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**MINIMUM CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVAL
OF IOWA ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS
AND
CURRICULUM REQUIRED BY LAW IN IOWA SCHOOLS**

3-49

State of Iowa
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Curriculum Division
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

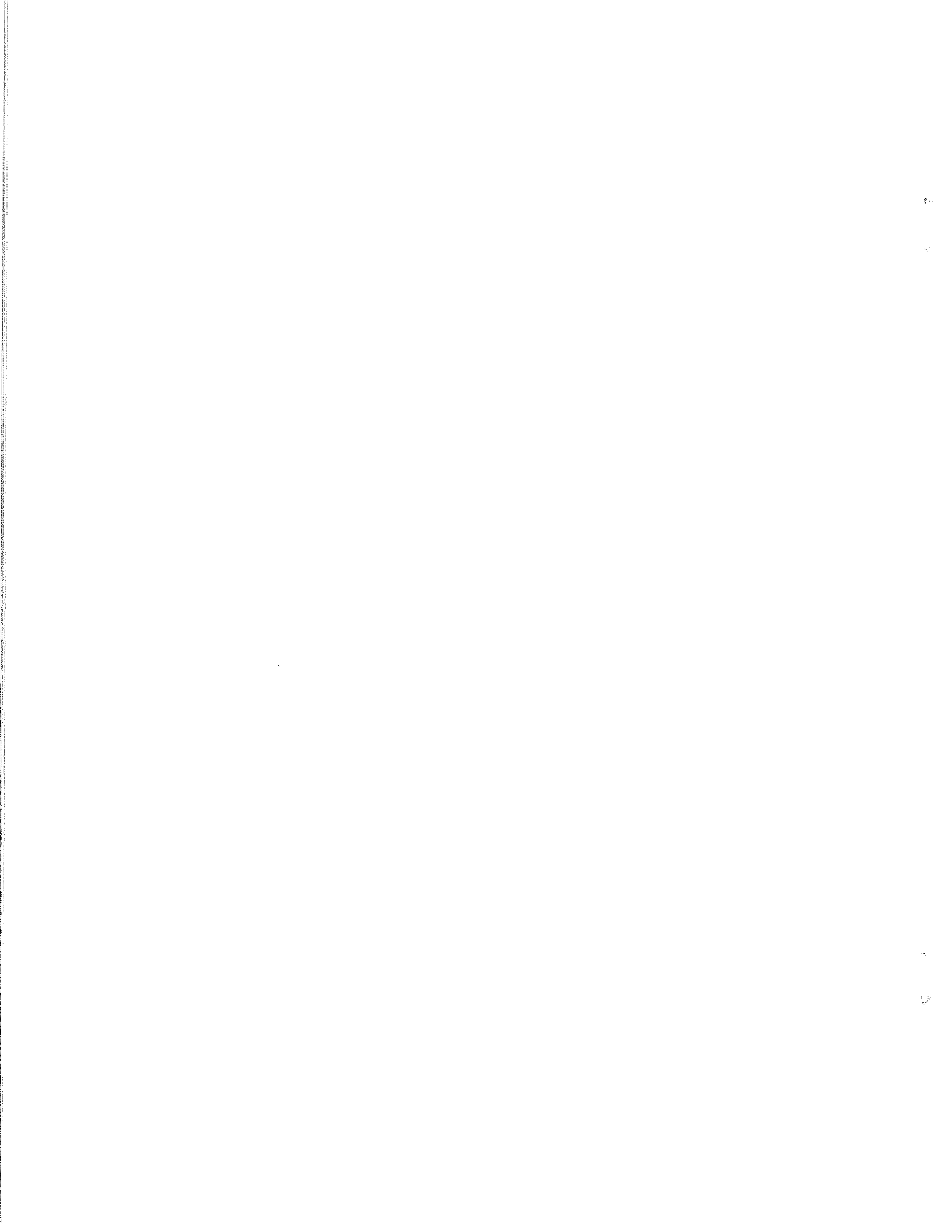
1973 Curriculum Circular No. 1-C

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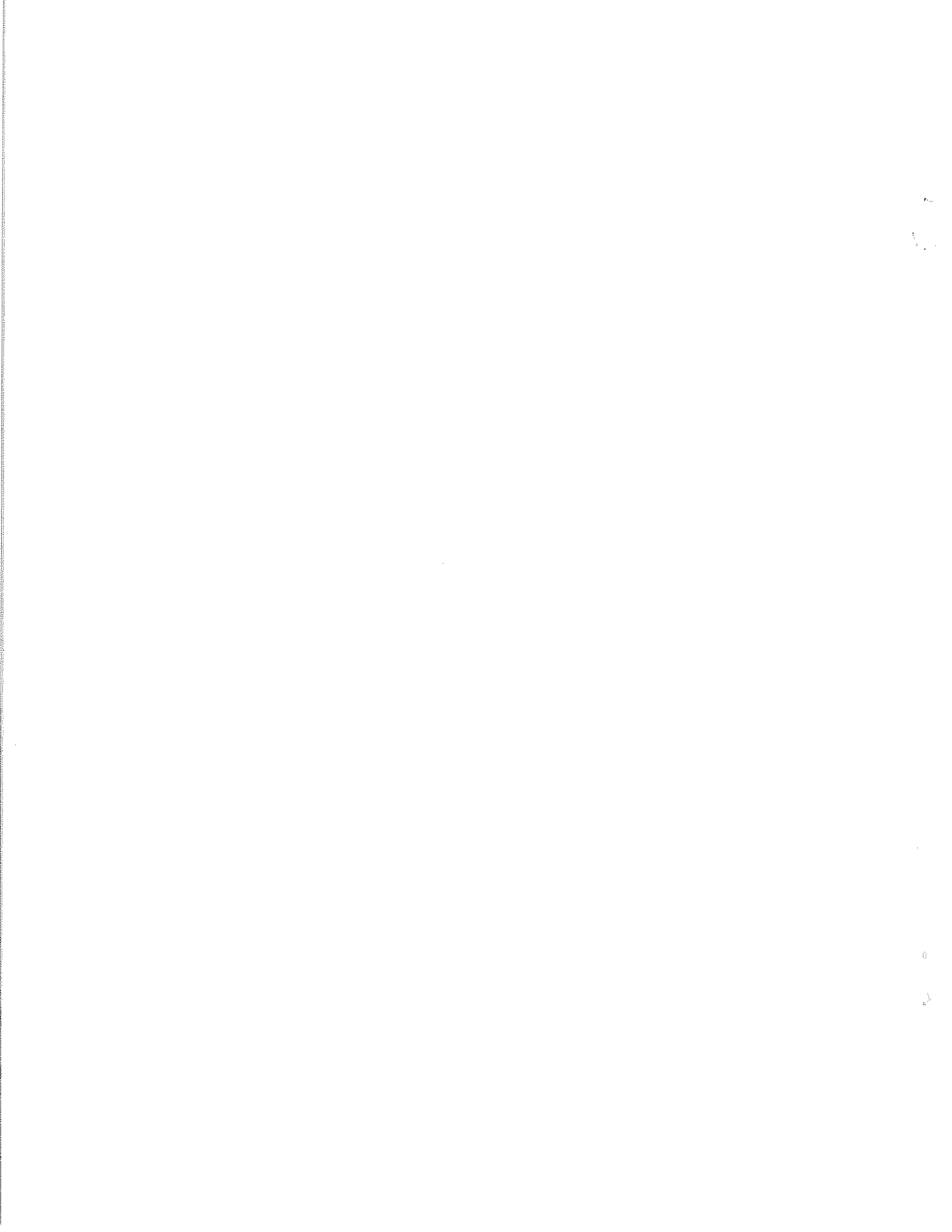
July, 1973



FOREWORD

The Iowa State Department of Public Instruction receives frequent requests for information about the minimum curriculum that the law requires for approval of Iowa's schools. This circular has been developed to give such information in handy form. While official publications containing the school laws also contain this information, they are available in such limited quantities that (aside from the chief administrator to whom they are supplied) members of school staffs such as principals, curriculum committees, and individual teachers and citizens in general do not always have immediate access to them.

This circular is entitled "Minimum Curriculum Requirements for Approval of Iowa Elementary and Secondary Schools and Curriculum Required by Law in Iowa Schools." Those who wish to study the "original sources" upon which the contents of this informal circular are based are directed to them by the footnotes and other citations included herein.



PART ONE

REVIEW OF MINIMUM CURRICULUM MANDATED BY LAW AND RELATED PROVISIONS

I. Introduction

It is commonly understood that education is a state function. This means that the state constitution and the laws made by the legislature are supreme in matters relating to public education. Reference and practice of long standing adhere to the principle that it is wise to delegate primary responsibility and control of schools to local school districts and their elected boards of education. However, every state has retained certain powers over its schools. Among these powers is that of mandating the minimum curriculum to be offered, and specifying those parts of it which pupils are required to follow.

