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FOR IOWA EDUCATORS

School Leader Update

November 2013

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Assessment task force named

Nineteen Iowans have been named to a task force that is studying the state's assessment needs and will recommend a new state test for public and accredited nonpublic schools.

The Assessment Task Force was established as part of [House File 215](#), the landmark education reform bill adopted by Iowa lawmakers. Recommendations are expected by January 1, 2015. During the 2012 legislative session, the Legislature mandated the Iowa Assessments for state and federal accountability purposes. During the 2013 session, the Legislature opened the door for a successor assessment administered by Iowa Testing Programs to be allowed for accountability purposes.

The State Board of Education was directed to create administrative rules that specify for implementation by the

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Fine-tuning our standards and assessments



There's been a lot of buzz in Iowa lately around our statewide academic standards and assessments. This is an important discussion. We know that clear standards, as well as assessments that gauge how students have progressed in meeting those standards, are a critical piece of a great education system.

If our goal is to make sure Iowa students are ready for college and career training after high school, we must have clear, uniform standards to which curriculum, instruction, professional development and assessment are all aligned. We also know we have a lot of work to do to implement the Iowa Core standards and align our state assessment to those standards.

I want to emphasize that I deeply support the work of the Iowa Core and have since I was a school administrator. It's simply the right work for Iowa. The Iowa Core raised the bar on what we expect from all students across the state. But what I really appreciated as a school administrator is that the Iowa Core allows schools the flexibility to determine how they help students meet those standards.

For example, all students are expected to learn Algebra I. But you might find a majority of 8th grade kids taking Algebra I in one district, while in another you'll find most kids take it in ninth grade. And you're also likely to find that the way Algebra I is taught in one district is not the same as it is in another. And this is a good thing. The point is to set the standard at the state level and then get out of the way so that teachers can tailor instruction to fit the needs of their students and local communities.

I also want to emphasize that the Iowa Core is truly an Iowa solution.

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Website changes: See what's new

The Iowa Department of Education's website, educateiowa.gov, has undergone some changes in an effort to meet a new standard for all state agency websites. These changes will result in a more functional and secure website. You'll notice that the website has a different look now, but it is organized in much the same way as the previous version.

One nice change is a working search bar in the upper right-hand corner of the website. This custom search bar will allow all users to more easily search the content of web pages and documents. This was not a reliable function on the old platform, which left many users to default to an A to Z list to search for important information. (The A to Z list still exists in the navigation bar of the new platform as well.)

In the short term, some links within the website may be broken, and some bookmarks previously used to save web pages may not work. While the Department is working to redirect these links, some may be missed because of the large size and volume of the website. Your patience is appreciated as work continues to fix any issues associated with this website transition.

Questions about troubleshooting or locating information on the website should be directed to Lisa Albers, the Iowa Department of Education's web content manager, at lisa.albers@iowa.gov or 515-281-0972.

To submit feedback about the website, visit <https://www.educateiowa.gov/website-issue>.

Iowa teachers named finalists for math, science teaching

Five Iowa teachers have been named state finalists for the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

The finalists in math are Allysen Lovstuen of Decorah High School, Brian Reece of Central Academy in Des Moines, and Jeff Marks of Roosevelt High School in Des Moines. The finalists in science are Marcia Powell of West Delaware High School in Manchester and Shannon McLaughlin of Norwalk High School.

The Iowa finalists' applications have been submitted to the national selection committee. One math and one science award-winner may be selected to represent Iowa. Award-winners receive \$10,000 and a trip to Washington, D.C., where they will participate in an award ceremony and receptions, professional development programs and discussions with policy-makers on how to improve math and science education.

The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are the nation's highest honors specifically for kindergarten through 12th grade teachers of math and science. More than 4,200 teachers have been recognized since Congress established the program in 1983. The National Science Foundation administers the awards on behalf of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Awards are given to math and science teachers from each of the 50 states and four U.S. jurisdictions. The program recognizes teachers who develop and implement a high-quality instructional program that is informed by content knowledge and enhances student learning. Awards alternate annually between elementary and secondary teachers.

Iowa's finalists were chosen by a panel of science and math educators from across the state. Read more about each finalist on the Iowa Department of Education's [website](#).

