

**FINAL REPORT**

**K-12 EDUCATION REFORM**

**STUDY COMMITTEE**

**Presented to the Legislative Council  
and the Iowa General Assembly  
February 1992**

**Prepared by the Legislative Service Bureau**

## PROGRESS REPORT

### K-12 EDUCATION REFORM STUDY COMMITTEE

January 1992

#### AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

During the 74th General Assembly, 1991 Session, a resolution, SCR 24, was passed that called for the establishment of a task force to study issues related to reform of Iowa's education system. The Kindergarten through Twelfth Grade Education Reform Study Committee was established during the summer of 1991 by the Legislative Council to study Iowa's primary and secondary education delivery system over a two-year period and to recommend to the General Assembly goals and any legislation necessary to reform Iowa's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system. The Legislative Council appointed a total of 23 members, eight of whom are members of the Senate, eight of whom are members of the House of Representatives, and seven of whom are members of the general public. The members of the Committee and their relationship, if any, to the education system are as follows:

Michael Blouin, Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce and former Member of U.S. House of Representatives, Chairperson

Senator Mike Connolly, Senate Education Committee Chairperson, Co-vice Chairperson

Representative C. Arthur Ollie, House Education Committee Chairperson, Co-vice Chairperson

Senator William Dieleman, Senate Education Committee Member

Senator Mark Hagerla, Senate Education Committee Member

Senator Wally Horn, Senate Education Committee Member

Senator Mary Kramer, Senate Education Committee Member

Senator Jim Lind, Senate Education Committee Member and Education Appropriations Subcommittee Ranking Member

Senator Jean Lloyd-Jones, Former Senate Education Committee Member

Senator Richard Varn, Senate Education Committee Member and Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chairperson

Representative Dennis Cohoon, House Education Committee Member

Representative Horace Daggett, House Education Committee Ranking Member

Representative Steven Grubbs, House Education Committee Member

Representative Don Hanson, House Education Committee Member

Representative Mary Neuhauser, House Education Committee Member and House Education Appropriations Subcommittee Vice Chairperson

Representative Mark Shearer, House Education Committee Member

Representative Don Shoultz, House Education Committee Member

Karen Goodenow, Former State Board of Education Member

Dr. Tom Switzer, Dean of College of Education at University of Northern Iowa

Karen Thomsen, Area Education Agency 13 Board Member

Stan Van Hauen, Teacher

Ruth White, Teacher and Minority Student Academic Advisor

Jonathan Wilson, Lawyer and Des Moines School Board Member

Dr. William Lepley, Director of the Department of Education, was added to the Committee membership as an ex officio nonvoting member.

### STUDY COMMITTEE CHARGE

The Legislative Council charged the Committee with the following duties:

Recommend to the General Assembly goals and necessary legislation to reform Iowa's early childhood, primary, and secondary education system. The committee shall include in its review alternative approaches to student assessment, early childhood education initiatives, school-based decision making, uses of education technology, enhanced parental involvement and parent education alternatives, staff development activities and teacher training enhancements, extended school instruction time, use of interagency collaboration and partnerships between schools and business. The committee shall report to the Studies Committee by September 1, 1991, on how the committee desires to proceed. Preliminary recommendations should be forwarded to the Legislative Council by January 1, 1992, with a final report due December 1, 1992.

Due to various delays, the Committee was unable to submit a report on how the Committee proposed to proceed by the September 1, 1991, deadline. The Committee asked

for, and received, an extension of time to file that report with the Studies Committee of the Legislative Council by the December meeting of the Studies Committee.

### AUTHORIZED MEETING DAYS

The Committee originally was authorized two meeting days during the 1991 interim to conduct Committee business. The Committee requested and received permission from the Legislative Council to hold meetings on an additional day. The Committee meetings were held on October 10, November 25, and November 26, 1991, at the Statehouse in Des Moines, Iowa.

### OCTOBER 10, 1991, MEETING

In preparation for the meeting, Committee members received a general background memorandum, regarding various studies of and statutory changes affecting Iowa's primary and secondary education system, and various materials relating to education reform initiatives in other states. The Committee also received copies of studies and education reform plans that were researched and developed by various groups with vested interests in aspects of the primary and secondary education system.

During the October meeting, the Committee viewed a videotape and received testimony regarding the current state of Iowa's education system, information that compares Iowa student academic performance with other states and countries, European and Asian education systems, various recommendations for changes in the current system, and various reform initiatives being proposed or carried out in other states and in the national arena. The presenters and brief summaries of their testimony are as follows:

Dr. William Lepley, Director, Department of Education: Dr. Lepley discussed various efforts made by himself and the Department of Education to investigate and initiate education reform in Iowa. He identified several specific areas for review by the Committee, several areas of potential concern, and expressed the Department and State Board of Education's desires to cooperate with the work of the Committee.

Mr. Frank Vance, Chief of the Bureau of Special Education, Department of Education: Mr. Vance discussed various education reform initiatives which are taking place in the area of special education in Iowa. He discussed how Iowa is addressing the two new special education categories of autism and head injury and the federally funded program for assistive technology. Mr. Vance then described the Department's most significant current initiative, the "Renewed Service Delivery System", and the development of the Department's Special Education Funding Task Force's work on adjustments to special education funding.

