



School Leader Update

Iowa Department of Education

December 2006

Resources for Iowa School Leaders

NEWS FROM THE DE

Districts Honored for Achievement Improvements

Seven school districts [were honored](#) at the November 15 State Board of Education meeting for improving gaps in student achievement.

Anamosa, Marshalltown, Norwalk, Sioux City, Wapello, Waukee, and Wayne Community School Districts each received a "Breaking Barriers to Learning and Teaching Award," which was created by the State Board of Education to recognize successful efforts to eliminate achievement gaps by improving instruction, curriculum and programs, and professional development opportunities for school staff.

"Although Iowa's overall achievement remains very strong, several persistent achievement gaps remain at all grade levels," said State Board President Gene Vincent. "Removing those gaps is a Board priority, and we want to recognize districts that have dedicated the considerable resources needed to focus on helping struggling students. Their efforts to work as a team, use data to diagnose the gaps, and provide the right interventions are truly noteworthy."

Districts earned the award if they made significant improvement among any subgroup of students in at least one grade level and subject, without allowing any other subgroup of students to decline significantly. Districts with a school on the federal school in need of assistance list were not eligible.

State Releases Annual Condition of Education

The Department of Education officials released the [Annual Condition of Education Report](#) at the November 15 State Board meeting. The report provides a wide range of data on the state's school population, curriculum and programs, teachers and administrators, and finances to help Iowans better understand our educational system.

"Our goal is that each Condition of Education Report serve as a reliable resource for understanding prekindergarten, elementary, and secondary education in Iowa," said Director Judy Jeffrey. "Accountability is an essential function of public service, and it is my hope that all citizens – especially policymakers, educators and parents – find this report a tool that will help them not only know and evaluate their schools, but also plan and implement changes that ensure schools are meeting the ongoing needs of students and the future of this state."

"We know our local districts have high standards and rate very well in many categories," Jeffrey said. "We know also that education, like the rest of the world and economy, is rapidly changing. The expectations of the past need to be upgraded to better prepare our students for the future. The level of investment also needs to be upgraded to provide greater support for the teachers and classroom materials necessary to ensure Iowa's children remain the best educated students in the country."

Data in the Condition of Education show Iowa schools rate above national averages in areas such as student test scores, college preparedness, graduation rates, and teacher quality. Jeffrey told Board members that challenges continue for schools, including meeting new and evolving expectations from business and industry, the impact of technology on student learning styles as well as teaching practices, providing more learning opportunities for students, and making more progress toward the reduction of persistent achievement gaps.

Highlights in both print and podcast are posted on the [DE website](#).

GPS Communications Toolkit Updated Online

The second quarter updates to the Go Prepare Succeed (GPS) Communications Toolkit have been posted on the [DE website](#). The second quarter theme is "PLAN IT" and is designed to build on the first quarter theme "DREAM IT."

The GPS toolkit is intended to help schools communicate with key audiences (students, parents, and community members) about high school improvements. The materials were designed to be distributed to the specific audiences. Some of the materials can be directly copied and distributed while others need to be customized by the school or district.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Data Now Available in Electronic Annual Progress Report (APR)

The Iowa Testing Program data are now ready for district and public view in the electronic APR. In the section displaying data for subgroups, the following message accompanies the data: ***The data for this Annual Progress Report student achievement site are based on the student's attending district and school. For those categories where the number of students is less than 10, the data will be suppressed for all data in that subgroup.*** For instance, for any reportable grade level, if the school/district's White population is greater than 10, the Hispanic population is greater than 10, and the African American population is less than 10, **NO** disaggregated data will be displayed for that grade level for **ANY** subgroup (White, African American, Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian) in an attempt to meet the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The same reporting guidelines have been applied to all subgroup reporting. **This does not, however, release the school/district from collecting, reviewing, and analyzing these data. These data will be subject to review on an accreditation visit.**

Data displayed in the electronic APR include Iowa Testing Program data as well as data from the Alternate Assessment. The Iowa Testing Program data used for the electronic APR display were reviewed and verified by the district for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting purposes. Districts should not be concerned if data displayed in the electronic APR differ slightly from locally aggregated data. A number of factors may account for such differences, including the fact that the electronic APR includes data from the following sources:

- All students tested, not just Full Academic Year (FAY) students,
- All students enrolled in the district, regardless of their residence status (i.e., open enrolled in and tuitioned in), and
- Students participating in the Alternate Assessment.

