



# 2015

## LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



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# 2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Des Moines Public Schools wishes to engage legislators and executive branch leaders to explore ways in which changes to state law and/or administrative rules will assist Iowa's largest provider of public education to support the success of our students and continue our work at becoming the nation's model for urban education.

**The following are key issues for Des Moines Public Schools:**

## **INCREASE EARLY CHILDHOOD OPPORTUNITIES**

Des Moines Public Schools serves more than 2,500 preschoolers with both the need and capacity to increase access and expand services. Expanding Iowa's four-year old universal preschool program would benefit more than 1,000 children in Des Moines, as well as addressing related issues such as full-day programming and transportation for students impacted by poverty.

## **SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Des Moines Public Schools educates more than 6,000 students, nearly 20% of our enrollment, who are English Language Learners, speaking nearly 100 different languages and dialects. DMPS, along with a growing number of Iowa school districts, continue to need expanded opportunities for Iowa's growing number of ELL students. Immediate benefits would result from expanding weighted ELL funding for up to a maximum of seven years (beyond the additional fifth year approved by the legislature in 2013) and moving Iowa's weighted ELL funding closer to .30, the national average; both items were recommended by a recent state-wide task force on ELL.

## **CONTINUE IOWA'S SALES TAX FOR SCHOOLS**

Des Moines Public Schools has made extensive investments throughout the entire community thanks to the one cent sales tax. From building new schools, renovating old schools, and making major improvements in key areas such as security, technology and energy efficiency, while creating jobs and investing in the local economy. The needs of schools will not end when this tax expires. It will benefit all Iowa school districts to begin the process of continuing this important support for our communities.

## **IMPROVE FUNDING FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS**

Des Moines Public Schools serves a student body that is increasingly diverse by every measure whose needs are not always best served by well-intentioned programs. Students in Des Moines and across Iowa would benefit from increased flexibility in the use of at-risk allowable growth and other state categorical funds.





## **MAINTAIN SCHOOL CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY**

Des Moines Public Schools is proud events such as the Iowa State Fair happen in our community, and that so many of our students and staff participate. That is why DMPS does not begin school before the Fair is over. However, mandating an even later start time for public schools hurts education by reducing the amount of classroom time before students take everything from the Iowa Assessment to AP exams to their college entrance tests. The priority of the school calendar should be what's best for education, and remain a decision left largely to local school districts.

## **REVAMP ATTENDANCE CENTER RANKINGS**

This month, the Iowa Department of Education will begin releasing grades of all public schools in the state through the new attendance center rankings. The criteria of this system must be re-considered as it will unfairly punish many schools, including in Des Moines, simply because of the students served. The development of the attendance center rankings did not take into consideration student growth, which is the key measurement of success in the classroom. If state rankings are to have any meaning, the criteria must be re-evaluated.

## **MAKE THE IOWA ASSESSMENT MEANINGFUL**

Des Moines Public Schools and all districts in the state use the Iowa Assessment to measure student proficiency. However, the Iowa Assessment does not align with the Core and is not criterion-reference, and therefore is not the most accurate measure. The State should begin work to revise the Iowa Assessment in order to better align with what is being taught in the classroom.

## **CONTACT**

If you ever have any questions about Des Moines Public Schools, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following individuals:

### **Cindy Elsbernd**

Des Moines School Board chair  
515-771-1140  
[cindy.elsbernd@dmschools.org](mailto:cindy.elsbernd@dmschools.org)

### **Rob Barron**

Des Moines School Board vice chair  
515-778-2961  
[rob.barron@dmschools.org](mailto:rob.barron@dmschools.org)

### **Tom Ahart**

Des Moines Public Schools  
Superintendent  
515-242-7766  
[thomas.ahart@dmschools.org](mailto:thomas.ahart@dmschools.org)

### **Phil Roeder**

Director of Communications &  
Public Affairs  
515-242-8153  
[phillip.roeder@dmschools.org](mailto:phillip.roeder@dmschools.org)



# DES MOINES PUBLIC SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE

## AWARD WINNING TEACHERS AND PROGRAMS

### 2015 Iowa Teacher of the Year

Clemencia Spizzirri,  
Merrill Middle School



As Iowa's largest provider of public education, Des Moines Public Schools is proud of our 5,000 teachers and staff, whose good work has earned state and national recognition.

**Des Moines Public Schools** is honored to be home to this year's Iowa Teacher of the Year, and celebrates this recognition of Clemencia Spizzirri, a language acquisition teacher at Merrill Middle School, who exemplifies our mission of preparing students for "the next stage of their lives."



### Recent state and national recognitions earned by Des Moines Public Schools:



Ten National Award Winners  
*Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching*



District of Distinction  
*District Administration Magazine*



2014 Elementary School Counselor of the Year  
*Iowa School Counselor Association*



2014 School Social Worker of the Year  
*Iowa School Social Workers Association*



2013 Teacher of the Year  
*Iowa High School Press Association*



2013 Elementary and Middle School Art Educators of the Year  
*Art Educators of Iowa*

**National Journal**

"Why Des Moines Can Be A Model for Urban Education"  
*National Journal*



Five High Schools on the Iowa AP Top 50 Index  
Iowa's Top-Ranked AP Program – Central Academy  
*Belin-Blank Center for Gifted Education*



2012-2014 ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year  
*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*



2012-2014 Award of Excellence  
*National School Public Relations Association*



Seven-time Certificate of Excellence Award  
*Association of School Business Officials*



Seven-time Certificate of Achievement  
*Government Finance Officers Association*



2012 Green Ribbon School – Central Campus  
2013 Green Ribbon District – DMPS  
*U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools*

**The Washington Post**

One of the Nation's Top College-Prep High Schools – Roosevelt  
*Washington Post*