



ABOVE: Elizabeth Bernal, who works for food service at City High, attends a meeting at the Center for Worker Justice of Eastern Iowa on February 4th. Bernal has been a proponent for immigrant rights, and advocated on behalf of Iowa City becoming a sanctuary city at a City Council meeting. PHOTO BY SOFIE LIE

National Teacher Shortage Brings Challenges to Iowa

State and local officials are looking for a solution for a shortage of willing and qualified teachers in a number of subjects.

By Rasmus Schlutter & Eden Knoop

John Bacon, the principal of Iowa City High School, flips through dozens of applications for a new teacher opening. Whether it be in English, chemistry, or calculus, the time and consideration that goes into his final selection is immense. For Bacon, the hiring process is at the core to his role at City High.

“When you have a truly great teacher, everything just snaps into place,” Bacon said. “Hiring is my most important duty. It is sacred to me, and being able to have a great pool of people to choose from is always going to make the process better for me and for all of City High.”

City High is in a rare position, with applicants exceeding available openings by significant margins. On average, there are over 80 applications for a new teaching position, a number that many school districts in Iowa would envy. Over the past six years, it has become increasingly difficult for many Iowa schools to find qualified teachers to fill open positions. Cultural shifts in attitudes toward teaching and cuts in state funding have contributed to this growing problem, but the issue is complex and constantly changing.

“There have been shortages of teachers almost as long as there have been schools,” said Larry Bice, an Administrative Consultant in Educator Preparation at the Iowa Department of Education. “There are a number of reasons [for the shortages], a major one being that education changes. We see new subject areas and populations growing quickly, requiring new schools and more teachers.”

The shortage in Iowa reflects a larger trend across the nation, one which experts have been warning about for years. However, City High and the Iowa City Community School District, or ICCSD, have remained mostly insulated from this emerging problem.

“[Iowa City] is such a desirable place to live and a destination school district so I don’t know if this has hit us as hard as some places,” Bacon said.

Continued on page A7

Iowa City Reaffirms Immigration Stance

By Lucy McGehee & Molly Liu

As the Trump Administration rolls out promised immigration regulations, the Iowa City community has reaffirmed and emphasized their own stance. The City Council has passed a resolution that clarifies the city’s current immigration policies, as requested by fearful members in the community.

“In light of public concerns, we are explicitly reaffirming that the focus of our law enforcement efforts will be on ensuring the safety of our residents and visitors, and that the city’s law enforcement resources will not be used for immigration enforcement except as necessary for public safety, or as otherwise required by state or federal law,” said Jim Throgmorton, Mayor of Iowa City, regarding the recent resolution.

The exceptions are highlighted explicitly in the resolution.

The ‘Sanctuary City’ issue traces back to the period after the presidential election, when groups of Iowa Citizens requested a discussion regarding the adoption of the title. The City Council voted to reject the label in January. The

“Iowa City is, and will continue to be, a safe and welcoming city for all of its residents and visitors.”

—Mayor Jim Throgmorton

term has come up many times following remarks by President Donald Trump. He threatened to pull federal funds from cities that have decided to label themselves as Sanctuary Cities as part of a heavily regulated immigration plan proposed during his campaign. Eleanor Dilkes, city attorney, does not believe that his remarks factored into Iowa City’s decision to reject the title.

“I think that if there is any follow through on those remarks by the Trump Administration, they won’t direct any legislation directed at a city that’s labeled a sanctuary city,” said Dilkes. “They will define what actual policies or laws at the city level will result in some kind of federal consequence.”

Though the term ‘Sanctuary City’ bears no

legal weight, cities such as Los Angeles and New York who have generally inclusive immigration policies have adopted the label. The council instead passed a resolution which ensured that Iowa City Police will leave immigration enforcement to federal forces, such as ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

“I think prior to the resolution and after the election when there was a lot of fear expressed to us by members of our community and in turn there was a number of city statements released about Iowa City continuing to be a welcoming community to all,” said Dilkes.

Historically, Iowa City has left immigration law to the federal government. By passing the resolution, the council sought to reaffirm this rule.

“Immigration enforcement and law is a federal matter, not a state or city matter,” Dilkes said. “The function of our police and other resources are to ensure safety.”

Elizabeth Bernal, a lunch lady at City High, spoke in favor of the label of a Sanctuary City at the January council meeting.

Continued on page A6

ICCSD Changes Approach to Inclusivity With Student Advisory Panel

By Addy Smith & Victor Kalil

The school district released a non-discriminatory statement and assembled a student advisory panel to promote diversity within the ICCSD.

