

The State of Public Education In Iowa

AAUW Iowa Spring Conference

April 22, 2023

Mary Jane Cobb

Executive Director

Iowa State Education Association

Iowa PreK-12 Education by the 2022 numbers

485,630 Enrollment (up from 484,159 in 2020 -21)

327 school districts

1293 schools

9 Area Education Agencies

Iowa PreK-12 Education by the 2022 numbers

26.8% minority student population

40.7% students eligible for free and reduced lunch

6.6% students whose native language is not English

90.2% four-year graduation rate

Proficiency Rates- Grades 3-11

English Language Arts

2022- 69.7% (up from 69.3% in 2019)

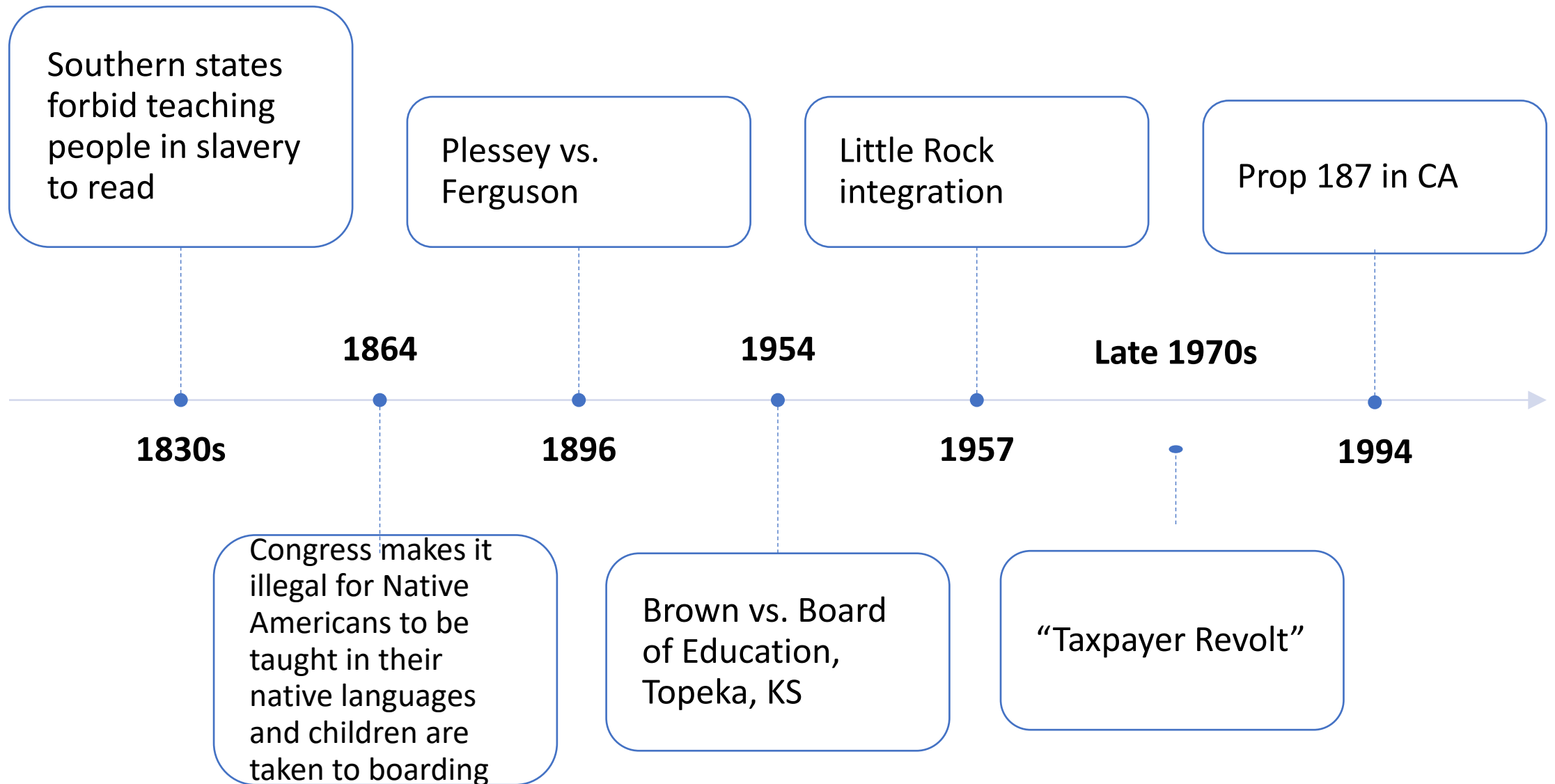
Math

2022- 63.8% (down from 71.7% in 2019)

Science

2022- 62.6% (up from 56.5% in 2019)

Culture wars in our public schools



Why is public education a battleground?

Education in the US is a \$764 Billion a year investment from local, state and federal government

There are 98,158 public schools in 13,598 regular public school districts in all 50 state, DC, Puerto Rico and other territories

Public schools are an incubator of democracy with people from diverse backgrounds interacting closely

What is new?

The COVID-19 pandemic

Social media

Deterioration of civil discourse

Well-funded opposition

- In June of 2022 NBC News identified at least 165 local and national groups working to turn COVID mandates and lessons on race and gender into divisive wedge issues to manipulate political purposes.

Anti-public education forces

Established organizations

- ALEC*
- Americans for Prosperity*
- Cato Institute
- DeVos family
- Federalist Society
- Heritage Foundation
- Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education*
- Koch brothers
- Manhattan Institute

New actors in the arena

- American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence*
- American Federation for Children*
- Citizens for Renewing America
- EdChoice*
- Excellence in Education*
- Moms for Liberty*
- No Left Turn in Education
- Parents Defending Education
- School House Rights.org
- 1776 Project

What are they doing?

School board fights- over COVID mandates and curriculum

Public record requests

Recall elections of school board members

Create suspension of what is being taught in local public schools

Litigation

Filing formal complaints against teachers & administrators

Model legislation



“The Year of School Choice-2021”

- nearly 150 voucher bills were introduced
- 7 states enacted new voucher programs
- 21 existing voucher programs were expanded across 18 states
- 918% increase nationwide of the number of students using vouchers from 2015 to 2021

2022 saw fewer new programs or expansions of existing programs

Vouchers in 2023

4 states have enacted new voucher legislation: Iowa, Arkansas, Florida and Utah

18 states have introduced similar bills

Almost half of US states are considering adopting or expanding vouchers this year

