



A MONTHLY JOURNAL
FOR IOWA EDUCATORS

School Leader Update

March 2010

TEACHER SALARIES up for third year

Iowa Governor Chet Culver announced teacher salaries, which were at 37th in the nation just one year ago, are now at 26th.

The average salary in Iowa is now \$48,638.

To read more about Iowa's ranking based on the National Education Association's annual report *Rankings and Estimates: Rankings of the States 2009 and Estimates of School Statistics 2010* go to www.nea.org/home/37872.htm.



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Standards build momentum, questions remain

The Common Core Standards Initiative is moving forward at the national level, but not without some challenges. The standards are in their fourth draft. The original intent was to write standards that are few, clear, and rigorous. However, it appears this is not an easy goal to achieve. As with any other discussion on what K-12 students should know and be able to do, it is difficult to sort that from what is nice to know and what is essential to know and do.

Iowa has continued to provide comments to the writing team as drafts have arrived. In fact, members of the writing team came to Iowa a few weeks ago to listen to our concerns and to view the work completed for the Iowa Core. Changes continue to be made to the national draft as a result of not only our input, but input from across the nation.

The U.S. Department of Education is pushing states to adopt the national Common Core, when it is completed. In fact, recent reports state that President Obama indicated that reauthorization of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) may have a heavy emphasis on states adopting the national common core standards and that federal funds, which may become more competitive, may be tied to the Common Core.

Iowa signed a memorandum of understanding, accompanied by a letter stating that it was difficult to promise adoption when a final product was not yet available. We are committed to continuing to work with and provide comments to the national writing group to promote the original goal of few, clear, and rigorous in reading and mathematics. When the final document is ready, the Iowa Department of Education will work to align the Iowa Core so that school districts will have only one document.

The Common Core State Standards Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

- Judy Jeffrey



Judy Jeffrey, Director

AP EXAM reimbursement

The state of Iowa will not be paying for Advanced Placement (AP) exam costs for students for the 2009-2010 school year.

A memo with this information was sent to school districts on August 28, 2009.

The legislature did not allocate funds to defray a portion of each AP exam fee for students who do not qualify for the low-income funding reimbursement.

Please communicate the information to appropriate staff so students affected by this will know they will need to pay full price for AP exams.

AP reimbursement for the low-income students will be the same as in the past.

Iowa Department of Education Consultant Rosanne Malek will be sending this information out to districts.

If you have any questions about AP reimbursement for low-income students, please contact Rosanne Malek (515-281-3199, rosanne.malek@iowa.gov) or contact your AP coordinators and/or high school counselors.

More students took AP exams in 2009

More Iowa high school students are taking at least one Advanced Placement (AP) exam, according to a [report released today by the College Board](#), which administers the AP program.

The graduating class of 2009 did well on the test and had more students take the exam than previous classes. Approximately 66 percent of the class of 2009 that



took an AP exam during their high school career scored a 3 or higher.

This is higher than the national average, which is 59 percent. Many colleges and universities award college credit or advanced placement into higher-level college courses to students with high AP exam scores. A score of 3 or above is considered to be college-level performance. AP exams are scored on a 1-5 scale, with 5 being

the highest possible score.

Of the 35,466 students of the 2009 class, 4,691 members or 13.2 percent took at least one AP exam during their four years in high school. This is higher than five years ago, when only 9.6 percent of the graduating class took at least one AP exam.

The increase is partly because in 2008 the Iowa legislature allocated \$40 per AP exam taken by any Iowa student. This was a one-time allocation and was not reinstated for the 2009-2010 school year. Please see the article at left entitled, "AP Exam Reimbursement" for more information.

Low-income students may still take an exam at no cost through federal funding administered through the Iowa Department of Education.

The long-term participation increase is due, in part, to the availability of [Iowa Online AP Academy](#). The Iowa Online Advanced Placement Academy was established to deliver AP courses to high school students across the state using online technology and the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). The academy's focus is on providing AP courses to accredited rural and small schools in Iowa.

AP is one option for Iowa students to potentially earn college credit while still in high school. To help more high school students access college credit—regardless of where they live, their career path, or family income—the Iowa legislature passed the Senior Year Plus program in 2008. The program helps provide access to college credit through AP courses, concurrent enrollment (previously and commonly called dual-credit) courses, Post-secondary Enrollment Options Act courses, Career Academy courses and ICN and Iowa Learning Online courses. Many of these programs have existed in Iowa for some time, but Senior Year Plus offers improvements and helps make options easier to understand for parents and students.

