



A MONTHLY JOURNAL
FOR IOWA EDUCATORS

School Leader Update

December 2013

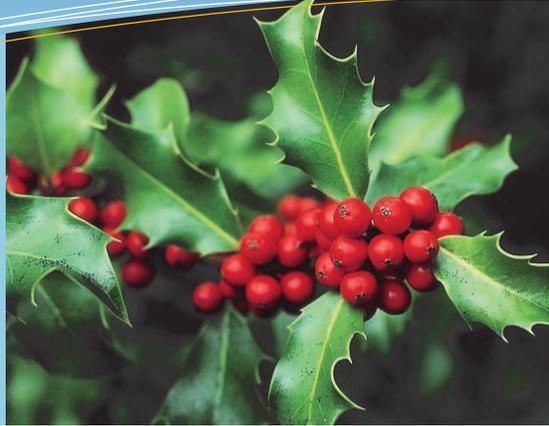
NAEP scores show some growth

Iowa's student results on the National Assessment of Educational Progress show some gains in math and reading since 2011, but stagnation over the long term remains a challenge statewide.

Iowa's results show small growth from 2011 in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and fourth-grade math. The long-term trend remains flat in reading at both grade levels, with small growth in math.

White students, who make up 81 percent of Iowa's student population, are behind their white peers nationally across all tested grade levels and subject areas.

Significant gaps in achievement also remain for black and Hispanic students, students who do not speak English as their native language, students from low-income backgrounds and students with disabilities. Read more on the Iowa Department of Education's [website](#).



In This Issue

Closing the gap ... p. 2

Youth survey here ... p. 5

Assessing preschoolers ... p. 7

A season for honoring teachers

When I was growing up in Cedar Rapids, I was convinced that I wanted to be a social studies teacher. It took one teacher – Mr. Becker, who taught science at Jefferson High School – to change my mind.

Mr. Becker brought science to life in his biology and chemistry classes. He helped me discover a love for science I didn't know I'd had, and I admired his ability to connect with students. I knew then that I wanted to change lives the way Mr. Becker had changed mine.



In my time as a science teacher, principal, and superintendent in Iowa, I saw many examples of great teachers who connected with their students. So it was really inspiring to have a front-row seat as our state celebrated some of our outstanding teachers and schools recently. The Iowa Department of Education honored 12 teachers at the annual Outstanding Iowa Teachers Recognition Luncheon on November 8.

They are teachers like Josh Culberson, a Lamoni elementary school teacher who works to bring history alive to his fourth-graders, in much the same way that his own grandmother brought the past to life for him when he was a young boy.

Josh is our History Teacher of the Year. Congratulations to Josh, and to all of the honorees in the other teaching categories. Then, on November 20, the State Board of Education honored six Iowa schools with Breaking Barriers awards for their progress in closing achievement gaps among students who face challenges.

The schools were recognized for having the state's highest proficiency rates in math and reading among a specific subgroup of students. These include

Continued on page 3

How one school closed gap for special needs students

On average, only 32.31 percent of students with Individualized Education Programs in Iowa are proficient in reading and math. Put another way, over 67 percent fall short of expectations.

Not so at Ankeny's Northeast Elementary. The school's students on IEPs are averaging 75.86 percent proficiency in reading and math. To break that down, 72.41 percent are proficient in reading, and an astounding 79.31 percent are proficient in math.

Make no mistake – Northeast Elementary is not just good. It is the best in the state when it comes to high achievement among students on IEPs.

Find out what the faculty does at Northeast Elementary to ensure success for all students by clicking [here](#).



These schools are 'Breaking Barriers'

Six Iowa schools received the Breaking Barriers to Teaching and Learning award from the State Board of Education on November 20 for their efforts to close the achievement gap among students who face challenges.

The schools were identified as having the highest proficiency rates statewide in math and reading for particular subgroups of students, such as students who do not speak English as their native language and students from low-income backgrounds. Data from three years were examined to confirm a positive trend. In each subgroup, the schools' proficiency rates were substantially higher than the statewide averages. The schools are:

Cedar Falls High School, Cedar Falls, for its work with African American students in which 84.7 percent of those students are proficient in reading and math (compared to the state average of 46.3 percent for the same subgroup).

South Tama County Elementary, Tama, for its work with Native American students in which 75.8 percent of those students are proficient in reading and math (compared to the state average of 59.3 percent).

