*Sample Press Release*

**Iowa School Finance (ISFIS) Conference Anticipates Continued Budget Strife for Schools, including *Sample Community School District***

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *Sample Community School District* attended the Iowa School Finance Information Services annual conference on June 7, 2017, in Ankeny, IA. Legislative and school finance experts shared ideas about making the most of a tough budget situation for schools, including sessions on budget flexibility, tools to accurately forecast future resources, and best strategies to inform education stakeholders, including parents and the business community, about the impact of continued low levels of education funding from the state.

Larry Sigel, Partner at ISFIS and school finance guru, reviewed the last legislative session impact on school budgets in the first general session. “The ongoing costs of doing the business of school continue to grow at a rate that has outpaced state funding in seven of the last eight school years,” Sigel stated. “It’s even worse in districts with declining enrollment, which make up about two-thirds of the state.”

The *Sample Community School District*  has been impacted by this state funding track record. The 1.11% increase per pupil for the 2017-18 school year continues the trend of low school budget increases. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(name), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(title), who attended the conference, anticipates another tough year ahead, especially since the Legislature had to borrow funds from the State’s cash reserve fund to piece together this FY 2018 budget. They anticipate paying those back in FY 2019 which will take funds otherwise available for education or other state priorities. “Encourage your legislators to once again set the state cost per pupil early in the 2019 session, as they did this last year, so school leaders know what resources they will have to work with as they plan for the next school year,” Sigel said. It’s critical that parents and citizens express their priority of funding our public schools adequately to all legislators. Find contact information for your legislator’s contact information here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

“For our district, successful passage of SF 455, School Transportation and Formula Equality, could also provide needed resources for the educational program,” says  *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(pick a spokesperson - school superintendent, board president or business manager). “*It was good to hear of the progress that bill made this last year in the Senate. We will contact our House members to make sure it gets their support next year”, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(last name) stated.

Other information provided at the ISFIS conference will help schools continue to find ways to become more efficient, such as (pick one that’s appropriate) investing in early reading interventions that work, installing LED lighting, considering solar energy, understanding collective bargaining changes and accessing new flexibility of categorical funds, but with staff costs making up 80% of school budgets statewide, the majority of budget reduction has to come in the way of fewer staff.

“Unfortunately, our 2019-20 budget situation is going to be just as challenging as the current year, if the legislature does not reverse the low level funding trend AND find stable revenue sources that keep pace with Iowa’s growing economy,” said Sigel in his message to the school business officials, board members and superintendents in attendance.

School officials also heard details of the condition of state revenues, tax credits and deductions impacting the general fund, and growth predicted by the Revenue Estimating Conference which last met in March of 2017. Margaret Buckton, Partner at ISFIS and legislative advocate on behalf of the Rural School Advocates of Iowa and the Urban Education Network, said, “It is a matter of priority. As long as tax credits and tax cuts are on the table first before the needs of schools are considered, we expect this scenario to continue.”

“Although these times are very challenging for our school district, we will continue to put the needs of students first,” said*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (school district spokesman.)*“Fully recognizing that students need to be prepared to succeed in the 21st Century despite these challenges, we will count on the unwavering support and understanding of our staff, parents and community to keep providing a quality education for our students.”

**Contacts:**

District spokesperson(s), title, phone number

Larry Sigel, ISFIS Partner, (515) 490-9951 [larry@iowaschoolfinance.com](mailto:larry@iowaschoolfinance.com)

Margaret Buckton, ISFIS Partner, (515) 201-3755 [margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com](mailto:margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com)