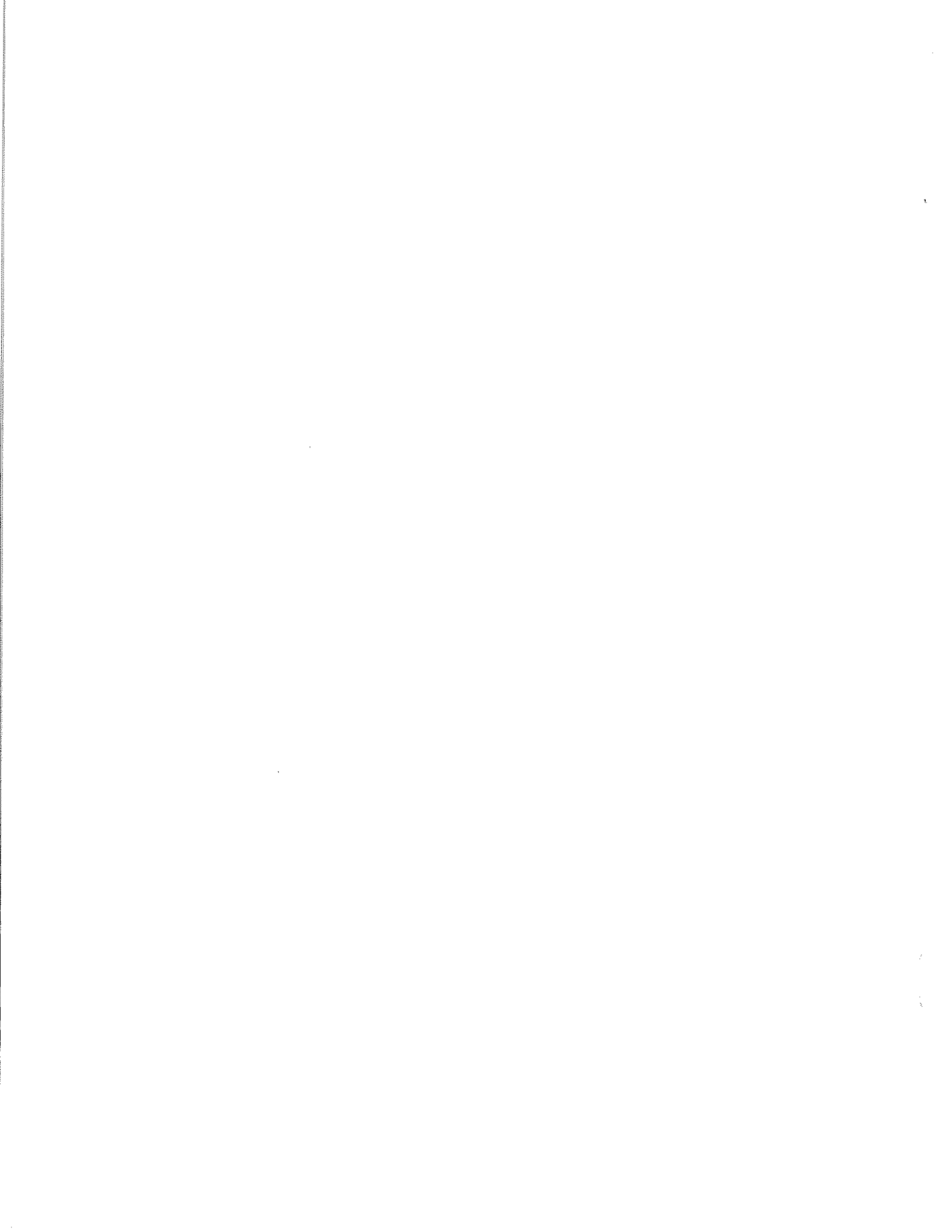
Iowa has provided greater central control of the curriculum within the past few years. This broadened control of the curriculum was instituted in 1965 by the 61st General Assembly and continued with minor changes by subsequent sessions in 1967 and 1969. Prior to 1967 there had existed certain minimum curriculum requirements of the type common to most states: required offerings in the so-called "common branches" and required courses in areas such as health and physical education, citizenship, U. S. history, and American government.