Carroll High School, Carroll, for its work with students who are lower socio-economic status in which 86.4 percent of those students are proficient in reading and math (compared to the state average of 61.3 percent).

Northeast Elementary, Ankeny, for its work with disabled students who are on Individualized Education Programs in which 75.8 percent of those students are proficient in math and reading (compared to the state average of 32.3 percent).

Kennedy High School, Cedar Rapids, for its work with Latino students in which 92.3 percent of those students are proficient in math and reading (compared to the state average of 58.8 percent).

Lenox Elementary School, Lenox, for its work with English language learners in which 86.4 percent of those students are proficient in reading and math (compared to the state average of 42.6 percent).

Interviews with the principals revealed a common thread between the honored schools: the use of evidence-based practices, a staff-wide commitment, high expectations and substantial teacher collaboration.

Reducing the achievement gap is one of the State Board of Education's top priorities. To view photos from the event, go to <https://www.educateiowa.gov/article/2013/11/20/six-iowa-schools-honored-breaking-barriers>.

RtI: a multi-tiered system of supports for students

The term Response to Intervention (RtI) refers to a process by which schools use data to identify the academic and behavioral supports each and every student needs to be successful in school and leave school ready for life. The process provides students with evidence-based instruction and interventions matched to their needs and monitors student progress to improve their educational outcomes.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) also refers to this same process, yet also denotes both systemic and sustained support across all areas within our educational system – from the individual student level to the classroom to the school, district, intermediary agencies and the state.

Nationally, MTSS is more commonly used; therefore Iowa is transitioning from RtI to MTSS, though these two terms may be used interchangeably. It is important to note, however, that the concepts and work will not change, except to underscore focused support for systems change to create a system that has the availability of a continuum of multiple supports for all students.

Continued from page 1

students with disabilities and students from low-income backgrounds.

You can read about these outstanding teachers and schools on pages 2 and 4, as well as on our website, www.educateiowa.gov. These teachers and schools will lead the way as we take our education system to the next level in Iowa.

One way we're doing that is through the landmark education reform bill adopted by the Legislature this year. This legislation allows every school district to adopt a teacher leadership system that empowers many of Iowa's great teachers to help their colleagues improve classroom instruction and raise student achievement.

In November, I announced the exciting news that every school district in the state applied for a planning grant to support the development of local teacher leadership systems. It's wonderful to know that education leaders are embracing this new opportunity.

School administrators who want to pursue funding to implement their districts' teacher leadership plans in the 2014-15 school year must submit plans for approval by the end of January. Districts will hear back from us in early March if their plans are approved for the first year of the teacher leadership system.

Please stay tuned to the Department's website for developments in the teacher leadership system, and be sure to join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #iatlc.

As we continue our work to improve our schools in Iowa, we should continue to respect and support our educators – and we also should celebrate their great work for Iowa's kids.

I wish all of you a very happy holiday season. Thank you for reading, and thanks for all you do for your schools and students every day.



Some of state's top teachers honored



Some of the state's top teachers join Iowa Department of Education Director Brad Buck during the annual top teachers luncheon in November (*above*). Buck, Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, and other leaders honored 12 finalists and winners of the following teaching awards at the Outstanding Iowa Teachers Recognition Luncheon in Altoona:

- Iowa Teacher of the Year
- Iowa Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching
- Iowa Preserve America History Teacher of the Year

The luncheon was hosted by the Iowa Department of Education and sponsored by CenturyLink, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the National Science Foundation and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Iowa Teacher of the Year

- Award-winner: Jane Schmidt, an eighth-grade literacy and language arts teacher at Maquoketa Middle School in Maquoketa
- Finalists:
 - Aaron Maurer, a gifted education teacher and instructional coach at Bettendorf Middle School in Bettendorf
 - Kari Murray, a science teacher at Carlisle High School in Carlisle
 - Jon Parrott, an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Urbandale Middle School in Urbandale
 - Kristi Wickre, a special education teacher at Smouse Opportunity School in Des Moines (Des Moines Public Schools)
 - Elaine Wolf, a culinary arts teacher at Central Campus in Des Moines (Des Moines Public Schools)

Iowa Preserve America History Teacher of the Year

Award-winner: Josh Culberson, a fourth-grade teacher at Lamoni Elementary School in Lamoni