With the increase of discriminatory rhetoric in the United States in the past several weeks, the ICCSD School Board has issued a non-discriminatory statement to ensure safe and accepting school environments.

“I believe our school is a kind, inclusive, supportive place,” Principal John Bacon said. “However, we can and we must continue to improve.”

In addition to releasing a non-discrimination statement to all of its schools, the ICCSD School Board has ordered for the assembly of a student advisory panel at each ICCSD school, from the elementary to secondary level.

“It is both an honor and responsibility to be selected into the group,” Ava Otoadese ‘18, a member of City High’s student panel, said. “I think the formation of the advisory board was an awesome idea, and we have a really great group of students who are committed to the cause.”

The Board’s first “assignment” for this new student-driven panel was to hold an assembly where the Board’s statement would be disseminated. Instead, the City High Administration made the executive decision to make a video to be shared during the advisory period.

“Our goal [when making this video] was to both remind students that harassment will not be accepted at City, and to give students the confidence to speak up if they witness discrimination or harassment,” Otoadese said.

After the election, the ICCSD School Board was prompted to reiterate this message of anti-bullying and harassment after receiving information from students and staff about students receiving hurtful comments regarding potential policies that the President-Elect had called for.

“The Board released the anti-discriminatory

“I think the formation of the advisory board was an awesome idea, and we have a really great group of students who are committed to the cause.”

—Ava Otoadese '18

statement after a Sudanese family had hate mail written on their car and door, and because of the subsequent events that occurred in response at West High,” City High’s student advisory panel’s faculty advisor and iJAG [position], Elizabeth Rook, said. “Because of the election, students are feeling like [they] ‘don’t know what to do, [they] don’t feel like [the School board has their] backs.’ This [initiative] is the School board saying, ‘We have your back.’”

Efforts to continue to promoting diversity and inclusiveness within the ICCSD have not just risen in response to the recent presidential election.

“ICCSD schools have been working on trying to become more equitable every year. It is an ongoing issue not just for our district but across the country,” School Board Vice President LaTasha DeLoach said. “I believe we need to infuse our discussions throughout our school year with a culturally responsive curriculum and discussion. We need to teach our children to not just notice that people are different but to actively engage with [different] cultures and people who are different.”

Although these efforts are not fresh, the presidential election has provided a renewed motivation for action and a desire to improve acceptance in our schools.

“With the recent election there has been a lot of backlash across the country. Many people seem to be less inhibited about expressing prejudices, and it is important to make sure that this stays as far away as possible from our school and district,” Otoadese ‘18 said. “We have a great school full of great students, and we need to remember that recent events cannot justify a deterioration of social decency.”

Continued on page A8

Iowa Senate Approves Meager Increase for Education Budget

By Lottie Gidal

In the midst of growing enrollment in the public school system, the Iowa Senate has debated how of the state budget should be allocated towards education.

On February 2nd the Iowa Senate approved a 1.11% increase in state funding for education, an amount around \$40 million. Senate Democrats, however, voiced strong concerns that this would not be sufficient for the coming years, citing growing enrollment and possibilities of laying off teachers, cutting supplies short and reducing course offerings. Governor Terry Branstad had called for a 2% increase instead, which some would have preferred as a form of bipartisan cooperation.

This clash of partisan ideas of how to best approach education has become especially heated after the 2016 election. November 8th left Republicans in control of Iowa state government, and many educators are concerned about the amount of money the state will be willing to provide to school districts.

“Providing adequate funding for education is just so huge, there are so many different things we can do to help teachers and administrators support students,” Ryan Ahlers, a special education teacher at City High, said. “If people feel supported they will be more excited about what they do on a daily basis.”

Once the state has actually allocated a certain amount for the schools, the districts can then use these appropriations to fund things like special education. Ahlers main job is to help students with individual education plans (IEPs).

“I work with kids who have behavior variables and try to help them become successful through providing structure, teaching them some classes but also mainly being there for behavior support,” Ahlers said. “A lot of special education teachers end up having to use an adaptive curriculum and so the budget obviously has to be able to support that.”

“We are struggling right now to support our public schools.”

