26 - SAI Keystone District Meeting

### April

- 11 - Spring Legal Lab - virtual learning
- 16 - Spring Legal Lab
- 18 - Central Rivers District Meeting
- 25 - Generative AI for School Leaders

Register and find more information at [bit.ly/SAIevents](https://bit.ly/SAIevents)

## Iowa Dept. of Ed. deadlines

Use this link to access critical due dates: [bit.ly/DEdates](https://bit.ly/DEdates)

## 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



## For the record

Being that Iowa basketball phenom Caitlin Clark just got more coverage than any other female athlete in the history of collegiate sports while she just broke the NCAA Division I women's scoring record, I thought to myself: "Self, what better time will there ever be during my time at SAI to write about records." It was from about the same angle, although approximately 15 feet farther back than the three-pointer I rained in against ... wait for it ... Dowling, at Dowling High School in the winter of 1989. Like Clark, I am also a record holder, as I am tied for the all-time highest three-point percentage in the history of Iowa high school basketball. That's right, I was one-for-one shooting treys during my otherwise unmemorable basketball-playing days at Urbandale High School. My lack of threes might have had something to do with the fact that our coach benched players if they passed me the ball when I was standing outside 15 feet from the basket, but that was their issue, not mine. In any case, I still am claiming a record, like Caitlin. Unlike Caitlin, my NIL value is a couple of cold Diet Cokes if I finish my column before the SAI newsletter is published. With that being said, let's get to PUBLIC RECORDS.

For starters, it is important to know what is considered a "public record" in Iowa. To learn that, and many other fun and not-so-fun things about public records, I turn our attention to Chapter 22 of the Iowa Code.

"Public records" includes all records, documents, tape, or other information, stored or preserved in any medium, of or belonging to this state or any county, city, township, school corporation, political subdivision, ... or tax-supported district in this state, or any branch, department, board, bureau, commission, council, or committee of any of the foregoing. (Iowa Code §22.1(3)(a))

As a general matter, communications between school employees or contractors, about official school business or using school technology, are subject to public records requests. Official school business should be construed broadly. For instance, two employees complaining about another employee via email would be a public record, even if portions of that email might be redacted prior to release if it contains confidential information that fits a codified exception, as we will review below. I sometimes hear that school employees decide to use personal Gmail or other email accounts or personal phones to get around the public records law. While some may see benefit in doing so, as the employer often has limited access to such technology, employees should know that such efforts do not remove the communication from the reach of Iowa Code Chapter 22. Regardless of the means of communication or creation used, the key is the content of the communication or other record. If the content of the communication or record is about school business and not a matter of public concern being expressed during the employee's free time, then the record IS A PUBLIC RECORD. Complaining about a teacher, coach, or administrator is not a matter of public concern. An example of a matter of public concern would be an employee sending an email on their personal email while outside of work to encourage other community members to vote for or against a school bond referendum.

I strongly encourage you to remind or educate employees in your buildings or districts regarding the fact that public records may indeed be on their computers at home or smartphones if they are using them to communicate about work or create school documents. Does this mean that the public then has access to all records on those personal phones, email accounts, or technology? Absolutely not, just those concerning school business.

As alluded to above, public records custodians, such as school employees, are to err on the side of transparency and openness when determining whether a record is to be shared with an individual making a request but may rely on a number of key exceptions found in Iowa Code §22.7 to determine whether a record may be withheld. As the Iowa Legislature regularly adds exceptions, we are up to 75 and counting, but most of those exceptions are not pertinent to school officials. I will do my best to highlight those exceptions that administrators and school staff find most useful to cite when replying to a public records request. With that, here are the exceptions I encourage you to keep handy, whether in a desk drawer or on your computer.