Iowa Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching*

- **Math Finalists:**
 - Allysen Lovstuen of Decorah High School in Decorah
 - Brian Reece of Central Academy in Des Moines (Des Moines Public Schools)
 - Jeff Marks of Roosevelt High School in Des Moines (Des Moines Public Schools)
- **Science Finalists:**
 - Marcia Powell of West Delaware High School in Manchester
 - Shannon McLaughlin of Norwalk High School

**State award-winners have not yet been announced by a national selection committee.*

Iowa Youth Survey district trend reports now available

The 2012 Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) district trend reports are available online for all districts that:

- Took the IYS in September-October 2012;
- Have taken the IYS in previous years; and
- Had enough students participate in 2012 to receive a report.

Please use the following steps to download your district's 2012 IYS trend report from the Iowa Department of Education's secure site, EdInfo:

- Have the person in charge of EdInfo security in your district login to EdInfo (<https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/>) and give you access to the application "Download – DE to District."
- Login to EdInfo using your ID and Password.
- Click on the button "Download – DE to District." A new screen will appear with four PDF files. The 2012 trend report ended on October 31.
- Click on the name of the file, then save it to your local computer.

The survey is administered every other year to 6th, 8th, and 11th graders across Iowa. It gathers data on students' experiences and perceptions of the conditions for learning at their schools (e.g. adult-student and student-student relationships, school safety and bullying, and the school environment), alcohol and drug use, family involvement, suicide, community norms, individual values, and gambling. Direct questions to Molly Hammer at molly.hammer@iowa.gov.

Read more about the survey by clicking [here](#).

Students needed for essay contest on women in history

An essay contest focusing on women in history is open to Iowa's students in grades 6 through 9. The contest, called Write Women Back Into History, is sponsored by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (ICSW), Iowa Department of Education and the State Historical Society of Iowa. The contest is designed to give youth a deeper and more relevant appreciation of women's roles in history. Winners of the essay contest will be recognized during March's Women's History Month.

This year's theme is "*Celebrating Women of Character, Courage and Commitment*." Though women have always made significant contributions to these fields, historically those contributions have not been recognized as publicly as those of men.

Winning essayists will be awarded prizes and recognized at a special ceremony at the State Capitol during Women's History Month, and each finalist will receive a certificate signed by the governor. They also will be introduced in the Iowa Senate and House of Representatives. All winners will receive some cash prize, names will be released to the press, and a special effort will be made to inform media outlets in the students' communities of their honors.

The deadline for entries is January 24. Guidelines can be found [here](#) and entry forms can be found [here](#). Contact Sanjita Shrestha at ICSW for more information at 515-281-4219, 1-800-558-4427 or women@iowa.gov.



On March 14, 2013, essay winners came to Des Moines to celebrate their success. Students were introduced in both chambers of the Iowa General Assembly, met with Governor Branstad and Lt. Governor Reynolds, and enjoyed a tour of the Iowa Capitol.

Applications available for student member of State Board

The application and supporting documents for the next student member of the State Board of Education are available on the Iowa Department of Education's website at <https://www.educateiowa.gov/about-iowa-state-boards-education#Student>.

The term of the student member starts May 1, 2014, and ends April 30, 2015. The State Board meets at least seven times during that term, with most meetings taking place in the Grimes State Office Building in Des Moines. The deadline for submitting an application with all required documents is January 31.

Besides being a full-time, regularly enrolled 10th or 11th grade student in a public high school, the student must meet these requirements:

- Has a GPA of at least 3.0 (4.0 scale) or 3.75 (5.0 scale);
- Has attended his/her present high school at least the past two consecutive semesters (or the equivalent thereof); and
- Demonstrates participation in extracurricular and community activities, as well as an interest in serving on the board.

The number of applicants from any one district is limited as follows:

- If district enrollment for grades 10 through 12 is less than 400 students, there may be no more than one applicant from the district.
- If district enrollment for grades 10 through 12 is from 400 to 1,199 students, there may be no more than two applicants from the district.
- If district enrollment for grades 10 through 12 is 1,200 students or more, there may be no more than three applicants from the district.

TeachIowa.gov grows, new training is on tap

TeachIowa.gov, the new statewide education job posting system, continues to expand. As of mid-November, there were 229 organizations that had posted 1,286 jobs; there were 2,220 applicants in the system.

