

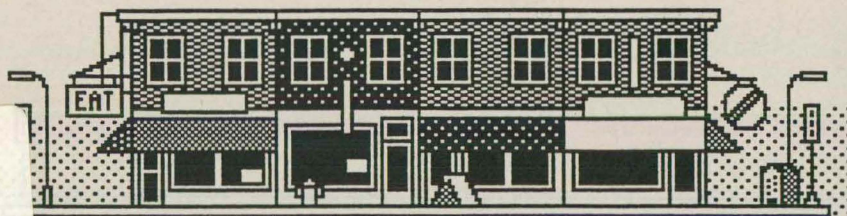


Iowa Schools - A Community Investment

A Report from...

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1994-95*

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INTRODUCTION

In 1958, an elementary teacher from Ames Community Schools in Ames, Jean Listebarger Humphrey, was selected Iowa Teacher of the Year. She became not only Iowa's first Teacher of the Year, but National Teacher of the Year, the only Iowan to receive the honor in the years Iowa has participated in the recognition program. Since 1968, an Iowa "Teacher of the Year" has been selected each year. I was honored to be the 30th Iowan selected to receive this honor. As Iowa Teachers of the Year, we know that we are representing an outstanding group of dedicated teachers, teachers whose commitment to education continues to provide Iowa students opportunities unmatched in other states.

In 1989, the Iowa General Assembly created the position Ambassador for Education. This position is to be filled by the Teacher of the Year if he or she agrees to fulfil the responsibilities outlined in the Code of Iowa. The Ambassador for Education acts as an education liaison to primary and secondary schools in Iowa. Working within the Department of Education, the Ambassador's duties are tailored to the person selected for the job. This past year, as your Ambassador for Education, the responsibilities of the job have been extremely varied. To those asking what a typical week is like, I respond that there is no such thing as a typical week. Each week is different and you learn quickly that you must be flexible and willing to adjust quickly to the unexpected. This year, I have been invited to visit schools for inservice presentations or special activities. I have made many informal school visitations during which I have met teachers, students, administrators, board members, and parents. I have attended conferences and conventions. I have enjoyed visits to several Iowa colleges and universities where I worked with future teachers. I have made presentations to business and civic leaders. During two out-of-state trips I have met and had the opportunity to share ideas with Teachers of the Year from across the United States.

I was honored to be selected 1994 Iowa Teacher of the Year and I have enjoyed the many opportunities that I have been able to experience as the 1994-1995 Ambassador for Education. Through this report I will share my observations and experiences of this past year.

"Does that mean you are rich?"

A southwest Iowa first grade student's question after hearing about the selection as Teacher of the Year.

This year I have enjoyed meeting and sharing ideas with many different groups of people. With teachers and administrators I discussed creative ideas that were working in their schools to enhance education. Community leaders and board members shared their concerns and pointed out the many things they were proud of in their local schools. Students told me about the approaches to education that they experienced in classrooms that they thought helped them to learn and become active in the education program. As I visited with each of these groups, I was quick to tell them that I am not an expert on education and that I do not have all of the answers to their many questions about educational issues. Like the majority of the people I visited with during the year as Ambassador, I am a classroom teacher who has enjoyed the years in the classroom working with many fine students. And while I do not have the answers to many of the questions we all are asking about education, this year has allowed me the opportunity to see how the schools of Iowa are attempting to find solutions to the newest challenges. Visiting Iowa schools, talking with people interested in education, and seeing a variety of approaches to attempting to solve our challenges would convince nearly anyone that the optimism with which we are approaching these challenges will provide the solutions to even the most challenging of our current concerns.

In the schools of Iowa I saw enthusiasm for education, an enthusiasm among students, teachers, staff, and administrators that is being turned into quality educational programs. This enthusiasm is a key to the future of Iowa education and a key to the opportunities of Iowa education.

During one of my visitations to an elementary school in southwest Iowa I had the opportunity to visit with a class of 24 first grade students. The class did not know ahead of time that the principal was going to bring me to their classroom to visit with the students. The first grade teacher introduced me, explaining just what it meant to be selected Iowa Teacher of the Year. As I stood in front of the class watching their reactions I noticed very few of them were as outwardly impressed

as their teacher had hoped. But just a couple of students from where I was standing one boy appeared to understand just what this honor must mean. His eyes grew bigger as his teacher continued to speak. Finally, he got out of his desk and walked right up in front of me. As his teacher was finishing he looked up at me and said, "Does that mean you are rich?"

"The school and the community partnership has never been more important than it is today..."

A teacher in an eastern Iowa school

This year as I visited Iowa schools I looked most closely at one topic that is of utmost importance to the success of any school. This was the issue of "school and community." What are we doing to involve the community in the educational process? How is the community becoming involved and what is the community doing to assist our schools? How are we working together to enhance the total educational program? No matter what school district I visited, when I asked what makes for a successful school, everyone's answer included the importance of the community and its support for the school. I asked teachers, administrators, and community leaders to share their ideas with me on how their own districts were encouraging a positive school and community relationship. Many of the school personnel said that so many of the challenges facing today's schools are problems of society and are problems that reach beyond the school walls. These new challenges demand new partnerships between school personnel and the community. The new challenges demand new investments. This issue of "school and community" also includes the topic of communications with parents. Several schools are placing a high priority on improvement of communication with parents and the community.

In this report I would like to share some of the projects, experiments, and programs that I saw Iowa schools using to develop a strong relationship between the school and the community. When I give the names of districts using the program, please understand that some of these programs are used in several districts, and I am using only schools I visited as examples. I also realize that what works in one school may not work in other schools. I know that some schools have modified programs to meet their own needs. I hope that everyone

who reads this report will find at least one idea or example that they will attempt or modify for use in their own school. The enthusiasm I mentioned in Iowa schools relies on our creativity to enhance our own school program.

"The community has sent a message to the school that it cares about kids..."

A superintendent in west central Iowa commenting on the many ways the community supports the school.