Maquoketa teacher named 2014 Teacher of the Year

Jane Schmidt, a longtime teacher known for her leadership, her ability to connect with students, and her commitment to improvement, is the 2014 Iowa Teacher of the Year, Gov. Terry Branstad announced on Oct. 18. Schmidt, a 30-plus-year teaching veteran from Delmar, is an eighth-grade literacy and language arts teacher at Maquoketa Middle School in the Maquoketa Community School District.

"I love schools, and I've never been tired of teaching," Schmidt said. "It's always been my passion, and it's always given me purpose. I think that's all we ask of a career – that, and a commitment to continuous improvement." Read more about the announcement on the Iowa Department of Education's [website](#).

Q & A with Jane Schmidt, 2014 Teacher of the Year

Jane Schmidt, an eighth-grade literacy and language arts teacher at Maquoketa Middle School, has been named the 2014 Iowa Teacher of the Year. Schmidt, a 33-year teaching veteran, serves as a teacher mentor at her school and, in a new role this fall, she coaches educators, refines curriculum and gauges the effects of teaching practices across the school district. She has two master's degrees and earned National Board Certification in 2004.

Schmidt lives in rural Delmar with her husband, Brian, and two black Labrador Retrievers, Ozzie and Annie. She has three grown children: Kate, Ben, and Sam. Her hobbies include reading, writing, baking and riding a four-wheeler around the farm.



1. You spent years in special education, and have segued to literacy. Why the change?

Through my work with special needs students, I discovered a passion for both reading and writing, which led me to pursue my endorsements in both reading and language arts as well as National Board Certification in the area of Early Adolescence English Language Arts. I wanted to expand the number of students I was working with in order to share my enthusiasm for literacy. Many special needs students are integrated in the general education classroom, and with my background in special education, it helps me to assist them to be successful through differentiation of instruction. In May, I completed my second Master's in Education from Western Illinois University in the area of Educational Leadership in order to take on other leadership opportunities and share my passion for teaching with other educators. As a teacher, I can be a part of making changes in my classroom and in my building, but in order to assist with district-wide changes I felt I needed to attain my master's degree in Educational Leadership. I felt strongly that I wanted to assist with school improvement in our district.

2. What is your No. 1 highlight in teaching?

Maintaining enthusiasm throughout my career while always striving for continuous improvement. These two qualities have kept me in the teaching profession over these many years. It is exciting to watch students become fluent readers and reflective writers. I love to integrate technology to inspire students along the road of learning. It is gratifying to see students achieve success and find their passion and purpose in a career.

Read the complete Q & A with Jane Schmidt on the Iowa Department of Education's [website](#).

10 districts identified for competency-based education grants

The 10 districts that will receive grants to engage in Iowa's development of a framework for transformation to competency-based education (CBE) have been selected.

The districts that will begin this work Nov. 19 are Cedar Rapids, Collins-Maxwell, East Union, Howard-Winneshiek, Marshalltown, Mason City, Muscatine, Nevada, Spirit Lake, and Van Meter.

If your district is interested in CBE, follow the collaborative on www.IACompEd.com, where you will find relevant videos, links to webinars, and other communication about the work, and #IACompEd for real-time updates on collaborative workdays.

Continued from page 1, Director Buck

Iowa was the last state to adopt statewide standards in 2008. Iowa legislators led this shift away from locally determined standards, which had caused inconsistent expectations in schools across the state. Iowa educators identified and wrote the essential concepts and skills that make up the Iowa Core in literacy, math, science, social studies, and 21st century learning skills. In 2010, with approval from the State Board of Education, Iowa adopted the Common Core State Standards as part of the Iowa Core in math and literacy. While there were similarities between the Common Core and the Iowa Core in math and literacy, the Common Core embodied some higher academic standards. The Iowa Core was, and remains, a state initiative.

As I said before, we have a lot of work to do in the areas of standards and assessment. It's clear that there's a fair amount of confusion around what implementing the Iowa Core means and looks like in schools. And there are a lot of questions about whether our state assessment is the right measure.

While schools are required by Iowa Code to administer the Iowa Assessments for accountability purposes, we're carefully weighing our options because we must have a high-quality state test that is aligned to our standards. Anything less would be selling our schools and students short.

We're tackling this assessment work in a few ways. First, the Iowa Department of Education recently convened a statewide Assessment Task Force, as directed by the Legislature. This task force will recommend a statewide assessment that is aligned with the Iowa Core. You can read more about this task force on our website at www.educateiowa.gov.