Additional training dates will soon be added. The Iowa Department of Education and Board of Educational Examiners will be conducting on-site trainings at each AEA. In addition, Aspx Solutions will be offering training webinars. Emails will be sent out to all TeachIowa.gov users detailing the training dates and format for each training.

Visit TeachIowa.gov for more information about the site.

Schools and Districts in Need of Assistance

The Iowa Department of Education has started reviewing SINA and DINA plans. The goal is to have all plans reviewed by the end of December. Districts will have until mid-February to finalize any changes necessary to plans before C-Plan closes at the beginning of March. The goal for the Department is to work with buildings until the plan is approvable. In order to do this, the Department will need to uncertify plans so changes can be made in C-Plan.

An approval matrix has been provided for districts and is available at the following link:

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/no-child-left-behind/schools-and-districts-need-assistance-sinadina/guidance-schools-and>.

For more information, contact Karla Day at karla.day@iowa.gov or 515-281-7145.

Early Childhood Preschool Programs

GOLD assessment required for children in district preschool

Districts are required to assess all preschool children with the GOLD online assessment and maintain local agreements with *Teaching Strategies, Inc.* under the *GOLD* State Service Umbrella Agreement. Iowa Code 279.60 was amended in 2013 to include the GOLD assessment for every resident pre-kindergarten or 4-year-old child whose parent or guardian enrolls the child in the district. This includes any preschool-aged child enrolled by a parent in a district program. Examples include 3-year-old, 4-year-old, and mixed-age classrooms, as well as those in which a child receives early childhood special education services. It also includes any community-based early childhood program that receives Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program funding. The key component of the legislation is that parents enrolled the child in a district-sponsored preschool program.



Any Iowa program not required to use GOLD online per the above guidance, including home- and center-based child care, may participate in GOLD online assessment under the Iowa State Service Umbrella Agreement. This would allow for a reduced per-child cost.

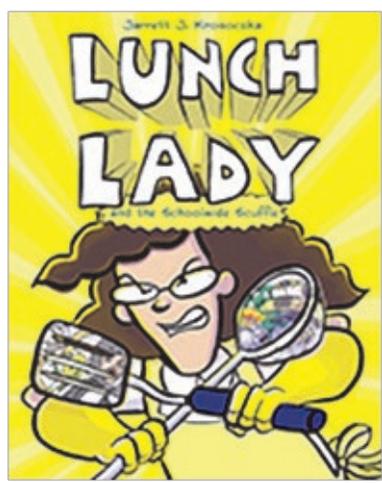
For more information on the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program or the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, go to <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/early-childhood/statewide-voluntary-preschool-program-and-four-year-old-children> or contact Penny Milburn at penny.milburn@iowa.gov or 515-281-7844, Jennifer Adkins at jennifer.adkins@iowa.gov or 515-725-2219 or Amy Stegeman at amy.stegeman@iowa.gov or 515-725-2273.

Nutrition and Health Services

Serving lunch...and justice

Here's a way to promote reading – and school lunch.

Author Jarrett Krosoczka was inspired when his former lunch lady remembered him when he returned to his school to be recognized for a writing success. It prompted a book in which characters Hector, Terrence, and Dee investigate to see who the lunch lady really is. They find that Lunch Lady doesn't just serve



sloppy joes – she serves justice. Check out the video, song and more ways to join in at www.lunchladycomics.com.

The Lunch Lady books were voted the third and fourth grade “Book of the Year” in Children’s Choice Book Awards in 2010 and 2011.

Schools have used these books in libraries to help promote reading, creativity, and link it to an everyday task students do – eat lunch. On May 2, schools across the nation will celebrate School Lunch Hero Day. Help promote reading and school lunch by finding a creative way to celebrate School Lunch Hero Day. Send us your pictures of how you celebrate this special day. For more information, contact Ann Feilmann at ann.feilmann@iowa.gov.



Legislative Update

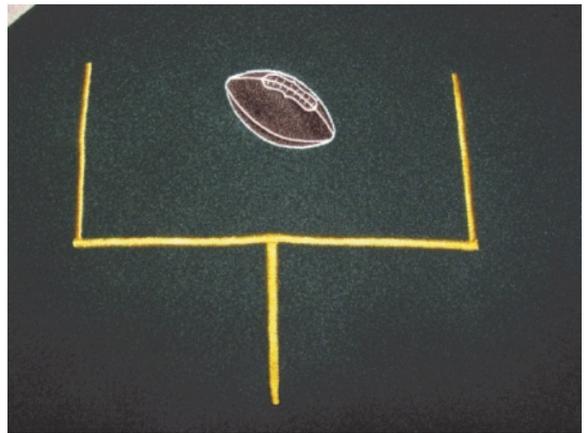
Contact Mike Cormack for all legislative items: mike.cormack@iowa.gov or 515-281-3399.