Iowa Core online self study ready

The online applications for the Iowa Core Curriculum Self-Study and Implementation Plan are now available on the EdInfo secure website:

www.edinfo.state.ia.us/.



Access to the EdInfo secure website is granted through a district or school's top administrator.

Guidance for the Iowa

Core Curriculum Self-Study and Implementation Plan is available to districts and schools from the Self-Study and Implementation Plan Handbook on the Iowa Department of Education website at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/>

[index.php?option=com_content&view](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view)

[=article&id=674&Itemid=1249#handbook](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=674&Itemid=1249#handbook) and AEA Network representatives.

Tutorial videos are also available for the Iowa Core Curriculum Self-Study and Implementation Plan at the following locations:

- Self-Study Tutorial—<http://iowaec.na4.acrobat.com/selfstudytutorial/>
- Implementation Plan Tutorial—<http://iowaec.na4.acrobat.com/implementationplantutorial/>.

High school commencement challenge

President Barack Obama has launched a new and innovative challenge to America's high schools.

The 2010 Race to the Top High School Commencement Challenge invites the nation's public high schools to compete for the opportunity to welcome the President as their commencement speaker for the class of 2010.

This challenge is designed to recognize high schools with effective strategies for reducing the number of high school dropouts, promoting college and career readiness, and encouraging college enrollment in support of meeting the President's goal of producing the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020.

In order to participate in the competition, schools will be required to submit an online application consisting of four short essay questions that demonstrate how the school successfully prepares students for high school graduation and college and career success. The deadline to submit applications is March 15, 2010.

Following the application deadline, six finalists will be selected by the White House and U.S. Department of Education. These schools will then be featured on the White House website and the public will have an opportunity to vote for the three schools they think best meet the President's goal.

The President will select a national winner from these three and visit the winning high school to deliver the commencement address to the class of 2010.

Additional details on the competition, including the application, are available at www.WhiteHouse.gov/Commencement.

TEACHER exchange program

Iowa school districts have the opportunity to offer the teaching of the Mandarin dialect and Chinese culture to their students, through a teacher exchange program sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education (DE), the U.S. Education Without Borders, and the Beijing Oriental International Education Consulting Service Company.

Chinese teachers spend at least a year in an Iowa middle or high school. The local school district hires the visiting teacher in accordance with all other local policies pertaining to salary scale, licensure, and local system requirements.

In addition, Iowa teachers interested in teaching English in the People's Republic of China are encouraged to explore opportunities through the exchange program. Positions are currently available in Shijianzhuan, a sister city of Des Moines, located in Hebei province, a sister province with Iowa.

Districts interested in acquiring a Chinese teacher or Iowa teachers interested in teaching in China may contact at 515-494-5610 or cheryl.mullenbach@iowa.gov.

A.T. and I.T.: What's the difference?

What should the relationship between Assistive Technology (A.T.) and Instructional Technology (I.T.) be?

Most schools have systems in place for supporting technology. A.T. devices are managed by school district teams (Individualized Family Service Plan, Individualized Education Program, or Section 504) working with students with disabilities. I.T. infrastructure is managed by network coordinators and technology specialists working with all students.

These teams and specialists are challenged to work together within the larger context of a school district to meet all technology and assistive technology needs of all students.

This includes the specific A.T. and I.T. needs of an individual student as identified in their Individualized Family Service Plan, Individualized Education Program, or Section 504.

A brochure providing guidelines and information to assist integration of these interests has been developed and can be found on the Trueaim website trueaim.iowa.gov/ in the "About Trueaim" section under "Who is Responsible?"

For more information contact Steve Maurer at steve.maurer@iowa.gov or 515-281-3576.

Three tips to improve access to AIM

There are three things schools should do to improve access to Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM):

1. Sign up your school district for a FREE Bookshare membership.
2. Add language to purchase orders requiring textbook publishers to develop a National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) filesset of the textbook(s) and send the file to the NIMAC.
3. If you need your textbooks converted to Braille, make sure the order is placed with the Iowa Department for the Blind no later than March 15, 2010.

Here's why:

You can sign up at www.bookshare.org as a school district (institutional membership) and assign one or more staff members as a liaison with Bookshare. Membership for all K-12 schools in the U.S. is **free**. Member schools can immediately start to use the services of Bookshare.

You can also sign up your individual students within your school district on your district membership account so they can access Bookshare from home. Bookshare scans books and converts them to digital text formats. Copyrighted digital books are available for download to people who submit proof of a disability that affects reading.