1. Personal information in records regarding a student, prospective student, or former student maintained, created, collected or assembled by or for a school corporation or educational institution maintaining such records. ... This subsection shall not be construed to prohibit a school corporation or educational institution from transferring student records electronically to the department of education, an accredited nonpublic school, an attendance center, a school district, or an accredited postsecondary institution in accordance with section 256.9, subsection 44. (Iowa Code §22.7(1))
7. Appraisals or appraisal information concerning the sale or purchase of real or personal property for public purposes, prior to the execution of any contract for such sale or the submission of the appraisal to the property owner or other interest holders as provided in section 6B.45. (Iowa Code §22.7(7))
11. a. Personal information in confidential personnel records of government bodies relating to identified or identifiable individuals who are officials, officers, or employees of the government bodies. However, the following information relating to such individuals contained in personnel records shall be public records ... :
  - (1) The name and compensation of the individual including any written agreement establishing compensation ... including but not limited to casualty, disability, life, or health insurance, other health or wellness benefits, vacation, holiday, and sick leave, severance payments, retirement benefits, and deferred compensation. (2) The dates the individual was employed by the govern-



ment body. (3) The positions the individual holds or has held with the government body. (4) The educational institutions attended by the individual, including any diplomas and degrees earned, and the names of the individual's previous employers, positions previously held, and dates of previous employment. (5) The fact that the individual resigned in lieu of termination, was discharged, or was demoted as the result of a disciplinary action, and the documented reasons and rationale for the resignation in lieu of termination, the discharge, or the demotion. For purposes of this subparagraph, "demoted" and "demotion" mean a change of an employee from a position in a given classification to a position in a classification having a lower pay grade. (Iowa Code §22.7(11)(a)(1-2))

*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.*

18. Communications not required by law, rule, procedure, or contract that are made to a government body or to any of its employees by identified persons outside of government, to the extent that the government body receiving those communications from such persons outside of government could reasonably believe that those persons would be discouraged from making them to that government body if they were available for general public examination. ... (Iowa Code §22.7(18))
50. Information and records concerning physical infrastructure, cyber security, critical infrastructure, security procedures, or emergency preparedness developed, maintained, or held by a government body for the protection of life or property, if disclosure could reasonably be expected to jeopardize such life or property. a. Such information and records include but are not limited to information directly related to vulnerability assessments; information contained in records relating to security measures such as security and response plans, security codes and combinations, passwords, restricted area passes, keys, and security or response procedures; emergency response protocols; and information contained in records that if disclosed would significantly increase the vulnerability of critical physical systems or infrastructures to attack. (Iowa Code § 22.7(50))
70. Information indicating whether a public employee voted in a certification, retention and recertification, or decertification election held pursuant to section 20.15 or how the employee voted on any question on a ballot in such an election. (Iowa Code §22.7(70))

Please note the Iowa Code citations at the end of each exception, which I encourage you to include with written responses to public records requests.

### Here are a few other public records legal and practical points to consider:

As should be specified in your records policy, the district may charge a reasonable price to print copies, to include the cost of clerical workers needed to perform the compilation of said documents. You may not charge legal fees if you need to involve legal counsel to review the documents to assist in redaction work. These charges may be required prior to copies being made or work performed.

Individuals do not have to come in person to obtain copies and may request them electronically if they are in electronic form or the documents are readily transferable in electronic form.

Schools are not required to create a document where one does not already exist. For instance, if the principal meets with a parent and the parent then requests for the principal to provide a memorandum summarizing the conversation, there is no obligation to provide such memorandum if it does not already exist. This issue also comes up frequently when businesses wish for the district to create a spreadsheet with all of the employee information from the district. If you have said information in spreadsheet form, and the information is not excepted (such as birthdate, home address, personal phone number), then the business or requester may obtain that spreadsheet form. HOWEVER, you are not required to go to the work of creating a new spreadsheet in the format desired by the requestor.

If a request is particularly extensive, you might consider having someone contact the requestor to determine what they are actually seeking. A brief conversation or correspondence via email might greatly reduce the extent of the request.

Consider adding surveillance video footage from buildings and buses to your emergency preparedness plan, which is excepted from public records requests under Iowa Code §22.7(50), see above. If individuals can review surveillance video they may determine patterns of travel in your buildings, as well as determine blind spots from cameras and camera angles. All such information makes your school buildings and buses more vulnerable to those wishing to do harm. However, if the video footage is used to discipline a student, keep in mind that the parents or guardians would still be able to visit the school and watch that portion of the video.

There is no specific deadline to provide records, but custodians should not unnecessarily delay the release of public records. As a general matter, it is fairly well known on the legal streets of Iowa that most records should be provided within 20 calendar days.