This circular reviews the mandated requirements that approved schools from nursery school through high school must meet.

II. Curriculum Requirements for a School Level

Nursery School

The law does not require that public nursery schools shall be operated; in fact, aside from some reference to children under five years

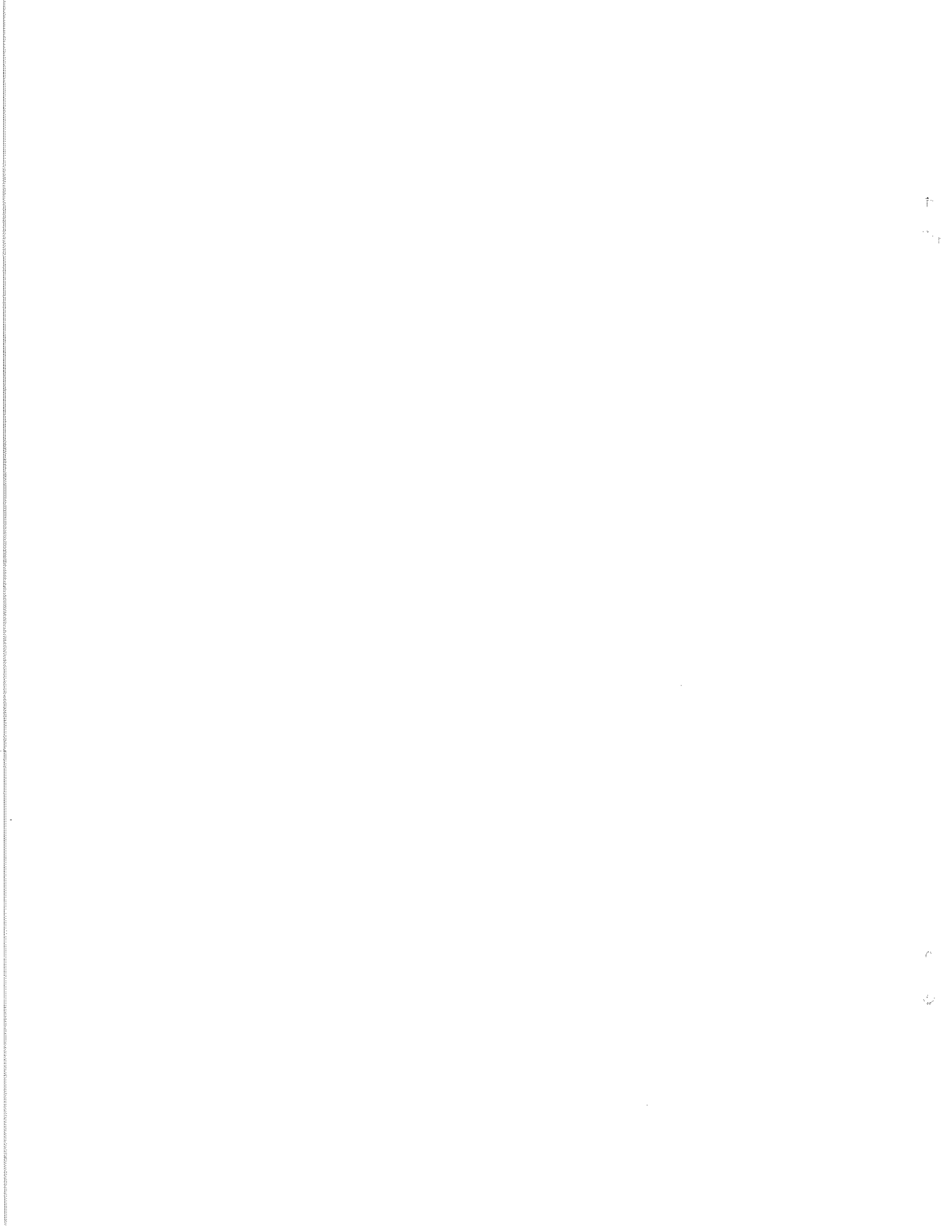


Cultures of other peoples and nations
Geography
History of the United States and Iowa
Special education services (See page 2.)