The NIMAC is an acquisition system for specialized formats of textbooks and related core instructional materials sold after July 18, 2006. The NIMAC is also a repository of electronic files of textbooks and core related instructional materials that are submitted directly by publishers. Districts **must** request the publishers to send these filesets to the NIMAC in their purchase order (http://trueaim.iowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=7).

The Iowa Department for the Blind and Bookshare are the sole Authorized Users to NIMAC. Coordinating with these entities will enable students with disabilities who require AIM in specialized formats (Braille, large print, audio, and digital text) to receive AIM in a timely manner. Each time you acquire a new textbook for your school, a digital version (NIMAS format) will be deposited by the publisher into the NIMAC system. You may not need that text in an accessible format now, but you may need it in the future.

Converting textbooks into Braille is the most time consuming and expensive part of producing AIM. Some math and science textbooks converted to Braille produce very large volumes that may take many months to convert. By ordering your Braille materials early you increase the likelihood that students will receive AIM in a timely manner. In Iowa, students who need instructional materials in Braille, large print, audio, or digital text may qualify for services from the Iowa Department for the Blind (<http://www.idbonline.org/library/student-resources> and <http://www.idbonline.org/form/imc>).

Please visit the Trueaim website (<http://trueaim.iowa.gov/>) or contact Steve Maurer at 515-281-3576 or steve.maurer@iowa.gov for further information.

Iowa to announce NGA graduation rates

For the first time, Iowa is determining its graduation rates using the National Governors Association (NGA) adjusted cohort formula, which is a calculation agreed upon by the governors of all 50 states.



The Iowa Department of Education (DE) will be announcing graduation rates for the class of 2009 the first week in March.

Iowa is among approximately 20 states that currently use the NGA cohort rate, which was part of a compact signed by governors in 2005 to voluntarily implement a common formula for calculating their state's high school graduation rate. The goal is that all states will use the NGA cohort rate by 2012. Previously, Iowa used the "leaver rate" calculation, which was used by approximately 30 states in the nation.

The NGA cohort rate sets a new baseline in Iowa for comparing graduation rates year to year. Therefore, comparing the 2008 graduation rate to the 2009 rate is not an "apples to apples" comparison. Next year, more information will be available about changes between annual graduation rates.

More information will be available on the DE's website at www.iowa.gov/educate.

ARRA reporting refresher training

The webinar training will cover how to report utilizing Iowa's Centralized Reporting System (reporting.iowa.gov), and is available to all individuals who need to access and use the state's system. Participants will be able to submit questions during the webinar, which will be answered during that session. The webinar will provide answers to the following questions:

- How do I log-in to the system?
- What all is available on reporting.iowa.gov?
- How do I complete my report and when is it due? Do I have to report job information?
- When and how do I create sub-awards?
- How do I request reports from recipients of sub-awards?
- How do I review and approve information reported by recipients of sub-awards?



You may reserve your webinar seat now by clicking the link for the webinar you plan to attend. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

System Requirements: Windows® 2000, XP Home, XP Pro, 2003 Server, Vista for PC-based attendees; and Mac OS® X 10.4 (Tiger®) or newer for Macintosh®-based attendees.

Date	Time	Registration Link
Wednesday, March 3	9 – 11 AM	https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/661590643
Wednesday, March 3	1 – 3 PM	https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/889924882
Thursday, March 4	1 – 3 PM	https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/866462018
Friday, March 5	9 – 11 AM	https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/972495194
Monday, March 8	9 – 11 AM	https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/584418346
Monday, March 8	1 – 3 PM	https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/669754715

Date & Reporting

New application for Fall BEDS

The Iowa Department of Education will bring the Fall Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) staff collection into the 21st century by unveiling a new application for fall 2010 reporting.



New collection elements related to licensed and non-licensed staff will be introduced. Specifically, non-licensed staff data will be collected on an individual basis. Full-time equivalent (FTE) data will be collected on all staff at the new program level for greater accuracy and accountability.

The Microsoft ASP.NET application will offer districts a significant enhancement in the data-entry process. The current method of manual data entry will be enhanced with a more user-friendly interface and increased functionality. In addition, the new application will allow districts to “upload” data from some of the human resources applications utilized in the state.

Spring BEDS and EASIER training

Webinars are being planned to facilitate districts' completion for Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS) and Project EASIER (Electronic Access System for Iowa Education Records) end-of-year reporting.