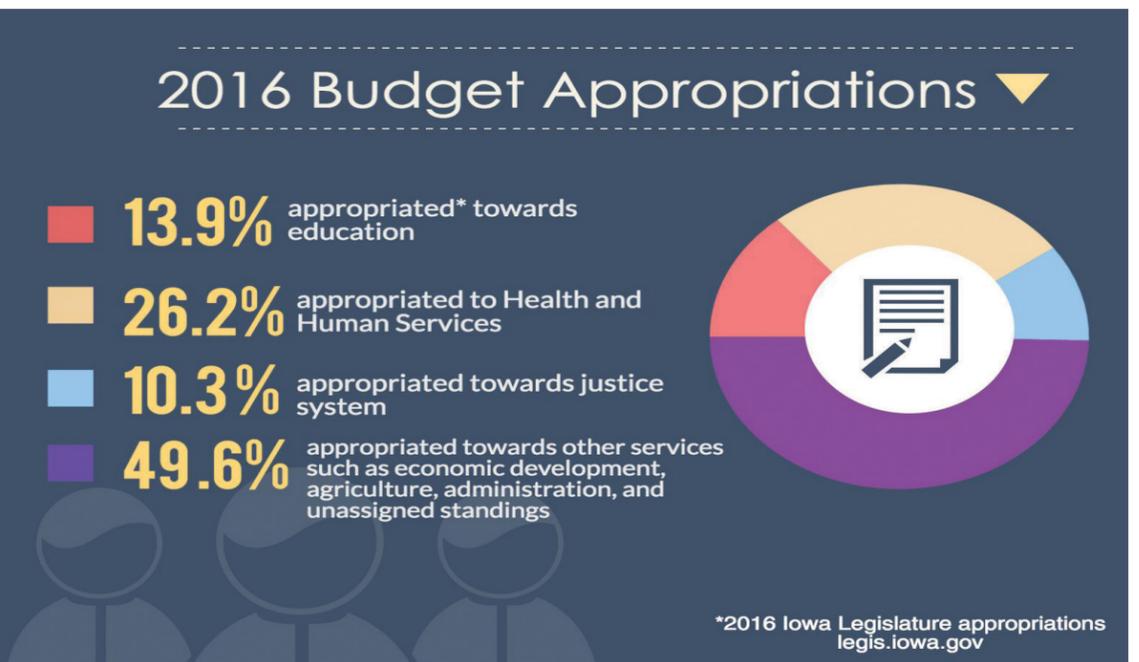
—State Representative Mary Mascher

According to a 2014 study by NCES (National Center for Education Statistics), 14% of students enrolled in public schools in Iowa have IEPs.

State budgets for education continue to remain lower than they were before the Great Recession. Even though the recession is over now, lawmakers are still hesitant to raise taxes again, even continuing to cut them.

“All the education funding that comes to City High and West is state appropriations,” State Senator Joe Bolkcom said. “The state sets the amount and we collect it through state taxes and through property taxes so we put the same amount of money behind every kid in the K-12 system.”

Being able to put an equal amount of money behind every student comes into debate when looking at the voucher system. Vouchers allow



parents to choose which school their child attends, with the money allocated to that student going to fund that particular school.

“Obviously we are struggling right now to be able to support our public schools,” State Representative Mary Mascher said. “If they put vouchers in place, that’s more money that will be shifted from public school students to private school students.”

Mascher herself spent over three decades as an elementary school teacher before shifting to government.

“Now I can still have an impact and certainly have a voice in the house in terms of what the agenda is and also fight the fight against things I believe are detrimental to our public school kids and giving a voice to them,” Mascher said.

Supporting students is not the only concern being discussed. Teachers are in the pay of the state, and their salaries are have a reputation of being low. As of the end of December 2016, the base annual salary of teachers in Iowa City was \$48.6 thousand. And nationally, the average earnings of workers with at least four years of college are over 50% higher than the average salaries of teachers.

“Most teachers do not go into education because you make a huge salary, because you don’t,” Robin Fields, the Vice President of the Iowa Education Association, said. “Teachers go into education because they care about the kids, because they want to make a difference.”

“You can make more money out of high school working for quick trip than you can as a public educator with ten years of experience,” Maureen Hill, building representative to the teachers union at City High, said. “Teaching is a fantastic job, but you are working so hard when you are on, it’s not an easy job, and you are very vulnerable. Parents can be upset, students can be upset, fellow teachers can be upset, administrators on every level can be upset. Without that protection of a union to back you up and support you... It’s having that negotiation and that power at your back to say this is my mistake and this is how I can get better.”

The gender wage gap has also become an issue throughout the past few months, and it’s something that Hill has on her mind.

“Collective bargaining, whether it’s for teachers

or not, as a woman in the workforce, I feel very strongly that I benefit tremendously,” Hill said. “I do not have the gender pay gap that I know many of my friends in the private sector deal with. I know that my salary is not going to be different than the man down the hall. And that’s incredible, and I don’t want to see that go away. We’re better as a group than we are as individuals.”

Having equal pay though, comes after the ability to receive good pay. Teacher’s depend on the ability to collectively bargain with the state.

