A MONTHLY JOURNAL
FOR IOWA EDUCATORS

School **Leader** Update

April 2012

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Students thrive in preschool program

Preschool continues to have a profound positive effect on Iowa's incoming kindergartners.

The second study since the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program began continues to show improvement in beginning reading skills among enrolled children.

Children from low-income backgrounds especially benefit from the high-quality preschool program, not just in terms of climbing proficiency rates, but substantially cutting down the need for intensive interventions.

About half of state's districts use Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or DIBELS Next.

DIBELS Next results show kindergartners who

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Looking ahead at education reform

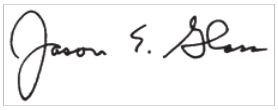
Jason Glass, Director

April is upon us. Flowers and trees are in bloom, students are starting to think about summer, school leaders are putting the finishing touches on their budgets for next year, and the 2012 legislative session is winding down.

On the legislative front, I'm very optimistic that we'll see some consensus on education reform, and I expect to see a significant bill pass this session. I remain deeply grateful for the time and attention that educators, legislators, and other Iowans have devoted to the issue of dramatically improving our schools.

Just as students and educators are looking ahead, so are we at the Iowa Department of Education. You've heard us say that the Governor's education legislation is the beginning of a multi-year effort. The next phase of this will continue the broader themes of great teachers and leaders, clear standards with high expectations and fair measures for results, and innovation.

But in addition to our focus on accountability and pressuring the system, we must look at giving educators the tools they need to be successful. We will look at the structures around capacity-building, educator collaboration, professional learning communities, and other supports in the coming months, as we work on teacher leadership and compensation issues. All of this work ties together as we set out to transform Iowa's good schools into world-class schools. As always, thank you for your courage and commitment to students and to Iowa.



Special education profiles in EdInsight

District and AEA Special Education Profiles will be available through the Iowa Department of Education's data warehouse, EdInsight, beginning in June. EdInsight users with district, AEA, or state-level access will be able to view and print Federal Fiscal Year 2010 profiles. The Department will continue to email district and AEA determinations during the summer, but districts will be expected to access their data through EdInsight. To view all data in your profile, your district must have someone with district-level and small cell size access trained in EdInsight. EdInsight training is provided through your AEA.

Questions about the Special Education Profiles should be directed to Janell Brandhorst at 515-281-3033 or janell.brandhorst@iowa.gov. Questions about EdInsight should be directed to Jason Grinstead at 515-281-7129 or jason.grinstead@iowa.gov.

Registration for special education conference under way

Mark your calendars for *Pursuing the Promise,* the Iowa Department of Education's special education conference. The conference is scheduled for June 11-12 in Des Moines.

Participants may register for the conference here. There is no registration fee, but registration will be capped at 1,200 participants. Details about the conference, as well as hotel information, are on the Department's website at www.educateiowa.gov.

The Department will reimburse students, parents, and Special Education Advisory Panel members for the cost of attendance at state rates. Information on reimbursement will be included in the registration announcement. Sessions during the conference will include academic (reading, math and science), legal, learning supports (bullying and mental health), and secondary transitions. For more information, contact Amy Williamson at amy.williamson@iowa.gov.

Guidance on physical education for students with disabilities

The U.S. Department of Education has issued recent guidance documents concerning physical education for children in special education. The first document is *Creating Equal Opportunities for Children and Youth with Disabilities to Participate in Physical Education and Extracurricular Athletics*. This document provides guidance for IEP teams and physical education teachers about improving access to, and participation in, the physical education curriculum for children with disabilities. That document is here. In the second document, available here, the U.S. Department of Education reminded a constituent that schools may not replace state or locally required physical education courses with additional reading instruction for special education children who struggle in reading. For information on adapted physical education, contact Ed Thomas at 515-281-3933 or ed.thomas@iowa.gov. For questions about special education law, contact Thomas Mayes at 515-242-5614 or thomas.mayes@iowa.gov.

New federal guidance on Section 504

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) released a "Dear Colleague Letter" on the 2008 amendments to 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. That letter is here and OCR's revised FAQ on 504 is here. School leaders will be accountable for the entire FAQ; however, it addresses two common concerns. First, 504 eligibility is determined without regard to mitigating measures. For example, if a child is on a medication for a condition (e.g., asthma, ADHD), the team determines the child's 504 eligibility as if the child were not taking the medication (one exception: teams can consider the effects of ordinary eyeglasses or contact lenses). Second, 504 eligibility decisions cannot be based solely on a child's grades or achievement test scores: The major life activities considered under 504 are broader than proficiency in reading and math. For more questions on this guidance from OCR, please contact Thomas Mayes at 515-242-5614 or thomas.mayes@iowa.gov.

