FY26 Certified Annual Report Chart of Accounts Upload

Due Date

Iowa Code 291.10 requires school districts to file an annual secretary's report with the director of the department of education.

Iowa Code 256E.12 requires charter schools to file an annual report showing financial performance.

The due date for the CAR 2026 Upload and Reports (CAR) to be submitted through the Iowa Education Portal is September 15, 2026 for all school districts and Area Education Agencies (AEAs). Several reports are dependent on CAR data including the Special Education Supplement, Transportation Annual Report, EL Excess Costs, and Facilities, Elections, and Sales Tax Report applications.

Administrative officials and board members are responsible for submitting information and materials as requested by the department of education, department of management, and any other state or federal agency. Reports shall be filed electronically if an electronic format is available (281 IAC 99.2).

If any plan, report, or data collection has not been received by the due date of the form or by the due date of a valid extension granted by the department of education, the procedures below will be followed (281 IAC 99.2(3)).

a. The superintendent of the school district or the administrator of the area education agency, and the president of the applicable board, shall be notified of the unfiled report and the number of days it is past due.
b. The state board of education, the School Budget Review Committee (SBRC), or the Iowa board of educational examiners may be notified of the school districts or AEAs which were not timely in filing one or more reports.
c. The SBRC may implement the procedures described in 289 IAC 6.2(5).

SBRC Hearing Procedures 289 IAC 6.2(5) *Failure to appear or to provide information.*

If any school corporation fails to appear as required by the committee or fails to provide any information requested by the committee, including the reports described in paragraph 6.2(3)"e," the committee may direct the director of the department of management to withhold state foundation aid until the school corporation complies with the committee's request. When the school corporation satisfactorily complies with the committee request, the withheld state foundation aid will be released and paid to the school corporation with the next regularly scheduled payment of foundation aid.

Extensions

Extensions are available for good cause (281 IAC 99.3(1)). Good cause includes illness or death of a school district or AEA staff member involved in developing the program plan or submitting the report or data collection; acts of God; technological problems at the department lasting at least seven days within the final two weeks prior to the deadline that prevent access necessary for the plan, report, or data collection submission; or unforeseeable unusual or unique circumstances, which, in the opinion of the director of the department, constitute sufficient cause for allowing submission of program plans, reports, or data collections after the published due date. Good cause does not include consequences of local time management or administrative decisions or when districts and AEAs have timed out or have encountered system overloads within the final three days before the due date.

A school district or AEA requesting permission to submit a program plan, report, or data collection after the published due date will notify the department staff member responsible for receiving the plan, report, or data collection as soon as possible upon determining that the district or AEA will not be able to meet the deadline, but no sooner than two weeks prior to the due date and no later than two days prior to the due date. When an extension of the submission deadline is allowed, the department will establish a date by which the school district or AEA will submit the plan, report, or data collection. Permission to submit a program plan, report, or data collection after the published due date expires upon receipt of the submission by the department and does not carry over into subsequent application or reporting cycles (281 IAC 99.3(2)).

Basis of Reporting

- All districts and AEAs are required to report according to the definitions and classifications in the 2009 edition of *Uniform Financial Accounting for Iowa LEAs/AEAs (UFA* manual*)* in each and every fund. This publication is on the Department website and may be found on the Uniform Financial Accounting web page.
- Districts/AEAs are required by law to be in compliance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). This requirement applies to all parts on the CAR. All districts and AEAs shall use 60 days for the cut-off period for revenue recognition. The CAR is reported at the fund level prior to any adjusting entries necessary to complete the entity-wide statements for the audit.
- If there is any conflict between GAAP or the UFA manual and the instructions to the CAR, follow the CAR instructions.

Considerations Before Beginning the CAR

- Assemble all materials needed to complete the CAR.
- Reconcile the bank statement and accounting records.
- Ensure all funds are in balance.
- Make adjusting entries to close books on a GAAP basis, if the district or AEA operates day-to-day on a cash basis.
- Refer to the sample entries in the “UFA Journal Entries” document on the Uniform Financial Accounting web page for help with general journal entries related to long-term debt, nonpublic transportation, or Medicaid**.**
- Do not **“**close” fiscal year books until the CAR has been certified to the Department.
- No further changes on the reporting period’s accounting records.
- Changes to CAR data discovered after filing are reported as auditor’s upward or downward adjustments in the books for the following year unless the Department has granted a specific exception/extension for the district or AEA.