Sections of law enacted prior to the one already cited in the preceding paragraph with reference to the elementary school (SLI, p. 118-119, sections 280.3, 280.6, 280.10, 280.12, 280.13, and 280.14) specify what shall be taught in both elementary and secondary schools. These legal requirements (which are still in effect, but not in essential conflict with those adopted in 1965 and since) are listed below in alphabetical order:

American citizenship
American government, principles of
Arithmetic
Geography
Grammar
History of Iowa
Music
Physical education (more than one period and not less than a total of 50 minutes)
Physiology and hygiene, "which study in every division of the subject shall include the effects upon the human system of alcoholic stimulants, narcotics, and poisonous substances."
NOTE: The law, section 280.10, in addition to the stipulation just quoted specifies that the board of education "shall require all teachers to give and all scholars to receive instruction in" this area. It becomes still more specific as follows: "The instruction in this branch shall of its kind be as direct and specific as that given in other essential branches, and each scholar shall be required to complete the part of such study in his class or grade before being advanced to the next higher, and before being credited with having completed the study of the subject."
Reading
Spelling
United States history
Writing

Certain elements of flexibility are left to the curriculum makers even when faced with this rather formidable list of specific requirements. For example, no mention of specific grades within the six-grade span is made, and no strict time allotments are set out.



Grade Seven and Eight

The list (SSLI, p. 35, 257.25, par. 4; and SLI, p. 118, 280.7; p. 119, 280.10) of what shall be taught in grades seven and eight as a minimum program (except for the fact that instruction in the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the State of Iowa shall begin not later than the opening of the eighth grade. . .) follows:

- Art
- Constitution of the United States and constitution of the State of Iowa
- Language arts, which may include:
 - Composition, oral and written
 - Grammar
 - Other communication subjects
 - Spelling
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical education (more than one period and not less than a total of 50 minutes)
- Physiology and hygiene (see details on page 3 under the heading "Elementary School--Grades One Through Six")
- Reading
- Science
- Social studies
- Special education (See page 2.)

Here, again, curriculum makers will see that fairly broad opportunities for "decision making" at the local level exist within the framework of these legally-prescribed minimums.

Junior High School

The law lists no subjects under the title, junior high school. But it does state that when grades seven and eight are contained in an organized and administered junior high school, the same minimum program legally specified for these two grades must be included. In fact, the minimum program specified to be taught in grades seven and eight applies to these grades "regardless of the organizational structure of the school districts." (SSLI, p. 35, 257.25, par. 5)



Certain school systems in the state have organized their schools in such a manner as to include grades six, seven, eight, and nine. Nationally, schools can be found with each of the following grade combinations: 4 through 8, 5 through 8, 6 through 8, 6 through 9, and even 6 through 10. The term commonly used to designate this type of school organization is the "middle school." In such a school the legal curriculum offerings mandated for each grade level included (grades one through six, grades seven and eight, and grades nine through twelve--where applicable) must be adhered to.

High School--Grades Nine Through Twelve

Units or courses that must be taught annually. With the exception of physics and chemistry, which may be taught in alternate years, the minimum program mandated for a high school grades nine through twelve, must be taught annually. The law defines a unit as consisting "of one academic year instruction in the subject" (SSLI, pp. 34-35, 257.25, par. 6h). As indicated below, not all subjects must be taught as full units. Furthermore, courses in fine arts which clearly must be offered are not designated in the law as units.

The following list of required offerings has been arranged in alphabetical order:

- Driver education
- English, including language arts (four units)
- Fine arts, courses in, including as options, but with the units or fractions thereof not specified:
 - Art
 - Dramatics
 - Music



government must be taken by all students as a requirement for graduation. Economics (and social problems) must be offered for at least one semester but may be elective.

NOTE: The above is effective until July 1, 1972. After July 1, 1972, the following is effective:

"All schools offering instruction in grades nine through twelve shall offer, and all students shall be required to take, a minimum of two semesters of American history which shall include the history and contributions of minority racial and ethnic groups, and one semester of the governments of Iowa and the United States, as part of the requirement for graduation. In addition, such schools shall offer, as an elective course, at least one semester in social problems or economics, or a combination thereof."⁶

