

# Iowa House and Senate

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## *Democrats propose school finance reforms to help Iowa schools.*

The Democratic members of the School Finance Formula Review Committee, which is required by law to meet every five years and provide recommendations for school finance formula changes or revisions, do hereby move the adoption of the following seven recommendations to be implemented by legislation in the 2020 legislative session:

1. **Adequate Basic School Funding.** Per-pupil supplemental state aid for K-12 schools has fallen behind inflation by more than 2.1% over the last three years. In setting SSA for FY 2021, the Legislature must fund schools above the cost of inflation.
2. **Increase English Language Learner (ELL) Weighting.** Currently, students enrolled in an ELL program generate an additional 0.22 student weights through the school aid formula for a maximum of five years. The weight must be increased, and the potential eligibility period lengthened for students who need more time to become English proficient.
3. **Accelerate the implementation of per-pupil equity between state and district cost per pupil.** At the current rate, the inequity will take over 30 years to eliminate. A different approach is needed to shorten the time, while increasing local control and making sure that increased support goes to making a difference in the classroom.
4. **Increase Preschool Funding.** Increase Preschool Funding to ensure universal PreK is a universal option for all Iowa 4-year-olds.
5. **Increase Special Education Weighting.** Currently, 80 percent of Iowa's school districts are running special education deficits.
6. **School Mental Health Study Committee.** Create a study committee of education stakeholders to coordinate the implementation in the schools of recent child mental health legislation and specifically to identify the necessary increases in school personnel and the funding to pay for them.
7. **Poverty Weighting Study Committee.** As reported by the 2018 Condition of Education Report, 40.5 percent of Iowa students are on Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), the most widely used measure of student poverty, up from 27 percent in the 2000-01 school year. Students

from low-income households often lack the educational resources and advantages at home that are common in more affluent homes. In order to create more equal educational opportunities, many states add additional dollars to their school funding formula to level up the playing field. Iowa should study the options to do so, too.