

STRONGER
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 WEAKER

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AREA 1: RESOURCES AND MEMBERSHIP
27TH

Compared with unions in other states, the membership and financial resources of Iowa’s state teacher union is in the middle of the pack. Approximately three out of four teachers in the Hawkeye State are union members (its membership rate of 73.3 percent is 30th out of 51 jurisdictions). From its members, the Iowa Education Association brings in \$496 annually per teacher in the state (26th of 51). And while 57.3 percent of total K-12 education spending in Iowa goes to teacher salaries and benefits (8th), just 17.4 percent of state expenditures go toward K-12 education (34th), giving teachers what amounts to a large slice of a small pie.

AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS²
TIED FOR 23RD

Teacher unions have been moderately active in Iowa state politics over the past decade.³ Their donations amounted to 0.59 percent of the total contributions to candidates for state office (25th) and 2.2 percent of donations received by state political parties (12th). Further, 16.6 percent of Iowa’s delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions were teacher union members (16th).⁴

AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING
32ND

While Iowa is one of thirty-two states that require collective bargaining, the state does not permit its unions to automatically collect agency fees from

non-member teachers, and it prohibits teacher strikes. Still, the state allows a broad scope of bargaining: Of twenty-one provisions examined in this metric, nine must be negotiated: wages, hours, grievance procedures, transfers/teacher reassignments, layoffs, evaluation processes and instruments, insurance benefits, fringe benefits, and leave. Only one item, pension/retirement benefits, is explicitly excluded from negotiations. Bargaining over the remaining eleven items is implicitly allowed because the state is silent on them.

AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 11TH

Iowa's education policies generally align with traditional teacher union interests. State law does not require that student achievement factor into teacher evaluations; does not support teacher performance pay; and grants tenure virtually automatically after three years. Further, charter schools are limited; although there's no cap on the number of such schools, Iowa does not allow new or virtual charters, only conversions of existing district schools. It also requires all charters to be approved by both a local school board and the state board of education—a more restrictive authorizing policy than in many other states. All charter school teachers must be certified and all charter schools must participate in district collective bargaining agreements.

AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE 31ST

Stakeholders report that the Iowa union has limited reach. Survey respondents rank its influence on education policy slightly behind that of the state school board and slightly ahead of the association of school administrators, the school board

association, and education advocacy organizations. But they note that state education leaders only sometimes align with teacher union priorities, and that unions often turn to compromise to see their preferred policies enacted. In addition, stakeholders report that policies proposed in the latest legislative session were mostly *not* in line with union priorities, while policies actually enacted were only *somewhat* in line.⁵

OVERALL 27TH

While Iowa teachers see a comparatively large share of overall spending on K-12 education going to teacher salary and benefits, their state union does not have a large degree of financial and membership resources itself. Even though unions contribute significant amounts to state political parties, and enjoy a favorable policy environment at the state level, stakeholders do not perceive the union as particularly influential.

The slide of Hawkeye students from well above the national average in reading and math in the early to mid-1990s down to average in 2011 garnered significant concern from state leaders.⁶ In July 2011, Republican governor Terry Branstad hosted the Iowa Education Summit, and Chris Bern, then president of the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA), was pleased with the results: “It was a good exchange of a lot of different ideas.”⁷ He was not so enthusiastic when Branstad presented the blueprint for his education reform bill, which included a progressive plan for compensation, increased tenure requirements, and a plan to decertify teachers on the basis of unsatisfactory evaluations.⁸

Discussion of the plan in the legislature quickly broke along party lines, with Republicans supporting the governor while Senate Democrats insisted on amending provisions related to student testing, the expansion of charter schools, and online education. The ISEA also pushed hard for such amendments.⁹ The reform bill that the Senate finally passed replaced the formal annual evaluations that Branstad sought with peer reviews two out of every three years, omitted a value-added assessment system, and reduced opportunities for online learning.¹⁰ “Unfortunately, I think the Senate bill is a much watered-down version,” lamented Branstad.¹¹ But the two chambers of the legislature passed the bill, which the governor signed in May 2012 (although not without taking one last swipe at the law, calling it “a first step” but affirming that “bold reform is still needed”).¹²

Turns out more than just Iowans were paying attention to the outcome. When the federal government issued a stack of NCLB waivers in June 2012, Iowa was conspicuously omitted. The state’s department of education and governor both pointed fingers at lawmakers, indicating that legislative (in)action was to blame. “Responsibility for the denial of this request lies squarely at the feet of the Iowa Legislature, which did too little to improve our schools despite repeated warnings,” said Branstad.¹³ Whether the legislature is to blame for its toothless reform bill or the union for pressuring lawmakers to remove the teeth, little help is in sight for Iowa’s still-sliding students.

