



Education Task Force Report

To the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission

August 2008



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Introduction

The tornadoes, storms and flooding of the 2008 disasters devastated entire communities, homes, schools, businesses, non-profit institutions and people's lives across the state. The Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission (RIAC) is charged by the Governor to guide the state's recovery and rebuilding efforts. The Education Task Force respectfully submits this report to be included and considered by the RIAC as it fulfills its obligations to the Governor and the state of Iowa. Availability of and access to educational programs and services for Iowans impacted by the disasters is a critical issue with immediate and longer-term recovery considerations.

Educational institutions are considered a cornerstone of Iowa's communities, with many Iowans – young and old – accessing and receiving educational services across the state. In the wake of the recent disasters, educational institutions, in coordination with community partners, have identified immediate needs for students and their families. Most significantly, issues facing Iowans displaced from their homes are compounded by concerns about where children will attend school, and how college students and adult learners may access financial supports because of additional burdens. Long-term planning must also be done to meet the demands of rebuilding and to allow communities to recover significant losses and continue to meet their financial responsibilities.

This report provides background information on the damages incurred in Iowa from the disasters and additional context for policy and rebuilding discussions. It offers initial review and priority-setting based on information available to date. It is meant to provide a foundation for developing next steps for recovery efforts that are safer, stronger, and smarter and includes recommendations to the RIAC for steps that might be taken to address these significant and important challenges.

In the aftermath of the severe weather and its widespread damages, Governor Chet Culver established the Rebuild Iowa Office to oversee the strategic recovery efforts in Iowa and to coordinate the efforts of state agencies as they address recovery issues. Executive Order Seven also established the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission to oversee the office and to provide 45-day and 120-day reports to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and General Assembly on the impacts, immediate recommendations, and long-term recovery vision for the state of Iowa. Also created in Executive Order Seven are nine Task Forces to provide information and recommendations to the RIAC. The Education Task Force, one of the nine created, worked to ensure the Commission is provided, at minimum, the information required in this Executive Order. The Education Task Force met in a day-long session on July 29, 2008 to identify, prioritize, and develop recommendations for how Iowa can best meet immediate and future needs for the educational system. This report is the product of the discussions, public inputs, information presented, and the expertise and experience of the Task Force.



Rebuild Iowa Education Task Force

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Task Force members were drawn from an all-volunteer pool of Iowans who expressed interest in serving the state. The response was overwhelming, with many more individuals volunteering than could be accommodated in the balance of a deliberative Task Force body. Rather than turn away volunteers who brought with them experience and expertise, each Task Force welcomed those volunteers to a Resource Group to participate in the meetings through offering presentations, specialized information, and additional inputs and ideas for rebuilding Iowa.

Rebuild Iowa Office staff supporting the work of the Education Task Force are Gary Schwartz, Emily Hajek, and Mary Jane Olney.

In support of the Rebuild Iowa effort, Task Force facilitation, staffing, and report development services were provided by State Public Policy Group (SPPG), Des Moines.



Executive Summary

The Rebuild Iowa Education Task Force is composed of Iowans with experience and expertise related to the impact of the tornadoes, storms, and floods of 2008 on the educational system in Iowa. The massive damage greatly impacted educational facilities and enrollment, resulting in thousands of displaced students and significant long-term rebuilding needs. In addition, the education system is a “community center,” and in many ways acts as a first responder to Iowans experiencing the disasters. It is important to also recognize this role and the need for “non-educational” (and often non-quantifiable) supports as a part of the overall recovery effort.

There are a few parts of the state that sustained significant structural and other damage as a result of the disasters. However, many school districts and educational institutions throughout the state experienced damage that resulted in re-allocating building usage, enrollment issues (because of housing and relocation issues in the community), or use of school facilities to assist in the recovery efforts (by housing displaced community agencies and providing temporary shelter for displaced Iowans).

At this time, damage estimates are only estimates and numbers are revised often. Estimates of damage are being developed by multiple agencies, including FEMA, the Iowa Department of Education, insurance companies, and schools themselves, since there are many different types of damage to be assessed and repaired. In addition to structural damage, educational institutions and communities are trying to find ways to quantify sometimes unquantifiable data, such as future revenue capabilities, population declines, and impact on mental health in the long-term. The data provided in this report is preliminary and as up to date as possible; information is updated on a regular basis as assessments continue and damage estimates are finalized.