Decision-making for children with disabilities in foster care

The Iowa Departments of Education and Human Services have issued a joint policy statement on the decision-making for children with disabilities who are in foster care. This position statement applies to children who are receiving Early ACCESS services (ages 0 to 2) and special education services (ages 3-21). This policy statement recognizes that DHS workers may not assert parental rights under Early ACCESS or special education, provides that foster parents may not act as a child's parent (unless appointed as the child's surrogate parent), and explains when and how a surrogate parent must be appointed. That document is here. For more information about this joint document, contact Thomas Mayes at 515-242-5614 or thomas.mayes@iowa.gov.

Notice: 2012 Iowa Youth Survey

The Iowa Youth Survey, the most frequently used source of data regarding Iowa's youth, is scheduled to be administered Sept. 24-Nov. 2.

The 2012 Iowa Youth Survey will be taken through online survey software following a procedure similar to one used in 2010. The invitation to participate includes all public and non-public students in grades 6, 8, and 11. All forms and information will be posted on the Iowa Youth Survey website, www.iowayouthsurvey.org, including a letter to superintendents from the Iowa Department of Public Health.

By April 1, you should have received an e-mail with a link to an online system to collect participation documentation. This site includes information that was previously collected, including the "Agreement to Participate" and "AEA Data Release." These forms may only be signed electronically, and are due by April 30.

For questions about the survey, please contact Linda McGinnis at the Iowa Department of Public Health at linda.mcginnis@idph.iowa.gov. Please watch your email for additional information regarding the survey.

Join national conversation on competency-based education

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) is hosting a webinar on competency-based education on April 2 at 2 p.m. Register at the website.

The webinar is presented by iNACOL's CompetencyWorks and will feature Susan Patrick, who is internationally known for her work with competency-based education.

STEM council seeks applications

The Governor's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Advisory Council is seeking applications for six Iowa Regional STEM Hubs, which will focus on unifying the state's many assets toward the common goal of STEM excellence for all Iowa learners. The Hubs will be strategically positioned across Iowa where communities, counties, multi-county regions and the state can achieve improved STEM education, opportunity and advancement.

Regional STEM Networks focus broad stakeholder groups on the region's unique STEM challenges and opportunities. They complement, leverage, and work closely with AEAs, extension and outreach county offices, community colleges, private and public universities, science centers and museums, regional workforce development partnerships, k-12 school districts, libraries, nonprofits, and youth agencies (e.g., Girl Scouts, 4-H), regional businesses, and local governments to grow a comprehensive STEM network for the region.

Regional Network boundaries honor existing partnerships and infrastructures while complementing them with a statewide co-ordinative fabric of zones. Applications can be found at http://www.iowamathscience.org/HUB.

The (financial literacy) game is on

Could you use a technology upgrade for your classroom? Iowa College Aid, in conjunction with Iowa Bankers Association and EverFi, Inc., has an innovative way to help. To celebrate Financial Literacy Awareness Month this April, they are sponsoring the IFLiP Video CLiP Challenge to encourage Iowa high school students to creatively demonstrate key financial concepts and the importance of making smart financial decisions.

The challenge, which runs through April 22, asks teams of up to five Iowa high school students, led by an educator mentor(s) from their school, to create and submit videos that will educate their peers on a financial literacy topic of their choice.

The team with the winning video will receive a $1,000 technology grant for their high school, courtesy of Iowa Bankers Association, and $250 for the student team members to share, courtesy of EverFi, Inc.

While it is not necessary for students to complete the Iowa Financial Literacy Program before submitting their video, the winning team must be certified through the program before prizes will be awarded.

The official challenge rules, as well as a promotional flyer educators can use to promote the challenge, are available on the Iowa College Aid website. If you have questions regarding the IFLiP Video CLiP Challenge, please contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456.

Youth advisory council seeks applications

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) is accepting applications from high school students for the 2012-13 youth council. The non-partisan policy advising organization, comprised of students between the ages of 14 and 20, researches legislation and meets with legislators to discuss bills that could impact Iowa's young people.

Selected members of the council have demonstrated leadership qualities. The council meets quarterly at the State Capitol and holds monthly conference calls. Applications are due on May 1, and new members will be selected in June. Council members serve two-year terms. There are no fees for youth to participate, and travel expenses to and from meetings are reimbursed.