Cormack at the Capitol

We are in an era of going for it

As I stood behind the end zone at the UNI Dome, I watched a football fluttering toward us. That can't possibly make it here, I thought, but at least it is on line. Then, as it began to descend in a downward arc, it kept inching forward. Every inch mattered because this 39-yard journey couldn't be 38. And it wasn't.

Every head in the stadium had turned to watch the flight path of the ob-long pigskin. The mighty leather orb struggled to clear the crossbar that stood in the way. It didn't clear that metal but struck it and took one more heroic leap forward. When it landed behind the goalpost and came to a gentle rest below, Carroll Kuemper Catholic had won a state championship and Waukon could only be in awe. One side of the stadium in pure elation and the other side in crushed disappointment. All because of the flight of one ball on a November afternoon did the fortunes of many change. All I could think to say was, "Oh my!"



As the ex-officio representative of the Department of Education to the Iowa High School Athletic Association and Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union, I have had the opportunity to see some dramatic accomplishments. That football game, between two great teams that showed tremendous class both during and after the game, will be a lifetime memory. As a participant in the trophy presentation after the game, I could sense great respect between the two teams. Regardless of the sport, it is an honor to see the hard work, dedication and school pride of so many great high school male and female athletes, win or lose. Just as in music, speech, drama, art and so many other activities, it is great that students have the opportunity to showcase their talents and provide bonding experiences for their communities. In this case, both Waukon and Carroll Kuemper should both hold their heads high for producing a memorable contest that will be talked about in their communities for many years.

If you are a school superintendent, I will put the envelope to my forehead to predict that your district signed up for a planning grant for the Teacher Leadership and Compensation System. All of my mentalist powers as Cormack the Magnificent (much like Johnny Carson's Carnac) have told me that your district has accepted the funds and is working on a potential plan for your district. Well, it's mentalist powers – and the fact that 346 of 346 Iowa school districts signed up to do so. In any case, much like the football drifting in the air, it was up to the last possible moment for that to take place. But whether your district was the first or the last to sign up for this, the result is one and the same: All Iowa districts are trying to figure out if this program is worth pursuing and, if so, how it could be done to best meet local needs. Much like the coach who dared to dream that his kicker could make that field goal, we are glad that you trust the planning process enough to go for it.

There will be \$50 million available to Iowa school districts to implement teacher compensation and leadership plans next

Continued on page 9

Legislative Update continued

Continued from page 8

school year. I'm guessing that more districts will apply for the funds than are available. In full implementation in three school years, three times that amount will be available for funding. If your district decides to pursue these funds for the next school year, you are offering to be a pioneer in educational leadership not only in our state but in the nation. Iowa is attempting to be the first state in the country to do this on a statewide scale. I fully believe we will succeed in this effort because it has local flavor to each plan as well as sincere lowans sitting on the state commission who will be reviewing those plans. The Legislature will be correctly monitoring closely the amount of applications in year one and will know both the total dollars requested as well as what districts (urban, suburban, rural) are making those requests. The action of districts will cause a reaction from lawmakers on how best to move forward and legislators will know prior to the conclusion of their session what the nature of those requests are.

Meanwhile, the action of the Legislature will cause a reaction from you as you set your school calendars. As the school guidance you received in a recent Superintendent Notes indicates, the next school year proposes to give you a choice in whether to have 180 days of school or 1,080 hours of school. If there are no changes in the law, you will not get any credit for early dismissals in the 2014-15 school year under the schedule based on days. For example, if your district dismisses after three hours of school under current law and rulemaking, you would get three hours of credit for the schedule based on hours while you would get no credit under the schedule based on days. In addition, nonpublic schools are required to meet either standard and like public schools must start school on a prescribed date, either late August or early September due to the calendar. Nonpublic schools will not be able to get a waiver to start earlier than that. Unless the Legislature fixes those two areas of law that were inadvertently changed in passing House File 215, that will be the reality for schools in the next school year.