Iowans oppose vouchers by an aggregate margin of -16

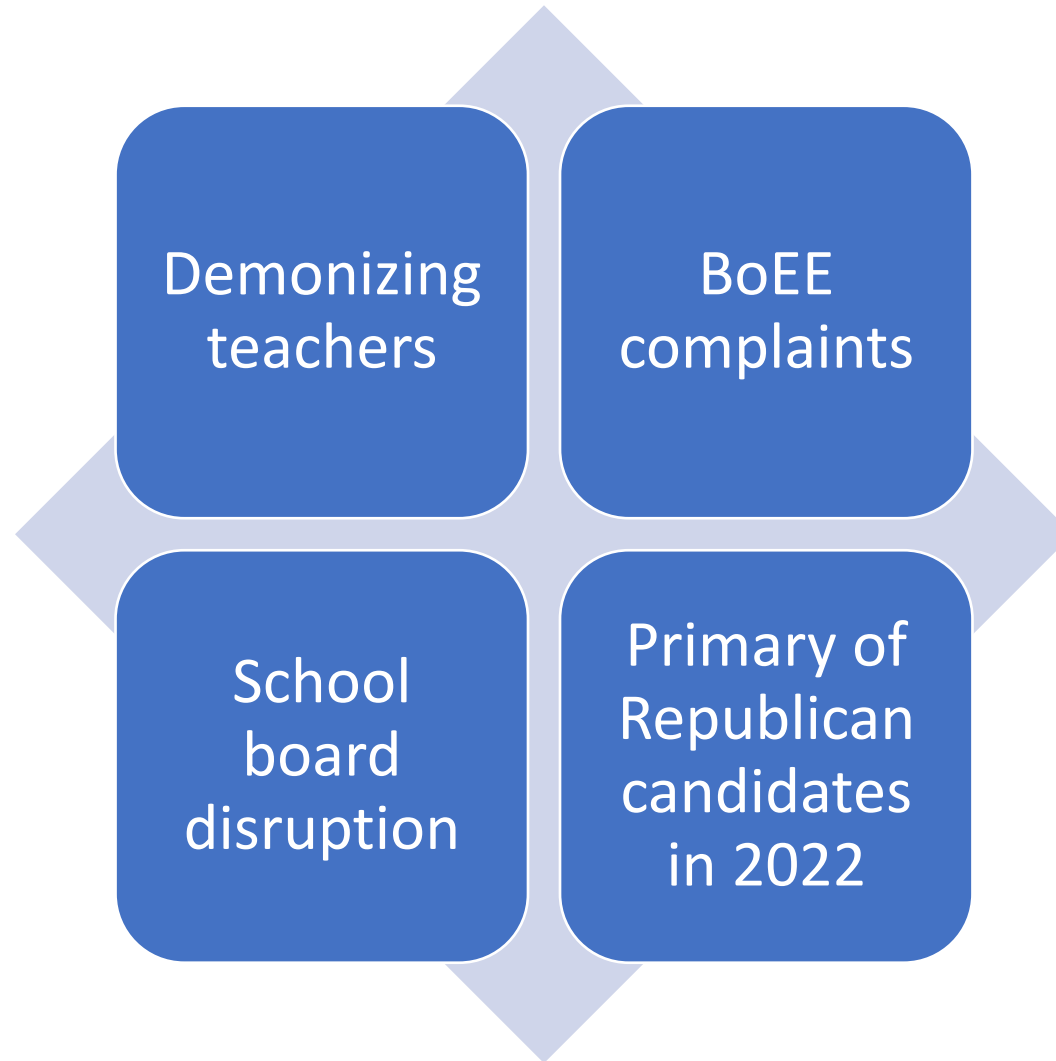
Selzer poll -28

Iowans for Tax Relief +9

Progress Iowa -16

Data for Progress -29

Iowa Tactics





The Iowa Legislature

- 2022- HF 802- Divisive Concepts
- Requires school districts to ensure that curriculum and staff training do not “teach, advocate, encourage, promote, or act upon specific stereotyping and scapegoating.”

HF 68 - Vouchers - ENACTED

\$7635 per student


2023-2024- 300% FPR (\$83,250) \$107 M

2024-2025- 400% FPR (\$111,000) \$156 M

2025-2026- Open to all \$314 M

By year four- LSA estimates \$356 M

Approx. \$1210 back to district of residence for those who enroll in non-publics



SF 192 - Supplemental State Aid (SSA) - ENACTED

- SSA 3% -FY 2024 – new \$107 M (approx. amount for 1st year voucher program)
- Per pupil increase of \$222 for FY 2024
- Includes categorical, & transportation
- No per pupil equity
- Leaves 71 districts on Budget Guarantee
(not enough SSA to offset decline in enrollment)

SF 482 - Bathroom Bill - ENACTED

Restricts bathroom & locker room usage by transgender students and became effective immediately.

Prevents schools from providing an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students.

We are concerned it puts schools in violation of Title IX of the federal civil rights law prohibiting sex-based discrimination. Violations can jeopardize federal resources.

SF 494 - Public Assistance Oversight - Sent to Governor for Signature

Makes changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program funded by the federal government.

Implements a new asset test for food and medical services that includes cash on hand, college savings accounts, or a car.

The cost to implement the administration of the changes will be more expensive, all while reducing the benefits available to Iowa families in need.

Expected to kick at least 8,000 adults off Medicaid,
600 kids off of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP),
Stop thousands of children from receiving food through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

SF 391- Governors Flexibility Bill - Sent to Governor for Signature

Division I- Eliminates the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) requirements.