IOWA RANKINGS BY AREA AND INDICATOR

OVERALL RANK: 27TH

Area and Rank ^a	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-Indicator Rank/Status ^b
AREA 1: RESOURCES & MEMBERSHIP 27	Membership	By rank, what percentage of public-school teachers in the state are union members?	30th
	Revenue	By rank, what is the total yearly revenue (per teacher in the state) of the state-level NEA and/or AFT affiliate(s)?	26th
	Spending on education	By rank, what percentage of state expenditures (of state general funds, state restricted funds, state bonds, and federal "pass-through" funds) is directed to K-12 education?	34th
		By rank, what is the total annual per-pupil expenditure (of funds from federal, state, and local sources) in the state?	21st
		By rank, what percentage of total annual per-pupil expenditures is directed to teacher salaries and benefits?	8th
AREA 2: INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS 23*	Contributions to candidates and political parties	By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state candidates was donated by teacher unions?	25th
		By rank, what percentage of the total contributions to state-level political parties was donated by teacher unions?	12th
	Industry influence	By rank, what percent of the contributions to state candidates from the ten highest-giving sectors was donated by teacher unions?	35th
	Status of delegates	By rank, what percentage of the state's delegates to the Democratic and Republican conventions were members of teacher unions?	16th
AREA 3: SCOPE OF BARGAINING 32	Legal scope of bargaining	What is the legal status of collective bargaining?	Mandatory
		By rank, how broad is the scope of collective bargaining?	4th*
	Automatic revenue streams	What is the unions' legal right to automatically collect agency fees from non-members and/or collect member dues via automatic payroll deductions?	Agency fees prohibited
	Right to strike	What is the legal status of teacher strikes?	Prohibited
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 11	Performance pay	Does the state support performance pay for teachers?	State does not support
	Retirement	By rank, what is the employer- versus employee-contribution rate to the teacher pension system?	29th
	Evaluations	What is the maximum potential consequence for veteran teachers who receive unsatisfactory evaluation(s)?	Teacher improvement plan
		Is classroom effectiveness included in teacher evaluations? If so, how is it weighted?	Not required
	Terms of employment	How long before a teacher earns tenure?	Three years
		Is student/teacher performance considered in tenure decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not included
		Is seniority considered in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Optional; Weighted at district discretion
		Is teacher performance included in teacher layoff decisions? If so, how is it weighted?	Not required
		By rank, what percentage of the teaching workforce was dismissed due to poor performance?	17th
Class size	Is class size restricted for grades 1-3? If so, is the restriction higher or lower than the national average (20)?	No restriction	

Area and Rank	General Indicator	Sub-Indicator	Sub-indicator Rank/Status
AREA 4: STATE POLICIES 11 (cont.)	Charter school structural limitations	Is there a cap (limit) placed on the number of charter schools that can operate in the state (or other jurisdiction) and/or on the number of students who can attend charter schools?	No state cap
		Does the state allow a variety of charter schools: start-ups, conversions, and virtual schools?	Conversions only
		How many charter authorizing options exist? How active are those authorizers?	Single option; No or limited activity
	Charter school exemptions	Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state laws and state/district regulations (except those that safeguard students and fiscal accountability)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	No; Schools can apply for exemptions
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from state teacher-certification requirements? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	No; Schools cannot apply for exemptions
		Are all charter schools automatically exempt from collective bargaining agreements (CBAs)? If not, are they eligible for exemptions?	No; No allowable exemptions
AREA 5: PERCEIVED INFLUENCE^c 31	Relative influence of teacher unions	How do you rank the influence of teacher unions on education policy compared with other influential entities?	Second-most influential
	Influence over campaigns	On a scale from always to never, how often do Democratic candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Sometimes
		On a scale from always to never, how often do Republican candidates need teacher-union support to get elected?	Rarely
	Influence over spending	To what extent, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, do you agree that even in times of cutbacks, teacher unions are effective in protecting dollars for education?	Disagree
		Given recent budgetary constraints, would you say that teacher unions generally make concessions to prevent reductions in pay and benefits or fight hard to prevent those reductions?	Generally fight
	Influence over policy	To what extent, from strongly agree to strongly disagree, do you agree that teacher unions ward off proposals in your state with which they disagree?	Neutral
		On a scale from always to never, how often do existing state education policies reflect teacher-union priorities?	Sometimes
		To what extent, from totally in line to not at all in line, were state education policies proposed by the governor during your state's latest legislative session in line with teacher-union priorities?	Not at all/Mostly not in line
		To what extent, from totally in line to not at all in line, were legislative outcomes of your state's latest legislative session in line with teacher-union priorities?	Somewhat in line
	Influence over key stakeholders	On a scale from always to never, how often have the priorities of state education leaders aligned with teacher-union positions in the past three years?	Sometimes/Often
		Would you say that teacher unions typically compromise with policymakers to ensure that their preferred policies are enacted, or typically need not make concessions?	Sometimes compromise, sometimes do not need to concede

* Tied with another state

^a Area ranks are calculated using a weighted average of sub-indicators. For a more detailed description, see Appendix A.