One of the ways the community has become involved in the local schools has been through new partnerships that are no longer only financial in nature. In several schools local businesses have become directly involved in classroom activities and curriculum enhancement. A program that I encouraged many schools to consider is called "Wee Deliver." This program has been developed by the U.S. Postal Service and has been very successful in classrooms across the country. The **Greenfield Community School** has established this program in their third grade class. The program, which is available through your local post office at no charge, establishes a post office in the classroom, complete with mail boxes, sorting boxes, and office supplies. The local postal employees have been in the classroom to explain their job and also invite the class to visit the post office. The third grade has become the school post office making deliveries to each classroom daily. Teachers were especially pleased with the letter writing skills that were developed in this program. Several schools have assigned addresses to each elementary student, and master lists in each classroom identify the address needed to properly address student letters.

Several schools have established on-going partnerships with a local business paired with each elementary classroom. These partnerships are used for career programs as well as support programs. In **Glidden-Ralston Community School** partnerships were in place pairing classrooms with the local newspaper, grocery store, and hardware store. A very successful partnership existed with the Rural Electric Cooperative (R.E.C.). The R.E.C. presented an electrical safety program and invited the class to watch as employees put up highlines and poles on the edge of town. Each year the class selected one R.E.C. member to be invited to come to class parties and school events. The Adopt-A-Business program developed pride in the community and brought many new people into the school.

The needs of the students and the community are brought together and enhanced through a strong School-To-Work program and the School Based Youth Services Program in **Western Dubuque Community School**. They are particularly proud of the high quality, work-based learning offered in a variety of businesses. School Based Youth Services provides over a dozen community agencies to students and their families in a central location within the school. Support and assistance are available for dealing with a wide variety of problems that may affect their daily life.

Aurelia Community School is in the process of planning a work study program that will allow seniors to leave school during study halls and/or lunch to hold a job. Students will receive school credit and will be graded on a pass-fail basis. A key element in this program will be student-written, specific goals and weekly evaluation forms. The weekly evaluation form will include questions to be answered by the student that will also serve as the basis for determining credit for the class. Questions such as: "What did you learn this week in relation to business ownership?", "How is what you are doing an important function of a well run business?", and "Give an example of how you handled a complaint from your employer, a customer, or a co-worker," will challenge the student to look beyond job responsibility. The questions will be different each week. Although modifications may be necessary once the program is established, it appears that many students are interested in the opportunities this program may offer.

The alternative kindergarten class at **Manson Northwest Webster Community School** enjoys a unique partnership with a local trucking firm. Modifying the popular "Travel Mates" project found in many Iowa schools where stuffed animals have traveled the world, this partnership has taught students about the United States. The trucking firm, particularly two truckers, has agreed to send post cards to the kindergarten students from locations that the firm serves all around the U.S. The students read the cards carefully and place them on a map in the classroom.

Over 30 adults in the **Cardinal Community School District** are participating in a project created several years ago to provide "pals" for students in the elementary school. The adults are paired with students in need of an adult friend who will be

available to visit the student during school, attend school events, provide classroom treats for the student, and help sponsor class activities. The coordinator points out that the program is structured to strengthen, not weaken the family relationship.

Winterset Community School is proud of its mentor program serving over 60 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The school provides a training program for mentors, and the mentor is paired with the same student each year. In addition to visiting with each other and collaborating on homework the students and the volunteers have participated in some summer activities.

A community survey in **Van Meter Community School** provides the school with a list of volunteers for a wide variety of projects. The survey specifically asks for volunteers to be available to chaperone field trips, to arrange field trips, to serve as computer aides, to provide clerical help, or to serve as in-class aides. Several local residents have volunteered for a career day presentation or shared information about a hobby or particular job skills. On the last day of school mini-classes are taught by local volunteers on a wide variety of topics in **CAL Community School**.

The **Dows Community School** has worked closely with local residents promoting interest in local historic sites. The Dows community has preserved several local historic sites, and the school has recognized their instructional value and uses these sites in several classrooms.

IKM Community School has benefited from local service clubs in the three communities joining together to support various school programs. Jobs too large for one small organization have been easier to complete through club cooperation.

Local residents have volunteered to participate in "It's A Small World" sponsored by the talented and gifted (T.A.G.) students in the **Lenox Community School**. Each of the T.A.G. students was paired with a local resident who had ties to a foreign country. Several residents had immigrated to the United States and others had visited foreign countries. Students, with the assistance of the volunteer, prepared a display on the country they were studying. They were

encouraged to wear costumes, provide samples of food, and display information on their country. The program was open to students and community residents and has been very well received.

Parent volunteers have painted a huge outline map of the United States on the hard surface area of the playground for **Woodbine Community School**. **Whiting Community School** has developed strong community support in several ways over several years. Its foundation program has been a model for other schools. Currently a new public library building is being built near the school, and a community built fitness center has been completed in a separate building next to the school providing easy access by students and the community even after school hours. Local businesses have sponsored "Student of the Month" recognition in **West Marshall Community School** and the "Vocational Student of the Month" in **Winterset Community School**. **Riceville Community School** uses volunteers to read onto tapes for classroom and enrichment programs. The superintendent of the **Riverside Community School** said that their school had benefited because of the special expertise of local residents serving on various school committees. Two of the current school board members, who both work with computers daily, had provided excellent advice as the district studied the future of technology in the district. **Iowa Valley Community School** has depended on local volunteers to complete a variety of jobs for the school that are completed in the volunteer's home. Teachers place the work they would like the volunteer to complete in a large envelope with the instructions. Each week one volunteer comes to the school to pick up the envelopes to distribute to the local volunteers and at the same time returns last week's work. Volunteers enjoy doing something for the school, but this system does not tie them down to a particular day or hour for the work to be done. I was also pleased to learn that a number of the volunteers were anxious to work for the school even though they were unable to leave their homes for a variety of reasons. Each year the school also recognizes a "Volunteer of the Year."