Districts are able to view their data using their BEDs password. The public view is accessible at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/61/896/>.

On that site, a new box (orange) is available titled, **Public Information**. The Public Information box contains three links: 1) **Annual Progress Report**, 2) **Student Achievement Data**, and 3) **Comprehensive School Improvement Plan**. Clicking on the second link (Student Achievement Data) will lead to the display of the district's student achievement data. Clicking on the first link (Annual Progress Report), however, will not result in any APR information until the state has certified the district's APR. School Improvement Consultants from the DE will be working to complete the APR certification process by January 1, 2007. Your patience is appreciated as we strive to complete the first phase of this project. For assistance, contact Debbie Boring at debbie.boring@iowa.gov or 515/281-3198.

QUALITY TEACHING

Seminar Series for School Leaders

The annual "Winter Institute" traditionally provided in February by the Iowa Department of Education, School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) and Iowa Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (IASCD) will no longer be offered. Instead, in collaboration with SAI, the Department will be hosting a series of

professional development offerings for school leaders. The kick-off event will be a one-day seminar on April 4, 2007. The "*Spring Seminar*" will be held in Des Moines with regional and ICN follow-up sessions distributed throughout the 2006-2007 school year. This series will feature the work of Dr. Richard Elmore of Harvard University, and will focus on leading and supporting evidence based instructional and assessment practices that promote accelerated student achievement for the 21st century. Dates and registration information will be posted in future issues of School Leader Update and on the DE and SAI Web sites.

IASCD's Annual Curriculum Academy is scheduled for May 9-10 at the Embassy Suites in Des Moines. Also, in partnership with School Administrators of Iowa, the Summer Effective Schools Conference will be held at Lake Okoboji on June 21-22 with keynote presenter Linda Franco. See [IASCD website](#) for further information.

Toyota International Teacher Program to Japan

Teachers of all disciplines in grades 9–12 nationwide are encouraged to apply for the Toyota International Teacher Program. Sponsored by Toyota Motor Sales, USA, the program will provide 40 educators with a fully-funded opportunity to bring ancient and modern Japan back to their classrooms. Participants will travel through Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, and surrounding rural areas to examine the history, education system, environment, and industry of Japan. The application deadline is January 8, 2007, and the travel will take place June 22–July 7, 2007. To apply online and read about additional opportunities, please visit the [Institute for International Education](#) website.

Supreme Court Institute for Teachers

Street Law Inc. is once again sponsoring summer "Supreme Court" institutes for teachers at the Georgetown University Law Center, Washington D.C. This year there will be two sessions of "The Supreme Court Summer Institute for Teachers," one scheduled for June 14-19 and another for June 21-26, 2007. Each Institute is limited to 30 participants and admission is through a competitive application process. Applicants must be employed by a public or private school and teach or supervise secondary school social studies. There is a \$150 registration fee. For more information about eligibility requirements, costs, stipends and application materials, go to www.streetlaw.org/scipage.asp.

Clarification for HQT and LRE

The DE has received various questions related to IDEA requirements of "highly qualified teacher" and "least restrictive environment." Please know that schools must comply with both requirements; there is no either/or choice involved. A memo for superintendents and AEA directors of special education to share with all instructional personnel is attached, and includes detailed information and guidance. The memo will be posted online in the Diverse Learners section of the DE website at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/special-education.html>. For additional information, contact Norma Lynch at norma.lynnch@iowa.gov or 515/281-6038, or Kara Krohn at kara.krohn@iowa.gov or 515/281-7145.

Instructional Materials for Students with Vision Impairment and Print Disabilities

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included a requirement that students who are visually impaired and students who are print disabled receive their textbooks and core instructional materials at the same time as their non-disabled peers. The 2006 regulations implementing the 2004 IDEA include directions on how states and local districts are to respond to this legislation. The two sections of this legislation are the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS) and the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center (NIMAC). Providing accessible formats in a timely manner is not a new requirement. The new NIMAS process will improve this process for the students covered under these regulations. The State of Iowa has adopted the NIMAS and agrees to work with NIMAC for the purposes of providing instructional materials and texts to students who are blind, visually impaired or students with a reading disability in a timely manner. These regulations take effect December 3, 2006.