Some of the information reviewed by the Education Task Force includes:

- Self-reported damage of \$62 million for the 73 public school districts impacted by the disasters.
- Self-reported damage of non-public schools in the amount of \$1.7 million.
- Area Education Agencies (AEAs) reported \$7.5 million in damage.
- Two of the most significantly impacted school districts have damages in the tens of millions of dollars – FEMA estimates that the Cedar Rapids School District sustained \$30 million in damages, the Parkersburg School District sustained \$12,750,000 in damages, and Waverly-Shell Rock High School sustained \$4,630,000 in damages. All of these numbers are part of an overall FEMA estimate of school district damage equaling more than \$53 million.
- Several early childhood and preschool providers have lost significant numbers of families due to relocation and sustained significant damages. Some home-based providers lost not only their homes



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but their businesses as well. DHS estimates that 2,500 children may have been affected through closed homes and centers, briefly closed homes and centers, or through relocation to another site.

- Ten universities and colleges are reporting damage in Iowa to FEMA. The University of Iowa has reported the highest damage estimate at \$231 million. Coe College also reported significant damages totaling \$1.6 million.
- There are 1,800 students displaced in the Cedar Rapids School District, and eleven other districts report anywhere from 10 to 260 displaced students each.
- College students are most immediately impacted by a lack of housing availability in some affected areas and a need for financial assistance following the disasters.

Three priority issues were identified by the task force:

- Access to education – related to displacement of students and impact of damage on accessing critical services such as transportation.
- Infrastructure planning and support – related to repairing damage and long-term emergency planning.
- Personal impact – related to the stress many students and families are experiencing as a result of the disasters, and the role that schools can play in responding to their needs.

Recommendations are presented for efforts related to the three priority issue areas. The recommendations are identified as meeting immediate or long-term recovery needs. Strategies to address each of the recommendations are listed in the full report.

Immediate Recommendations:

1. The state should provide immediate resources to address student enrollment and transition issues.
 - Area: Access to Education. The Rebuild Iowa Office and Iowa Department of Education will continue to play a critical role in connecting educational systems and communities with resources, and ensuring families have access to the same opportunities as before the disasters.
2. The state should implement funding and policy solutions to help school districts meet immediate needs in infrastructure and availability of educational services.
 - Area: Infrastructure Planning and Support. While there are significant long-term infrastructure issues and planning to be addressed by the state, there are flexible solutions that can be generated to assist in the immediate future as educational institutions and communities find ways to best meet the needs of their citizens.



3. The state should implement a statewide public education and outreach campaign.
 - Area: All. Communication is critical to a successful long-term recovery effort and to empowering Iowans to embrace a vision of a safer, stronger, and smarter Iowa. The state should ensure clear and transparent communication with the public regarding availability and types of assistance, as well as the vision and priorities of the Rebuild Iowa Office.
4. The state should ensure mental health services are available to children and adults affected by the disasters.
 - Area: Personal Impact. Educational institutions are sometimes the only community organizations or entities that families interact with on a regular basis. Schools and AEAs will continue to be challenged with issues related to mental health during the recovery process. There are strategies that can be undertaken now to assist in identifying mental health issues early and directing Iowans to the appropriate resources.

Long-Term Recommendations:

1. The state should encourage emergency planning for all educational services and facilities.
 - Area: Infrastructure Planning and Support. Organizations should undertake disaster preparedness and hazard mitigation activities now to help prevent some disaster-related issues that arose in 2008. The state may also play a role in creating some consistent expectations for educational facility preparedness.
2. The state should monitor and address long-term financial impacts of the disasters on educational institutions.
 - Area: Access to Education; Infrastructure Planning and Support. Many Iowa communities are currently faced with huge financial burdens without avenues to increase revenue to meet their obligations. Or, even if provided the opportunity to seek additional funds (such as the process for school districts and AEAs to request supplemental aid or increased allowable growth from the School Budget Review Committee), the funding is not available immediately and there is a gap in getting funds to address immediate needs. Compounding this issue is the loss of property tax revenues as a result of lost businesses and residential homes.
3. The state should ensure public libraries have adequate capacity to maintain public access to the Internet and other library resources.
 - Area: Access to Education; Personal Impact. For some Iowans and in some communities, libraries provide the only access to Internet services. The importance of this access should not be

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underestimated – it may provide the best connection to information and updates during disasters. Some libraries in Iowa are currently experiencing difficulty with Internet access and those needs should be addressed immediately. Options should also be explored that would prevent future lapses in Internet availability.