We have drafted legislation to fix those two scenarios. Fortunately, we have had good bipartisan response to moving a simple bill early in the session to fix those two items. If you believe these changes have merit or think otherwise on it, please share your opinion with your legislators. The main concept that needs to be shared with legislators is that it is important to move the bill early in the session so that your calendar committees can conclude their work for the next school year. In addition, it is important that this bill remain clear of other items so that the bill remains a technical fix. If the bill isn't modified, it is likely to move forward but as with anything in the legislative system, nothing is entirely certain until the bill is on the desk of the governor.

We are in an era of going for it. With schedule flexibility and widespread participation from Iowa schools, there is momentum for positive change in the state. It may seem like a fluttering ball at times rather than the rocket sling but we are moving ahead. I have faith the ball is going through the posts on the many education reforms moving forward. By next fall, we will have many Iowa school districts engaged in competency-based education work, a full-year teacher preparation pilot project, additional assistance to young readers, schedule flexibility and teacher compensation plans that are being implemented on a widespread basis. The ball isn't going to bounce backwards onto the field next year.

May the holidays treat you well and may you be in good spirits when you read this column again in 2014. Three points for Iowa education!





Legal Lessons

Contact Nicole Proesch for all Legal Lessons items: nicole.proesch@iowa.gov or 515-281-8661

A time to take stock

Remembering Sandy Hook

December 14 will mark the one-year anniversary of the tragic shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. During that shooting, the lives of 20 precious students and six courageous school staff members ended prematurely. These individuals will not be forgotten. The images from that day will be remembered in the minds of Americans for years to come. These lives were not lost in vain. The tragedy at Sandy Hook has prompted schools across the nation to take a second look at the safety procedures they have in place to protect their students in the event that a similar situation were to take place. And, it has reminded us all that we need to make a conscious effort to protect our schools and the precious lives of our students and dedicated staff. Iowa schools have joined this mission and continue to explore ways to protect our schools. Together we will continue to move forward to protect our schools and remember the lives needlessly lost at Sandy Hook.

Iowa Code section 724.4B prohibits firearms on school grounds with few exceptions

Since the tragedy at Sandy Hook, several inquiries have been made by school officials about whether it is lawful to carry a weapon on school grounds if the carrier has a permit to carry. In January 2011, certain amendments to the Iowa Code provisions governing carrying weapons went into effect. In short, the amendments made it easier to get a non-professional permit to carry weapons in the state of Iowa. However, even if a person has a non-professional permit to carry weapons, Iowa Code section 724.4B clearly prohibits firearms on the grounds of schools.

Iowa Code section 724.4B specifically states that bringing weapons onto the grounds of a school is a class D felony. The only exceptions to having a firearm on school grounds are if:

- The person is a peace officer, member of the armed forces or National Guard, or correctional officer, who is carrying the weapon in connection with his or her duties as such; or
- The weapon is unloaded, inside a closed and fastened container or securely wrapped package or in the luggage or cargo compartment (i.e., trunk) of a vehicle; or
- The school has specifically authorized the person to bring the weapon onto school grounds, such as for purposes of conducting an instructional program regarding firearms.

Moreover, Iowa Code section 724.7, as amended, specifically states that a permit is not valid where possessing or carrying a firearm is prohibited by state or federal law. Under federal law, it is generally unlawful to possess a firearm in a "school zone," subject to exceptions similar to those in the Iowa Code described above. 18 U.S.C. § 922(q)(2). "School zone" includes the grounds of any public or private elementary or secondary school, as well as all public property within 1,000 feet of such a school. 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(25).¹

In summary, unless an exception applies, both state and federal law clearly prohibit firearms on school grounds whether a person has a lawful permit to carry a weapon. If you have any questions about the laws pertaining to weapons on school grounds, contact me at 515-281-8661 or nicole.proesch@iowa.gov or consult your legal counsel.

¹This federal statute is separate and apart from the federal Gun-Free Schools Act, which requires states, as a condition of receiving federal education funds to enact laws expelling students who bring guns to school. 20 U.S.C. § 7151(b)(1). (Iowa has enacted such a law. Iowa Code § 280.21B.)