See the attached memo for full details about district responsibilities. Contact Steve Maurer at 515/281-3576 or steve.maurer@iowa.gov.

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

Athletic Scholarship Rule – Tell us How It’s Working

Now that the first grading period is in the books for some schools and is soon to be here for the rest, implementation of new rule 36.15(2) (“no pass/no play”) is upon us. If the State Board does not hear anything from the field, the Board will naturally assume that there are no problems. Please email to Carol Greta any feedback, positive or negative, regarding implementation of the rule. Please be as specific as possible to best guide the State Board in determining how the rule is working.

Also, remember that most questions are answered in the Guidance document (updated recently) on the [DE website](#).

Applications for Student Member of the State Board of Education

Applications for the nonvoting student member of the State Board of Education were sent via email to all school districts a week ago. The application and all required supporting documents are also available on the [DE website](#). John Jessen, now a senior at Des Moines Roosevelt High School, is the current student member of the Board.

This is a competitive process, and it is crucial that all requested information is completed and all instructions be followed accurately **to avoid the following problems** that have occurred in the past:

- Applications missing the signed approval from the district.
 - Applications with no letter of reference from an instructor who taught the student.
 - Applications without the summary of community or extracurricular activities.
 - Applications postmarked after the deadline of Friday, February 2.
 - District administrators who sign the approval document for more than the allowable number of students from their district. The limits are as follows:
 - If district enrollment for grades 10-12 is less than 400, only one student may apply.
 - If district enrollment for grades 10-12 is 400 – 1199, two students may apply.
 - If district enrollment for grades 10-12 is 1200 or more, three students may apply.
- In districts with more than one high school, administrators should communicate with each other about this. The DE will not screen applicants for a district that submits more than the allowed number.**

Please emphasize to interested, eligible students the importance of following the instructions for completion of all required documents. If a district has more students interested in applying than the above limits, the district must determine who gets to submit their application(s) to this agency.

The term of the student member starts May 1, 2007, and is for one year. If the appointed student is a sophomore this year, s/he may serve a two-year term.

Permissible Activities at Public Schools During the Christmas Season

The lists below are, of necessity, generalizations. If a public school administrator has a question about a more specific activity, the administrator is encouraged to contact his/her school attorney.

1. *Student prayer.* As is true of any time of the year, individual or collective student prayer is permissible so long as the prayer does not disrupt or impede the educational mission of the district. (For instance, students cannot organize a prayer group that skips math class to pray.) The corollary to this is that any prayer led by or at the behest of a public school official is in violation of the First Amendment.
2. *Secular aspects of Christmas.* The secular or commercial aspects of Christmas are a large part of many lives. To that end, the non-religious aspects of Christmas may be part of students’ lives at school to the extent that they do not otherwise violate school rules. For example, the following are permissible activities (inasmuch as they do not violate the First Amendment):
 - a. Hanging pictures of reindeer, bells, and other non-religious symbols.
 - b. Sponsoring a “giving tree” on which students may hang hats, mittens, scarves, or other items for donation.

- c. Handing out candy. Remember, this does not violate the First Amendment; check to see if it would violate a local school wellness policy!
 - d. Sponsoring sleigh rides.
3. *Class parties* must focus on the secular side of Christmas. Excuse all children whose families object to celebrating Christmas in a secular way, both those families who are of other faiths and those who are Christian, but who find the commercial aspects of the holiday to be offensive.
 4. *Caroling*. Again, if the songs are secular (“*Jingle Bells*,” “*Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer*,” “*Sleigh Ride*,” etc.) in nature, there is nothing about singing them that violates the First Amendment. Songs that celebrate the birth of Christ are more problematic. In an end-of-the-year music program open to the public, religious songs may be included as selections as long as they are selected for their musicality and are not limited to Christian songs.
 5. *Displays* that do not overemphasize the religious side of Christmas have been ruled by courts to not violate the First Amendment. Nativity scenes standing alone have been struck down by the courts.
 6. *Greetings*. Staff and students alike are free to wish each other a sincere “Merry Christmas,” “Happy Hanukkah,” “Joyous Kwanzaa,” etc., and *they may do so within the walls of a public school building*.