Second, Iowa and other states have an opportunity next spring to field test new assessments developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, of which Iowa is a governing state. This field test will give schools a chance not only to provide feedback on the new assessments while they're under development, but also to provide input to help guide the work of the Assessment Task Force.

I look forward to working on these issues with you. Once again, thank you for listening, and thanks for all you do for your schools and students every day.



Continued from page 1, Task force

2016-17 school year a new statewide assessment of student progress in grades 3-11. That new assessment must meet the following criteria:

- Align with the Iowa Core
- Accurately describe student achievement and growth for the purposes of accountability
- Provide valid, reliable and fair measures of student progress toward college or career readiness
- Must have been piloted in Iowa schools

The Assessment Task Force represents a cross-section of education stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, representatives of state and regional agencies and associations, and parents and business leaders. Members of the Assessment Task Force are as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Ruth Allison | Administrative Consultant, Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Des Moines |
| Catherine Blando | Educator, Iowa City |
| Shelly Bosovich | Executive Director, Des Moines Public Schools, Des Moines |
| Kathy Brenny | Consultant, Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency, Storm Lake |
| Martha Bruckner | Superintendent, Council Bluffs Community School District, Council Bluffs |
| Lowell Ernst | Director of K-12 Instruction, Pella Community School District, Pella |
| Diana Gonzalez | Chief Academic Officer, Board of Regents, Urbandale |
| Harry Heiligenthal | Leadership Development Director, Iowa Association of School Boards, Des Moines |
| Tina Hoffman | Regional Administrator, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, Cedar Rapids |
| Mark Lane | Principal, Jensen Elementary, Urbandale |
| Jo Ellen Latham | Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Southeast Polk Community School District, Pleasant Hill |
| Jane Lindaman | Associate Superintendent for Educational Services, Waterloo Community School District, Waterloo |
| Jon McKenzie | Director of Assessment & Comprehensive Improvement, Area Education Agency 267, Cedar Falls |
| Angela Olson | Associate Principal, Xavier High School, Cedar Rapids |
| Elliott Smith | Executive Director, Iowa Business Council, Des Moines |
| David Tilly | Deputy Director, Iowa Department of Education, Des Moines |
| Tammy Wawro | President, Iowa State Education Association, Des Moines |
| Melanie Wirtz | Teacher, Union High School, La Porte City |
| Karen Woltman | Parent, Swisher |

For more information on state commissions and task forces established as part of 2013 legislation, visit the Iowa Department of Education's [website](#).



Rtl at work

If you think Response to Intervention, or Rtl, is aimed only at struggling students, teachers at Van Meter Elementary School would beg to differ. This year, seven high-performing fifth graders jumped a year-and-a-half ahead in math.

“That whole group of students was put into a hybrid class in which we blend sixth-grade math standards with pre-algebra standards,” said Janelle Thompson, one of the elementary’s two instructional strategists. “The teacher is fully assessing each student and targeting instruction, and it’s all standards-based. And the students are loving it.”

Though Van Meter Elementary had previously implemented many facets of Rtl, the school joined 10 percent of Iowa’s schools this fall to officially launch Rtl. And Van Meter already is seeing results.

In just one year, the elementary school saw an average proficiency increase of 8.1 percent in reading, and 8.7 percent in math, among the third-through-fifth graders.

Read more about the school’s progress [here](#).

Application for Green Ribbon Schools

Applications to be recognized as Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) must be submitted to the Iowa Department of Education by Jan. 10.

The U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools (ED-GRS) recognition award honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools and districts that are exemplary in three areas: 1) reducing environmental impact and costs, including waste, water, energy use and alternative transportation; 2) improving the health and wellness of students and staff, covering environmental health and nutrition and fitness; and, 3) providing effective sustainability education, requiring robust environmental education that engages science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)

civic skills and green career pathways. The award is meant to encourage schools and school districts to consider matters of facilities, health and environment comprehensively. Schools must be high achieving in all three areas, not just one.