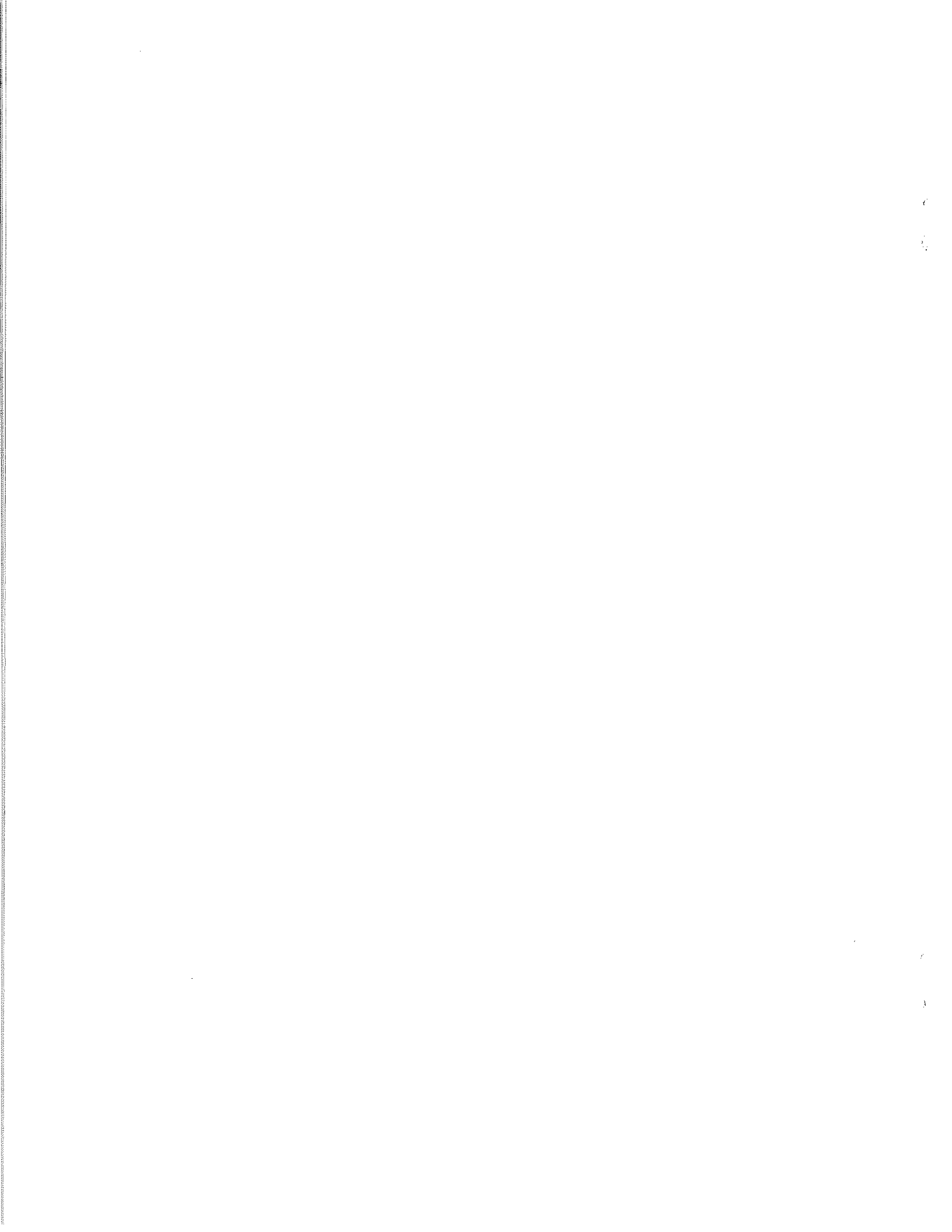
Special education services

III. Schools That Are Exempted from Curriculum Requirements of Section 257.25 of the School Laws

Schools on special approved list of private college preparatory schools. There are legal provisions (SSLI, p. 39, 257.25, par. 13) under which a private high school or a private combined junior-senior high school operated for the express purpose of preparing its graduates for entrance to accredited colleges or universities are exempted from teaching the minimum program specified in section 257.25, paragraphs 6 and 7 of the school laws. Private schools meeting these specified legal provisions "shall be placed on a special approved list of college preparatory schools...."

Exception for Amish. A section of the law (SSLI, pp. 67-68, 299.24) provides that, under certain specified conditions, members of the local congregation of a recognized church or religious denomination may be exempted from standards set forth in section 257.25 of the school law.

⁶Change made by the Second Session of the Sixty-third General Assembly of the State of Iowa (1970).



substances. The instruction in this branch shall of its kind be as direct and specific as that given in other essential branches, and each scholar shall be required to complete the part of such study in his class or grade before being advanced to the next higher, and before being credited with having completed the study of the subject." Section 280.10

The law clearly intends to have such teaching emphasized. In earlier grades it is taught in general lessons and with the textbook instruction in those grades where textbooks are used.