In **CAL Community School** a community craft fair is held to sponsor the "Reading Is Fundamental" (R.I.F.) program. **Sac Community School** has an active P.T.A. that sponsors the "R.I.F." program. I enjoyed visiting with the members of the P.T.A. during one of their noon hour meetings at the school.

Several schools, including **Iowa Valley Community School** and **Guthrie Center Community School**, were especially proud of the new playground equipment completed entirely by community volunteers. These schools had professionals design the layout and then, in a mass effort, the equipment was erected. Several teachers commented that it was one of the best events ever sponsored, bringing parents and teachers together. Crescent Elementary School in the **Council Bluffs Community School District** makes excellent use of a nature trail located a short distance from the school on school property. Students, teachers, administrators, local residents, and conservation officials have worked together to construct this trail along a stream near the school. I was impressed to hear of the many ways the trail was used and that nearly every subject area had found a way to incorporate the trail into their curriculum. A couple of outdoor classrooms were located along the trail.

One of the most successful and most active volunteer programs I saw this year was in operation in the **Coon Rapids-Bayard Community School**. After hearing about the program from teachers and administrators during a one-day visit to the school, I returned another day to visit with the volunteer coordinator about the program. The program coordinator is a full-time staff position which allows for a wide range of activities to be integrated into the school program. Teachers told of the excellent speakers they were assisted in scheduling and of the well-trained volunteers that provided a wide range of help to the school. The coordinator works closely with both the large local employers and small businesses to build support for local education.

"We receive so much from the community, we need to repay them in some way..."

High school principal in southwest Iowa discussing the school's role in the community.

In what appears to be increasing numbers, schools are looking for ways that students can become active in the local community and contribute to the betterment of the community. Some of the programs have been ongoing, while others provide an immediate one-time need.

In **Creston Community School** students in the T.A.G. program decided to work in favor of a campaign for the local library building program. The **Atlantic Community School** National Honor Society sponsors a community service project each year. They took part in flood relief work and just recently helped on the blood bank drive. The **Red Oak Community School** provides rides to residents wishing to attend the Sunday afternoon performance of the school play. I visited **Ogden Community School** the day after the students collected pennies to cover the gym floor (\$9,731.75) to help two students who recently underwent heart surgery. **Hinton Community School** has discussed offering free computer classes for the community to show the computer is important in the classroom and to gain support for the expanding computer needs of the district. Business sponsors of the **Remsen-Union Community School** renaissance program are listed on a large board in the main lobby of the school. Over 50 businesses are currently supporting this program.

Walnut Community School and the Walnut community have benefited from receiving an Iowa Department of Education Com Serv Iowa Grant. Every class has selected a specific community project for their class to plan and carry out. These have included working in the local nursing home, landscaping the school, and securing lighting around the outside basketball court. A major project initiated by one of the high school classes has created the "Walnut Wetlands Restoration Project." Working closely with local leaders the class has helped develop a wetlands, bike trail, and recreation center. **Paton-Churdan Community School** has also received a Com Serv Iowa Grant. Starting this year, the Board of Education has mandated that each student will complete eight hours per year of community service, for a total of 32 hours at graduation time. Students are able to select from a wide range of activity examples or develop their own idea for community service projects.

The "Hands All Around" project in the **Winfield-Mt. Union Community School** is providing the community services that benefit many residents. Grant money has allowed the school to remodel the former school-owned superintendent's home into a child care center and a comfortable facility for parenting classes. Plans are currently underway to convert one room in the facility into a student-operated store. The store will sell a number of articles currently not available in local

businesses. There already is a display of greeting cards in one of the school offices that will be moved across the street to the new store when it goes into operation. Students will be able to learn many job skills when the store is opened.

The Helping Hands Serve and Learn project in **Roland-Story Community School** brings each of the curriculum areas together in community service projects. The "adopt a family" segment of the program encourages the social studies classes to discuss social issues affecting children and families that live in poverty. Math students brainstorm ideas for gifts and establish a budget for the program. Art students make posters, music students use concerts to promote and collect contributions, and the English classes prepare letters and news articles on the project. Other academic areas participate in activities created around the school project.

The entire staff in **Carroll Community School** were encouraged to work with students outside of school teaching particular job skills, serving as tutors, or just spending time with students in outside-of-school activities when the superintendent allowed staff members to bid volunteer hours in return for a day out of the classroom or away from their usual school job. The high bidder would receive a "no hassle" (no forms to complete, maybe even a day before or after a holiday) day off and would have his or her job covered by the superintendent. The promotion went so well that the superintendent decided to cover for two high bidders.

The seventh grade students in **Winterset Community School** have been busy handling responses to letters coming to the local Chamber of Commerce concerning The Bridges of Madison County from students in all parts of the U.S. Winterset High School American Government students perform a wide variety of community service projects as a part of the course requirements for American Government. Among those projects is a student-prepared voting guide which was distributed to district residents. Once a month an elementary class in **CAL Community School** writes letters to pen pals in a nearby community nursing home. The last quarter of the year the first graders in **Ruthven-Ayrshire Community School** read to residents at the local care center. **Hinton Community**

School elementary students color placemats and decorate the tables at the local senior citizens meal site.

Approximately 20 families are members of the **Andrew Community School** Preschool Book Club. Encouraging reading to young children and hoping to increase the readiness of children coming to kindergarten, this popular program places quality reading materials in member homes. The school has invested in a large number of preschool-age books. These have been placed in book bags for circulation among the members. Each week participants pass their bag of approximately six books to a neighbor who is participating in the program. The **Ruthven-Ayrshire Community School** is currently planning an early childhood lending library that will include books and videos.

Every year the **Garner-Hayfield Community School**, with the help of local banks, hosts a come and go school and community gathering from 4:30 until 6:00 p.m. during American Education Week. Hors d'oeuvres are served and the superintendent presents some information on the school. Following a tradition, I, as Ambassador for Education, was invited to speak at this gathering. Outside of the two brief presentations, the time was spent in informal visiting. Many business people stopped after closing their stores for this opportunity to learn more about the school, meet the school staff, and show their support for local education. I later received a check from the Garner-Hayfield Trust & Thank Account for one million thanks in appreciation for participating in the program. This check serves as a way of the school sending its appreciation to many people who help the school.