Adobe Connect Pro will again be used to provide training during April. You may participate in any or all of the various sessions from your own computer. Sessions will be recorded and posted to the Iowa Department of Education's website.

A schedule of session topics, dates, and times will be sent to all EASIER and BEDS contacts later in March.

June regional training sessions are tentatively being planned to help districts prepare for Fall BEDS and EASIER changes.

Regional training of Fall BEDS will include training on the new staff collection application. The application provides the option to upload a file, allows for the collection of all licensed and non-licensed staff at the individual level, and collects FTE at the new program level.

Fall EASIER changes underway include the expansion of EASIER to include supplementary weighting for shared courses in next fall's certified enrollment. Details will be released as they become available.



Coming in May!

Iowa Transcript Center

What is It?

The Iowa Transcript Center is a statewide electronic student record and transcript exchange system free to public school districts, colleges, and universities.

What Does it Mean to Me?

The Iowa Transcript Center will provide you with a common hub for exchanging student records with other Iowa school districts.

- Send electronic transcripts for *many* students to a single institution
- Send an electronic transcript for *a single* student to many institutions

Stay tuned for more information!

www.transcriptcenter.com/iowa

Early Childhood Preschool Programs

Preschool program grant application

The posting of the revised application, technical assistance guidance manual, and timelines for the 2010-2011 Statewide

Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children grant has been delayed with alignment of the state budget. Please continue to refer to the website for updated information at [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279)

[index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=940&Itemid=1279)



Districts may contact early childhood consultants at their AEA for further preschool program information.

Contact information may be found on the Iowa Department of Education website for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children under "Contacts in Your Area."

For more information, please contact Judy Russell at 515-281-4705 or judy.russell@iowa.gov.

Districts to report updates to DE

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) requires districts that have participated in the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program update contact, assurance, and preschool information through the Early Childhood Application at the DE secure reporting website. Districts were required to adopt at least one set of program standards for each preschool session.

These standards include:

1. Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards,
2. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation, or
3. Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Districts following the NAEYC or Head Start standards for any preschool session, must update this information on the DE Secure Reporting Site.

For more information, please contact Judy Russell at 515-281-4705 or judy.russell@iowa.gov.

IQPPS Tip of the Month

Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS) Standard 5, Criteria 1 states:

The program maintains current health records for each child: Within 6 weeks after a child begins the program, and as age-appropriate thereafter, health records document the dates of services to show that the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the schedule recommended, published in print, and posted on the websites of American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control of the United States Public Health Service (CDC-USPHS), and the Academy of Family Practice...

Documentation for blood lead testing is not a requirement for achieving this criterion.

Districts typically include documentation on vision, hearing, and health screenings.

For information, please contact Judy Russell at 515-281-4705 or judy.russell@iowa.gov.

IOWA Teacher of the Year



Nominate an
outstanding
Iowa teacher
TODAY!

Forms due April 15, 2010.

Contact the Iowa Department of
Education at (515) 281-3980 for
more information.



Early Childhood Preschool Programs

DE to hold early childhood symposium

The Iowa Department of Education's Early Childhood Services (ECS) Bureau is committed to providing leadership, professional development and technical assistance in order to enhance learning for all preschool children.

As a part of this commitment, the ECS Bureau is hosting an Early Childhood Summer Symposium in June 2010. The symposium will focus on building the capacity to support the implementation of effective instruction and child assessment for districts and community partners responsible for Statewide Voluntary Preschool and Early Childhood Special Education programs.

The goals for the Early Childhood Summer Symposium professional development opportunity are to support area education agency (AEA)-district teams in the following areas: Enhancing the implementation of Creative Curriculum instruction and assessment; Identifying needs of individual/groups of children to provide multi-tiered instruction; and Implementing evidence-based instruction in the essential concepts and skills in the content area of math related to the Iowa Core.

The AEA-district teams will select one of three professional development strands with the following presenters: Ms. Kate Werling, Early Childhood Consultant, Teaching Strategies Inc.; Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak, Professor, Kent State University; Dr. Barbara Dougherty, Professor, Iowa State University.

The Early Childhood Summer Symposium is scheduled for June 14–15, 2010, in the Des Moines area. Registration information will be sent in the next few weeks to the district contacts for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) and AEA Early Childhood Leadership Network. Capacity will be limited to 200 participants. For more information, contact Dee Gethmann at 515-281-5502 or dee.gethmann@iowa.gov.

