



Iowa's Area  
Education  
Agencies

## Serving children, families and educators since 1974

The Iowa Legislature established Iowa's Area Education Agencies in 1974 to identify and serve children from birth to age 21 who require special education services. Today this regional system of nine AEAs provides effective, efficient and economical solutions to schools, families and educators, and supports the developmental and learning needs of all children including those with disabilities.



Children Birth-Age 3 on an IFSP: **2,429**  
 Children Ages 3-5 on an IEP: **7,106**  
 Children Ages 5-21 on an IEP: **62,308**



Total Number of Iowa Public School Districts Served: **327**



Total Number of Iowa Accredited, Nonpublic Schools: **180**



Total Iowa Public Enrollment: **445,037**  
 Total Iowa Nonpublic Enrollment: **32,689**  
 Total Iowa Enrollment: **477,726**



Total Number of Full-time Teachers: **37,567**



Total Number of Full-time Principals: **1,146**



Total Number of Superintendents: **326**



Source: Iowa Department of Education  
 (Data above: 2020-21, Data right: 2018-19)

### Northwest AEA

Public: **39,324**  
 Nonpublic: **5,324**  
 Total Enrollment: **44,684**

### Central Rivers AEA

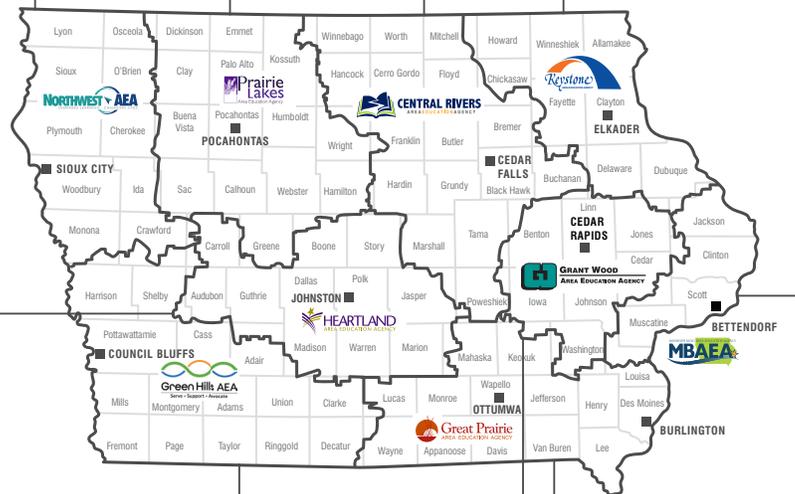
Public: **62,256**  
 Nonpublic: **3,230**  
 Total Enrollment: **65,486**

### Prairie Lakes AEA

Public: **29,962**  
 Nonpublic: **2,118**  
 Total Enrollment: **32,081**

### Keystone AEA

Public: **28,251**  
 Nonpublic: **4,262**  
 Total Enrollment: **32,513**



### Heartland AEA

Public: **137,826**  
 Nonpublic: **7,905**  
 Total Enrollment: **145,731**

### Grant Wood AEA

Public: **70,025**  
 Nonpublic: **4,401**  
 Total Enrollment: **74,426**

### Mississippi Bend AEA

Public: **46,644**  
 Nonpublic: **3,383**  
 Total Enrollment: **50,027**

### Green Hills AEA

Public: **37,460**  
 Nonpublic: **1,066**  
 Total Enrollment: **38,527**

### Great Prairie AEA

Public: **34,513**  
 Nonpublic: **1,159**  
 Total Enrollment: **35,673**

## Overview of Iowa's Area Education Agencies

## Who We Are

Our staff are in every accredited school building, both public and private, in the state, and have established relationships with students, families, school districts, and service providers. Iowa's AEA staff include experienced educators; school social workers; occupational, physical and speech-language therapists; school psychologists; behavior interventions; and curriculum consultants. Our staff work directly with families, students, educators and administrators in every accredited school building in Iowa to ensure a continuum of services are available when needed.

We provide support in the areas of developmental screening, special education support services, quality classroom materials, curriculum planning, best practices in teaching and learning including early literacy and numeracy, safe and caring learning environments, appropriate educational opportunities for all learners, technology planning, professional learning, assessment, special education, leadership development, and more.

## What We Do For Families

- **Screenings, interventions and support services for children birth-21:** AEA staff provide developmental screenings to identify children who may be at risk for delays beginning at birth and continuing through a child's educational career. Support services include providing transition planning and post-secondary support is available for students who qualify for assistance, and for those in shelters, detentions and jails.
- **Academic and behavioral assistance for specific children:** Our services support children who require special education services, and need assistance with social-emotional learning, mental health and other services.

## What We Do For Educators

Our AEA staff help educators ensure high-quality learning environments. Support to local schools is provided in three, tightly integrated areas: Educational Services, Information & Technology and Special Education.

