

Iowa State Board of Education
Work Session to Discuss Legislative Issues and Priorities
State Board Room, Grimes State Office Building
November 16, 8:45 – 9:45 a.m.

AGENDA

Invited:

Senator Herman Quirnbach, Chair, Senate Education Committee
Representative Greg Forristall, Chair, House Education Committee
Senator Shawn Hamerlinck, Ranking Member, Senate Education Committee
Representative Sharon Steckman, Ranking Member, House Education Committee

Agenda

1. Welcome/introductions/overview – Charles C. Edwards, Vice President, Iowa State Board of Education (5 minutes)
2. State Board of Education priorities (5 minutes each)
 - Competency-based Education – Valorie Kruse
 - Online Learning – Max Phillips
 - Reducing Achievement Gaps – LaMetta Wynn
3. Education Blueprint – Jason Glass, Director, Iowa Department of Education (10 minutes)
4. Discussion (30 minutes)

Iowa State Board of Education

Policy Development Priorities 2011 – 2012

For the past year the State Board of Education has been exploring the policy development priorities of competency-based education and online learning in order to increase educational opportunities and personalize education so that all students will succeed. The Board has looked at innovative educational practices; how to engage communities, parents and educators to help them understand and embrace the need for change and improvement; and the challenge of maintaining quality while trying new ways of doing things. All of this has been focused on the Board's goal of improving instruction in order to eliminate the achievement gap and increase learning and achievement for *all* students.

The sense of urgency for educational innovation is greater now than ever before. Over the coming year, the Board will continue to focus on these priorities, taking them to the next level.

Policy Development Priorities for 2011 -2012 include:

- **Competency-based Education**
- **Online Learning and Other Technological Advances to Support 21st Century Learning**
- **Reducing the Achievement Gap**

Competency-based Education

A competency or performance-based system of education is designed to ensure students master a set of specific competencies or skills. Students are provided with engaging personalized learning opportunities and team-based, inquiry-oriented tasks. This approach requires clearly identifying learning objectives, creating authentic measures of student achievement, and allowing students to demonstrate learning through performance and application to real-world tasks. Moving away from seat time and the Carnegie unit to evidence of performance would truly transform the education system.

Long-term Goals and Strategies related to this priority:

- Move to a competency-based system of education that provides students with personalized learning and allows students to demonstrate learning through performance and application to real-world tasks.
- Expand access to quality measures of student achievement and growth that assess students' acquisition of the essential concepts and skills in the Iowa Core/Common Core.
- Build a coalition with business and education groups to advocate for competency-based education.
- Expand and refine Iowa's statewide longitudinal data system and encourage its use to improve instructional practices in the classroom.
- Support improvements in educator preparation programs that increase teacher effectiveness.
- Provide professional development and support for teachers as they transition from the traditional role of directly delivering the content in a classroom, to a new role facilitating student learning, organizing learning opportunities, and guiding students in the most effective learning environment.
- Collaborate with higher education to facilitate a smooth transition from a competency-based K-12 system of education into postsecondary education.

Online Learning and Other Technological Advances to Support 21st Century Learning

There are many benefits to be realized from increasing access to online learning opportunities for students and teachers in Iowa and better utilizing technology as a tool for student learning.

Personalizing learning through technology equalizes opportunities across the state by allowing students access to high quality instruction, a broad array of courses, real-world experts, and an endless wealth of online resources no matter where they live. It supports competency-based education by allowing students to work toward mastery of essential concepts and skills at their own pace.

Long-term Goals and Strategies related to this priority:

- Expand quality instruction and educational opportunities for students across the state by increasing access to online learning.
- Highlight innovative ways that Iowa districts and community colleges use technology to personalize learning and transform education. Champion promising practices and articulate the need for change.
- Utilize technology to better support professional development; provide professional development to help educators capitalize on technology to implement the Iowa Core.
- Strengthen teacher and administrator preparation programs to ensure that preservice programs focus on how technology can be used to transform the teaching and learning process.
- Develop a state policy framework that supports a comprehensive system of online learning.

Reducing Achievement Gaps

It is the State Board's vision that *all* students receive an education that will prepare them to become productive citizens and successful participants in a global community. To assist in achieving this goal, Iowa has implemented a system of learning supports aimed at struggling learners, utilizes Parent Information Resource Centers to engage parents, and has invested in several efforts to overcome racial disparities. Unfortunately, there are still gaps in achievement for minority and poor students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. We must raise expectations for these students, provide teachers with new teaching strategies to meet diverse learning needs, modify the structure of schools to recognize that all students do not learn in the same way or at the same pace, and continue to create a sense of urgency about the need to address this issue. Supporting reforms related to high expectations and fair measures, great teachers and leaders, and innovations such as competency-based education are part of a comprehensive strategy to transform learning environments and raise achievement for all students. In addition, the Department is supporting Response to Intervention (RTI), a framework used by local school districts to provide extra support to students who need it.