Materials Needed to Prepare a CAR

- Cumulative attendance records for summer session.
- Taxes levied for the next fiscal year (from final budget and taxes information).
- CAR year Aid and Levy Worksheet used to record income surtax receivable and deferred inflow, if applicable.
- Journal entries from fiscal agent to record district's share of Regional Planning Partnership and Perkins activity that wasn't a reimbursement of district expenditures.
- Reimbursement requests filed but not received for grants, tuition receivables.
- List of districts' resident students that are educated in the district (compare to billings to see if any are missing).

General Information

- Report actual numbers—do not estimate, allocate, or prorate.
- Use **60 days** for revenue recognition.
- Report all expenditures in the correct function and object for the activity performed—do not change the object (or function) just to make it work if it is not the correct function or object.
- Ask questions if you do not understand an edit or how an account should be coded.

Suggested Timeline Throughout the Year

- Check the validity of account codes and upload a file through the CAR – COA Test Records application found on the Iowa Education Portal. Districts should test new account codes as created. Successful progression through Stages 1 and 2 confirm the validity of the account code.
- This site does not roll into the current fiscal year's rules until spring.

July 1:

- Reconcile the bank statement and accounting records.
- Do general journal entries, if necessary, to ensure the beginning balances on local records are the same as the Department file on the website for your district or AEA. This is necessary if the district/AEA made changes to its books not required by the Department after the previous CAR was filed or if the district/AEA did not make changes to its books that were required by the Department during the CAR processing.
- Ensure all funds are in balance.

July 15:

- Enter all known accounts receivable and payable, as well as any other known accruals/adjustments, and deferred inflows and outflows. These entries should be made by the district/AEA, not its auditor. The CAR/local records may not match to the audit. CAR reporting requirements control the records rather than the audit. If adjustments are necessary for the audit, those are made within the audit rather than the CAR or district/AEA records.

August 15:

- Enter any delinquent taxes received with the August property tax payment.
- Review and adjust additional accruals/adjustments, and deferred inflows and outflows.
- Ensure all funds are still in balance.
- Use the "CAR - 2026 Upload and Reports" application as soon as it opens and use the testing application only for individual records testing. Work through edits, review the Special Education Supplement (SES) and Annual Transportation Report (ATR) and make any changes to the financial records prior to certifying the CAR. Certify no later than September 15, 2026.

September 1:

- Contact the Department for an extension if unable to file the CAR by the established deadline, due to good cause.

September 15:

- Last day to file the CAR unless an extension is granted.

Transmitting the CAR Upload

Location

Iowa Education Portal

Sign In

Sign in to the Iowa Education Portal by going to the dropdown menu at the "A&A Account" heading. Choose the Sign-In option and enter the Account Id and Password. Options are available on this screen if the Id or Password have been forgotten. In addition, a new user can create an account from this screen. District personnel assigned as the security person can give permission for the availability and use of the various data collections.

Application Menu Screen

Applications are available under the dropdown menu at the "EdInfo" heading (Finance Applications).

- Select the link for the **CAR 2026 Upload and Reports** to enter into the CAR Data Collection application.
- To leave the CAR Data Collection application and return to the home screen, select the Portal link at the top of the page.

Creating a CAR Upload File

Each district must create a year-end csv file from its accounting system. Be sure to create an annual file for the correct year. This file must include all funds except for Funds 01 and 02. Many software systems have a quick and easy procedure for creating the file. Contact the district's software vendor for instructions on how to create this file.

Certified Annual Report (CAR) Data Collection Screen – Home Screen/ Contact Information/ District Info Screens

- **Home Screen:** Upon logging in to the application for the first time, the first screen that appears is the "Home" screen listing any messages that are pertinent to the data collection. Click on the various tabs at the top of the screen to move through the application.
- **Contact Information:** This must be completed the first time the user is going through the process. This information will be retained by the program.
- **District Info:** Go to the "Upload File" tab, upload a file and then complete the information on the "District Info" screen the first time going through the process and click the "Save" button. If the district needs to change its answers a new file must be uploaded, then it can modify and save changes to the "District Info" screen before proceeding to the "Status" screen and going through the stages.