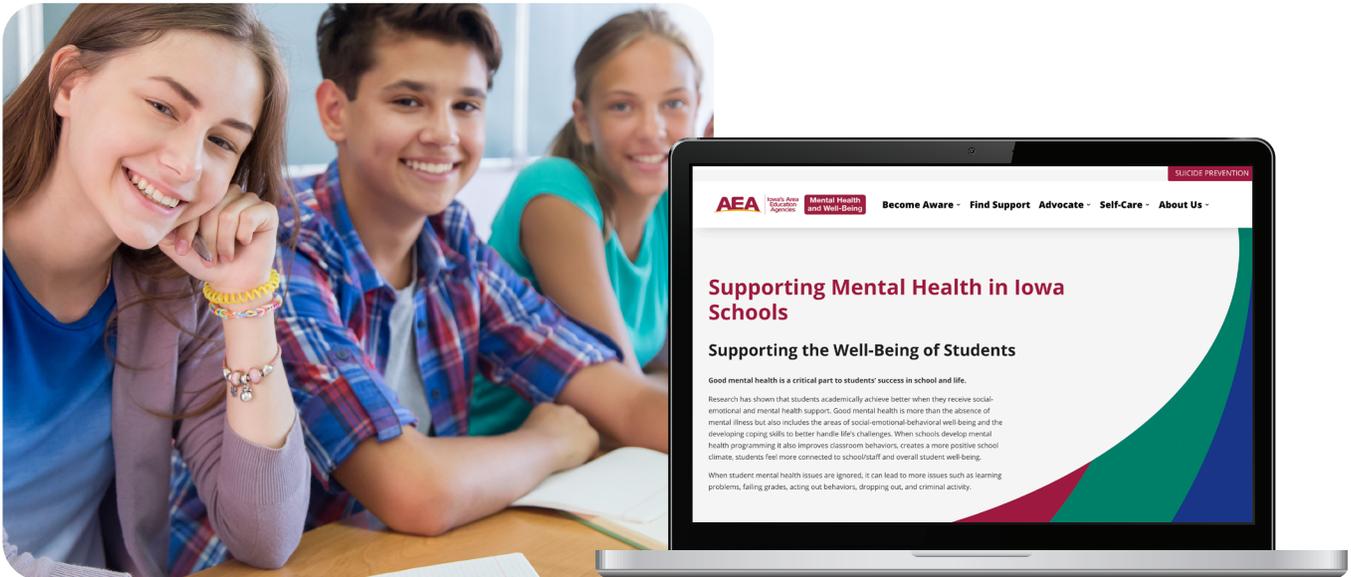
- **Educational Services:** We provide year-round learning opportunities and networking meetings to ensure research-based strategies are learned, easily accessible, and shared among school communities. AEA staff work alongside educators through consulting and job-embedded coaching to help support the implementation of best instructional practices.
- **Information and Technology:** We provide economies of scale for infrastructure and programs support. This includes providing instructional media material and coordinating support for central office functions and technological data systems.
- **Support Academic Achievement for All Students:** AEA staff help enhance learning opportunities for all learners and provide dedicated support for special education, ELL, gifted and at-risk learners. Specifically, AEA's are responsible for the identification of those who need special education services, and ensure educators access instructional strategies and interpret data to support individual student achievement.

## Mental Health Services for Iowa School Districts

Iowa's AEAs are committed to supporting schools in promoting healthy learning environments that address the social, emotional, behavior, and mental health of students.

### Integrated, State-Wide Response to Mental Health Needs

- Iowa's AEAs offers extensive professional development to support school employees in the areas of suicide prevention and postvention, identification of adverse childhood experiences, and strategies to mitigate toxic stress response.
  - The AEA system developed AEA Learning Online Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Training for Iowa educators
  - AEAs provide professional learning on the identification of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and strategies to mitigate toxic stress response.
  - Every educator in the state can access Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training that focuses on how school personnel can help students experiencing a mental health, addiction challenge, or crisis.
- Earlier this year the AEA system launched [www.iowaAEAMentalHealth.org](http://www.iowaAEAMentalHealth.org) to help educators, parents, and students navigate resources related to mental health and well-being in the state.



## Expanding Support Services Across Iowa

### Therapeutic Classrooms

Therapeutic classrooms are safe spaces for students with mental health challenges to learn. Several therapeutic classrooms, which include targeted therapy, retraining, intense academic support and family involvement, have successfully been established in multiple locations across the state in partnership with AEAs.



### Support for Districts

AEAs recognized the need among districts, especially those in rural areas, to increase staff who can work directly with students with mental health concerns. AEAs have established sharing agreements to employ additional school social workers who can provide direct support to students in need. The AEAs also have built consortiums of rural districts and deployed existing community mental health providers across the regions.

### Mental Health Regional Partnerships

The nine AEAs and 14 mental health regions are committed to building connections and relationships between the two entities, educating each entity on the roles of their respective work; and developing action plans as regional partners.

- This partnership has helped expand mobile crisis outreach support services to nearly every county in Iowa. Mobile crisis outreach dispatches mental health counselors to homes, schools and other locations with a goal of providing support within 60 minutes of dispatch.
- The AEAs piloted mobile crisis outreach in schools in seven counties in 2019-20 and are expanding the program to include additional schools in 2021.