Each class at **South Tama County Community Middle School** has adopted one employee from the district's major business. The employee is invited to visit the school and receives cards from the class. The school and the business have found this to be a positive relationship.

Westwood Community School invites the county employees to the annual Christmas dinner. I attended the annual Veteran's Day Program in **Essex Community School**. After several years without the program, the high school

students in **Stanton Community School** planned this year's Veteran's Day Program.

CAL Community School has encouraged planting trees on the school grounds by providing a tree for each student to plant. More expensive special trees have been donated as class projects. On National Volunteer Day students and staff in the **West Marshall Community School** clean up each of the district's communities, concentrating on main street clean-up projects. **Essex Community School** elementary classes conduct a town clean-up day each year.

CAL Community School sponsors a community cultural series which has provided six special cultural programs each year. Recent programs have included the Des Moines Ballet, Iowa Arts Council productions, community theater, and various musical programs. **Remsen-Union Community School** combines community service and cultural opportunities in their H.A.V.E. (Home Economics and Visual Experience) program. Membership is voluntary and students who join take part in many community service projects. This year over 60 high school students are taking part. Each year the members make a one-night trip to a nearby city where they enjoy special events or programs. They always eat at a restaurant specializing in dishes the students have not previously eaten. **Guthrie Center Community School** has developed an environmental classroom for school and community use. High school students are operating a day care center in the **Sac Community School**. In the **Forest City Community School** each Friday the foods class operates their own restaurant. Residents must R.S.V.P. because the class usually has more reservations than they can handle. In addition to planning the meal students do the necessary purchasing, learn some bookkeeping, develop improved communication skills, and brush up on etiquette. Every year students in the **Garner-Hayfield Community School Middle School** prepare a harvest dinner for the community. Students have divided up the responsibilities for preparing the entire meal. Some students make apple pies, others peel potatoes, make rolls, dressing, and salads. Preparing the entire meal keeps three kitchen sites busy. Students serve the meal and complete the clean up. The student comments written after the successful project show not only that students enjoyed fixing the meal, but that they learned and practiced many skills. In Coon Rapids, the **Coon Rapids-Bayard Community School** has purchased a

home near the school in need of repairs, and several high school departments are completing the renovation project. Landscaping, interior design, financial management, and carpentry are just some of the skills this project will incorporate. In many schools, including **Riceville Community School, Creston Community School, Iowa Valley Community School, Montezuma Community School, and Maple Valley Community School**, teachers, administrators, and community residents are proud of the many projects undertaken by local chapters of the Future Farmers of America. This program has incorporated community service for many years, and they continue to provide opportunities for students in this field.

"The foundation for good school and community relations is good communication between the school and the community and especially constructive communication with parents."

A teacher in a small eastern Iowa school

In presentations around the state and in conversations with teachers I have stressed the importance of good communication between teachers and parents. Because of the new challenges for students, parents, teachers, and administrators we must communicate more often and more clearly than we have in the past. Iowa schools are currently creating new methods to ensure the best communications exist between the school and the home. We will all find our jobs easier to accomplish if we encourage parents to ask questions, participate in their child's school work, and monitor their progress. In many schools the merits of positive communication through notes to parents or telephone calls have provided teachers with surprising results both in student work and attitudes toward school.

Many Iowa teachers are currently writing weekly letters to parents telling them about the upcoming weeks activities. The second grade teachers at **Boyer Valley Community School** have gone one step farther with an end-of-the-week letter home from the students telling about what happened during the past week. Students dictate their ideas to the teacher who prints the letter which each student signs before copies are made to be sent home. The teachers were pleased with the additional information this sent to parents and also the positive response

from the parents. An elementary class at **Ballard Community School** uses a "Fridaygram" to let parents know what is happening in school and to encourage student writing. Each Friday students take home the "Fridaygram" in which they write about one or two things that went on in class the past week. They also are to include two questions for their parents. Parents are to respond to the note from their student in writing. Parents are also encouraged to write notes to the teacher on the back of the sheet if they have any questions, concerns, or comments during the year.

The school newsletter from **Remsen-Union Community School** always includes examples of student work. **Stanton Community School** publishes a weekly newsletter which provides a forum for both school and community news items. The **Battle Creek - Ida Grove Community School** mass communications class produces a weekly Saturday morning radio program. The school calendar produced by the school in **Remsen-Union Community School** includes black and white photographs of students and school events. **Indianola Community School** broadcasts the school board meetings on the local cable channel.

Colo-Nesco Community School, with the sponsorship of area businesses, is pleased with both the opportunities and the success of "The Royal Hotline," an informational system linking the school and the student's home. The 24-hours-a-day, seven days a week telephone call-in system is being employed for an expanding number of uses by many patrons of the school district. Currently students and parents can secure information at home concerning high school class assignments and information from individual teachers, homework assignments for sixth grade to eighth grade, athletics, music and fine arts, the lunch menu, and booster club activities. Parents are asked to use the hotline to call in student absentee information. School informational polls can also be taken over the hotline. **Westwood Community School** has hosted seven grade level coffees to present information on the school to parents. Parents are invited to attend any of the coffees if they have several students at different grade levels or are unable to attend the grade level coffee for their individual student. In the **Harmony Community School** attendance at parent-teacher conferences has increased since the student council has called each of the parents to invite them to conferences and remind parents of the upcoming conference schedule.

A program now in its second, very successful year allows the high school guidance counselor at **George Community School** to come to school one day a week at noon and stay in the office until 8:00 p.m. This change in schedule has allowed both parents and students opportunities to visit with the counselor after school and after work hours.