- **Questions on District Info Screen:** Answers must be submitted prior to moving through the Edit Stages.
    - The questions are mostly yes-no about the purchase of land and existing buildings, land and building improvements.
    - If the district had a refunding bond, you will be asked to enter the amount defeased, if any.
    - The district must report summer school attendance. Helpful information for counting students follows:
        - Count the summer session in the following fiscal year. For example, count the 2025 summer session on the FY2026 CAR.
        - This is a cumulative count of each student counted to the nearest half-day for the number of days attended. For example, a class has 20 students that meet for a half-day for 15 days. Assuming perfect attendance, the aggregate days present would be 150 (20 x 15 x .5).
        - Average Daily Attendance (ADA) and Average Daily Membership (ADM) are not calculated in summer session.
        - Count all summer school classes for which attendance is taken or credit is given.
        - Do not count park and recreation or child care/camp activities.
        - Do not count the driving time for driver's education students.
        - For regular session alternative education programs and kindergarten, use the student accounting guidance below.
            - ***Regularly scheduled classes.*** A pupil in a summer school program which is part of the total school program and which has a regular time during which the pupil is present under the guidance and instruction of teachers, is counted as present or absent measured to the next nearest half day. For example: a child who attends summer school for three hours per day is considered a half-day student while a student who attends school for five hours per day is considered a full-day student.
            - ***No regularly scheduled classes.*** A pupil in a summer school program which does not have a regular time during which the pupil is present under the guidance and instruction of teachers, is counted as present calculated as the count of the number of days present multiplied by that student's FTE or absent using the count of the number of days absent multiplied by that student's FTE. ***Full time equivalent (FTE)*** Full time equivalent means the proportion that the time for which a student is enrolled or receives instruction bears to the time that full-time pupils, carrying a normal course schedule, in the same school district, for the same school year are enrolled and receive instruction.
    - If the district used a Medicaid billing service.
    - The CPA firm that will audit this year's CAR.
    - The software vendor used for finance.
    - Once all questions are answered, click on the "**Save"** button below the questions.

CAR Upload File Screen

Use this page to upload the local CAR Chart of Account file information to the Department.

- Click the "Browse" button to search your computer to find the CAR file to be exported and click on the "Upload" button.

CAR Status Screen

- This page is used to complete different stages of edit checking on the upload file. Click through the four stages sequentially starting with Stage 1, allowing each stage to process before proceeding to the next. If the CAR file has any edit messages, changes should be made on the local records and a new CAR file should be created and uploaded again. An uploaded file cannot be edited online. The district must proceed through all the edit checks in each of the stages and have no edit messages to have a successful file. Some stages take a long time to process. Clicking on the stage button more than once while waiting for the stage to complete will force the file to go through the stage again and will increase the edit and warning count. Edits and warnings may be repeated on the screen also.

- Once Stage 1 has been successfully completed, it is possible to click the subsequent stages to view edit messages in Stages 2 through 4. Edits do not need to be corrected to move on to the next stage but will need to be corrected prior to certification. The only exception to this is Stage 1 edits that ensure amounts are numeric with no more than two decimal places. Those edits will need to be corrected prior to moving to Stage 2.
- Repeat the process outlined for Stage 1 until each of the remaining stages has been completed.
- Once all edits in all four stages have been corrected, a message will appear stating, "Your file has been uploaded successfully without edits."
- In addition to edit checks, warning messages may also appear. The warning messages may or may not result in a correction needed. Districts/AEAs should research the data applicable to the warning message and correct records if necessary. Districts/AEAs are required to comment on warnings that remain and are not applicable.
- Correct the records and upload again until all stages indicate "Complete" on the "**Status"** screen.

CAR Edits Screen (Stages 1 & 2, Stages 3 & 4)

- This screen lists the Edit Checks the upload was not able to pass. Stage 1 and Stage 2 edit checks which are attributable to a specific account code can be sorted by any dimension or edit description. Stages 1 & 2 Edits – Stage 1 will check for things such as negative numbers that should not be negative, invalid account codes, and header versus detail problems. Stage 2 does many comparisons between dimensions; function, project and object codes.
- Stages 3 & 4 Edits – Stage 3 checks for consistency between the questions answered on the District info screen and the upload, revenues and expenditures for the nutrition program, reporting of taxes, intrafund transfers, etc. Stage 4 has many reconciliation checks for funds and projects, checks the amounts recorded for state revenues and income surtaxes, etc.