Damages and Impact in Education

Iowa is proud of its educational system, and for good reason. According to the Iowa Department of Education's 2007 Condition of Education Report, the graduation rate for Iowa's students is over 90% and Iowa's ACT scores rank second highest in the nation. The state boasts a strong community college system, three highly regarded universities, and many distinguished private colleges. The massive damage experienced by Iowa communities as a result of the tornadoes, storms, and floods of 2008 greatly impacted educational facilities and enrollment, resulting in thousands of displaced students and significant long-term rebuilding needs.

Of course, rebuilding does not always mean building something the way it was before. Task Force members identified considerations for rebuilding "safer, stronger, and smarter." Rebuilding efforts should consider current and future needs for the infrastructure, as well as practical implications such as energy-saving and green building options. The state can provide leadership by encouraging educational institutions to assess future needs and sustainable planning for infrastructure rebuilding efforts.

As with most of the Rebuild Iowa Task Forces, many of the issues identified by the Education Task Force are interconnected and have multiple impacts for Iowa's students and families. The education system is a "community center," and in many ways acts as a first responder to Iowans experiencing the disasters. Although some individuals may not access formal systems of support or recovery assistance, children and college students attend school and will continue to participate in educational activities and services throughout the recovery period. Therefore, Task Force and Resource Group Members highlighted the importance of the "non-educational" (and often non-quantifiable) supports for students and families that must be recognized as essential components of the overall recovery effort.

The Meaning of Data

The Education Task Force heard from a number of Iowa education experts about estimated damages and impacts from the recent disasters. Damage estimates are just that—estimates. In some cases, damage data change on a daily basis as additional information is collected or adjusted to reflect new information. For this reason, this Damage and Impacts in Education section will provide the source of the information and the context through which the reader may better understand the data. The data outlined in this section are best estimates of the impact to date and although there may not be a finalized number for damages for some time, the Task Force recognizes the importance of ongoing data collection and analysis for assessment of immediate and long-term implications.

Impact on Facilities

Obviously, there are a few parts of the state that sustained significant structural and other damage as a result of the disasters. However, many school districts and educational institutions throughout the state experienced damage that resulted in re-allocating building usage, enrollment issues (because of housing

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and re-location issues in the community), or use of school facilities to assist in the recovery efforts (by housing displaced community agencies and providing temporary shelter for displaced lowans). Damage estimates are being developed by multiple agencies, including FEMA, insurance companies, and schools themselves, since there are many different types of damage to be assessed and repaired.

According to a survey of all school districts conducted by the Iowa Department of Education and Homeland Security, 73 local public school districts self-reported that they were affected by the disasters. In addition, according to the survey, six facilities and two systems of non-public schools were impacted and two Area Education Agencies (AEAs) were affected. Local public school districts reported a total of \$62 million in damages; non-public schools reported \$1.7 million; AEAs reported \$7.5 million; and community colleges reported \$2 million in damages.

Of 73 districts reporting damages to Iowa Department of Education, only 33 have contacted FEMA for assistance. According to the Department of Education, the reason for the limited number reporting to FEMA is that many of the districts were able to access insurance coverage for damages and therefore did not request assistance from FEMA. FEMA has finalized 23 damage reports from public school districts totaling \$53 million in damages. The Cedar Rapids School District is included in that estimate, and sustained an estimated \$30 million in damages. The Parkersburg School District has also received a finalized damage report from FEMA totaling \$12,750,000, and FEMA estimates Waverly-Shell Rock High School damage at \$4,630,000 (all part of the overall \$53 million in estimated damages by FEMA).

In response to the disaster impacts on school districts and community colleges, the Iowa Department of Education developed a disaster recovery team comprised of representatives from the School Budget Review Committee, finance, buildings and infrastructure, school nutrition programs, USDA commodity foods and food programs, legal, and transportation and busing. The Department posted a web page devoted to 2008 disaster recovery with information about contacting the disaster recovery team, recovery assistance programs available, and guidance for districts regarding issues related to displaced students.

According to a survey conducted by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS), as many as 26 child care centers or licensed preschools or Head Starts, and as many as 87 registered child care homes, report they had some to total damage. DHS estimates that 2,500 children may have been affected through closed homes and centers, or through relocation to another site. Three early childhood educational sites – HACAP-Cedar Rapids Head Start, Harrison Elementary School in Cedar Rapids, and Taylor Elementary School in Cedar Rapids – were severely impacted by the disasters because of the loss of some of the 4 year-old state preschool grant program classrooms. The classrooms have been relocated for fall classes, and the Iowa Department of Education is allowing a late count of students (since the count impacts funding for the following year). The majority (85%) of Taylor school families and 65% of Harrison school families are displaced. Early childhood providers are also facing a loss of funding support from community



businesses that were part of non-state grant program preschool partnerships. In addition, according to the Iowa Department of Human Services, some 2008-2009 school year preschool slots are being relocated from damaged sites.