### **House File 758 Bill Language**

*From moneys appropriated in this subsection, \$1,200,000 shall be allocated to the area education agencies to provide mental health awareness training for educators and schools \$750,000 shall be allocated to the area education agencies in the manner determined by the area education agencies to be used to identify a range of approaches to best meet the mental health needs of students and to strengthen community support for students, and \$150,000 shall be allocated to the area education agencies to create a clearinghouse of mental health resources for use by schools and community providers.*

**The AEAs asks for more flexibility in the funding language in 758 to support the expansion of mental health well-being resources and support services directly for students in Iowa.**

## AEA Funding Equity

Since the inception of the modern funding formula, AEAs, like school districts have been funded at different levels per student. Additionally, the original AEA cuts going back to 2002 were administered on a per student basis using each AEA's portion of the student population at that time--those same proportions are used today, although in some cases, student populations have changed significantly. Both of these drive inequity in AEA funding.

The AEA system has proposed legislation that equalizes the AEA funding system over a period of time to address these inequities with a multi-year plan to bring equity (\$3-10 million est.) by equalizing AEA reductions and costs per pupil.

### Understanding Funding Inequities

#### Varying Costs Per Pupil

The AEA system has five separate costs per pupil impacted annually by the percentage increase in supplemental state aid. None are consistent among and between individual AEAs. Our proposed legislation has focused on per pupil equity for LEAs.

#### PROPOSAL

Establish a statewide cost per pupil for each of the five funding categories.

#### *The ranges in the five costs per pupil among the AEAs:*

Special Education	\$293.91 to \$316.17
Media	\$56.09 to \$56.57
Education Services	\$61.15 to \$63.45
Teacher Salary Supplement	\$24.47 to \$38.42
Professional Development	\$3.10 to \$4.42

#### Calculation of the Annual AEA Reduction

The AEA system has experienced a special education funding reduction annually since FY02 with the grand total through FY20 reaching \$342.25 million. The reduction percentage for each AEA has been static since FY04. Dramatic enrollment changes in the past 15+ years have rendered the reduction flawed and inequitable.

#### *The specific reduction language on page 2 of SF 638 states:*

*The reduction for each area education agency shall be prorated based on the reduction that the agency received in the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2003.*

#### PROPOSAL

Permanently address inequity in applying the AEA cut stemming from 2003. This could be accomplished in a number of ways.

#### Total Student Enrollment Percentages by AEA (2003-2019)

	2003 Enrollment Percentage	2019 Enrollment Percentage
Heartland AEA	22.9	28.3
Grant Wood AEA	12.9	14.1
Central Rivers AEA	14.0	12.9
Mississippi Bend AEA	10.2	9.8
Green Hills AEA	8.7	7.8
Northwest AEA	8.6	8.2
Great Prairie AEA	8.1	7.1
Prairie Lakes AEA	7.5	6.1
Keystone AEA	7.1	5.9

### Special Education Weighting

The AEA system provides special education services to Iowa’s children from birth to 21. The funding formula for this support does not recognize the birth to 3 (Early Access) population, nonpublic students, or preschool students.

**3,044 children from birth – age 3 receive support services through the AEA for services that do not generate any special education weighting.**

### PROPOSAL

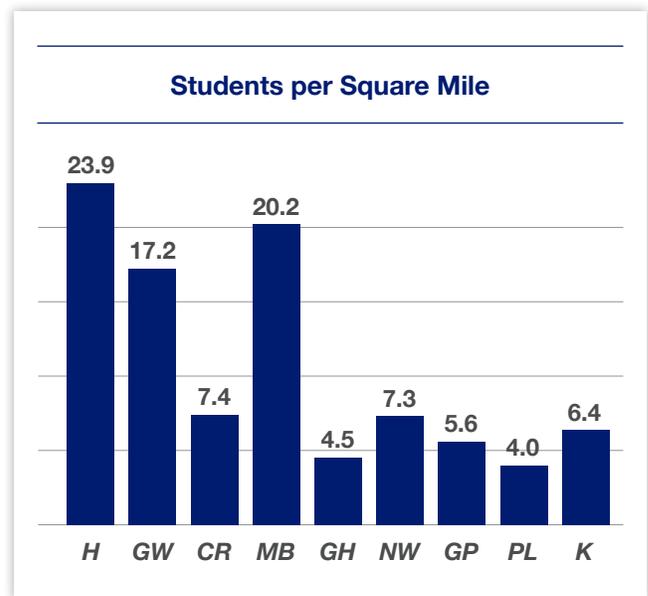
Amend the special education formula by substituting the overall IFSP and IEP count for special education weights and adding nonpublic and preschool enrollments to the headcount.

### Sparsity

The Iowa Legislature emphasized “effective, efficient, and economical” when establishing the AEA system in 1974. Enrollment trends have created significant resource disparities over time. SF 171 has focused on transportation equity for LEAs. The discrepancies shown herein parallel that focus.

### PROPOSAL

Allow a 3% increase in the cost per pupil for special education, media, and education services for those AEAs that fall below the state average of students per square mile.



**Much like the legislature and Governor have tackled inequities in the cost per pupil and transportation areas in recent years for schools, we ask the same two considerations be approved to remedy inequities in the AEA funding system.**