Dr. Lee Tack, Administrator of Division of Planning and Accountability, Department of Education: Dr. Tack presented the Committee with evaluative information on Iowa primary

and secondary student performance as compared with students in other states, including historical trends and current comparative data. He also presented a variety of statistics on aspects of Iowa's educational delivery system, including expected matriculation rates, numbers of school and high school districts, pupil-teacher ratios, and teacher salary levels.

Mr. Roger Foelske, Acting Chief of the Bureau of Technical and Vocational Education, Department of Education: Mr. Foelske discussed the impact that the education reform movement has had on vocational education, including the development of concepts such as performance transcripts and the increased potential for creative use of distance learning technology to provide program diversity. He discussed the various pieces of state and federal legislation that have generated vocational education reform in Iowa, including their respective goals and requirements, and the progress that has been made toward implementation of the new state vocational education standards. Mr. Foelske listed various federal grants that the Department has received for improvement of vocational education and reported on the status of the approval of the plan for administration of funds under the federal Carl Perkins Act.

Dr. Mark Grey, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Northern Iowa: Dr. Grey provided the Committee with a comparative analysis of the American versus the European and Japanese educational delivery systems. He described characteristics of the different systems, noted the differences in emphases, and recommended several areas for improvement in the American education system. Dr. Grey also suggested that some of the problems that America's education system is experiencing may be attributed to societal and parental attitudes toward education and the importance of the role that education plays in society.

Dr. John Tarr, Professor of Mathematics, University of Northern Iowa: Dr. Tarr discussed the results of a comparative study of student mathematics performance that was conducted at the University of Northern Iowa. The study, he informed the Committee, was released in 1981 and compared students in the United States and students in other countries and concluded that American students were far behind the rest of the world in mathematics education. The study which was repeated in 1987, he said, compared the performance of Iowa students to those of students in other countries and concluded that Iowa students compared favorably to students in other countries, especially in areas that are generally heavily emphasized in Iowa curricula.

Ms. Angie King, President of Iowa State Education Association: Ms. King discussed the results of focus groups, conferences, and surveys initiated by the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA), which are summarized in a report produced by ISEA entitled "Time for a Change: A Report to the People of Iowa From the Teachers of Iowa." The areas identified by the teachers as areas of need Ms. King listed as follows: time, authority and responsibility, evaluation and accountability, and beginning at the youngest age possible.

Mr. Jamie Vollmer, New Iowa Schools Development Corporation and Iowa Business and Education Roundtable: Mr. Vollmer described the role that business plays in the education of society's children as that of the consumer of the education system's product. He described the

work of the Business and Education Roundtable in developing their report on the need for education reform and the history and composition of the New Iowa Schools Development Corporation. He also suggested that many of the reform plans being proposed by different education constituency groups are consistent with each other and identify the same basic goals of clearly articulating what a high school graduate must know, accurately measuring whether a student has achieved the desired outcome, creating an appropriate system of accountability within the education system, recognizing excellence within the system, and decentralization of decision-making authority to the building level. He added that more may need to be done to deregulate or change the way that education is regulated.

Mr. John Myers, Education Program Director of the National Conference of State Legislatures: Mr. Myers described the role of state legislatures in the education reform movement as that of goal and vision setting, encouragement of local innovation, providing the leeway for changes to occur, and keeping change within the confines of a discernable and predictable direction. He described the education reform initiatives which Oregon has undertaken and some of the challenges that state has yet to face in implementation of the reform package. Mr. Myers informed the Committee of the kinds of assistance that the National Conference of State Legislatures can provide to Iowa and to the Committee. He also gave the Committee an update on the progress that several states have made in the area of student assessment.

#### NOVEMBER 25, 1991, MEETING

Prior to the November 25, 1991, meeting, staff prepared an outline and charts describing the contents of four education reform initiatives that the Committee members had received copies of and about which members had expressed interest in hearing additional information. At the meeting, the Committee received in-depth information on the contents of the initiatives from proponents of the four initiatives. At the conclusion of the presentations of testimony, the Committee discussed various ways that the Committee could fulfill its duties and the potential challenges that Iowa's education system faces under current economic conditions. The presenters, the initiatives that they addressed, and a brief summary of their testimony are as follows:

Mr. Gerald Ott, New Iowa Schools Development Corporation (The Case for America 2000 in Iowa: An Educational Barn-Raising in America's "Field of Dreams"): Mr. Ott described the history and constituencies involved in the formation of the New Iowa Schools Development Corporation and the premises which form the bases for NISDC's request for proposal to the federal government. He noted that the NISDC proposal and other Iowa education reform proposals differ from those in other states in that the Iowa proposals are based on internally motivated change, whereas other states rely on external factors to motivate change.