Open Enrollment Rule Changes Finalized

At its November meeting, the State Board of Education approved final adoption of changes to the open enrollment rules in chapter 17 of this agency’s rules. The changes (**effective January 10, 2007**) may be summarized as follows:

- Appeal available to a resident district for protesting an approval of a late-filed open enrollment request by a receiving district.
 - The board of the resident district must vote to file the appeal; an appeal cannot originate with the superintendent.
 - The appeal must be sent to the DE within 30 days of the resident district being notified of the approval of the open enrollment by the receiving district.
 - The DE will attempt mediation first; if unsuccessful, a brief telephonic hearing will be scheduled and a written decision issued.
 - REMEMBER: Written decisions are public information, and it is foreseeable that a written decision might characterize one district’s actions as “wrong.”
 - A dissatisfied district may appeal further to the State Board of Education.
- “Continuous enrollment” is not available to the parent/guardian of a child entering kindergarten for the first time.
- References to Phase III dollars deleted
- Requirement to send copies of open enrollment applications to the department rescinded
The exact language will be available shortly after January 10, 2007 at www.legis.state.ia.us/Rules/Current/iac/281iac/28117/28117.pdf.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Schools Can Win Funds for Wellness

Go The Distance and *Go The Distance Day* are free programs for Iowa youth that teach the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. Participating school teams can also win up to \$1,000 to use toward physical activity or wellness efforts. In 2006, *Go The Distance*, a four-month program, had 10,023 participants while *Go The Distance Day*, a one-day event, had 35,427 participants. For more information on upcoming events, visit www.lightenupiowa.org or contact Kelley at 888-777-8881 ext. 9, or kelley@lightenupiowa.org.

CALENDAR

Deadlines and Dates to Remember

December 11-12 [Third Annual High School Summit](#), Des Moines

SCHOOL LEADER UPDATE is produced monthly by the Iowa Department of Education for school leaders of Iowa. Contact 515/281-5295.



TO: AEA Directors of Special Education
School District Superintendents

FR: Lana Michelson

DA: December 1, 2006

RE: Consultative Teaching, Co-Teaching, and Least Restrictive Environment
Problems of Implementation

PLEASE SHARE WITH ALL INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL.

The Department has been made aware of certain misunderstandings and some instances of improper implementation of the IDEA's least restrictive environment (LRE) mandate and its "highly qualified teacher" (HQT) quality mandate. Some of those misunderstandings and resulting implementation difficulties are presented on the second page, accompanied by guidance and further information. It would appear that there is some confusion about what the LRE and HQT mandates actually require. Schools are to comply with both mandates: there is no either/or choice involved.

Concerning LRE, it is presumed that all children will be educated in the general education environment; however, each placement must be made based on each child's individual needs. For a small number of children, the general education environment, even with support and related services, is inappropriate. For all children, the least restrictive environment for each child is determined based on the unique needs of each child.

Concerning HQT, the IDEA requires that each secondary school teacher in a core content area must be "highly qualified." The HQT requirement, however, does not alter the requirement that children with disabilities receive specially designed instruction or eliminate the crucial role of the special educator. The general educator is an expert on content, and the special educator is the expert on identifying instructional strategies that provide children with special education needs access to the general education curriculum. These areas of expertise are to be blended using consultative teaching and/or co-teaching. Co-teaching occurs when both a general educator and a special educator are physically present and contributing to the instruction in a classroom. The Consultative Model occurs when the general educator provides content instruction and the special educator has consulted with the general education teacher on individual needs, student assessment, progress monitoring, and other IEP (Individual Education Program) needs.

This memorandum covers major issues and concerns, and gives general information. For more specific information or technical assistance, feel free to contact Norma Lynch (Norma.Lynch@iowa.gov or 515-281-6038) or Kara Krohn (Kara.Krohn@iowa.gov or 515-281-7145).

Scenario 1: A district unilaterally places a child with disabilities in the general education environment using either consultative teaching and/or co-teaching. This is done without giving notice to the parents or convening an IEP team meeting.

ANALYSIS: The district's action would appear to result in a change in a child's IEP or the child's placement, for which the district must give prior written notice to the parents, who are entitled to procedural safeguards.

Scenario 2: A district tells parents and educators that all children must be in the general education classroom. The district uses LRE or HQT as a rationale. The district states, "There is no more special education in the building." It appears in this scenario that children with disabilities receive no specially designed instruction or supports and related services in the general education environment.

