



April 2014 Newsletter



A Few Points About Numbers And Politics

How Much Does The State Of Iowa Contribute To Nonpublic Schools?

In response to your emails to legislators this session asking the legislature to restore textbook and transportation funding and consider Iowa ACE's Education Savings Account proposal, many of you have received responses with some interesting numbers. At least two different estimates have circulated with numbers dramatically over-stating the dollars Iowa invests in nonpublic schools and in school choice. We want you to have the most accurate numbers we are aware of:

- Nonpublic school transportation - \$8.7 million
- Nonpublic textbook services - \$600,000
- State aid for nonpublic shared-time - \$1.1 million
- Area Education Agency (AEA) services ~\$3.5 million
- Tuition and Textbook Tax Credit - ~\$3 million
- School Tuition Organization Tax Credit - ~\$11 million
- Other support - \$135,000

Total Aid For Nonpublic Schools: ~\$28 million

Tax credits can be considered as revenue foregone by the state and not direct appropriations (the State isn't writing a check). The only direct appropriation of funds we know of is, in some cases, transportation services. All other appropriations are made to the public school district or AEA which then shares services with the nonpublic schools in its area. Textbook funding is currently limited to only \$20 per student. Therefore, these numbers are accurate but only a small portion of these dollars are direct aid to

nonpublic schools and not every school participates in every program.

Keep in mind that regular state aid for public K-12 schools is almost \$3 billion! Even if you assumed the highest possible cost for the proposed Education Savings Account (ESA) legislation and kept everything else intact, we could see universal school choice in Iowa for a tiny fraction of what we currently spend on K-12 education in Iowa! **School choice is the most cost-effective education reform!**

Textbooks & Transportation Funding

Many of you have responded to our [action alert](#) and emailed your Representative and Senator asking that they restore these funds to the levels before back-to-back budget cuts a number of years ago. Although most programs have seen these dollars restored, we are having a difficult time getting the legislature to restore these funds. Some of you have asked us why.

The simple truth is that there are two main groups of legislators at the Capitol: one that only increases spending on a few of its top priorities for the year and one that finds it difficult, philosophically, to level the playing field for private education options. This leaves very few legislators willing to work at restoring these funds or fully funding the State's current commitments to nonpublic school families. We are extremely grateful to those few legislators who work each year to rectify this and encourage you use our [action alert](#) if you have not already done so. We'll update you on the final result of our efforts after the session's end!

ESA Legislation Update

We had two goals this year: work with Iowa ACE on perfecting our ESA legislation and demonstrate to the Iowa House and Senate that Iowans are behind ESAs. We accomplished both goals. We are proud of the two bills that have been introduced and are grateful for the *thousands* of Iowans who responded to the school choice coalition's call to action and emailed their Representatives. Although we hoped the legislature would act quickly, the bill did not survive the "funnel" deadline during this session.

In the House, Representatives Chris Hagenow, Jake Highfill, and Peter Cownie co-sponsored [HF 2090](#). The bill received a subcommittee but did not advance further.

In the Senate, Senator Behn [introduced](#) a new version of the ESA bill, co-sponsored by *every Republican* in the Senate! We appreciate his support and the willingness of each of the 24 co-sponsors to sign on. We will continue working with [Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education](#) and the Iowa Catholic Conference on this legislation.

You can read the Senate bill [[SF 2154](#)] and see the list of co-sponsors on the legislative website.

We are very pleased with the large, bipartisan list of legislators that are interested in or are actively supportive of this legislation. Stay tuned as we'll need your help!

Summer STO Meeting

Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education (Iowa ACE) is hosting its annual Summer STO Meeting on **Tuesday, June 24** at Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines. Exact times and slate of speakers isn't yet set but stay tuned to our website for more details.

This meeting is open to STO Board Members, Nonpublic School

Administrators, STO Board members, school board members, development directors, STO staff, community supporters – anyone who is involved in STO business and is engaged in expanding school choice opportunities in Iowa. We hope to see a great turnout!

IACS Website Listings

We have a [new website!](#) Please find your school on the schools page and make sure we have the correct link to your school's website. Also, please email us or contact us through our Facebook page or Twitter account and let us know if your school has social media accounts, etc. we should be linking to or promoting!

We'd love your feedback on the new website and any ideas to improve it. Starting this Summer, we will be working to further expand the website, including some resources and tools exclusively for dues-paying member schools.

Iowa's School Choice PAC Needs Your Help!

Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education is gearing up for a busy election cycle. Although both organizations are 501(C)4s, IACS does not endorse candidates, make campaign donations, or get involved in political races. We exist to educate Iowans about Christian education in the State and advocate for you at the Capitol. We do, however, support the efforts of the Iowa Educational Opportunities PAC (a separate fund under Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education) to champion the school choice cause.

Please visit their website and consider helping them with your financial gift or to help with fundraising. Both [Iowa Advocates](#) and its [PAC](#) could use your help. You can also find their links on our website's "Partners" page.

ESA Numbers: The Real Story

Many of you have received emails from legislators commenting on the cost of ESAs if this year's bill were to be passed. We want to clarify the context of those numbers so that, moving forward, you are armed with the facts when talking about ESAs and how they would benefit Iowa families.

Some estimate ESAs could cost \$207 million. Although theoretically possible, similar programs implemented in other states demonstrate clearly that not every private school family and a small percentage of public school families will utilize the program, putting the realistic annual cost of the program at a level that is less than last year's ed reform bill on an annual basis and much less than many of the numbers that have been discussed for "allowable growth" in public school budgets this year.

Some claim ESAs would divert money from public schools. There is no mechanism in the bill to divert money from public schools. Public schools will still receive local property taxes, their local option sales tax, and other State revenues regardless of where children attend school. We have not seen any choice program demonstrating negative consequences for public school budgets or (more importantly) student achievement.

The ESA concept is cost effective, true ed reform that respects the role of parents. It is a fraction of the cost public K-12 schools receive (currently around 50% of a \$6.5 billion budget) and will demonstrably increase student achievement for both public and private school students.

IACS Online

Check out our **NEW** website! You can keep track of IACS' efforts at www.iowachristianschools.org. Learn more about IACS and sign up to receive email updates and alerts. If your school is not listed or needs updating, please let us know.

“Follow” IACS on [Twitter](#).

“Like” us on [Facebook](#).

“Follow” us on [Google+](#).

IACS Membership

Your school should have received this year's request for dues. We appreciate those that have already responded, **thank you!** We can't effectively represent the interests of your school at the capitol without your school's participation! **We need your help to protect the rights of Christian schools in Iowa.**

As an example of the value of IACS membership: every year IACS defeats numerous unfunded mandates at the Iowa Capitol. Just *one* of these mandates would cost your school significantly more than its IACS dues for the year! Add to this significant victories on accreditation and school choice issues and IACS membership is a great value. Join us as we work for you. Contact Brad Vis at (712) 476-2615 for information.



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