Application forms and more information can be found at www.icyd.iowa.gov/SIYAC/ or by contacting Renée Mallo, State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council coordinator, at SIYAC@Iowa.gov or 515-725-2836.

Youth Congress seeks applicants

The Iowa Youth Congress (IYC) is seeking applications from high school students who want to learn how government works in a fun, realistic way.

During the Iowa Youth Congress, students can be a one-time representative and attend the three-day IYC House Session in October, or they can add on to their involvement by running for office or writing a bill. There may be other student leadership projects throughout the year as well.

Any accommodations students may need to participate in Iowa Youth Congress, such as transportation and other requests, will be provided as needed. IYC participation is free for students.

Iowa Youth Congress is an inclusive youth-led program for students living across Iowa. Through its offices with the Iowa Department of Human Rights, IYC has strong ties with the Commission on the Status of African Americans, the Office of Asian and Pacific Islanders, and the Office of Latino Affairs. IYC also has partnerships with the Office of Persons with Disabilities and Iowa Deaf Services.

Online applications can be found at http://iyc.latinoaffairs.iowa.gov/.

A nationwide visual arts competition

The Congressional Institute is sponsoring its annual nationwide high school visual art competition to recognize and encourage artistic talent in the nation and in each congressional district. The competition provides an opportunity for members of Congress to encourage and recognize the artistic talents of their young constituents.

Students submit entries to their representative's office, and panels of local artists in each district select the winning entries, which are then displayed for one year at the Capitol. Winners are recognized both in their district and at an annual awards ceremony in Washington, D.C.

Follow the 2012 Art Competition Guidelines and fill out, print, sign, and submit the 2012 Student Information/Release Form to your representative by the deadline specified on their website. All entries must be:

- Two dimensional;
- No larger than 28 inches wide by 28 inches tall by 4 inches thick;
- No more than 15 pounds;
- Original in concept, design, and execution and may not violate any U.S. copyright laws.

An opportunity for Mandarin Chinese education

Teachers of Mandarin Chinese have an opportunity this summer to spend two weeks in Taiwan receiving additional instruction on how to effectively teach the language.

Participants pay their own air fare, but the Taiwan Ministry of Education will provide tuition, accommodations, textbooks, and food. The program is tentatively set for July 14-26.

The two-week program focuses on methodological and theoretical advanced instruction for K-12. Professional development includes curriculum and oral training, Chinese teaching pedagogy, classroom visits, cultural introductions, and a conference promoting Chinese language learning.

Applications are available here. Click on the black "Application." Applications need to be in the mail before April 14. Send them to:

Cultural Division, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Chicago
180 N. Stetson Avenue, Suite 5803
Chicago, IL 60601
Email: info@edutw.org

Workbook is available on Consolidated Plan (C-Plan)

A new tool is now available to assist districts and schools as they transition to the C-Plan, which is the Iowa Department of Education's effort to streamline the collection of mandatory reports and progress for districts and schools.

The C-Plan template is an Excel workbook that is designed to:

1. Show users how the C-Plan questions have been categorized into the seven characteristics of improving and effective districts and schools, due dates, and key ideas;
2. Allow users to trace the C-Plan questions back to the questions that are on the five plans it is replacing;
3. Give users the opportunity to begin work on the C-Plan content before the application opens in June.

A public and nonpublic C-Plan template, instructions for use, and a recorded tutorial can be found on the C-Plan website. The C-Plan is a living, ongoing planning and reporting document for schools and districts. The five plans identified for inclusion are:

- The Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)
- Annual Progress Report (APR)
- Iowa Core Implementation Plan (to be included December 2012)
- District Developed Service Delivery Plan (DDSDP)
- Schools/Districts In Need of Assistance (SINA/DINA) Plan

Visit the C-Plan website to see a list of dates and locations for the 2012 Spring EASIER Trainings, which will include the C-Plan. Registration will open soon. Questions about the C-Plan should be directed to Karla Day, Title I consultant, at karla.day@iowa.gov or 515-281-7145.

Bringing student voices into education reform conversation

Iowa teenagers hear a lot from adults about what they need to succeed in school and beyond. Fifteen high school students turned the tables March 28 at the first meeting of the Learning Council, a new statewide student advisory group, at the Iowa Department of Education.