Green schools are critical to schools’ fiscal health and our nation’s economy. Much-needed improvements to school facilities create new jobs and save schools money. They prepare students to participate in the green economy, strengthen the nation’s energy security and conserve precious natural resources. Healthy behaviors, environmental education and green facilities are as vital to individual students as they are to the nation. High standards of nutrition, fitness and facility conditions improve student and staff health, attendance and productivity, and enhance achievement and engagement, particularly STEM.

The Iowa Department of Education will review applications based on the applicant’s demonstrated progress toward the goals of each of the three pillars. Nominees demonstrating exemplary achievement in all three pillars and every element will be ranked highest. The Department is permitted to nominate as many as four PK-12 school nominations and one school district nomination.

The application is available on the website: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/school-facilities/green-ribbon-schools>. For more information about the program, contact Gary Schwartz, facilities consultant, phone 515-281-4743 or gary.schwartz@iowa.gov.

Data and Reporting

Certified enrollment update

Key individuals in each district are essential to the success of the student-level collections known as Student Reporting in Iowa. The work done by these individuals is critical to generating accurate certified enrollment results using student-level data. Thank you for your time and effort in completing this year's certified enrollment.

Among the public school districts:

- 90 percent utilized the September testing period to upload files.
- 50 percent had all data available in Certified Enrollment on Oct. 8.
- 94 percent certified on or before Oct. 15.

When combining the three criteria, 159 districts (46 percent) met each of the three established targets. Today, the districts below are being recognized as achieving this year's gold level performance standard. Districts identified with (2) were also recognized in Fall 2012 as platinum performers in November 2012's School Leader Update:

Gold and Platinum Districts

| | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Adel DeSoto Minburn | Cedar Falls (2) | East Buchanan | Highland (2) |
| Allamakee | Central Clinton (2) | East Greene | Hubbard-Radcliffe |
| Alta | Chariton (2) | East Marshall | Hudson |
| Ames (2) | Charles City | East Union | Independence |
| Anamosa (2) | Cherokee | Eastern Allamakee | Iowa Falls |
| Andrew | Clarksville (2) | Edgewood-Colesburg | Iowa Valley |
| Aplington-Parkersburg | Clearfield | Eldora-New Providence (2) | Jefferson-Scranton |
| Armstrong-Ringsted | Clinton (2) | Estherville Lincoln Central | Johnston |
| Ar-We-Va (2) | Colfax-Mingo | Farragut | Keota |
| Audubon | College (2) | Fort Dodge | Knoxville (2) |
| A-H-S-T (2) | Coon Rapids-Bayard | Fredericksburg | Laurens-Marathon |
| Ballard | Corning (2) | George-Little Rock | Lenox |
| Baxter (2) | Corwith-Wesley | Gilmore City-Bradgate (2) | Lewis Central (2) |
| BCLUW | Dallas Center-Grimes | Glidden-Ralston (2) | Linn-Mar |
| Bedford | Davenport | Nodaway Valley | Lone Tree (2) |
| Benton | Davis County (2) | Griswold (2) | Manson Northwest Webster |
| Bettendorf | Delwood (2) | Grundy Center | Maquoketa (2) |
| Brooklyn-Guernsey-Malcom | Dike-New Hartford | H-L-V | Maquoketa Valley |
| Burlington | Dubuque | Hamburg | Marion |
| Calamus-Wheatland (2) | Dunkerton | Hampton-Dumont | Marshalltown (2) |
| Carlisle | Boyer Valley (2) | Harlan | MOC-Floyd Valley |
| Carroll (2) | Earlham | Harris-Lake Park (2) | Mid-Prairie |

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Data and Reporting continued

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| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Missouri Valley | Pleasantville | Springville | Waverly-Shell Rock |
| Morning Sun | Pocahontas Area | Storm Lake (2) | Wayne |
| Mount Ayr | Prescott | Stratford (2) | Webster City |
| Mount Pleasant | Rock Valley (2) | Sumner | West Bend-Mallard (2) |
| Mount Vernon | Rockwell City-Lytton | Tipton | West Branch |
| Murray | Roland-Story (2) | Treynor | Western Dubuque |
| Nashua-Plainfield (2) | Rudd-Rockford-Marble Rock (2) | Tri-Center | West Harrison |
| Nevada (2) | St Ansgar (2) | Tri-County | West Marshall |
| Newell-Fonda | Sergeant Bluff-Luton (2) | Twin Cedars (2) | Westwood (2) |
| Northeast | Seymour (2) | Underwood | Woodbine |
| North Linn | West Fork CSD (2) | Union (2) | Woodbury Central |
| North Polk (2) | Sibley-Ocheyedan (2) | United | |
| North Scott | Sigourney | Valley (2) | |
| Northwood-Kensett | Sioux Center (2) | Ventura | |
| Oelwein | Sioux Central | Villisca | |
| Orient-Macksburg | Sioux City | Waco (2) | |
| PCM (2) | Solon | East Sac County (2) | |
| Pekin | Southeast Warren | Washington (2) | |
| Pella | South Tama County | Waterloo | |
| Pleasant Valley | Spirit Lake | Waukee (2) | |