Mr. James Sutton, Iowa State Education Association (Time for a Change: A Report to the People of Iowa From the Teachers of Iowa): Mr. Sutton described the process which culminated in the drafting of the report, identified the four major need factors emphasized by

teachers surveyed, and noted that the development of a research and development mechanism is key to the implementation of any proposed changes. Mr. Sutton described the current education delivery system as an efficient means to an end, but said that the end results that today's society requires are different from those that the system was designed to achieve. He also described some of the restrictive elements of the current system which can preclude creative, individualized, or effective instruction techniques.

Mr. Jamie Vollmer, Executive Director of the Business and Education Roundtable (World Class Schools: The Iowa Initiative): Mr. Vollmer related the events which led up to the formation of the Business and Education Roundtable and the development of the World Class Schools Report. He listed the assumptions upon which the report was based and described the kind of economy that children of the future will have to be prepared to deal with. Mr. Vollmer described the Roundtable's report as a nonprescriptive method for requiring, and assessing achievement through, a set of standards for what children should know, and pointed out that the only mandatory aspect of the report is the prekindergarten availability requirement.

Mr. Ted Stilwill, Department of Education (Education is Iowa's Future: The State Plan for Educational Excellence in the 21st Century): Mr. Stilwill stated that the main premises of the report that was initiated through the Strategic Planning Council of the Department of Education are that schools must change because the purpose of schools have changed and that change can and will occur through development of shared directions of the various education constituencies. The main recommendations contained in the report he described as reestablishing what is expected of students and setting a process to establish state outcomes and assessment mechanisms. Mr. Stilwill discussed what the Department is advocating in the areas of assessment, human resources, and systemic changes in education and the perceived role of the Department in fostering the proposed changes.

#### NOVEMBER 26, 1991, MEETING

At the November 26, 1991, meeting, the Committee received information about a strategic plan that the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) have developed in response to the current discussions about education reform. At the conclusion of the testimony, the Committee discussed methods that the Committee could employ to fulfill its duties. Committee members noted that there appeared to be a consensus between the various education constituencies on the broad issues of education reform, but that when it came to specific changes, differences of opinion were apparent. During the process of discussing the broad issues and the role that the General Assembly plays in molding change, the Committee decided to create several subcommittees around the larger issues to identify short-term and long-term goals and to help the Committee develop its vision of the way that education in Iowa should be reformed. The Committee concluded that, if the subcommittees were to meet during Session, additional staffing assistance would need to be requested, but that it should not take the form of hiring a consultant.

The Committee briefly discussed, and received descriptions or copies of, several individual recommendations for short-term changes in the education system but did not act on those recommendations. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Committee received copies of the state of principles developed by The Renaissance Group, a group of presidents and deans of education from various higher education institutions, from Dean Switzer and were promised copies of a set of premises for articulated comprehensive education reform which had been developed by the deans of education at the three state universities and Drake University. Members of the Committee were also given the opportunity to state their preferences as to subcommittee assignment, with the final assignment duty being left to the Chairperson of the Committee.

The morning presenters and a brief summary of their presentations are as follows:

Al Wood, Chief Administrator of AEA 3 in Clinton; Ron Fielder, Chief Administrator of AEA 10 in Cedar Rapids; J. Gary Hayden, Chief Administrator of AEA 4 in Sioux Center (Statewide AEA Strategic Planning): The three presenters described the role that the Area Education Agencies can play in providing the resources and technology, including research and development, to districts to foster and promote positive education reform. They described some of the initiatives already taken by many of the AEAs to provide assistive technology resources to their constituent districts. They also described how the AEA infrastructure and partnerships can provide the appropriate information necessary to create the appropriate climate for and abilities to change. They noted that most of their services in education reform are process-related, not instruction-related, services. The presenters also informed the Committee of the development of an informal AEA council, which is entirely voluntary in nature and will prove useful in coordinating and achieving statewide consensus on strategic planning.

#### PRELIMINARY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee made the following short-term recommendations:

1. That a request be submitted to the Legislative Council to employ an administrative assistant to organize and provide research services for Committee or subcommittee meetings that are held during the upcoming legislative session.
2. That the Committee divide into three subcommittees to study school structures, human and technological resources, and student learning and development. A list of subcommittees and their corresponding subject matter areas of concern is attached to this report.
3. That the General Assembly endorse a method by which schools can obtain a waiver of school standards to allow schools and school districts to achieve comprehensive systemic change and to explore new methodologies, and creative approaches designed to help students achieve at higher levels,



provided that the waiver does not have the effect of lowering the standards or expectations for student achievement or does not provide schools and school districts with an easy opt-out mechanism from the minimum standards.

## **Subcommittee Structures**

1. **School Structures**
  - a. Authority within the schools (site-based and shared decision making)
  - b. Systemic accountability
  - c. General school operations
  - d. School/educational climate within schools
  - e. School day/calendar
  - f. Business/community/agency partnerships
  
2. **Human and Technological Resources**
  - a. Information technologies
  - b. Climate control
  - c. Facilities development/improvements
  - d. Physical infrastructure
  - e. Human infrastructure and affirmative action
  - f. Higher education and K-12 system
  - g. Educator preparation and development
  
3. **Student Learning and Development**
  - a. Curriculum
  - b. Student assessment
  - c. Outcomes and standards
  - d. Family support and early childhood education

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