Ten universities and colleges are reporting damage in Iowa to FEMA. To date, six of them (The University of Iowa, Coe College, Southwestern Community College, Kirkwood Community College, Iowa State University, and Northern Iowa Area Community College) have reported more than \$228 million in damages – most of which is due to The University of Iowa damages.

Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids was forced to close their campus for over a week. The college also housed over 500 National Guard, police, and nurses who assisted with flood response efforts. Additionally, Mount Mercy opened its classrooms to local businesses for temporary relocation. Wartburg College is also playing a significant role in recovery efforts by conducting volunteer coordination for both the city and county, and by offering temporary housing to flood victims.

The University of Iowa sustained the most damage with twenty buildings and utilities impacted. Action was quickly taken to address the needs of students, staff, faculty, parents, and others. The University staff had to immediately meet needs and worked to ensure that fall classes would begin on time, students would have access to the courses they needed, and that the financial needs of students were met. According to a representative from The University of Iowa, the successful response by the University should be praised, and significant consideration should be given to the long-term recovery and planning implications for the University and the community as a result of the massive damage sustained.

Iowa State University's outlying teaching, research and demonstration farms incurred significant damage to buildings and crops, as well as some livestock being injured. It is too early to determine how these damages will be covered – either through FEMA, insurance, or other farm assistance programs. Although the University of Northern Iowa closed for one day, it did not sustain material flood damage. University of Northern Iowa buildings served as a location for evacuees and disaster workers.

The Regents universities were involved in flood recovery efforts in their communities by providing counseling services, farm assistance, business assistance, and housing of displaced businesses and residents. ISU Extension, for example, has led emergency crop meetings to assess damage, is working to identify businesses affected by flooding, is facilitating flood recovery strategies for communities, and is providing emergency child care for flood victims.

The universities are also playing a key role in supporting small businesses as they assess and recover from the disasters. In Parkersburg, UNI Business and Community Services estimates more than 1,200 small businesses in rural communities have been adversely affected by the tornado and subsequent flooding. UNI's Regional Business Center (Small Business Development Center) is assisting businesses



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with assessment and rebuilding through community meetings throughout northeast Iowa. UNI has used a variety of other avenues to connect with businesses, including MyEntreNet's listserv, webinars—an interactive forum with experts, and outreach activities. In addition, the UNI's Institute for Decision Making has extended significant resources to recovery and reconstruction efforts in Parkersburg and Butler County with plans to extend resource support to nearby impacted communities and counties as well.

As rebuilding gets underway, major barriers have been identified because of limitations of contractors to meet the capacity and timely needs for reconstruction. In addition, some facilities are located within floodplains and must consider relocation. Many schools did not purchase federal flood insurance, or had limited insurance coverage for the type of damage sustained, and they are therefore working with FEMA to assess and repair damage. As was mentioned previously, the Task Force emphasized rebuilding safer, stronger, and smarter than before, and identified a need to support school districts and educational institutions pursuing improvements and updates to reconstruct buildings.

Impact on Students and Families

The Department of Education is working closely with school districts to identify and respond to displaced students and their families. There are 1,800 displaced students in Cedar Rapids alone, with another 11 districts reporting anywhere from 10 to 260 displaced students each. Transitioning displaced students between and among Iowa school districts proves challenging. Despite school districts' attempts to minimize disruption, some transitioning of students is necessary. Many issues complicate the transitions, including rules regarding transportation of students between districts, rules limiting the amount of time allowed for bus trips, and sports eligibility in different districts. The Department has made available waivers for sports eligibility, transportation, and cross-district transfers for displaced students. Districts have been informed of this availability, and the Department continues to provide updates to districts through communications such as the School Leader Update to ensure they are utilizing the resources available from the Department. In addition, school districts will include displaced students in their October enrollment reports to the Department.

College students are most immediately impacted by a lack of housing availability in some affected areas and a need for financial assistance. The Iowa College Student Aid Commission is collecting data on four indicators of change: number of college applications, number of college registrations, number of financial aid applications, and financial aid awards. Comparisons of these numbers will be made to the same numbers from the previous year, and the information will assist in determining the overall impact of the disasters on both college enrollment and financial aid. Financial aid packages for students may need to be adjusted to reflect changing needs.