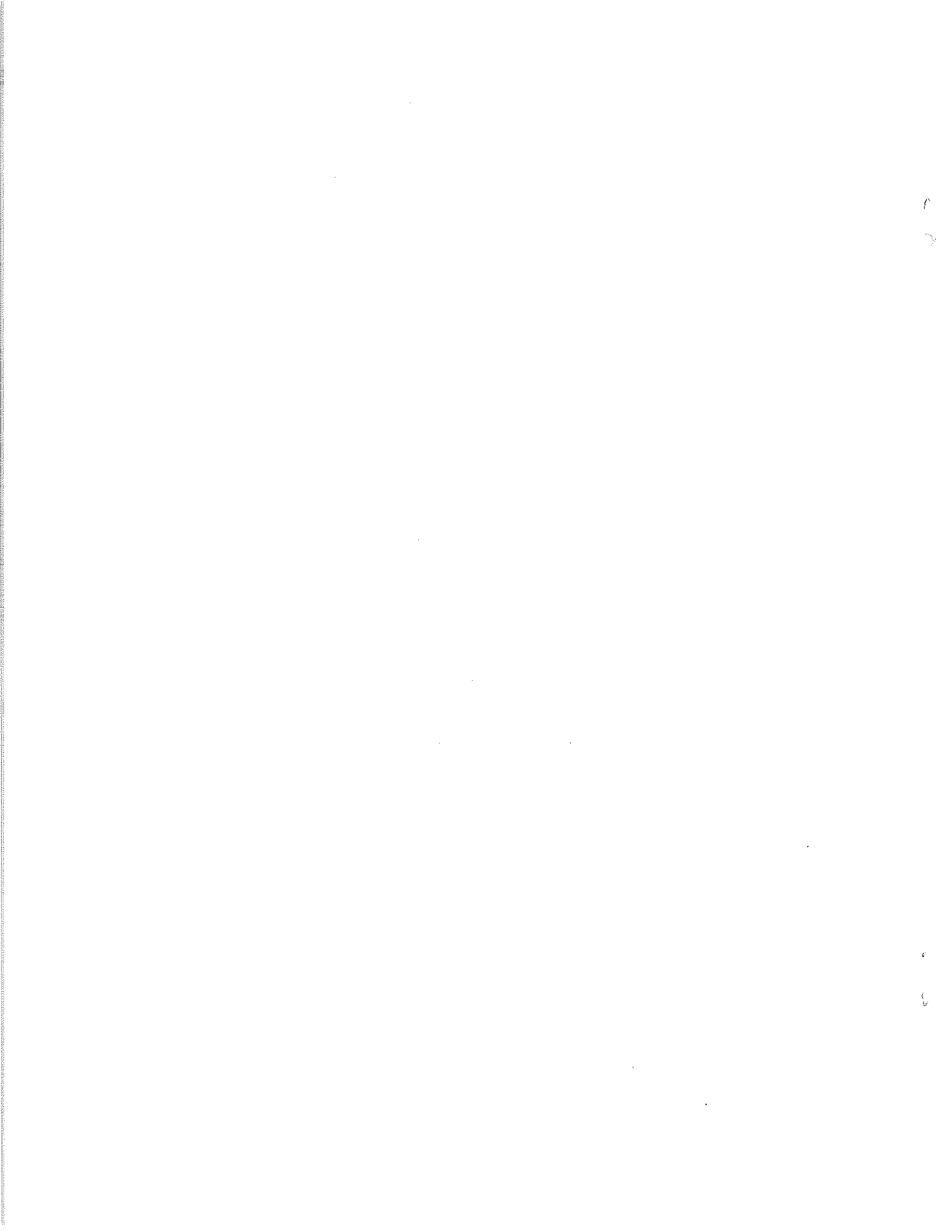
PHYSICAL EDUCATION

"The teaching of physical education exclusive of interscholastic athletics,⁷ including effective health supervision and health instruction, of both sexes, shall be required in every public elementary and secondary school of the state. Modified courses of instruction shall be provided for those pupils physically or mentally unable to take the courses provided for normal children. Said subject shall be taught in the manner prescribed by the state superintendent of public instruction." Section 280.13

