



# Legislative Priorities 2023-2024

The Linn-Mar Community School District is proud to be a part of a thriving, energetic, future-focused “community” of east-central Iowa. Our district includes portions of the cities of Marion, Cedar Rapids, and Robins. We also serve students in areas of eastern Linn County.

## Mental Health

We support efforts to establish comprehensive community mental health systems to offer preventative and treatment services and comprehensive school mental health programs that include:

- Increase access to in-school and telehealth services;
- Increase access to mental health professionals via in-person or telehealth visits;
- Improve awareness and understanding of child emotion and mental health needs through ongoing teacher, school counselor, administrator, and support staff training;
- Integrate suicide prevention and coping skills into existing curriculum;
- Support the mental health needs of educators and staff;
- Provide a comprehensive mental health resources clearinghouse for schools and community providers;
- Expand training to include a referral plan for continuing action provided by mental health professionals outside of the district;
- Designate a categorical funding stream for mental health professionals serving students and ongoing teacher, school counselor, administrator, and support staff mental health training;
- Support development of mental health workforce to provide services to children; and
- Opposing policies with detrimental effects to marginalized populations mental health.

**Advocacy Fact:** School counselors are already on staff and trained in the area of mental health, but there are not enough school counselors to address the needs of all students. The recommended ratio is 250 students per counselor. The Iowa average is 400-500 per counselor.

## Drop Out/At-Risk Students

We strive to provide every student with the services they need to remain in school, progress, and graduate to become productive citizens. We support state policies that:

- Include dropout prevention and funding for at-risk students in the foundation formula and the socio-economic status as a factor in determining a student’s at-risk status
- Equalize the ability of all districts to generate dropout prevention funds.

**Advocacy Fact:** Linn-Mar is limited to receiving only **2.5%** while many other districts receive the full **5%**. There is inequity in the formula and Linn-Mar advocates that all districts be given the full **5%** funding cap allowance to meet the needs of students.

## By the Numbers\*

### Students

**7,685** Students  
**12th** largest district in Iowa  
**36** different languages are spoken by students and their families across the district.

### School Sites

**7** Elementaries, **2** Intermediate,  
**2** Middle, **1** High School  
COMPASS Alternative  
Success Center Transition Program

### District Personnel

**553** full time teachers  
**16.1** year career average  
**43.6%** teachers with advanced degrees

### Budget (General Fund)

**80%** personnel costs  
**20%** operational costs

### District Size

**64** square miles serving Marion, Cedar Rapids, Robins, and Linn County

### Linn-Mar Board of Directors

Brittania Morey, President  
Clark Weaver, Vice-President  
Barry Buchholz, Sondra Nelson, Matt Rollinger, Melissa Walker, Rachel Wall

### Administration

Amy Kortemeyer, Superintendent  
Nathan Wear, Associate Superintendent  
Bob Read, Associate Superintendent

\* Sources: Iowa Performance Profile 2022; Iowa Department of Education (IA Public School Teacher Information Update 2022); Linn-Mar Comprehensive Annual Report 2022

## School Funding Policy

Provides students with the programs and services needed to be successful and support policies on public school funding that:

- Sufficiently supports the ability of local districts to meet parent and community expectations and provides a world class education to **ALL** students;
- Equalize per-pupil funding for all program areas;
- Equitably funds all Area Education Agencies (AEAs);
- Maintain the funding mechanism for transportation costs that reduces the pressure on the general fund and addresses inequities between school districts;
- Include factors based on changes in demographics, including socio-economic status, remedial programming, and enrollment challenges;
- Reflect actual costs for special education services;
- Support flexibility in the use of voter and board-approved special levy funds;
- Incorporate categorical funding in the formula within 3 years;
- Include a mix of state aid and property taxes; and
- Increase the budget guarantee to **103%** to provide additional stability to support student achievement for districts with declining enrollment.

**Advocacy Fact:** 80% of Linn-Mar's budget (general fund) is staff. If the district is underfunded it means fewer staff members, which means larger class sizes. Larger class sizes are shown in studies to lead to less individualized attention and more behavior and academic interventions. Underfunding also makes providing raises that meet the cost of living difficult, which puts a strain on teachers. Some may choose to leave the profession as the district cannot compete with the for-profit business world's rate of pay.

**WE ARE  LINN-MAR**

[www.LinnMar.k12.ia.us](http://www.LinnMar.k12.ia.us)

## Local Accountability and Decision Making

Supports providing local school boards with decision-making authority regarding methods to accomplish desired educational outcomes. The Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) opposes overly restrictive or inefficient limitations which inhibit innovation, efficiency, and the ability of school boards to meet local needs. Local accountability and decision-making includes:

- **Student Achievement:** As locally elected officials, school boards should have the ability to set priorities, customize programming, and maximize community strengths to improve outcomes for all students;
- **Accountability & Reporting:** Data collection for state accountability should enhance the ability of school boards to focus on student learning and school improvement. IASB supports streamlining state-level reporting on management operations and eliminating duplicative or inefficient reporting processes;
- **Funding Flexibility:** School boards should have the ability to maximize existing resources to meet local needs;
- **Transparency:** School boards should have flexibility to provide public access to records in ways that promote transparency for citizens while balancing the cost to taxpayers; and
- **Flexibility on Health & Safety Measures:** School boards should have the ability to make decisions, in partnership with local officials, regarding the health and safety needs of students, staff, families, and the community.

## Teacher Recruitment & Licensure

A highly skilled teacher workforce is essential to student achievement and can be supported by state policies that:

- Ensure high-quality teacher preparation programs, including alternative licensure programs for individuals with non-traditional or international education backgrounds;
- Provide research-based pedagogy training in addition to content knowledge in a curricular area;
- Encourage initiatives and programs that diversify Iowa's teaching profession to better match our student demographic makeup;
- Expand programs such as Teach Iowa Scholar, Teacher Intern Program, and others as approved by the Board of Educational Examiners;
- Create programs for student teaching grants and stipends and expand teacher apprenticeship programs to make education careers a more attractive and affordable option;
- Use the management fund to offer recruitment incentives to attract high-quality teachers; and
- Create reciprocity agreements with other states that have high-quality teacher preparation programs to increase diversity among certified teachers and administrators.