The importance of communication between the school and the community is apparent in the **Perry Community School District**. Working closely with the community, the school has been an important link between the non-English speaking students and their families and other Perry residents. The school is pleased with the success of the English as a second language classes. The Spanish teacher in **CAL Community School** has rewritten the school handbook in Spanish for a number of students in that district.

Guthrie Center Community School sends out a pre-conference survey to the parents of elementary students for them to complete prior to the conference asking them to note any questions or concerns they would like addressed during the conference. Several schools, including **Forest City Community School**, have begun pre-school-year conferences as a part of the pre-school workshop schedule. The conferences have included parents, student, and teacher. A pre-conference survey asks the parents to identify their questions concerning the upcoming year and to assist their student in setting several goals for the new school year. **Interstate 35 Community School** has implemented a weekly grade monitoring report in the high school. With the input of students, parents, and teachers, academic goals and other goals for each student have been developed at the beginning of the school year. Consequences related to failing to meet the goals are also written. Teachers work closely with the students to keep them informed of their grade status during periodic conferences. Grades and progress towards attaining goals are provided parents on a weekly basis. Parents have become more involved in monitoring and encouraging student progress through this program. **South Tama County Community Middle School** has seen an increase in parental involvement and interest in student progress with the creation of their "contact groups." Each teacher is responsible for monitoring and reporting student progress to parents and other teachers on approximately 14 students.

Montezuma Community School eighth graders are scheduled each spring to meet with the high school principal and guidance counselor to prepare for going into high school. The school has made an extra effort to schedule the individual 30-minute conference at a time when both parents can attend the meeting. The community response has been very positive, and the school believes this effort has been a good investment.

Whiting Community School has had a professional video tape produced providing information about the school. At **Guthrie Center Community School** the fine arts instructors have agreed that an art display will be set up at each of the school music programs. This has become very popular with the community and has encouraged larger attendance for the programs. **Forest City Community School** has provided the local public library with educational journals for the public to check out and read on current educational trends.

Interstate 35 Community School uses three-ring notebooks for all students kindergarten through twelfth grade to assist students in organizing and having the needed materials for class. An assignment list is located inside the front cover for the student's use and so that parents know where to check on assignments and their own student's progress. They have noted an increase in parental interest and involvement in homework because of this program. Students through fifth grade at **Schaller-Crestland Community School** use Monday "saddle bags" to send home important messages, student work, spelling words, or report cards. The parent is asked to sign a receipt for the envelope which the student returns the next day to receive a sticker on the envelope showing the completed circuit. Parents are especially supportive and appreciative of the information arriving each week. Teachers in the elementary school at **South Hamilton Community School** are giving out tickets to their students who are caught "Doing Something Good." Every three weeks a drawing from the tickets selects 10 students to have lunch with the principal. They point out that there has been a positive response to the program which has no cost to the school. In the same district each student receives a certificate from the school on his or her birthday. The certificate includes the student's picture. The school photographer provides the roll of student pictures for this project. In **Essex Community School** the student's picture is placed on a bookmark and sent with a

congratulatory letter from the principal when a student is cited by a teacher for doing something positive at school. Before the year ends, each elementary student in the **Rockwell City-Lytton Community School** will have the opportunity to eat lunch with the principal. The "Dinner With A Prince" program invites three students at a time to lunch with the principal at a special table set up in the front entry of the school. Students enjoy visiting with the principal while eating on special dishes at the specially decorated table.

School officials at **Gilbert Community School** and **Garner-Hayfield Community School** have spent considerable time to prepare "report cards" on the school for the community. The report from Garner-Hayfield Community School includes reports on school improvement efforts, the importance of community support, and student achievement. The report is highlighted with photographs taken during the last school year. This year **Manning Community School** held their first "town meeting" hosted by members of the community advisory committee. Each committee member invited residents of the district and led small group discussions on important school issues. The first-time meeting was attended by 100 people. Those attending were very positive about the meeting's success and looked for even more people to attend similar meetings in the future. **Glidden-Ralston Community School** dismisses school early for visionary planning. District residents are invited to brainstorm in small groups focusing on ideas for school planning. The meetings conclude with an evening dinner. They have been pleased with the participation of the community and the ideas that have been presented in this format.

"...there are so many good things happening in Iowa schools. In schools of all sizes, in all parts of the state, from elementary classrooms through our high schools..."

From a speech I presented in south central Iowa

During this year as Ambassador for Education I have had the opportunity to see in action programs and projects that Iowans can be proud of in our schools. From the smallest to the largest in enrollments and in every area of the state, our schools are continuing to implement new and creative ideas. This creativity is a

key component to our continued success. Several new and on-going programs I found particularly interesting.

If I were giving out awards to new educational programs in Iowa this year one of those awards would have to be presented to **Sioux City Community West Middle School** and the citizens of West Middle Microsociety. In its first year, after a couple of trips by several of the teachers to Boston, Massachusetts to see a model, the microsociety has enjoyed a success rate beyond anyone's expectations. The last two periods of the day the entire building becomes a community within itself. Students quickly post their licenses to operate businesses (there were over 100 operating when I visited), the court hears disciplinary cases, the employment office assists students needing jobs, and the teachers oversee and step back and watch with pride. Facing the same challenges so many of our schools are confronted with, but hoping to reduce these by large numbers, the staff and students at West Middle School have created a program that has increased student attendance, encouraged students to complete homework, reduced tardies to class, developed job skills, created a new pride in the school, and provided students an exciting way to learn. I watched as students on their day a week off from their jobs were able to purchase jewelry, wooden pennants, cupcakes, and even clothes. I observed student judges presiding over discipline court where students before the judge had hired defense attorneys to represent them. I visited the bank where students were involved in making loans, issuing time certificates, and helping students with savings accounts. A detailed constitution establishes the government for the microsociety. I could go into much more detail on this single program, but space does not permit and there are so many great opportunities in the program that I would encourage schools to consider contacting West Middle School for information on this program or if possible to visit and see for themselves this innovative program.