Early Childhood Preschool Programs

TeachTown: Serving Young Children with ASD

Since 2010, the Iowa Department of Education has partnered with Keystone Area Education Agency to provide professional development and funding for the TeachTown software program for eligible preschool children, ages 3-5 years old, who are at-risk or identified as having Autism Spectrum Disorder.

TeachTown is a computer-based program that combines online learning with classroom activities in six key learning domains: adaptive, cognitive, language, language arts, mathematics, and social/emotional. The engaging and motivating lessons are scaffolded for individual children, and data on a child's progress are regularly available.

Families can be provided access to the curriculum at home as well, promoting the school-home connection. The TeachTown program uses research-based strategies from Applied Behavior Analysis, Discrete-Trial Training, Pivotal Response Training, and Errorless Learning while reinforcing the generalization of skills.



For additional information, including which AEAs are currently participating, please contact Betsy Lin at betsy.lin@iowa.gov.



Nutrition and Health Services

Free HIV/AIDS/STD pregnancy prevention curriculum

The grant supporting HIV/AIDS Prevention now includes only survey activities in Iowa. The program still has a limited number of curricula materials available for the various state-approved programs. Schools will be provided with these materials free on a first-come, first-served basis.

The following curricula are available. For more information, look at the publisher's website.

“Draw the Line/Respect the Line 6, 7, 8” helps students develop personal sexual limits and practice the skills needed to maintain those limits when challenged.

ETR publisher: <http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebpDetail&PageID=624>

“Promoting Health Among Teens! Abstinence-Only” students learn about puberty, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, and pregnancy prevention.

Select Media Inc. publisher: <http://www.selectmedia.org/programs/phatab.html>

“Reducing the Risk” curriculum for high school youth emphasizes teaching refusal statements, delay statements and alternative actions students can use to abstain or protect.

ETR Publisher: <http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebpDetail&PageID=129>

“All4You” curriculum is composed of 10 classroom sessions and four service-learning visits. It targets alternative high school students between the ages of 14 and 18.

ETR Publisher: <http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebpDetail&PageID=627>

“Making Proud Choices” curriculum can be used with middle-high school youth.

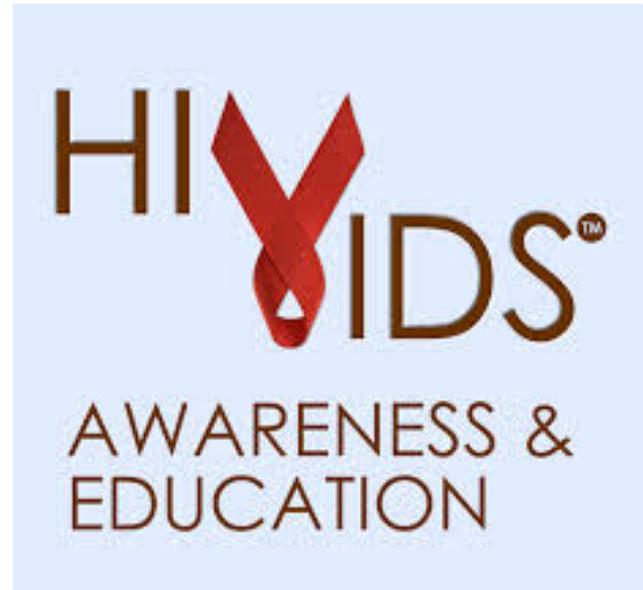
Select Media, Inc. publisher: <http://www.selectmedia.org/programs/choices.html>

“Focus on Youth” curriculum is a prevention intervention for African American youth.