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In addition, many child care providers lost their businesses when they lost their homes; others are impacted by children temporarily relocating or moving to different parts of the state; and some lost staff due to the disasters.



Issues in Education

The disaster events of 2008 have had an unprecedented impact on education systems in rural and urban areas across the state as demonstrated by the damage estimates and information provided. The issues created by the severe damages are both personal to individuals and families, and systemic as communities, counties and the state work to ensure that the same, if not greater opportunities are made available to all students—early-childhood through higher education—following the disaster events of 2008. The Education Task Force is focusing on these personal and systemic issues that affect education in terms of access, infrastructure and support, and the health and well-being of students and their families. Further, the Education Task Force desires to provide education institutions and facilities with the tools needed for informed decision making and planning. Emphasis has been placed on creating flexibility in funding for rebuilding efforts, creating policies that address immediate needs without creating barriers for long-term planning and maximize opportunities for sharing of resources.

Eighty-five counties in Iowa have been declared Presidential Disaster Areas as of August 13, 2008. The severity of damages to education facilities in the state are record setting. Schools in the districts of Aplington-Parkersburg, Cedar Rapids, and Waverly-Shell Rock have experienced severe or total losses to school facilities. The University of Iowa alone has reported 20 major buildings damaged. Across the state, Iowans have pledged to rebuild, and rebuild in better ways. Iowan's pride in their communities and drive to achieve has yielded many opportunities as a product of these adverse circumstances. In like fashion, the Education Task Force has sought recommendations that will leave our state's students and families safer, stronger, and smarter. In these recommendations to address immediate, transitional, and long-term education needs, precedents should also be set to ensure effective recovery from future disasters impacting our comprehensive education system across the state. It will be important for the state to implement practical recommendations and guidelines that maximize opportunities for students while at the same time, respect Iowans' priority of local control.

The Context

Many of the educational issues created by the disaster events overlap with other individual and systemic issues. In some communities the school district is a primary employer and is also one of the largest components of that community's identity. Decisions on the future of a school district also critically impact additional issues in the community such as employment, housing, floodplain management, and economic development. There is an urgency to address issues impacting education so additional cascading issues impacted by the education system can also be addressed.

Further, many Iowans have experienced loss of businesses, jobs, as well as homes and even loved ones. As Iowans face uncertainty in nearly every aspect of their daily lives, there is an extreme need to create normalcy and routine which can be provided by schools, area education agencies, early education facilities, colleges, universities, and in additional facilities such as local libraries and afterschool programs.



Much must be done to create flexibility in funding, policies, and sharing of resources to ensure our state's education facilities and programs are prepared for the start of the new school year and the additional stress the disasters will place on our state's education system.

Priority Issues

Our state's education system has a tremendous span serving the needs of early childhood students to adult learners. All components in the education system play a critical role in preparing our state's students for success and must be addressed in the Task Force's recommendations. The needs of early childhood facilities, K-12 public and non-public school districts, area education agencies, public libraries, educational lending entities, community colleges, private colleges and universities, Regents institutions and for-profit institutions all serve critical needs. The state has a leadership role in establishing statewide priorities and direction across the education system as a whole as recommendations are made to enhance our state's educational opportunities.

The Education Task Force has categorized issues under the following three broad issue areas:

- Access to education
- Infrastructure planning and support
- Personal impacts

Access to Education

An immediate priority of the Education Task Force is to ensure that the same, if not greater, access to educational opportunities exist for all students, pre-K through adult learners following the disasters of 2008. The Task Force has made the commitment that every impacted student will have access to education. Access may not be available to a student's school of first choice, however access will exist. During this transition time, it will be critical to manage the expectations and promises made to the public. For those displaced from their homes and forced to move to a different school district or attend a different educational institution, immediate enrollment issues must also be addressed. Enrollment and transition issues such as school district funding, eligibility for school sports and activities, transportation, and other needs must be addressed.

Many immediate and challenging issues related to displaced students have been resolved by the Iowa Department of Education. The Department reports that open enrollment waivers have been made available for parents and students, and waivers for sports eligibility and transportation issues have been made available to districts. There is a need, however, for ongoing monitoring of these needs and continual assessment of future impacts of displaced students transitioning into and out of different school districts.