The Learning Council is a 10-month commitment that includes meetings throughout the year and virtual conversations. Members are:

Hannah Ritchey, eighth grade, Shenandoah Middle School
EmmaKate Wichman, eighth grade, Pleasant Valley Junior High School in LeClaire
Grant Gordon, ninth grade, Van Meter High School
Jack Hostager, 10th grade, Hempstead High School in Dubuque
Apple Jackson Amos, 10th grade, East High School in Des Moines
Sophia Babcock, 10th grade, PCM High School in Monroe
Geoffrey Bruder, 10th grade, Humboldt High School
Lillian Nellans, 11th grade, Roosevelt High School in Des Moines
Mohad Aziz Azmat Awan, 11th grade, Waukee High School
Tom Bowman, 11th grade, Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines
Tessa Horn, 11th grade, Manson Northwest Webster High School in Manson
Monica Figueroa, 12th grade, Storm Lake High School
Sara Gabriele, 12th grade, Cedar Falls High School
Andrew Patience, 12th grade, Thomas Jefferson High School in Cedar Rapids
Whitney Leming-Salisbury, 12th grade, Central High School in Davenport

A heads up about preschool verification visits

The Iowa Department of Education will be scheduling the 2012-13 verification visits for fourth-year district grantees of the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program. Those districts will be contacted in the near future by Department staff.

Find a complete list of districts that will receive visits in 2012-13 and 2013-14 here.

… continued from page 1, Students thrive in preschool program

attended the state program were 8 percentage points ahead of those who did not. Even more impressive, the DIBELS Next results show that proficiency rates among students from low-income backgrounds were 7 percent higher than those of students who did not attend preschool.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this is that far fewer students of poverty who attended the state program will require intensive intervention. Among those who received the pre-school program, 11 percent will require intensive intervention.

Among those who did not attend the preschool program, 26 percent required intensive intervention. Results were similar on the DIBELS evaluation. For further information, please contact Penny Milburn at penny.milburn@iowa.gov.

Student Health and Nutrition

Eating well + exercise= win-win

How do you convince young students that eating well and exercising pays off? How about a $1,000 prize, a plaque and a visit from a top federal official?

That's what Gilbert Elementary School earned on March 22, when the school was honored with the USDA's HealthierUS Schools Award.

Gilbert has created a healthy school environment with strict requirements for meals, nutrition education and physical activity, USDA officials said. USDA manages 15 nutrition assistance programs, including the National School Lunch Program.

Kevin Concannon, the USDA under secretary for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, joined students March 22 for a healthy school lunch, the award presentation, and student demonstrations about physical education and nutrition.

Find more information about the HealthierUS Schools Award here.

Legislative Update

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

Cormack at the Capitol

Have you shopped lately at Montgomery Ward, Borders, Woolworth, Circuit City, or Builders Square? Want to test drive a new Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Mercury or Plymouth? Dine at a Howard Johnsons or Chi-Chi's? Fly on TWA or Braniff recently?

Why did those companies fade away? They were once thriving businesses that held major market share in this country and once provided services that produced profits. Still other companies survive today but are not the market leaders they once were. I still shop at Sears and Kmart, but I find fewer folks who do. I can remember a time when Kmart was dominant, and there was some little company from Arkansas moving into our state. I also remember a convenience store opening down the street and how exciting it was for a slush machine to appear in my neighborhood. Walmart and Casey's are innovative. Sears and Kmart are struggling to survive.

Starbucks and Subway both have more customers than Burger King, which would have been unthinkable earlier in my lifetime. Which of those three hasn't been innovative or creative during this time period? How about the renaissance of Apple Computer, which struggled to remain relevant and now can't do wrong in the marketplace with any of its products?

As a former teacher, coach, and legislator, my question is simple: Has education been innovative during this time period? Would a classroom today look much different than a classroom of 20 years ago? Is the Iowa educational system Kmart or Walmart? We were once the undisputed education leader in the nation. Are we that today?

April brings the scheduled adjournment of the Iowa General Assembly, and this is a crucial time for legislators to debate many important issues. The action or inaction of the Legislature on education reform will determine where our state goes from here. Will the status quo reign or will changes be made? An Iowa education is still a quality education. Is it still the best education in America? Is it best serving the changing needs of the students in our state? Can it get better?

After hours of debate that reached into the middle of the night, the Iowa House passed HF 2380 by a 53-46 margin on March 14. A full copy of that bill is available on the official legislative website or on the Iowa Department of Education legislative update page. That bill currently has been assigned to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Previously, the Senate had passed its version on this topic, SF 2284 out of the Senate Education Committee. It has been inactive since that time until this week. SF 2284 passed out of a Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Wednesday, March 28 and out of the full committee the next day. At this time, it is likely the Senate will vote on SF 2284 next week and at this time, not act on HF 2380.

