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Each and Every Child

Quick news for Parents, Teachers and Students

An e-newsletter by the Iowa Department of Education's Bureau of Student and Family Support Services

Passion + 'Iowa Stubborn' = Determination

The Iowa Department of Education's special education survey conducted a few months ago was revealing.

Taken by teachers, parents, administrators and AEA staff, the survey shows we are passionate about our work.

It also shows we are, as coined by native son Meredith Willson in his musical *The Music Man*, "Iowa Stubborn."

It takes a lot to convince us that change is needed. But the clarion call was sounded when we learned that Iowa is at the bottom of the pack nationally when it comes to the education gap among students with disabilities. We heard you loudly and clearly: We can do better.

Unlike Professor Harold Hill, where he taught the school children to play their instruments through "the think system," our role is to support your work through solid, evidence-based tools.

Your work today should be concentrated on adjusting your lessons and instruction to the content in the Iowa Core. The Core is the foundation to ensuring students with disabilities are taught grade-level content or have instruction targeting grade-level achievement.

This much we know: Together, we will make Iowa the No. 1 state in the nation when it comes to special education results by ensuring teams have the tools they need across the grade span to successfully exit students ready for college or career. We promise that.

The following shows more results from the survey. The numbers do not add up to 100 percent because "don't know" replies were omitted.

All students can reach grade-level benchmarks if they have sufficient support.

27% agree/strongly agree

63% disagree/strong disagree

Nearly all Iowa teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to a level of basic reading proficiency.

42% agree/strongly agree

41% disagree/strongly disagree

Something to contemplate this summer

An old-time favorite children's book, *The Little Engine That Could*, perfectly demonstrates the power of self-fulfilling prophesy. Would the Little Engine succeed if he said to himself, "I really don't think I can do this?" Of course not. His determination to succeed surpassed everyone's expectations.

This metaphor holds true in special education. Can we really determine who is going to succeed and who is not? And if we apply this mindset to students, are we not creating a self-fulfilling prophecy that a particular child will not succeed?

These questions extend beyond philosophical exercises. Iowa's toward-the-bottom-of-the-pack national status when it comes to an education gap among students with disabilities suggests there is a disconnect. Why is that? And what is it?

As the state's educators and the Iowa Department of Education continue work on defining and resolving this complex issue, there are some statistics that are worth contemplating:

- Students who are reading proficiently by the end of third grade are more likely to graduate from high school.
- Students who graduate from high school are more likely to experience a variety of better life outcomes, from higher income to less likelihood of obesity.
- And this is a jaw-dropper: If we could move all students in Iowa up one level in educational attainment, so that high-school dropouts got a high school diploma, highschool graduates received an associate's degree, and those with an associate's degree received at least a four-year college degree, the average life span of all Iowans would increase by nearly two years.

Of course this applies to students with disabilities, as well. Research shows that only 1 percent of students with cognitive disabilities cannot achieve at grade level. But research also shows that students with disabilities fall short in education achievement exponentially higher than that.

And while not every child will succeed, are we willing to say with certainty which cannot?

That's why the Department of Education's collective mindset is to get rid of the education gap altogether. Will it really happen? No. Are we willing to identify which students will and will not succeed? No.

Are you?

*Annie Casey Foundation report <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/reports/readingmatters.aspx> and Common Good website http://apps.unitedway.org/forecaster/common_good_forecaster_full_report.pdf

For the summer break

During the summer months, *Each and Every Child* will be focused at parents and provide resources for them to use during the break.

We will include tools that will help reduce the educational slide and recommend books for specific ages. We also plan to feature some of our partners throughout the state, ensuring that parents (and educators) know what kinds of organizations are out there to help them.

In the meantime, enjoy your upcoming – and so very deserved – summer break.

Meet one of our partners

The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council) advocates for supports and services that result in full integration of people with developmental disabilities in communities they choose. We believe that individuals and families are the best people to articulate what they need and should be involved in all decision-making that affects their quality of life.

We asked people what they needed to be more involved in during the decision-making processes. They said

that they needed to know more, and gain confidence and access. The DD Council responded by creating opportunities for people to gain those through a project titled "Iowans with Disabilities in Action" (ID Action). Over 8,000 people have registered with ID Action (www.IDAction.org) to receive updates on public policy and legislation affecting Iowans with disabilities in InfoNET (www.infonetiowa.org).

The Council asked those registrants in what areas they would most like to see change. Their responses were in the areas of health, employment and support services. These are the areas in which the Council currently focuses its resources, collaboration and public policy advocacy.

Special ed.conference: A step toward ending the gap

Register today for the Iowa Department of Education's free special education conference Pursuing the Promise held in Des Moines at HyVee Hall June 11-12.

Travel expenses will be reimbursed exclusively for students and parents (contact: Deb Samson at 515-242-5295) and members of the Special Education Advisory Panel (contact Eric Neessen at 515-281-5766).

The conference is an opportunity to learn what is going on statewide to eliminate the achievement gap, hear about evidence-based practices in special education and network with the community of special education teachers, parents, students, researchers and policymakers. Speakers include the Iowa Department of Education's Director Jason Glass and state Special Education Director Martin Ikeda.

There is a wide range of sessions, including literacy, legal, learning supports, and postsecondary transition.

To register for the conference, go to <http://iowaspecial.ed.eventbrite.com>.

For more complete information, go to http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2600.

Group rates have been arranged at:

Savery Hotel
515-244-2151 or
800-514-4706
Price: \$99/night + tax
Group Code: doedoea

Holiday Inn (Mercy Campus)
515-283-0151
Price: \$81.95/night + Tax
(register by May 21)
Group Code: SEJ

Des Moines Marriott
515-245-5500
800-228-9290
Price: \$135/night + tax
(by May 21)
Group Code: stastaa