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With no doubt, sharing of physical and financial resources will be required between school districts to serve students. Task Force members indicated that the Iowa Mutual Aid Compact may provide some guidance and opportunities for schools to pool resources during times of emergencies. Guidance will also be needed to ensure student records are accurately and efficiently transferred between districts.

Varying opinions exist on the impact that the disasters will have on the number of students enrolled at higher education institutions. However, many traditional and adult learners seeking to enroll in postsecondary education may be negatively impacted by their increased need for financial aid and loans due to the economic impact of natural disasters on them and their families. The ability to qualify for and receive aid or loans in excess of projected demand calculated prior to recent natural disasters may make the difference in decisions on whether or not to continue in postsecondary education for some. The ability of students to receive such aid, and of graduates to repay prior education obligations, should be monitored closely.

Access to public libraries is also an important issue to communities that are rebuilding. The library provides public access to the Internet and other important resources that are critical to individuals, families and businesses working to rebuild. It will be important to ensure that public libraries are provided adequate resources as temporary locations are utilized and reconstruction projects begin.

Infrastructure Planning and Support

FEMA reports that 73 public school districts, six non-public facilities, two Area Education Agencies, seven libraries, five community colleges and six private colleges and universities reported structural damages to their facilities. An immediate issue to address is the physical infrastructure rebuilding and funding of these projects. Flexibility in funding mechanisms may be required to ensure that state and local matches are met for FEMA construction projects. Further, preliminary damage estimates for facilities across the education system indicate that FEMA and insurance coverage will not adequately cover the cost of repair or replacement. Many organizations in Iowa's educational system lacked an understanding of how the national flood insurance program works. Better education is needed regarding flood insurance, FEMA support, and other funding supports so schools and educational organizations are able to make informed planning decisions.

The capacity of child care facilities has been severely impaired by the damage of multiple structures. Early childhood education providers will be in need of additional resources as the system works to absorb displaced children and alternative and new facilities are created.

An additional rebuilding issue the Task Force identified includes the limitations created by current construction bidding and procurement policies. In times of disasters, other states have implemented alternative project procurement and construction bidding procedures to expedite the rebuilding process.



The current design, bid, build procedure may prolong some of the rebuilding projects throughout the state. Furthermore, the Task Force identified the lack of uniform, statewide educational facility programming, planning and design standards establishing minimum guidelines for the design and construction of school buildings and educational facilities. Though FEMA itself does not maintain such guidelines, in the event of a natural disaster FEMA recognizes State and/or Local Education Authority adopted standards, which are utilized when assessing the extent of damage to buildings for determining the value of repair or replacement. This is critical to establishing the amount of federal disaster aid to be provided by FEMA and reducing the financial burden on the state and local communities.

Task Force members also recognized the need for statewide disaster mitigation planning for educational institutions and school districts. Currently disaster mitigation plans are not mandated for educational institutions and school districts, nor have general mitigation guidelines been established. Local, state and federal resources, such as Local Emergency Management Agencies and Councils of Government exist to assist organizations in developing hazard mitigation plans; however there is a lack of outreach and education to ensure that these technical assistance resources are utilized.

A longer-term issue that needs additional consideration is the impact that changes in property tax revenues will have on school districts. Many communities impacted by the disasters are forced to make critical decisions on whether to rebuild homes and businesses or relocate to new communities. These critical decisions will have a large impact on property tax revenues vital for the sustainability of schools. This issue will need to be closely monitored as the fabric of communities transforms.

Personal Impacts

Caring for the health and well-being of Iowa's students and families is a priority of the Education Task Force. Although educational needs are critical, individuals and families impacted by the disasters are also coping with other basic needs such as housing, employment, financial resources, healthcare and more. It is imperative that our education system is prepared to accommodate students who are dealing with excessive stress in their home lives. Kindergarten through grade 12 schools will need adequate resources to provide mental health and other wrap-around services to impacted children. In addition, institutions serving adult learners will also need adequate resources to address the mental health and other cascading impacts adult learners are facing. There will be a need for mental health providers at school facilities to communicate well and work closely with other service providers in the community.

The disasters have also created unique circumstance for college students, international students, and students with special needs. For example, many college students who were displaced lack renter's insurance and will be unable to recover the cost of replacement for their personal belongings. Further, some students, including many international students, were living on campus during the disasters and have been displaced for several weeks. Students with disabilities and special needs may also need assistance



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as they access temporary and alternative facility locations. Special considerations may be necessary to ensure the needs of students in unique circumstances are adequately addressed.



