



by Donita Joens, Iowa Valley CSD Superintendent

ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) Replaces NCLB (No Child Left Behind)

If one remains in education long enough, you will see cycles. Our nation is at the advent of a new cycle called ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act); President Obama signed it on December 10, 2015. ESSA will allow for more local control, allowing the state of Iowa to use new measures to track student achievement. Accountability and authority has now been put into the hands of the states again, allowing us to focus on improvement.

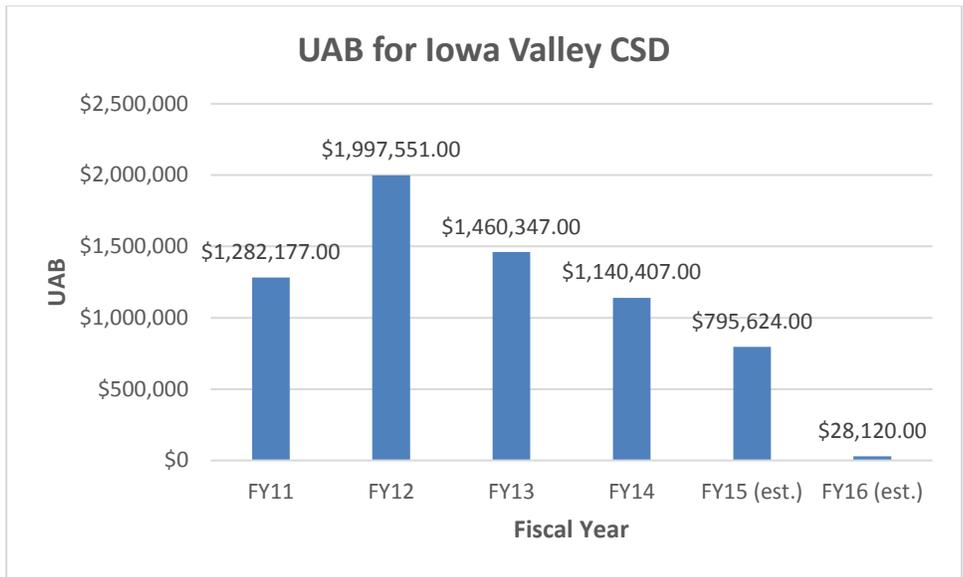
ESSA will replace NCLB (No Child Left Behind), which has been in place since 2001. Although the philosophy of achieving 100% proficiency in math and reading in every district in the nation was an admirable goal, it was unrealistic and states did not adhere to the same achievement levels of proficiency. Also, there were high-stakes pressures for staff members to prep students for taking state assessments. The emotional roller coaster under NCLB left most staff members feeling like they were failures. Being able to focus on improvements will allow for greater flexibility, more local control, and time spent with students rather than prepping for tests. ESSA will create a balance between being accountable and spending more time on creating meaningful relationships with each and every student.

One timely change in Iowa that will measure student success is through a state report card that the Department of Education is rolling out this month. The report card, known as the Attendance Center Rankings, will use nine measuring tools to rank schools. A few of the areas reviewed are graduation rates, attendance, and employee turnover rates. While this means of comparison is still under debate, it helps to move schools towards high quality by looking at a diverse profile data as opposed to test performance alone as NCLB did.

Lesson #4 on School Finance- UAB (Unspent Authorized Budget)

The two most important key measures of the financial health of a school district are enrollment trends and UAB, unspent authorized budget, or more commonly known as spending authority. UAB is the amount of maximum spending authority left at the end of the year after deducting the general fund expenditures incurred during the year. By law, a school district cannot have a negative UAB. If this occurs, a two-year workout plan must be made with the SBRC, School Budget Review Committee, at the Iowa Department of Education. Methods of raising spending authority include: increasing enrollment, increasing miscellaneous income, decreasing district expenditures, and raising allowable growth. If a district has an ample amount of cash but limited spending authority, it cannot spend the cash that it has.

Iowa Valley Community School District is working through plans to prevent a negative UAB issue. With the state settling at 1.25% last year for SSA (Supplemental State Aid), a declining enrollment, and little/no cuts in staffing or supplies over the past few years, it is reaching a concern when one looks at trend data. We will be working to level off the declining UAB that has occurred over the past few years, a goal which is achievable with the help of our school community. The method of doing business will force us to become more frugal than in past years. By working together, we will increase our financial health because of the Tiger Pride in our school district.



Meet our New Little Tigers!



(L-R): Jackye Bowlin and Jude, Mindy Driscoll and Blaine, and Stacie Christner and Jeter