CAR Warnings Screen

This screen lists Warning messages. Warning messages may or may not result in a correction needed and do not need to be cleared to certify the CAR. Districts/AEAs should research the warning to determine whether it is applicable to their district, and make changes to its records if necessary. Districts/AEAs are required to comment on warnings that are not applicable. To comment, click on the "**Edit Warning**" button, enter notes, and then select the "**Save**" button. A district/AEA will not be able to certify until a comment has been entered for each remaining warning listed. Stating that changes will be made in the subsequent fiscal year is not acceptable.

Reports Screen

- Reports may be accessed on the EdInsight application within the Portal.
- The static reports Include:
    - Balance Sheet by Fund
    - Budget Crosswalk
    - Expenditures by Fund, Facility, Function & Object
    - Miscellaneous Income and Actual Expenditures (GAAP basis)
    - Revenues by Fund, by Source
    - Transportation Report
    - Treasurer Report by Fund
    - Long-Term Assets and Long-Term Liabilities for Governmental Activities
- If the district/AEA is not satisfied with the accuracy of the static reports/queries, it may correct its records and upload the corrected file to go through the process again. This can be repeated as many times as necessary to obtain accurate static reports as long as the entire process is completed by the due date.
- Review the static reports carefully before certifying. Information from the CAR flows into the Special Education Supplement, Transportation Annual Report, Facilities, Elections, and Sales Tax Report and the LEP Allowable Costs applications. Changes to the CAR may not be made after certification.

Certification

- This is the final step in the CAR reporting process and must be completed no later than September 15th (or the Monday following the 15th if the 15th falls on the weekend) following the fiscal year. Again, see the Overview information at the top of these instructions related to withholding of state aid for late filing.
- The certification button will not appear until the following steps are completed: fill-in questions on the Status page have been answered, all stages of the upload are complete and edit free, and all warning edits include comments for the reason the warning is not applicable. **You must return to this screen and click the certify button when finished with the CAR. The Department recommends certifying in the following order: CAR, ATR, SES.** The date certified will appear at the top of the certification screen. Please save a copy of this screen and all reports for the district's records.

Final Steps

- Compare the current year's submission with similar data for the previous year. Large differences may indicate an error.
- Have an independent person review the CAR. This review should include comparing the entries to the original documents, determining that all funds handled by the district/AEA have been reported, and that all instructions and UFA regulations have been followed.
- The certification and certifying official's contact information for the CAR upload and CAR-web-based data collection is included on the Certification page. After entering the certifying official's information, click the "**Update"** button to save the information. Click the Certify button to officially certify the application. This is the final step in the CAR reporting process and must be completed no later than September 15 (or the Monday following the 15th if the 15th falls on the weekend) following the fiscal year end. Again, see the "Overview" information at the top of these instructions related to extensions for good cause.
- The date certified will appear at the top of the certification screen. Please print a copy of this screen and all reports for the district's records.
- Once the data have been certified, data can no longer be changed. Data will, however, still be browsable.

State and Federal Response

- LEAs/AEAs are responsible for timeliness and data quality and for responding to questions raised by Department of Education staff or the auditors. Personnel at the Iowa Department of Education perform edit procedures on each LEA's/AEA's Certified Annual Report to check for internal and longitudinal consistency. Questionable entries may be referred to the LEA/AEA for verification or correction.
- Federal and state law require the CAR to be audited. See Iowa Code (11.6(1)(a)(1). The CAR is audited during the annual audit of the LEA/AEA by an independent or state auditor. The auditor includes in the audit comments information regarding the accuracy and timeliness of the CAR filing.
- A printed copy of the final CAR should be retained permanently. The supporting worksheets should be retained for at least five years after approved audit.

Questions

Sheila Tharp, 515-205-0259, Sheila.Tharp@iowa.gov or Bobby Wilson, 515-210-9674, Bobby.Wilson@iowa.gov for help with uploads, reports, account codes, and journal entries. Kassandra Cline, 515-326-2242, kassandra cline@iowa.gov, for extension requests.