ETR publisher: <http://recapp.etr.org/recapp/index.cfm?fuseaction=pages.ebpDetail&PageID=125>

“American Red Cross HIV/AIDS Facts Book” is a basic HIV/AIDS “101” facts book about HIV/AIDS that would be most useful in a classroom or library location. It is not a curriculum.

Email Janelle Loney with material requests at janelle.loney@iowa.gov.



Nutrition and Health Services continued

Empowering parents for school wellness

Would your school like to increase parents' understanding of the nutritional value of school meals and empower parents to be champions of school wellness? Team Nutrition is partnering with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation to provide 20 Iowa school districts with Empowered Parents for School Wellness workshops. The free one-and-a-half-hour interactive workshop will be provided by a registered dietitian during February or March, and will be tailored with your school input to emphasize the points most crucial to your district.

After the workshop parents will be able to debunk the old myths and share new truths about school meals with their peers; explain to others how school breakfast improves learning; champion for school wellness changes in your district; and support the district's nutrition program.

To receive an application for the Empowered Parents for School Wellness workshops, contact Patti Delger at patti.delger@iowa.gov. The applications are due Nov. 27.





Legislative Update

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

Cormack at the Capitol

Fore! Education reform coming through

Scotland is the birthplace of golf. My grandfather was 100 percent Scottish and farmed near Moorland, which was named after the treeless, boggy ground in that area that reminded the Scots who settled there of their homeland. Tiling has turned that area into prime farm ground, but before the tiling took place, the treeless plains had the look of the historic golf courses we watch British Opens sometimes played on today, with tall, windswept grasses gently swaying across the prairie.

I golfed as a child and in college (as part of my rigorous Mankato State physical education curriculum also including tennis, bowling, and billiards); I earned a solid “B” in that class. Since then, I have hardly touched a club until last fall, when I moved across the road from the Woodland Hills Golf Course. I am golfing again (using the term extremely charitably), and in no way, shape or form have utilized any of the 25 percent of my Scottish background in a positive golfing manner. I think I inherited the concept of treeless golf in that I have a unique ability to hit every tree of every size on a consistent basis. If graded today, I could only hope for a generous “C-minus” on the golfing report card.

Please don't even ask to look at my actual scorecard from any of my rounds, either.



I think of one particular golf shot this summer that draws parallels to where I think we are on education policy. This shot, like many, managed to find a tree far to the right. However, it struck the tree solidly and somehow bounced perfectly to the middle of the fairway. Anyone who walked by and only saw where I teed off from and where the ball was would think I had hit a perfectly planned shot. Which, of course, I tried to convince my playing partner was exactly the case.

In the political world, we have had two legislative sessions with great controversy and argument about where this state should go in educational policy. As with any line of work, those of us who work in educational policy in Des Moines could look back at items and see things we would do differently. Yet, as we enter into the implementation phase of education reform, Senate File 2284 and House File 215, from the past two years, I think we ended up in a good spot. However we got here, I think the ball is sitting solidly in the middle of the fairway. The Iowa educational system has arrived at a point of opportunity.

Teacher leadership planning grants have just concluded their application process and we are excited at the extremely positive response we have received. As districts in Iowa study how they can best put the teacher leadership and compensation plan into practice for their local needs, an innovative spirit is being unleashed across our state. Districts will then decide whether to apply for funds for the 2014-15 school year in the coming months. I fully expect that as districts explore how they would do this program, there will also be tremendous interest in applying for those funds, as well. Iowa will be leading the way for other states on how to unveil a program that impacts schools statewide while still respecting local choices that best serve individual district needs.

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Legislative Update continued

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As I shared in my previous column, there is a process moving forward on extended learning programs. In attending meetings directed by a legislative study with parents, providers and students, many ideas are emerging on how to deliver services to students in need. The emergence of academic inclusion in after-school programming, for example, is an underreported but exciting trend where students are being impacted in a positive manner. We are finding good, bipartisan support for giving suggested measures in this area a fair and open look in the legislative process.

Community college programming for adult literacy programs will be funded for the first time in our state, joining virtually every other state that has already done this. The gift of literacy opens doors to lowans and allows them to widen their individual opportunities. In addition, major expansions of workforce training in the community college system have taken place the last two sessions. We are establishing a multi-year commission of experts who are studying workforce issues; it remains a high priority to legislators, as well as this agency, to keep exploring how to best provide services in this area.