LENGTH OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION COURSE

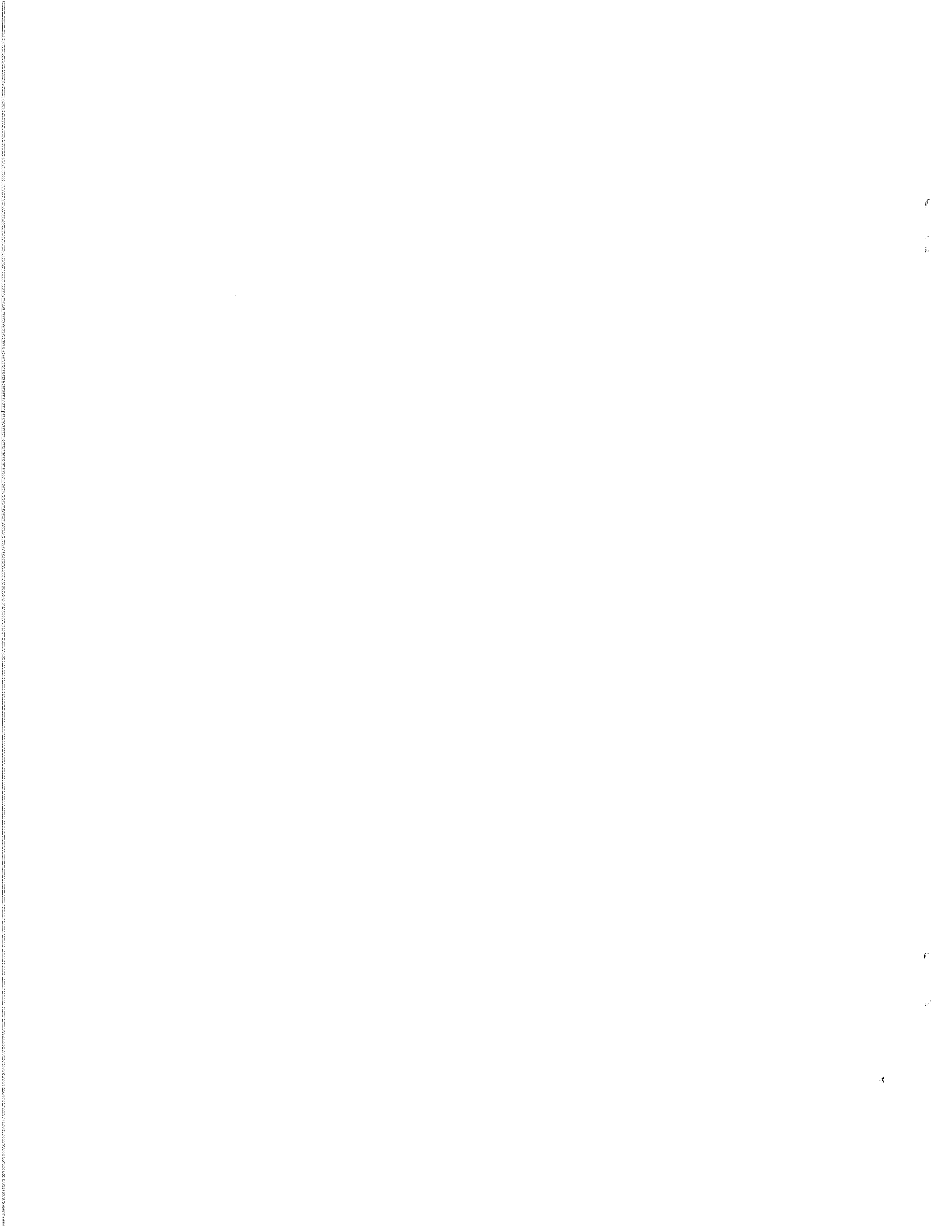
"The course of physical education shall occupy periods each week totaling not less than fifty minutes, exclusive of recesses, throughout each school term. The conduct and attainment of the pupils in such course shall be marked as in other

⁷NOTE: Change made by the Second Session of the Sixty-third General Assembly of Iowa (1970): "except that any pupil participating in an organized and supervised high school athletic program which requires at least as much time of participation per week as such one-eighth unit may be excused from the physical education course during the time of his participation in such athletic program."



subjects and it shall form part of the requirements for promotion or graduation of every pupil in attendance, but no pupil shall be required to take such instruction whose parents or guardian shall file a written statement with the school principal or teacher that such course conflicts with his religious belief." Section 280.14

The Department of Public Instruction urges the use of more time for physical education than the law requires.





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