“One of the things that the republicans are going to try and do is take away the ability of our local teachers to negotiate with the school board for wages and benefits,” Senator Bolkcom said. “If they are successful in doing that, it’s going to make it harder and harder to recruit teachers to go into the classroom.” In fact, enrollment of university students in teacher prep courses has significantly declined over the past few years, while enrollment in public education is expected to increase by at least 5% over the next 10 years.

In the end, despite being unable to vote, K-12 students themselves can have a voice in the decisions being made about their education.

“You may think that you are voiceless but you are future voters and I think all politicians and elected officials see you that way,” Representative Mascher said. “You have a great deal of power, whether you know it or not, in terms of working with other students across the state on issues that you all care about. Sometimes the most important thing you can do is give some of your time. I try to volunteer as much as I can for different groups that I feel are important to me and I encourage students to do the same.”

According to Bolkcom, change is not always immediate.

“At the end of the day this is not the hundred yard dash, you know it’s not even a 5k,” Senator Bolkcom said. “Being involved in the political life and the civic life is a lifetime endeavor, it’s a marathon. You go on and you win and you lose and when you lose you look inside and say what can we do better, how can we address the needs of people that think we are headed in the wrong direction.”

ABOVE: The Iowa Legislature has halted its increase in education spending in the past years. INFOGRAPHIC BY LUCY MCGEHEE

Immigration Stance *continued from A1*

She was motivated to speak her opinion in front of the City Council after sensing fear from fellow Hispanic members in the community after the election.

“The fear was all the time before [the election], too. But right now, after the election, the fear is more major,” Bernal said. “People started thinking, ‘okay now what do I do?’ They started freaking out. They don’t know what exactly will follow. I think the Wednesday after the election it was a bad day for everyone.”

Like Dilkes, Bernal believes the term ‘Sanctuary City’ carries different meanings.

“It means different things in different ways, depending on how you look at it,” Bernal said. “In a city, it’s taking care of other people who are in the dark. Sanctuary is being respectful to each other.”

Despite the council’s decision to reject the ‘sanctuary city’ label, Bernal is thankful that immigrant issues have been brought further into light.

“The city takes a position and lays it on the table. We are here. We live in this little town. [At the council meeting,] I said thank you for being here to put this on the table because we never have talked about it so now finally they touched on something we never had dreamed of, and something possible to see. I told them thank you for seeing me,” Bernal said.

However, not everyone was in favor of the discussion relating to inclusive immigration. ‘Priorities for Iowa’, a super PAC based out of Des Moines initiated robocalls in an effort to cultivate an opposition in Iowa City. The City Council received many phone

calls and emails in opposition, however a large proportion came from people that do not live in Iowa City.

“There was a whole range in comments,” said Dilkes, regarding the opposing messages. “Some were respectful and just said ‘I don’t think we should be a sanctuary city’, or ‘we shouldn’t adopt sanctuary city policies’. Others were more harsh, and some threatening.”

Opponents of sanctuary city policies voiced concerns regard-

“In a city, it’s taking care of other people who are in the dark. Sanctuary is being respectful to each other.”

—Elizabeth Bernal

ing their own safety. Through the most recent resolution, Throgmorton and the council sought to alleviate these concerns.

“One of the claims we’ve heard from opponents of this resolution is that we would be violating federal law, and the answer is, no we would not, because this resolution is skillfully crafted to account for existing laws and court decisions,” said Throgmorton. “Another claim is that we would be harboring dangerous criminals, and the answer is, no we would not. The claim presumes that undocumented residents are dangerous criminals

and there’s no evidence whatsoever that undocumented residents in Iowa City are dangerous.”

In addition to the concerns of the non-immigrant families, Bernal also recognizes the fears that the undocumented families may have regarding the recent debate on immigration policies. By putting faith in the local police force, she believes that everyone’s safety will be preserved.

“Some families are scared about it. They start thinking about moving or won’t say anything if they have any problems--they don’t want to call anybody. We try helping a lot of families to continue trusting the police. Whatever [the police] are doing right now in Iowa City, it’s okay. If everyone follows the rules, we are okay. I just think we need to be safe,” Bernal said.

Despite the ongoing fears, the council affirms that it will continue to protect its immigrant population.

“We do not know what specifically the new President will do in the form of future executive orders or what new legislation Congress might enact. We will just have to monitor their actions very carefully. I do know this: no federal law compels local police to participate in the enforcement of federal immigration law, and requiring the City to do so or conditioning federal funding on doing so would raise significant issues under the 10th Amendment and Spending Clause of the U. S. Constitution. There is no doubt whatsoever that one of the states (California, for instance) or perhaps one of the larger cities would challenge such orders or legislation in the courts. Being such a small city, we would be minor players in such cases,” said Throgmorton.