Continued on page 11

Legal Lessons continued

Continued from page 10

FERPA and emergencies

In an emergency situation, school officials may have to balance the immediate need for the safety of their students and staff with the need to protect the privacy of individual students. Generally, under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a school is required to obtain written consent before disclosing a student's education records. However, in an emergency, school officials are permitted to disclose without consent education records, including personally identifiable information from those records, to protect the health or safety of students or other individuals. During these emergency situations, records and information may be released to appropriate parties such as law enforcement officials, public health officials, and trained medical personnel. See 34 CFR § 99.31(a)(10) and § 99.36. However, school officials should note that this narrow exception is limited to the period of the emergency and generally does not allow for a blanket release of personally identifiable information from a student's education records. School officials should determine on a case-by-case basis whether a disclosure of education records is necessary to protect the health or safety of students or other individuals.

For further information about FERPA, contact the Family Policy Compliance Office:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920
202-260-3887
FERPA@ED.Gov.

Religious holiday celebrations in public schools

"Have a holly jolly Christmas/it's the best time of the year..." Hmm, well, perhaps not for everyone. Public school officials need to be especially conscious at this time of year that the birth of the Christian Savior is not recognized or celebrated by all students and families. Therefore, here is a quick (not meant to be exhaustive) checklist of what public school officials are prohibited from doing and what they are permitted to do.

a. Prohibited Activities

- Displays of religious symbols such as a crèche, an angel, a menorah, or a banner with a religious message ("Gloria in Excelsis Deo," e.g.).
- Display of a Christmas tree with religious symbols such as stars, angels, the baby Jesus.
- School-wide prayer or Scripture readings.
- A musical concert with exclusively religious music.
- Banning students from offering candy canes or other items with a religious message during noninstructional time (before or after school or during a recess) and not done in the classroom. Schools may still prohibit distribution within classrooms.
- Holding a "Christmas party" in the classroom. A "holiday" or "end of semester" or "end of 2013" party is OK.

b. Permissible Activities

- Including religious music selections during public holiday concerts if non-religious music is included.
- Holding holiday concerts at religious sites if the concerts are also held at non-religious sites.
- Displaying a "giving tree," i.e. a tree on which students hang donated items such as mittens, gloves, etc.

Continued on page 12

Legal Lessons continued

Continued from page 11

- Displays of religious symbols *when combined with* other symbols of cultural and ethnic heritage such as Kwanzaa symbols, Frosty the Snowman, other festive figures, a “Happy Holidays” banner, etc.
- Displays of symbols representing many religious beliefs, even without non-religious symbols. But, just displaying symbols from Christianity and Judaism is an impermissible endorsement of dual beliefs. The display must present a message of pluralism and freedom to choose one’s own beliefs.

School safety corner

The Iowa School Safety Coalition now has all safety bulletins posted on its website. Please refer to <http://www.iowaschoolsafety.org/> for more information on what you can do to protect your students.

Students with disabilities

For questions regarding students with disabilities, contact Thomas Mayes at 515-242-5614 or thomas.mayes@iowa.gov.

Interest high in planning grants

All 346 Iowa school districts have applied for planning grants to support the local development of Teacher Leadership and Compensation Systems.

This effort to better utilize the expertise of top teachers to improve classroom instruction and raise student achievement is the centerpiece of the landmark education reform package passed by the 2013 Legislature. Teacher leaders will take on extra responsibilities, such as coaching and co-teaching.

The legislation creates a four-year process to develop a statewide teacher leadership and compensation system, with the goal of all school districts participating by the 2016-17 school year. For more information, visit: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/teacher-leadership-and-compensation-system>.

Calendar

- December 1 • SBRC application for Modified Allowable Growth (MAG) for Increased Enrollment, Open Enrollment Out, and Limited English Proficient Excess Costs, for Districts that want MAG (IAC 289—6.3(3) “h”) deadline
- December 1 • First semester parental claim forms for non-public transportation reimbursement due

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, gender, disability, religion, age, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by the Iowa Code sections 216.9 and 256.10(2), Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d and 2000e), the Equal Pay Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 206, et seq.), Title IX (Educational Amendments, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 – 1688), Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.). If you have questions or grievances related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, telephone number 515/281-5295; or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Citigroup Center, 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60661, telephone number 312-730-1560, fax 312/730-1576, e-mail: OCR.Chicago@ed.gov



www.educateiowa.gov

Iowa Department of Education

400 E 14th Street
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Ph: 515-281-5294
www.educateiowa.gov