During my visit to **Woodbine Community School** I enjoyed a visit to the alternative school operating in Woodbine by several area schools. Any school considering or currently involved in an alternative program would find this an excellent example of the possibilities this kind of program might offer. In the **Council Bluffs Community School** the Harmon Tucker Center For Vocational Education is providing students excellent hands-on learning, challenging students of all

abilities, and providing vocational training background in an expanding program.

Winfield-Mt. Union Community School has been pleased with the success of using citizenship grades as requirements for graduation. Each student receives credit in each class for meeting citizenship expectations such as classroom attendance and school behavior. Students receiving an "Unsatisfactory" may make up lost credit by completing one of four alternatives. Examples of alternatives would be completion of a three-hour self-improvement course, completion of eight hours of community service, or participation in a leadership conference.

I was impressed with the "Star of the Week" program in an elementary class in **Sidney Community School**. Each week a student was selected at random to be the "Star." A letter home to the parents asked them to help their student write a story about their life. The student was asked to bring items to go on the Star Bulletin Board for the week. The items would include pictures of the student and the family, newspaper articles, awards, or other items about the student. On a special table the student could display hobbies, favorite toys, a trophy, first shoes, or anything important to that student. Each Friday from 3:00-3:30 p.m. a Star Party was held in the classroom. The "Star's" parents provide treats and guests are welcome. The "Star" reads the story about his or her life and each of the class members reads a letter filled with positive statements about that week's "Star." Parents are asked to bring along a blank videotape and the party is recorded and kept by the student.

A special pre-Christmas inservice in **Keota Community School** included "Christmas in Yugoslavia." A new family in the district moved to Iowa from Yugoslavia and as a part of the December inservice the mother and two children came to school to take part in the inservice. The mother told about several holiday customs and treated everyone to a special desert, which was a traditional Yugoslavian holiday treat. The inservice was an excellent multicultural lesson. It also provided a chance to welcome this new family and better understand some of the family's new challenges after arriving in Iowa. I thought about the opportunities so many districts in our state could enjoy if we would follow a

similar program, even inviting someone who may have been a part of our community for several years.

At the **Elk Horn - Kimballton Community School** all new teachers are taken on a tour of the town as a part of the pre-school workshop schedule. A highlight of the tour is a visit to the Danish Museum, which is used extensively by school groups.

Clay Central/Everyly Community School teachers are helping students prepare and review for semester tests during a 4:00-7:00 p.m. review time. Each teacher works with students for an hour and a half on the scheduled day. This district has also spent considerable time creating an outstanding interdisciplinary technology program that could serve as a model for other districts. The **Akron Westfield Community School** is also proud of the opportunities technology has provided for their students. One of the teachers told me that she was especially proud to see that a school of their size could be so successful in this area. She pointed out that it involved a commitment from many people both inside and outside of the school.

"As you travel what are you seeing in Iowa schools?"

One of the most frequently asked questions I have heard from educators across Iowa.

This year has allowed me the opportunity to actually see what we have all heard about -- excellence in Iowa education. During this school year I have met many dedicated Iowa educators anxious to share their dreams for the future of Iowa education with me. These educators have also shared their concerns about the challenges we face, but their optimism will make solving these challenges much easier. Much of the success we have enjoyed in Iowa schools is dependent on the creativity of Iowa teachers. Many of the successful and unique programs or projects I have identified in this report are the product of individual teachers' creativity. This creativity must be allowed and encouraged by administrators, school boards, and the community. In a number of districts the Phase III plan has encouraged the incorporation of new ideas into the curriculum, providing new opportunities and new ways to learn for our students. In our schools,

instilling creativity and expecting creativity from our teachers and our students should be one of our top priorities.

In November, U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley invited teachers from each of the states to a three-day Goals 2000 Educate America Conference in Washington, D.C. The Teacher of the Year and an additional teacher from each state were invited to participate. Sue Ruch from Carroll Community School was the other Iowan to attend the conference. Although many issues were discussed by the participants, it seemed that one central issue continued to be the focus of our debate: the issue of time. So many of the teachers felt frustrated by the increased expectations on education and the lack of time to incorporate these expectations into current schedules. Some of the participants wanted more inservice time in their schedules, while others said that they have enough inservice time, but not enough time to put into operation the ideas learned in the inservice meeting. Others talked of the pros and cons of schedule and calendar adjustments to allow more preparation time. As I have visited Iowa schools this year, I talked with teachers every day who told me about ideas they would like to implement in their classes, but they do not currently have the time to plan, organize, and carry out. At the conference I said that I thought a high priority should be to allow us more time for preparation, assessment, incorporating new ideas into our curriculum, and assisting students with individual concerns beyond the typical one period a day for planning time in so many of our schools. I was especially pleased when following one of our sessions a U.S. Department of Education official stopped me in the hall to say he supported what I had said about the importance of expanded planning time. Now, at the end of this year, I am more convinced than ever before that if we are serious about school improvement, curriculum development, and meeting the expanding needs of our students, we will make the issue of time a top priority in Iowa schools.

Another first time program in Iowa schools this year and one I would call an award winner is taking place in **Westwood Community School**. Faced with a possible staff reduction in the elementary school last year, the decision was made to retain a full-time staff member as a "floating teacher." This year this teacher is moving from the kindergartens through the third grade classes and taking the class for a week while the teacher does curriculum work in an in-building

resource room. Each of the teachers in these three grade level classrooms will spend nearly three weeks of this school year in the resource room. During the three-week period each teacher is expected to create two thematic units to incorporate into his or her curriculum. Next year the "floating teacher" will work in grades beyond third grade. The resource room is classroom size and stocked with resource books, media, and materials to encourage the best of curriculum work. The A.E.A. has provided assistance for this project. The investment this school is making to provide time for quality program improvement will be an investment worth every penny. This is an example of the creativity so valuable in solving our challenges, and it is also an excellent example of one way of facing the issue of time.