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Legislative Update continued

…(continued from page 10)

This makes the possibility of an eventual conference committee, where members of both chambers work together to craft a compromise, a likely possibility. SF 2284 can also be monitored, as with all legislation, on the website for the latest status of it.

I believe there continues to be consensus to move forward with education reform this legislative session. As you study the bills that are before the Senate, all Iowans continue to have the opportunity to provide input to legislators, positive or negative, on this legislation. It will return to the Iowa House if it does come out of the Senate, so your advice on this is important to members of both bodies.

My grandmother spent a lifetime as an elementary teacher. My mother served on the Fort Dodge Community School Board. I spent nine years as a substitute teacher and 10 years as a social studies instructor before assuming this role. What drives me in this role is to try to do all I can to help improve our educational system, not as a critic but as one who wants to see it succeed. If education reform is done right, it can change the lives of Iowa students in a positive manner. With inaction or token reform, that opportunity to enhance our educational system all but disappears.

I've heard some citizens and legislators tell me that everything is fine with Iowa education. As a lifelong Iowan, I know how resistant to change we all can be. I posed many questions in this column because I would like each reader to pause and reflect. Change for change's sake doesn't make any sense. But being content and complacent can be harmful, too. As a coach, I was always tougher on my team after wins than losses. It is human nature to be satisfied with success at any age. Are we satisfied with our educational system or are we driven to expect more?

Education is not a business. But it is an organizational structure with a mission. Our mission in education should always be to provide the best for Iowa kids. The lesson we can learn from business is the importance of innovation. As the Legislature comes to its closing days, I hope all Iowans can come together in the pursuit of innovative policies that help our students achieve their maximum abilities.

Legal Lessons

Contact Carol Greta for all Legal Lessons items: carol.greta@iowa.gov or 515-281-8661.

Turning to our environments: asbestos, going green

Reminders about asbestos

The Iowa Workforce Development Department (IWD) reminds us that even a very small amount of asbestos, which is present in many building materials, can cause cancer and other health problems. As a result, schools have important obligations to protect their employees, their students, the public, and the environment from asbestos. So, IWD has put together a one-page summary, available at http://www.iowaworkforce.org/labor/asbestosnoticeforschools.pdf, of a school's responsibilities. The summary includes the following:

- Responsibilities as an employer (including asbestos awareness training);
- Implications regarding public bid law;
- OSHA standards;
- Clean air standards.

It isn't easy being green…

School districts and community colleges have until July 1 to either begin using environmentally safe products or to pass a resolution opting out of the mandate to use green cleaning products, based upon an evaluation and assessment. (The bill does not address Area Education Agencies or nonpublic schools.)

The Iowa Department of Administrative Services (DAS) is the agency responsible for determining what is an "environmentally preferable cleaning and maintenance product." More information about this law, including the approved products, is on the DAS website at http://das.iowa.gov/greencleanschools.html.

The Iowa Association of School Boards has prepared a sample resolution for school districts to use if the board votes to opt out. (A community college can choose to opt out simply by having its president opt out on behalf of the community college.) Any school district or community college that does opt out must inform the Department of that decision by filing its resolutions with Gary Schwartz, 515-281-4743 or gary.schwartz@iowa.gov.

Deadline looms for Iowa Core plan

Iowa Core Implementation Plans for districts and accredited nonpublic schools serving K-8 students are due July 1. In 2010, many districts submitted a K-12 Iowa Core Implementation Plan. Those districts and schools have met this requirement. This reminder is specifically intended for K-8 districts and schools that only submitted a 9-12 plan.

Districts and accredited nonpublic schools are encouraged to revisit their Iowa Core Implementation Plans to ensure it represents the ongoing work toward full implementation of the Iowa Core.

Calendar

April 18 ▪ Spring EASIER Test Site Open

May 1 ▪ Bond Resolution Filing with Control County Auditor

May 1 ▪ Copy of VPPEL Ballot Due to DOM

May 7 ▪ Spring BEDS Collection Site Opens

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, gender, disability, religion, age, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by the Iowa Code sections 216.9 and 256.10(2), Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d and 2000e), the Equal Pay Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 206, et seq.), Title IX (Educational Amendments, 20 U.S.C.§§ 1681 – 1688), Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.). If you have questions or grievances related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, telephone number 515/281-5295; or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Citigroup Center, 500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60661, telephone number 312-730-1560, fax 312/730-1576, e-mail: OCR.Chicago@ed.gov

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