Student Health and Nutrition

Equipment assistance grants available

The U.S. Department of Agriculture received funding to provide equipment assistance to eligible School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).

Please note that the 2010 NSLP Equipment Assistance Grants are similar in nature to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) equipment grants awarded in Fiscal Year 2009, *but should not be confused with them*. These grants must be distributed to SFAs via a competitive grant process that is fair and equitable. As mandated, grants will be awarded to SFAs that participate in the NSLP *and did not receive an ARRA grant funds for NSLP equipment assistance in FY 2009*. Priority will be given to schools where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced price meals under the NSLP.

Information on the grant process will be mailed in the next four weeks. Contact Patti Harding at patti.harding@iowa.gov for additional information.

Student Health and Nutrition

FRUITS, VEGGIES in your schools

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) is currently requesting applications for elementary schools to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program for the 2010-2011 school year. Federal law establishes the following participation criteria:

1. Only elementary schools may apply to participate;
2. Each interested school must submit an approvable application for participation annually; and
3. In the selection process, highest priority must be given to schools with the highest percentages of low income students to the maximum extent practicable.

Any elementary school may apply. School districts with one or more elementary schools with 50 percent or more of the students eligible for free or reduced price meals will be mailed applications in early March. If districts do not receive an application by mail and want to apply, please go to the DE's website at www.iowa.gov/educate/ >nutrition programs > Fruit and Vegetable Program and fill out a 2010-2011 FFVP application. Deadline for application submission is April 7, 2010.

For additional information, please contact Dean Flaws (dean.flaws@iowa.gov, 515-281-4032) or Carrie Scheidel (carrie.scheidel@iowa.gov, 515-281-4758).

Healthy Kids Act Nutrition Calculator

The Healthy Kids Act Nutrition Calculator is available on the Iowa Department of Education (DE) website at www.tinyurl.com/iowa-HKA.



The calculator will determine whether a food product meets the Healthy Kids Act Nutritional Content Standards for à la carte, vending, and regulated fundraising items sold to students during the school day. These standards will go into effect July 1, 2010.

Using information from a food product's nutrition facts label, enter all required fields into the Nutrition Calculator (calories, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and sugar) and click the "Check It!" button to see if the food item meets the nutrition standards.

A food product must meet all categories even though one category may be exempt. For example, fat may be exempt for a specific food product, but all other categories (i.e., sodium) need to meet the standards.

For additional information, please contact Patti Delger (515-281-5676 or patti.delger@iowa.gov) or Jennifer Neal (515-281-4542 or jenny.neal@iowa.gov).

Sharing information between programs

Information about the benefit eligibility status of an individual student may be shared between Child Nutrition Programs (CNPs) without the need for a specific release or waiver from the parent. This practice is strongly encouraged, but is not required, to ensure that children continue to receive meal benefits when they transfer schools.

CNPs include schools, day cares, and summer programs participating in U.S. Department of Agriculture funded meals programs. This sharing, should be done confidentially so only those with a need to know are provided the information. Sharing may include providing a copy of a processed application or a letter identifying the student's eligibility status and the date it was determined.

For most other purposes, information about a particular student's meal eligibility status cannot be released without notice to and written consent of the parent. For example, districts that wish to refer low-income children to back pack programs with local food banks, or students who meet income eligibility standards to Upward Bound, may do so only with the knowledge and specific written consent of parents. The waiver form signed by the parent must be specific as to what the information released will be used for. It does not matter that the child will benefit from a program. Districts may release eligibility information to some other federal or state education programs, without knowledge or consent of parents. In these situations, ONLY eligibility status may be released, not copies of applications or other documents. For questions about information release and other application or eligibility questions contact Nancy Christensen at 515-281-5663 or nancy.christensen@iowa.gov or the school meals consultant covering your district.



Legislative Update

The contact for all legislative items is Konni Cawiezell (konni.cawiezell@iowa.gov or 515-281-3399).

Second funnel date approaches

Hard to believe we are entering our eighth week of a shortened 80-day legislative session. This Friday marks the second funnel date where Senate bills must be reported out of House committees and vice versa for House legislation. Funnel does not impact bills in Ways & Means, Appropriations, Government Oversight and Leadership legislation. For education issues there remains only a handful of bills that may be considered compared to the significant number introduced by legislators.

As both the House and Senate focus on passing priority legislation, the tempo picks up for the numerous appropriation bills that must pass before adjournment. The joint Education Appropriations Committee will look to pass out their appropriation bill this week then the full Senate will debate it first. This legislation will contain multiple appropriations for several education programs, including the last installment for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Old Children, and may contain policy language that impacts districts.