This is one of those columns that likely will create more questions. If so, don't hesitate to shoot me an email or contact your district legal counsel. I will be out of the office until March 12, Caitlin Clark needs three-point coaching. OK, I will be out until March 12, but, despite my shooting record, I probably won't be waiting for a call from Caitlin. Go Cubs and Go Hawks!



## Words contain worlds

Listening to a recorded keynote by the late Judith Glaser, leading authority on **Conversational Intelligence®**, I clicked pause and replayed her statement “Words contain worlds.” She offered this thought as an explanation of the complexity of our conversations and the hidden trust and energy that are inherent in every exchange. I thought about my recent conversations. I take for granted that the other person in the conversation attaches the same meaning to my words that I do; and I’m quite sure that person assumes I am understanding their words in the same way that they do. I don’t think Glaser’s message was to stop every few words to seek confirmation. I would certainly hate to pollute the conversation with more “I know, right?” or “You know what I mean?”

Glaser intended to increase our awareness of the fact that words carry meaning well beyond what we might find in a dictionary. Each time we hear a word, we attach to it our experiences; this goes beyond even the connotative definitions of words, which relate to contextual understanding, and into the deeper, personal emotional experiences we connect to words. Take for example the word collaboration. Each of us has experienced our own definition of collaboration. Perhaps my world of collaboration has involved being part of a team that probed issues, rigorously debated potential solutions, identified an approach, and achieved success; however, you experienced collaboration as time wasted. There was no clear agenda, no productive conflict, and no real results. So, when you and I engage in conversation about scheduling collaboration time for our staff, I want it to be a priority; and you don’t see it as valuable. We find ourselves in conflict even though we’re focused on the same word. That single word carries a different world for each of us.

Glaser notes we speak approximately 16,000 words a day and 9 of 10 conversations miss the mark! How can we engage in more productive conversations? Trust plays a critical role. Assuming you and I have a high trust relationship, we seek to understand each other by investigating the worlds in our words. We care about each other and are willing to hold space for one another as we explore what collaboration means to each of us and how we can create the kind of experience for our team or our staff that will advance us toward the goals we’ve set.

Absent trust, I speculate about your ulterior motives and get a story going about what I think you believe. I’m frustrated that you won’t see my point of view. You respond in kind. Both of our bodies release cortisol, which activates our “shut down” mode. The area of the brain that is open to new ideas and responsible for processing and thinking, the prefrontal cortex, is blocked by the cortisol response. Neither of us wants to stay in the conversation.

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“Absent trust, I speculate about your ulterior motives and get a story going about what I think you believe. I’m frustrated that you won’t see my point of view. You respond in kind.”

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Understanding the neuroscience of trust and the role of neuroscience in our conversations helps us avoid shutting down and keeps us open to continuing the conversation. When we feel positively about someone or something, our bodies release oxytocin, which activates the prefrontal cortex. This heart-brain connection increases our energy and opens us up to acknowledging and honoring new ideas and thinking. When we have both high trust and a positive emotional response, we can readily tap into innovation, strategy, and insight. When there is a lack of transparency and trust is low, the amygdala takes over. We move into survival mode and seek to protect our own ideas. Energy decreases as we close ourselves off, and we cannot readily consider new ways of thinking; our empathy decreases.

How do we apply this understanding of neuroscience and our awareness of the worlds contained in words to improve our discussions? Simply being aware that words contain worlds and knowing that every conversation involves an energetic exchange can put us on the path to better conversations. Entering into a conversation with care and interest is a different energy from “I’m right and I have the answers.” If your energy isn’t serving your purpose, tap into curiosity. What are you wondering about this person or topic? Or, tap into gratitude, what can you appreciate about this person or their situation? The slightest shift can alter the quality of the conversation.

You can also create space, “I see this differently from you. Is there anything we can do to talk about it?” Being transparent in the moment can also be of impact, “What would it take to make this conversation better for you?” Additionally, ask questions for which neither of you has the answer. This puts both parties into a different head space. As we know, people want to be seen and heard. When we listen intently, we activate the heart-brain connection in the prefrontal cortex and open people up to new thinking.

We seem to be in a time when the idea that “words contain worlds” rings especially true. With one utterance, we can be judged as aligned to one “world” or another. Applying your understanding of the neuroscience of conversation can help you resist such polarization and advance innovation and creativity with the empathy needed to achieve your goals.



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