Gaps in Education

For the state to undertake initiatives and establish policies toward solving the educational needs created by the tornadoes, storms, and floods, identification of the gaps is necessary. While the needs are acute in many areas of the state, few wish to duplicate or launch new initiatives without clearly understanding the significance of the void they will fill.

Two significant and immediate gaps were easily identified by the Education Task Force – gaps in timeliness of financial assistance, and gaps in funding for some types of repairs. As outlined in the damages and impact section of this report, FEMA is traveling throughout the state conducting damage assessments and updating damage estimates on a regular basis. However, there is an incredible sense of urgency for repairs and rebuilding. School districts are eligible for FEMA's Public Assistance Program. The time period between application and receipt of funds is currently about two months for non-emergency, permanent work assistance. The gap in time between when repairs need to be done and when funding is actually received from FEMA or other sources is a critical concern.

FEMA's Public Assistance Program requires 10% state and 15% local match for permanent work (emergency work is a 90% federal, 10% state match), and the local match will be difficult for many communities to provide. For facilities in floodplains that are uninsured, FEMA estimates what insurance would cover for the damage and subtracts that amount from the assistance it gives to the entity. Uninsured facilities in floodplains receive a \$500,000 deduction for structural damage and a \$500,000 deduction for content damage.

Additionally, rebuilding at the same quality and capacity as before is sometimes not practical. The Task Force noted the need to fill the gap between replacing what previously existed and purposefully planning a long-term and sustainable rebuilding effort.

A major gap presented by the data is the minimal number of school districts contacting FEMA for assistance despite many of them reporting damage to the Iowa Department of Education. Of the 73 districts reporting damage, only 33 have contacted FEMA for damage assessments. According to the Iowa Department of Education, many of these school districts did not contact FEMA because damages were covered by insurance or another program. It is important to note the need to continue to communicate with school districts and educational institutions about the options available and to encourage seeking support and assistance if needed.

The Task Force discussed the potential for gaps in housing and financial aid for college students in affected areas. Although there is no current data showing gaps in these areas, the Task Force would like to recognize the potential gaps that may arise and recommend continued monitoring of these issues for affected college students.

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Public libraries were discussed by this Task Force because they exist as the hub for accessing information in many communities. Some libraries in affected areas remain without access to the Internet and are facing difficulties getting funding for relocation costs. Most immediately and for future planning, public libraries should be able to provide access to critical information for the citizens in their communities, and their value to communities should not be overlooked.



Education Recommendations

The recommendations brought forward for consideration by the Rebuild Iowa Advisory Commission address the three priority issues discussed in previous sections of this report. As called for in Executive Order Seven, the Task Force gathered information on damage to Iowa's educational system to the best of its ability, considered models and best practices, and identified issues and gaps that command attention. The recommendations reflect those initial findings based on information available and the consensus deliberations of the Task Force.

Recommendations are presented for efforts in access to education; infrastructure planning, support, and funding; and personal impact. Each recommendation includes a brief narrative explanation and rationale, as well as strategies proposed that may be effective in implementing the recommendation. The recommendations are identified as meeting immediate or long-term recovery needs.

Immediate Recommendations:

1. The state should provide immediate resources to address student enrollment and transition issues.
 - Area: Access to Education. The Rebuild Iowa Office and Department of Education will continue to play a critical role in connecting educational systems and communities with resources, and ensuring families have access to the same opportunities as before the disasters.
 - Suggested strategies:
 - The state should continue to conduct outreach to affected districts to help schools connect with resources and to provide technical assistance.
 - Adjust financial aid packages for affected college students as needed and monitor the need for such adjustments.
 - Ensure availability of 4-year old preschool funding to meet needs.
2. The state should implement funding and policy solutions to help all educational institutions meet immediate and unmet needs in infrastructure and availability of educational services.
 - Area: Infrastructure Planning and Support. While there are significant long-term infrastructure issues and planning to be addressed by the state, there are flexible solutions that can be generated to assist in the immediate future as educational institutions and communities find ways to best meet the needs of their citizens.
 - Suggested strategies:

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- Allow for and develop provisions for alternative project procurement and construction upon declaration of disaster for reconstruction projects due to damage sustained by a natural disaster.
- Encourage sustainable building practices, including energy efficiency standards and green building techniques.
- Explore options for filling gaps in funding when schools rebuild at a quality and capacity level higher than before the damage occurred, and during the interim period when waiting for FEMA reimbursements or other cash assistance.
- Ensure public libraries have adequate capacity to maintain public access to the Internet.
- Allow for flexibility in 28E agreements in response to the disasters to maximize resource sharing.