Since I've been at the Department, no single item has had broader support in both the educational and political arenas than competency-based education. The task force on competency-based instruction will be concluding its work this month and will follow shortly with a list of recommendations to the Legislature. Several districts are launching competency-based instructional programs in their districts, and this fall many will be awarded part of the \$100,000 provided by the Legislature for these efforts. We are moving solidly in the direction of having education being measured by what a student has learned and knows as the driving factor in evaluating their progress.

The Iowa Reading Research Center is now fully operational and will continue to grow in importance in sharing with local school districts what is best practice in literacy instruction. I wish all Iowa educators would have my perspective of working with a steering group that is full of experts in the field who are working collaboratively to assist the center in their efforts. Truly, it is refreshing to watch folks from the center and from the advisory group who have one goal in mind: how to best serve kids in need.

Long-term commissions and task forces are intensely studying major areas of educational policy. As a former legislator, I think the current legislators were right to trust lowans to gather and to dialogue in a manner where the level of politics is much lower than in a traditional legislative committee. While legislators and the Governor continue to make policy, they will receive recommendations from folks who have the interest to study individual topics in great detail. These task forces are generating ideas that are the basis for laws refined by legislators. Teacher leadership and compensation is the largest example of that and an ongoing commission will make recommendations on individual district plans for funding those plans after its review. Evaluation, assessment, suicide prevention, reporting requirements and many other topics are actively being addressed in this manner.

The work by local districts and exploration of major topics in this state is a great step. Washington, D.C. is struggling to do so the same, reminding me of another actual golf shot I hit. This time when I hit a tree, it bounced off of a nearby building and landed harmlessly behind me. They seem to be struck in a bipartisan sand trap. I'm glad to be in Iowa where our shots



are landing safely in the fairway and are ready to hit a great second shot. Just don't ask me to be the one who hits it.



Legal Lessons

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

Time to give thanks!

Fall is in full swing. In just a few short weeks, it will be Thanksgiving. I wanted to take some time to reflect on the things I am thankful for this year. To put my thoughts in perspective I must share that last month a former classmate of mine unexpectedly lost his 1-year-old son when he did not wake up. When I heard the news, I was overwhelmed with feelings of shock, unexplained sadness, love and support for this family. I immediately went to check on my two kiddos, who were fast asleep, and I kissed them both on the forehead. I cannot imagine the grief that comes from losing your own child and I hope I never have to.

Since this loss happened, I remind myself every day to appreciate family, friends, and the people who we have around us. We never know what tomorrow brings, so it is important to live in the moment. This year I am incredibly thankful for the people around me – my wonderful husband, two fabulous kiddos, a loving family, great friends, outstanding co-workers, and the dedicated people I interact with in the education community. This Thanksgiving I remind you to live in the moment, to enjoy every day, to let others know they are appreciated, and to be thankful for those around you. Have a Happy Thanksgiving!

Branstad Signs Proclamation Celebrating School Safety Week

America's Safe Schools week was Oct. 20-26. To commemorate the week, Gov. Branstad signed a proclamation celebrating Iowa's support of the national week of observance. Members of the Iowa School Safety Coalition were also present for the event. Iowa Department of Education Director Brad Buck said: "We have to work together in our communities and as a state to keep Iowa's students and schools safe. Part of that is providing school leaders the expertise they need to put in place quality safety plans, which will help schools prepare for, and respond to, threats to facilities, students and staff members. The Iowa Department of Education is committed to helping schools provide a safe learning environment."

To recognize the week, the Iowa Safe Schools Coalition released a new school safety bulletin each day focusing on a different topic. The topics covered were 1) Security at Special Events Held on School Grounds; 2) Working with Local Responders 3) Access Control; 4) School Security Visitor Programs; 5) Lockdown Procedures. These bulletins and all past bulletins may now be accessed on the Iowa School Safety Coalition website at <http://www.iowaschoolsafety.org/>. *Continued on page 15*



Legal Lessons continued

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Background checks and the role of BOEE

During last year's legislative session, a new law was passed which closed the gap on the requirement for school district employees to have background checks. The newly passed Iowa Code section 279.69 requires that all school district employees have a background check conducted in compliance with various Iowa laws by July 1, 2014. This new law covers those school employees (part-time, substitutes, or other contract employees) who are not already covered by other statutes. Since the new law was passed, the Department has received several questions about who should be subject to background checks this year. The short answer is that school districts need to do background checks on all non-certified employees. The procedure for licensed teachers under Iowa Code section 279.13 and bus drivers under Iowa Code section 321.375 remains the same. Below are all of the relevant code sections that are applicable to background checks. School districts should maintain documentation to demonstrate that background checks have taken place.