ANALYSIS: There must be a continuum of services to meet the needs of students with disabilities, including students who cannot be educated in the general education environment even with support and related services. The IDEA states each student with a disability must be educated "to the maximum extent appropriate" in the general education environment, based on each student's needs. Furthermore, each eligible child is entitled to "specially designed instruction" appropriate to that child's needs. For students in the general education environment, this may require consultative or co-teaching. Finally, some students require support and related services for placement in the general education environment.

Scenario 3: Special educators and general educators who are partners in collaborative (consultative or co-teaching) never have contact or have insufficient common planning time to discuss content, instructional strategies, and other supports for students with special education needs.

ANALYSIS: Special educators and general educators who are engaged in collaborative teaching must have "regular and frequent" consultation, which means that both the core content teacher and the special education teacher are thoroughly familiar with the core content teaching strategies used in the classroom, individual specially designed instruction, progress of students in the general education curriculum, classroom assessments, individual assessments, and individual accommodations. The consultation may take place through professional development opportunities, staff meetings, regularly scheduled consultation, e-mail and telephone consultation, and other means.

Scenario 4: An educator recognizes she or he needs more training and support to engage in consultative teaching and/or co-teaching.

ANALYSIS: If additional resources to engage in collaborative teaching are needed, please contact local school leaders. For additional training or professional development, each AEA has staff who have received training on Iowa's Consultative Model for Collaborative Services Provision, which included both consultative and co-teaching. Feel free to contact the AEA professional development office for further training.



STATE OF IOWA

THOMAS J. VILSACK, GOVERNOR
SALLY J. PEDERSON, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

TO: District Superintendents
FR: Lana Michelson
DA: December 1, 2006
RE: Instructional Materials for students with vision and print disabilities

The 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included a requirement that students who are visually impaired and students who are print disabled receive their textbooks and core instructional materials at the same time as their non-disabled peers.

The 2006 regulations implementing the 2004 IDEA include directions on how states and local districts are to respond to this legislation. The two sections of this legislation are the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS) and the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center (NIMAC). Providing accessible formats in a timely manner is not a new requirement. The new NIMAS process will improve this process for the students covered under these regulations.

The NIMAS establishes standards to be used by textbook publishers to prepare electronic files of textbooks, which can be converted to specialized formats. Specialized formats means Braille, Audio, Large Print, Text to Speech or Digital Text, which can be used by students who are blind, vision impaired, physically disabled, and reading disabled. The NIMAC's duties are to receive and maintain a catalog of these electronic files. Publishers at the direction of local school districts send these files to NIMAC. When a student in a local school district requires one of these specialized formats to have access to the general education curriculum, the local district will contact an Authorized User designated by the State of Iowa to search the NIMAC for the particular textbook and associated materials. The Authorized User can take the electronic file and turn it into the specialized format requested or identify an Accessible Media Producer in the state to develop the specialized format. Once the specialized format has been developed, the Authorized User will send it to the local district making the initial request.

The State of Iowa has adopted the NIMAS and agrees to work with NIMAC for the purposes of providing instructional materials and texts to students who are blind, visually impaired or students with a reading disability in a timely manner. These regulations take effect December 3, 2006. If you will be ordering textbooks after the December date you must require the publisher to prepare and, on or before delivery of the print instructional materials, provide to the NIMAC electronic files containing the contents of the print instructional materials using the NIMAS; or purchase instructional materials from the publisher that are produced in, or may be rendered in, specialized formats identified above. These regulations effect textbooks and core related materials published after July 19, 2006.

At this point in time, the districts responsibilities are to begin to think about the following responsibilities:

1. Identifying NIMAS eligible students in conjunction with the AEA.
2. Identifying accessible formats these students will require.
3. When selecting new textbooks and core related instructional materials, begin to ask about accessible formats for students in special education.
4. Require publishers to send files to the NIMAC.

You will be receiving further correspondence and directions from the Department in early December on the process the State will be using to ensure blind, visually impaired, and reading disabled students receive instructional materials in a timely manner with their peers. We wanted to alert you to these regulations and process before they went into effect. For additional introductory information, feel free to consult OSEP's Topic Brief on NIMAS (<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CTopicalBrief%2C12%2C>).

If you require additional information, please contact Steve Maurer at 515-281-3576 or steve.maurer@iowa.gov.