In Longfellow Elementary School in the **Council Bluffs Community School**, staff members are allowed three half days each year to do work on projects, help individual or small groups of students, or develop curriculum. A substitute teacher is provided that allows the teacher time out of the classroom.

Creativity in Iowa schools is not limited to the issue of time. Schools considering use of multiple-age groupings could learn more about the idea from a number of Iowa schools already using this concept. In **Forest City Community School** parents of elementary students are currently given the choice of a single-age classroom or a multiple-age classroom. The elementary teachers and the principal have spent many hours developing a program meeting individual student needs and parents' requests as this plan has been put into operation.

In **Shelby Community School** I attended the dress rehearsal for the fourth, fifth, and sixth graders' "Night of the Notables." Fifty-eight students dressed as famous Americans lined up in the auditorium and as the public came by their location the student told about their life without revealing their identity. The public was given a program identifying the student's name and identification number and as the presentation was being made the public was to guess the famous American. Students had memorized descriptive and detailed life stories to provide clues to their identities. Each student would present his or her story many times as the parents, other students, and the community filled the gym. After an hour everyone enjoyed coffee, punch, and cookies in the lunchroom while

the teacher introduced each student and identified who the person represented. If past years were any indicator, they would have a large crowd for the evening program.

The **Missouri Valley Community Middle School** had put in many hours of preparation and planning for their interdisciplinary ecology fair that was held a couple of days after my visitation. Nearly every curriculum area had provided support and enhanced the fair in some way. Students would be available to answer the questions of visitors to the fair. Each spring the **Schaller-Crestland Community School** holds its "Educational Extravaganza" to showcase the successes and highlights of the past year. Speech and music contest winners perform, there is a style show, and history projects are displayed along with many other fine examples of the students' work. An ice cream social is held in conjunction with this event. **Remsen-Union Community School** hosts its "Spring Fling" to not only display student work, but also display students' special interests and hobbies. Students in the T.A.G. program at **Logan-Magnolia Community School** present an elementary "European Fair," with each classroom decorated for a different country. Students are present to share research and inform the visitors about the country they have studied. I was impressed by the wide variety and amount of student work displayed in the hallways of **Eastwood Community Cushing Elementary School**. Just walking down the halls and seeing the examples of student work told me that there was a pride in the work shared by the students and the teachers. Science and social studies teachers in **Manning Community School** have developed an outstanding cemetery study for high school students. Research has included such topics as cause of deaths, age of deaths, specific disease studies, and local history. The study emphasizes document research and oral presentation of findings. The physical education curriculum in **Pocahontas Area Community School** includes a popular unit on fishing. Students go to a nearby pond to practice skills. The art department in **West Harrison Community School** is constructing a detailed topographic map of the school district using rock-hard putty. Located in the Loess Hills of western Iowa, the district has a variety of topography and this map, which many of the high school students have helped create, shows everything in detail. Small nails were first driven into the board at different depths to lay out the terrain and then the putty was shaped following the nails to make the hills and valleys. In **Glidden-**

Ralston Community School the kindergarten class begins every day by singing their "Good Morning" song. Not only can it be heard in the halls of the school the class has been recorded and an area radio station uses the song periodically and also promotes the school when it is used.

"I am so glad you were free."

An A.E.A. staff member's comment following a presentation for their recognition banquet.

I had to ask whether she was referring to my schedule or the fees for my visit. She assured me that she meant that I was available to speak on the date they had selected for their annual banquet. But she was also aware that there was no cost for my visit. I mention this because every week someone would ask about covering my expenses. As Ambassador for Education I work for the state of Iowa and through the Department of Education. There are no expenses required to request a visit by the Ambassador. Each August a letter has been sent to Iowa schools, A.E.A.s, and colleges announcing the Ambassador's name and address and inviting schools to contact the Ambassador if a visit is desired. Several Iowa schools have made it a tradition to invite the teacher to schedule an informal school visit or to come during a special event. Most of these invitations are extended during August and September. The Ambassador then completes the year's schedule by contacting additional schools to fill in dates. In addition to attending several conferences and conventions, working with college students planning to become teachers, and presenting workshops for social studies teachers, most of the schedule is made up of school visits. This year I visited 83 Iowa school districts and well over 150 school buildings. But of the schools I visited approximately one-third contacted me to schedule a visit. Of the nearly 60 that I contacted none turned down my request to visit and several did not know that visitations were available. I know that some of the schools visited for the first time have already made plans to invite future Ambassadors to visit their schools. In the past the letter inviting visits has arrived just before school starts and it may have been set aside because of other priorities, but I hope that schools that have profited from previous visits and those that have not had a visit will consider extending an invitation to a future Ambassador. Some of the most encouraging

comments I received this year came from teachers and administrators in schools that were visited for the first time. And the cost...it's free.

"This year has been filled with memorable experiences and great opportunities."

A quotation from an inservice presentation

I began the school year by speaking in the **Charter Oak - Ute Community School** and the **East Monona Community School**. In every school district that I visited I received a warm welcome and the entire staff was willing to share ideas with me. Iowa's winter only slightly affected my schedule. I traveled through snow drifts to reach **Prairie Valley Community School** and everyone had an eye out for ice while I visited **Sentral Community School**. After visiting the **Emmetsburg Community Middle School** an evening reception was held in one of the staff member's homes.

In addition to visiting many Iowa schools, I have been offered the opportunity this year to study and observe education outside of the classrooms and the school buildings. In August I flew to Atlanta, Georgia where I met each of the other state teachers. We were joined by teachers representing 23 foreign countries. On the second day in Atlanta we boarded busses to travel to Huntsville, Alabama where the remainder of our ten-day stay would be spent. In Huntsville we participated in International Space Camp. We not only went through astronaut training and simulations, but we had a chance to visit with each other about education. This experience in itself would make us proud of Iowa schools and the opportunities available to our students. While in Huntsville we heard a presentation on the future opportunities for learning through fiber optics. Many of the teachers left this presentation dreaming of the impact this could have on education in the future. The teachers were surprised to learn that just such a system already is in place in some schools across Iowa.