Division II – Eliminates the requirement that school districts employ teacher librarians, instead allowing public librarians to serve in such capacity without the required license. It would also eliminate the Master's degree requirement the Board of Educational Examiners currently has for teacher librarians serving at K-12 schools.

This division also creates goal language related to the role of a guidance counselor and makes school counselor the appropriate terminology.

Division III- Allow up to five days or 30 hour of instruction virtually per year.

Division IV- Allows for the expansion of agreements school districts have with area community colleges. Removes language that previously required districts to work in good faith to first meet the needs of students with an educator licensed under chapter 272.

Division V- Relates to authorization changes to offering sequential units in one classroom. World Language changed from 4 to 3 required units and Fine Arts from 3 to 2 required units.

Division VI – Changes to education standards including removing technology literacy from core curriculum standards.
Removes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) from the health curriculum.
Reduces the required sequential units offered and taught for world languages and fine arts.

SF 496 Governor's Ed Reform - Sent to Governor for Signature

The Good:

- Original proposal to require the DE to keep a list of books that school boards remove from school libraries and/or classrooms, requiring parental consent in all other districts for student access, removed.
- Transparency requirements that would have required posting of ALL materials used in ALL classrooms, in a searchable, sortable database are now gone.
- Removed mandatory US Immigration Exam – including graduation requirement
- Eliminates requirement to immediately notify parents or guardians if a student is suspected to be expressing a gender identity different from biological sex.
- Penalties for non-compliance removed.

The Bad:

- K-12 instruction, courses, programs and libraries must only include materials that meet a new definition of “Age Appropriate” standard that excludes descriptions and or visual depictions of sex acts as defined in 702.17. The only exception is human growth and development courses taught in grades 7-12.
- Prohibits instruction, promotion, discussion of gender identity and sexual orientation in grades K-6.
- Eliminates specific references and instruction related to HPV, HIV and related vaccines in human growth and development curriculum.
- Parental consent required to call a student by a different name or pronoun from their birth certificate and school registration.

- Parental consent required for student participation in any survey, evaluation or activity that would reveal personal information about the student or their family, outside of state and federally required surveys.
- Creates parents constitutionally protected right to make decisions related to medical care, moral upbringing, religious upbringing, residence, education and extracurricular activities.
- Does not prohibit medical attention in an emergent care situation.
- Does not prohibit a person from cooperating with a child abuse assessment.
- These stated parent rights are not comprehensive and shall not be construed to limit parents' rights.
- Exempts bill from 25B.2 re: state unfunded mandates law.

HF 654 – Firearms Omnibus Bill - Passed the House, Sent to Senate

Div. III- Firearms on School Property

- If directed, allows a school employee, appropriately permitted, to have a gun in a school vehicle.
- Allows guns owned by permit holders to be in vehicles on school grounds. Guns can be left in vehicles on school grounds, vehicles must be locked.

Div. IV- Dangerous Weapons in Vehicles at Regents and Community Colleges

- Allows guns owned by permit holders to be left in vehicles on grounds of a community college.
- Prohibits community colleges and regents from adopting rules and laws that would prohibit guns in vehicles on campus grounds. Holds the colleges harmless if accidents occur.

Div. V- Insurance Coverage- Firearms on School Grounds

- Orders the Iowa Insurance Commissioner to prohibit insurance companies from denying property and casualty insurance to a school based solely on the presence of firearms on school grounds.

Iowa Community Colleges by the 2022 numbers

82,251- 2022 Enrollment (up from 81,749 in 2021)

7 colleges had an increase in enrollment; 8 had a decrease

34.1% of students are enrolled full time

24.5% of students are minorities

19 is the median age of students (84% are under 25: 16% over 25)

**Largest career
clusters**

7,140 students in
health sciences

3,259 students in
business

2,178 students in
law, public safety
and security

Online enrollment

4% decrease in
online enrollment

39,576 students
enrolled in at least
one online class

**Joint enrollment
with high schools**

37,943 students
participated

4.2% increase
from 2021

197,320 credit
hours of classes



Questions?

Mary Jane Cobb
mjcobb@isea.org