3. The state should implement a statewide public education and outreach campaign.

- Area: All. Communication is critical to a successful long-term recovery effort and to empowering Iowans to embrace a vision of a safer, stronger, and smarter Iowa. The state should ensure clear and transparent communication with the public regarding availability and types of assistance, as well as the vision and priorities of the Rebuild Iowa Office.
- Suggested strategies:
 - Provide information to points of entry, including schools and preschools, colleges and universities, AEAs, child care homes and centers, and other community organizations that see impacted families on a regular basis.
 - Identify effective information sharing tools for a variety of audiences, including posters, public service announcements, media engagement, and online messaging.

4. The state should ensure mental health services are available to children and adults affected by the disasters.

- Area: Personal Impact. Educational institutions are sometimes the only community organizations or entities that families interact with on a regular basis. Schools and AEAs will continue to be challenged with issues related to mental health during the recovery process. There are strategies that can be undertaken now to assist in identifying mental health issues early and directing Iowans to the appropriate resources.



- Suggested strategies:
 - Train educators to be able to identify signs and needs of students and families, and refer as needed.
 - Coordinate with mental health first responders to ensure a presence in educational settings to assist in identifying needs.

Long-Term Recommendations:

1. The state should encourage emergency planning for all educational services and facilities.
 - Area: Infrastructure Planning and Support. Organizations should undertake disaster preparedness and hazard mitigation activities now to help prevent some disaster-related issues that arose in 2008. The state may also play a role in creating some consistent expectations for educational facility preparedness, response, and recovery operations.
 - Suggested strategies:
 - Strongly encourage school districts, AEAs, preschools, and institutions of higher education to develop a coordinated mitigation plan and suggest membership in the Iowa Mutual Aid Compact as a best practice.
 - Establish a workgroup to study the advisability of implementing statewide planning and design guidelines for educational facilities.
2. The state should monitor and address long-term financial impacts of the disasters on educational institutions
 - Area: Access to Education; Infrastructure Planning and Support. Many Iowa communities are currently faced with huge financial burdens without avenues to increase revenue to meet their obligations. Or, even if provided the opportunity to seek additional funds (such as the process for school districts and AEAs to request supplemental aid or increased allowable growth from the School Budget Review Committee), the funding is not available immediately and there is a gap in getting funds to address immediate needs. Compounding this issue is the loss of property tax revenues as a result of lost businesses and residential homes.
 - Suggested strategies:

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- Conduct a statewide assessment of property tax revenue implications of the disasters to review potential assistance in response to revenue losses and the potential for maximizing any current local revenue-generating options.
 - Monitor the financial impact of enrollment fluctuations on school districts and AEAs. School districts will begin reporting displaced students as a part of the October certified enrollment report, but fiscal implications will not be known for at least another year when school district budgets are determined.
3. The state should ensure public libraries have adequate capacity to maintain public access to the Internet and other library resources.
- Area: Access to Education; Personal Impact. For some Iowans and in some communities, libraries provide the only access to Internet services. The importance of this access should not be underestimated – it may provide the best connection to information and updates during disasters. Some libraries in Iowa are currently experiencing difficulty with Internet access and those needs should be addressed immediately. Options should also be explored that would prevent future lapses in Internet availability.
 - Suggested strategy:
 - The state should consider requiring libraries and communities to have a back-up plan for providing electronic access for their members.



Supporting Data, Documentation, and Context

- Iowa Department of Education presentation – Impact on K-12
- Iowa Department of Education – Results of survey of school districts and community colleges
- Iowa Department of Education – Open-ended comments from survey
- Iowa Department of Education – Other barriers comments from survey
- Iowa Department of Education – Sports eligibility form for displaced students
- Iowa Department of Education – Residency intent form for school districts
- Cedar Rapids Community School District – Impact report
- FEMA – K-12 Damage assessment report
- Community Colleges – Flood damage report
- FEMA – Universities and colleges damage assessment report
- Regents Universities – Damage report
- Iowa College Student Aid Commission – Iowa flood disaster assistance registrations
- Early Childhood – Impact of disasters
- Iowa Department of Human Services – Impact of severe weather on child care
- Effects of the June 2008 Flood on Local Early Care and Education Services (new report, not originally provided to the task force)
- Rebuild Iowa Education Task Force Meeting Notes – July 29, 2008



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