Long-term Goals and Strategies related to this priority:

- Eliminate achievement gaps for poor and minority students, for students with disabilities, and English language learners. *All* students will achieve at a high level.
- Promote collaboration among districts, AEAs, the Department of Education and other appropriate agencies to recognize and address racial disparities in education, develop cultural competence, and implement necessary systemic changes.
- Help districts implement Response to Intervention (RTI), a framework for providing supplemental supports to students who need them and measuring whether or not these supports are making a difference.



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Rosie Hussey
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Charles C. Edwards, Jr.
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Ana Lopez
Pella

Max Phillips
Woodward

LaMetta Wynn
Clinton

Brandon Bolte
Student Member
Ankeny

Jason E. Glass
Director and
Executive Officer

Position Statement on Education Transformation

August 16, 2011

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Iowa has a deep-rooted and proud history of educational excellence, and many innovative practices are taking place in classrooms across the state. While the quality of our schools hasn't declined, Iowa's results have stagnated as other states and other nations have made dramatic improvements that have increased student learning. Average is not acceptable to Iowans. Transformational change will restore Iowa's standing as a leader in education and will ensure Iowa students are prepared for college and careers in a globally competitive economy. All students deserve a world-class education.

TEACHER PREPARATION

We know that a highly effective teacher is the most important factor in student learning, and Iowa educators are very dedicated. Still, Iowa must raise the bar to recruit the best students to educator preparation programs and to provide rigorous training at our colleges and universities. Once teachers reach the classroom, they need continuous support from effective principals and targeted, useful professional development. Teachers also need adequate time to plan and learn. Rigorous teacher preparation, meaningful professional development opportunities and extra help for struggling students are critical components of a world-class education. To get there, the teaching profession must be elevated, respected and compensated fairly. The quality of an education system hinges largely on the quality of its teachers; however, the quality of teaching also hinges on systems in place to recruit, train, develop and advance teachers.

EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS

Accountability is a key ingredient of a high-performing education system. In Iowa, the momentum behind high student expectations and fair measures must continue. This is especially critical given the large gaps in achievement for minority and poor students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. The Iowa Core, a set of essential concepts and skills adopted in 2008, was a good start because it provides consistency for schools and raises expectations for what students should learn. Iowa built on that foundation with the adoption of the Common Core standards for English/language arts and mathematics in July 2010. We must continue on our path to improvement by reviewing new Common Core standards in science and social studies under development at the national level. Just as high academic standards and expectations are critical to a high-performing education system, so are fair measures of those expectations. A comprehensive assessment system will support instruction and measure growth in student learning. Assessments must be rigorous and must measure content, communications and critical, creative thinking.

INNOVATION

It is critical that Iowa's education system builds on its innovative spirit. While there are pockets of innovation in Iowa schools, the entire system must be willing to take on new approaches, learn from them and continue to improve. Competency-based education, which focuses on mastery of specific competencies and skills instead of seat time, is one such approach. Technology is a key tool for educational innovation, and teachers must be trained to weave technology and online learning into the classroom. The State Board of Education will continue to work with Iowa Department of Education staff to study methods for delivering innovative, high-quality instruction to students using various models for online learning, such as state-led supplemental online programs and full-time virtual schools.

HIGH-QUALITY VOLUNTARY PRESCHOOL

Ensuring that every Iowa child has free access to high-quality preschool has been a priority of the State Board. More than 21,000 Iowa children benefited from the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program in the 2010-11 school year. This ongoing initiative will help ensure that every child starts school ready to learn.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Just as we must set high expectations for students, teachers and school districts, we must set high expectations for parents. The learning process doesn't stop at home. Parents must be willing to dedicate the time to stay engaged in the education of their children. They must be willing to form a partnership with teachers and school administrators.

The sense of urgency to improve Iowa schools is growing. We must build on this foundation with great leadership and efforts to build consensus around education reform. We must be clear about what we value in our education system and invest the resources to support those priorities. We must enlist the help of teachers, school administrators, educational leaders, parents and communities in a shared effort to raise expectations, accountability and excellence so that Iowa students are ready to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive world.