Four teachers (Alisa Meggitt, Latrenda Soukup, Robin Fields, and Anne Marie Kraus) and one parent went to the state Capitol to talk to legislators about Allowable Growth (AKA SSA, Supplemental State Aid) for 2015-16. We spoke with many Republican members of the House Education Committee, which is the source of the holdup in this process. Here are some main points spoken by the Republicans:

- The Republican leadership of the House Education Committee is telling the House Leadership to NOT allow school funding to be discussed on the calendar of debate items.
- Their main points are:
  - There is no money to do this (see below for the truth on the budget).
  - They cannot set school funding “outside the budget process,” meaning they won’t know what the revenues will be in 2015, so they don’t want to set it and then have to take it away.
  - They are trying to change the law (setting school funding 18 months in advance) to a two-year budget process instead, and then, after they get that, they will give us 4%.
- The truth about the state budget is that there is $1.3 billion in reserve, the highest reserves in the history of the state. The fiscal year will close with approximately $600 million in surplus, and the 6% allowable growth (set by the Senate) would cost $196.3 million.
- The truth about the two-year budget, which they say will be a better way to fund the budget:
  - During the second year of a two-year budget, schools will not know their next year’s budget until 6 months prior to the school year, which is too short a timeline to plan responsibly.
  - There is no logical reason why a two-year budget is any better than the current method. In the current method, Republicans say we won’t know what the revenues will be in 2015, but in the new “improved” two-year method, they also won’t know what the revenues will be two years out.
- The unspoken agenda for Republicans holding off on funding: They want to make a huge tax cut next year, and then there won’t be as much money for education. This is in addition to the big commercial property tax cut they already got for this year. Rep. Jorgensen, chair of the House Education Committee, says if we have a surplus, this is “overtaxing.”
- Supporters of Education, including the Democrats, are saying that all efforts at using logic, and the state law, are not effective. No one is expecting to get any additional school funding in this session. They’ve considered suing, because this is breaking state law, but the suing process would not be fast enough to effect change during this session.
- Despite this discouraging state of affairs, it is important that we continue to advocate for the needs of education. Like it or not, public school teachers are part of the political process. Teachers need to speak out for our profession. We cannot go down without a fight. Legislators claim that they “understand and support” the needs of education, but they don’t understand like we understand. We need to be visible and vocal. We need to keep reminding the legislators, and the general public, and telling our stories. We four ICEA lobbyists feel very good about what we did in Des Moines. We hope that more teachers will emerge from the already overly-stressed, overly-busy lives we lead, and go the extra mile to be politically involved.