During the three days in Washington at the Goals 2000 Educate America Conference mentioned earlier in this report, our time was spent discussing the future of education and facing the challenges in education. In small groups we shared ideas and discussed programs that were working in our own states. Representatives of the U.S. Department of Education were present in our

discussion groups to listen to our ideas. As I mentioned earlier in this report, much of our discussion centered on the issue of time. The final report of this conference has not yet been issued, but it will emphasize the ideas and concerns presented by the teachers attending the conference. An effort was made by the Department of Education to use this meeting to listen to the participants rather than using the conference to disperse Department of Education studies or policies.

I had the opportunity to attend several conferences and conventions within Iowa during the year. During one of those, the At-Risk Conference, I was impressed with the optimistic attitude of the participants as they shared their concerns about problems currently facing their schools. This optimism will make solving our most challenging problems much easier. I saw the creativity of Iowa teachers demonstrated during the workshops at the Iowa Council For Social Studies Conference. New approaches and methods were presented during the Alternative Education Conference.

In three of the school districts that I visited I was able to visit with former students, now teachers. In those districts I was extremely proud of each of these fine teachers. Administrators were quick to tell me about the outstanding job each of these teachers is doing.

I presented several workshops entitled "Teaching Beyond The Textbook: Projects That Work For Social Studies Classes." These were presented through area education agencies and at conferences. I was pleased with the teacher reaction to the workshop and I hope that each of the participants will incorporate or modify some of the ideas we discussed in his or her own classrooms.

The gymnasium was filled to capacity for the Blue Ribbon Schools Award Celebration at **Alden Community School** in October. It was truly a community celebration of education involving students, teachers, administrators and local residents. This district can be proud of receiving this recognition, but to see the local show of support for the school must have been just as rewarding.

Again this year The Pella Corporation honored technology, science, and math teachers in the communities where they have Iowa plants. I spoke to this group

commending this company for investing in Iowa education and encouraging Iowa educators. I participated in planning meetings organized by the FINE Foundation to plan a graduate course. I shared ideas with participants at the area school board conference hosted by Western Hills A.E.A. 12 in Sioux City. I served as a judge for the State Geography Bee. Anyone attending this event would have been impressed with the job of each of the contestants.

One of the highlights of the year for me was the time spent working with future teachers at several Iowa colleges and universities. In my presentations I tried to share some practical ideas that I thought would be beneficial to the students preparing to teach. I was surprised to find in each of the schools I visited that the job market and finding a teaching job was not the number one concern of the students visiting with me. Most students expressed concern and asked the most questions on the issue of discipline. One of the two trips I made to the **University of Iowa** was spent meeting with the staff of the education department. During this informal meeting I was given the chance to share some of the views I was hearing from teachers and administrators in Iowa schools. When I made a presentation to future teachers at **William Penn College**, the college also hosted an evening program where I spoke to area school personnel and local residents. I enjoyed working with two social studies methods classes at the **University of Northern Iowa**, and while I was on the campus I spent time in the **Malcolm Price Laboratory School**. The Lab School continues to provide an opportunity for university students to gain experience in an atmosphere that expects innovation and creativity in the classroom.

This also was a year of some wonderful " returns." In October, **Simpson College**, where I graduated 25 years ago, rolled out the red carpet when I spent two days on campus at the invitation of the education department. In addition to participating in the Alumni-in-Residence Program I made a Simpson Forum presentation. In February I visited **Southeast Webster Community School**, which includes my hometown of Dayton and the former Dayton Community School District, which I attended from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The day was concluded with a community reception hosted by the school. During my visit to the **Indianola Community School**, I visited with the cooperating teachers I worked with when I student taught in this district. In January I was among

friends and familiar faces when I made a presentation during the **Maple Valley Community School** and **Anthon-Oto Community School** inservice. These two districts are participating in the first year of a three-year whole grade sharing program. Visiting with students, teachers, and parents I believe these two districts can be extremely pleased with the success they have enjoyed by working together and sharing programs. And the returns would not be complete without mentioning two other events. In September I was invited to ride in my hometown's annual rodeo parade and later in the month I was honored to serve as grand marshall for Danbury's annual Corn Days parade. I would not have traded the ticker tape of New York City for the honor of being in these two parades.

Through the year I have received support and encouragement from many employees in the Iowa Department of Education. Dr. Ramirez, Ted Stilwill, Susan Fischer, and Jody Crane have not only provided assistance, but they have been interested in hearing about my experiences as Ambassador For Education. Education in Iowa has benefited from their professional skills.

"Does that mean you are rich?"

A southwest Iowa 1st grade student's question after hearing about the selection as Teacher of the Year.

Yes, I am rich. Maybe not in the dollars and cents in the eyes of the southwest Iowa first grader, but professionally I have been richly rewarded. I received a good education in a small Iowa school, I attended an excellent Iowa college, and I have been fortunate to work in a fine Iowa school district. Like so many Iowa communities, the Maple Valley community recognizes the importance of education and wants to know what we are doing in our school. I have worked for administrators who have encouraged teachers even when the best laid plans seem to fall apart. Our school board continually asks what is best for our students and considers the entire educational program when making decisions. Daily I have worked with teachers who are willing to be creative and who challenge their students. And again, it is an honor to have been selected Iowa Teacher of the Year and to serve as this year's Ambassador for Education.

"...but I have missed the students and the classroom."

A quote from every speech I presented this year.

And yet the real reason I am rich goes to the very core of all of our jobs and is the reason for our jobs -- the students. For me 25 years of Maple Valley students. Students who have provided me with encouragement, criticism, enthusiasm, and appreciation that have been the motivation for me at Maple Valley. They are the reason I have been honored. In conclusion, I must add that I have missed the classroom and the students. I will return to the classroom with many new ideas. I return convinced that this state, with all of us working together, will continue to provide quality education to all of our students.

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