Iowa Code § 272.2(17) – BOEE Licenses <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/ACO/IC/LINC/2013.Section.272.2.PDF>

Iowa Code § 279.13(1)(b) - Applicants for a 279.13 Contract (Teaching) Position <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/ACO/IC/LINC/2013.Section.279.13.PDF>

Iowa Admin. Code r. 282 -- 20.3 – BOEE Renewals for all licenses
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/ACO/IAC/LINC/10-16-2013.Rule.282.20.3.pdf>

Iowa Code § 321.375(2) - School Bus Drivers
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/DOCS/ACO/IC/LINC/2013.Section.321.375.PDF>

New! Iowa Code § 279.69 – All Remaining Applicants and School Employees
<https://www.educateiowa.gov/documents/laws-and-regulations/2013/11/27969-school-employees-background-investigations-0>

BOEE's Role

Pursuant to Iowa Code section 272.2(17), the Board of Educational Examiners conducts a state background check, a national fingerprint background check, and a check of the sex offender and child and dependent adult abuse registries on all initial applicants for Iowa licensure. For renewals, the Board checks criminal history information available to the general public (Iowa Courts Online), as well as the three registries listed above. Certain forcible felonies and any criminal sexual offense involving a child will automatically disqualify a candidate for initial licensure or renewal. All other criminal convictions or founded abuse reports are evaluated using several factors set forth in the Board's administrative rules, including the number of convictions or founded abuse reports, the time lapsed since the last conviction or founded abuse report, and any evidence of rehabilitation provided by the applicant. For further questions on the role of the Board, contact Darcy Lane at 515-242-6506 or darcy.lane@iowa.gov.

NSLA trumps FERPA

Student information may fall under the protection of more than one law or statute administered by more than one federal agency. This can create confusion. One area frequently questioned is sharing information about students qualified for free or reduced-price meals. The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) has stricter provisions than Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA). In this instance, NSLA trumps FERPA and is the guiding regulation when looking at confidentiality issues. The NSLA restricts who may have access to this information without parental consent to persons directly connected with **the administration or enforcement** of certain programs. A chart is available on page 71 in the Eligibility Manual (revised August 2013): <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/EliMan.pdf>. Programs and the types of information allowed to be released are outlined in this chart.

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Legal Lessons continued

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Some frequently questioned scenarios:

- To enroll a student in a backpack program sending food home over weekends and holidays, or to sign up a family for holiday meal donation: Information cannot be shared without parental consent. This is a local program.
- A staff person responsible for collecting school fees must have parental consent to receive the information. The usual method is via the fee waiver at enrollment.
- A principal, guidance counselor, or teacher at a school that operates several programs authorized under NSLA to receive free and reduced-price eligibility information. It depends on the staff person's role with the authorized program, not the job title. To receive the information without parental consent, there must be a legitimate "need to know" to provide a service or carry out an authorized activity of the program. It is recommended that a written agreement be signed between the determining official and the receiving program administrator. Appendix C of the Eligibility Manual provides a template for such an agreement.

For further questions about FERPA, contact Nicole Proesch at 515-281-8661 or nicole.proesch@iowa.gov. For further questions on NSLA or FNS, contact Ann Feilmann at 515-281-4757 or ann.feilmann@iowa.gov.

Students with Disabilities

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

Talk about #IATLC on Twitter!

Iowa school administrators who are moving ahead with development of local teacher leadership and compensation systems are encouraged to talk to each other about this exciting opportunity on Twitter. The hashtag is #IATLC.

Many districts applied for planning grants, which provide resources to facilitate a local planning process. For more information on Iowa's teacher leadership and compensation system, visit:

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/teacher-leadership-and-compensation-system>

Calendar

- November 15 • Exhibits and requests for the Dec. 17 School Budget Review Committee hearing and corrective action plans for negative unspent authority

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



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