^b Where possible, we report a state's rank as compared to other states on a given metric. For example, out of 51 states, Iowa has the 30th-highest percentage of teachers who are union members. Otherwise, we report a status: Iowa has mandatory collective bargaining, and union agency fees are prohibited. For a more detailed description of our metrics and methodology, see Appendix A. To request the raw data for your state, send an email to uniondata@edexcellence.net.

^c For all survey questions, stakeholders were asked specifically about teacher unions, candidates, policies, and leaders in their state. In addition, we asked about unions and policies in the "current legislative session," but because legislative calendars vary from state to state, responses refer to policies proposed and enacted within the 2010-11 window.

ENDNOTES

¹ A state's overall rank is calculated as follows: First, we score it on multiple sub-indicators (sub-indicator data and scores for Iowa are shown in the table, *Iowa Rankings by Area and Indicator*). Second, we take a weighted average of the sub-indicators in each of five areas. In each area, we use that average to place the states in rank order. For example, in Area 1: Resources and Membership, Iowa is ranked 27th of 51 based on the weighted average of its sub-indicators. To generate the state's overall rank, we average the five area ranks together, then re-order the states. For a more detailed description of data sources and methodology, see Appendix A.

² Readers should note that these figures include only direct donations from unions and union-connected PACs, but not their spending on electioneering/advertising, mobilizing the union's own membership, lobbying, or advocacy. A recent *Wall Street Journal* report found that donations and lobbying activities account for a small share of union political spending compared with their expenditures on member mobilization and advocacy. Even the AFT agreed, making the argument that since its mission is organizing and activism, it will naturally spend significant amounts on these activities. Thus, the percentages we report here are extremely conservative representations of what unions actually spend on politics. For more information, see Appendix A, Area 2; Tom McGinty and Brody Mullins, "Political Spending by Unions Far Exceeds Direct Donations," *Wall Street Journal*, July 10, 2012; and Jeff Hauser, "Wall Street Journal Compares Union Political Spending to Corporate Donations," AFL-CIO, July 10, 2012.

³ In this metric, we include contributions from state unions and their local and national affiliates. While in most states the state-level union is the largest donor, in Iowa the AFT-national is a major contributor as well.

⁴ At the time of publication, the 2000 conventions were the most recent for which such detailed data were available in forms that met rigorous standards. However, 2008 data provided by the Democratic National Convention were highly correlated with the reliable figures from 2000.

⁵ We asked stakeholders about unions and policies in the "current legislative session," but because legislative calendars vary from state to state, responses refer to policies proposed and enacted within the 2010-11 window.

⁶ "State Profiles," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed July 20, 2012, <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>.

⁷ Steve Woodhouse, "ISEA's Bern Pleaded That Teachers Have Role In Education Reform," *Journal Express*, August 5, 2011, <http://journalexpress.net/local/x850291497/ISEAs-Bern-pleaded-that-teachers-have-role-in-education-reform>.

⁸ Jeff Ignatius, "No Poison Apple? Terry Branstad's Education Proposal Aims To Be Palatable To Varied Legislators And Interests. They're Open To Reform But Leery," *River Cities' Reader*, January 19, 2012, <http://www.rcreader.com/commentary/branstad-education-reform/>.

⁹ "Education Reform Talking Points," Iowa State Education Association, March 7, 2012, http://www.isea.org/assets/document/TP_ed_reform_bill-revised.pdf.

¹⁰ Jason Clayworth, "Iowa Senate Passed Education Reform; Hurdles Ahead," *Des Moines Register*, April 9, 2012, <http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2012/04/09/iowa-senate-passed-education-reform-hurdles-ahead/>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Jason Clayworth, "Branstad Signs Education Reform; Shakes Finger For Using 'One-Time Money,'" *Des Moines Register*, May 25, 2012, <http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2012/05/25/branstad-signs-education-reform-shakes-finger-for-using-one-time-money/>.

¹³ Mary Stegmeir, "Iowa Denied NCLB Waiver," *Des Moines Register*, June 21, 2012, <http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2012/06/21/iowa-denied-nclb-waiver/>.