Another bill of interest for school leaders will be the "Standings" Appropriation bill that contains the K-12 state aid, teacher compensation and professional development, and nonpublic transportation. This is often referred to as the last train out of the station because it provides legislators a final opportunity for policy changes, and technical or corrective changes to previously enrolled bills.

School leaders are encouraged to frequent the Iowa Department of Education's website for bills of interest and to see what has survived this week's second funnel deadline. Sine Die, or the last day of session, is March 31 – only 30 days away!

Legislative update available online

For the most up-to-date information on legislation related to Iowa education, please visit the Iowa Department of Education website at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1529&Itemid=2348.

This page provides regular updates during the Iowa



legislative session on bills related to education in Iowa. Information about new bills, including names, numbers, content, sponsors, and status in the legislative process are provided.

Users may sort bills by these categories by simply going to the "Sort by" box and choosing a category.

Bills are also color coded to indicate its status.

For more information, please contact Konni Cawiezell at konni.cawiezell@iowa.gov or 515-281-3399.





Legal Lessons

The contact for all Legal Lessons items is Carol Greta (carol.greta@iowa.gov or 515-281-8661).

Sunshine week, open meetings & more

Sunshine Week

March 14–20 is Sunshine Week. Now, granted, we all need some sunshine, but this is not a weather-related event. Rather, it is intended to educate the public about the importance of open government and the dangers of excessive and unnecessary secrecy. The timing coincides with the birthday of James Madison (4th President and “Father of the Bill of Rights”) and National Freedom of Information Day (this year, March 15). So, in honor of Sunshine Week, here are just a few of the *new* FAQs on the DE’s website at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/support/index.php?_m=knowledgebase&_a=view&Itemid=2457 regarding both open meetings and public records.

Open Meetings Law—Iowa Code Chapter 21

Q: How many board members make a quorum? If just that number are present, do they have to vote unanimously?

A: For school boards, Iowa Code section 279.4 states, “A majority of the board of directors of any school corporation shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business... .” For a board of five, the quorum is three. For a board of seven, the quorum is four. The quorum is the number necessary to conduct business. Unless the board has a local policy to the contrary, business items are passed by simple majority. For example, if three members are present and three is the quorum, it takes two votes to pass items. If one board member votes “nay” or abstains, the two “yea” votes carry the day.

Public Records Law—Iowa Code Chapter 22

Q: To what extent may a public official ask a requester why the record is being requested?

A: This is a question that may not be asked. The reason a requester wants the record is irrelevant. Records which are open to public examination must be produced no matter what the reason for the request. The public can examine and copy a record just because it’s there. However, if a request is not clear, the official may ask questions that assist the official in focusing on precisely WHAT is being requested.

Q: To what extent may a public official ask a requester for ID?

A: *Usually*, this is not allowed. Members of the public usually should not be required to identify themselves in order to get access to public records. However, if a record is only open to certain people for limited purposes (for example, parent asking for student records), then the lawful custodian may need to ask for additional information to assure the record is only provided to those entitled to see it.

Both

Q: If a citizen has a question or complaint about either open meetings or public records, to whom may the citizen turn?

A: Citizens who have inquiries or complaints about public records or open meetings may call the Iowa Citizens’ Aide/ Ombudsman Office – toll free at 888-IA-OMBUD (888-426-6283.)

Snow Days Predictions

Under the category of “you can’t make this stuff up,” a few years ago a school administrator received a call about this time of year from a parent who wanted to know “when will you be scheduling next year’s snow days?”

The parent wasn’t talking about make-up days.

The parent wanted to know when school would be canceled due to inclement weather!

If any of you can answer that for next year, you are in the wrong business!



DE & NEW MEDIA

Don't forget that the Iowa Department of Education is on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Get regular updates on education news, facts about education in Iowa, and announcements.

Go to www.iowa.gov/educate and click on the respective icons.

Calendar

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| March 1 | • Special Education Balances |
| March 1 | • AEA Budget—last date for public hearing |
| March 25-26 | • 11th Iowa Special Education Law Conference, Dubuque |
| March 30 | • Open Enrollment deadline for receiving district to act on timely-Filed open enrollment application 281-17.0(2). |
| March 31 | • Annual audit submission extension request |
| April 10 | • SBRC hearing Request |

[Click here for a complete Iowa Department of Education Calendar](#)

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