

March 2016



Iowa Core Annual Report

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

One central component of a great school system is a clear set of rigorous, comprehensive standards so educators help all students achieve high goals. In Iowa, that effort is known as the Iowa Core.

The Iowa Core represents our statewide academic standards, which describe what students should know and be able to do in mathematics, science, English language arts, and social studies. The Iowa Core also addresses 21st Century Skills: financial, civics, technology, health, and employability.

These state standards provide Iowa students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with a clear, common understanding of what students are expected to learn at every grade level, regardless of where they live.

The standards establish what Iowa students need to learn, but not how to teach. Local schools and teachers continue to create lesson plans and tailor instruction to fit the needs of their students.

Senate File 245 (May 2005) and Senate File 588 (May 2007) established the voluntary Model Core Curriculum in kindergarten through grade 12 in the areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century skills. The 2008 legislature proposed that the Iowa Core Curriculum be fully implemented by all Iowa schools — public and accredited nonpublic. The governor signed Senate File 2216 into law May 1, 2008, which requires the full implementation of the Iowa Core — in high schools by 2012-2013, and in K-8 by 2014-2015. Implementation plans were required for high schools by July 1, 2010, and by K-8 schools by July 1, 2012.

The appropriated Iowa Core funding for the 2014-2015 fiscal year has made possible continued area education agency (AEA) uses and statewide activities such as Statewide Leadership Teams and a Standards Review Process.

AREA EDUCATION AGENCIES

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) is currently working with AEAs to support Iowa Core implementation with local schools districts and accredited nonpublic schools. “As a system, AEAs:

1. Provide supports and accountability for implementation of evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, and scalable best practices in all Iowa schools.
2. Promote implementation of the Iowa Core while remaining unwavering in [the] commitment to identify and serve special needs populations.
3. Advocate that the current AEA accreditation standards be revised so that they are consistent with the New Compact.
4. Deliver specialized, quality services based on individual student, building, and district needs through a learning contract with each LEA that specifies each partner’s reciprocal responsibilities to increase student learning.
5. Re-purpose resources from programs that are not aligned with [the] overarching goal and vital few measures and/or not delivering consistent student learning results.

6. Build the collective, organizational capacity of AEA personnel to deliver quality services as co-owners of every student's learning and to decrease variability between AEA's.
7. Maximize our resources. This will include mobilization of collaborative partnerships across all AEA's and with other educational partners, establishment of consortia of AEA's as appropriate, exploration of entrepreneurial opportunities, application of quality management techniques, and establishment of practices consistent with highly reliable organizations."

These funds generally support the "implementation of the Iowa Core while remaining unwavering in the commitment to identify and serve special needs populations." Out of the funds allocated to the implementation of the Iowa Core, \$850,000 is sent directly to the nine Iowa Area Education Agencies. This is used for many activities in different AEA's including: staffing of content and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) consultants, professional learning of standards, and the facilitation of regional curriculum networks. As a system, the Iowa Department of Education partners with the AEA's, collaborating together at least once a month. The Educational Services Directors with representatives from the Iowa Core team meet to discuss and gather feedback from multiple perspectives on many topics, including implementation of Iowa Core standards and MTSS throughout the system. (http://www.iowaaea.org/about_aea/our-goals/)

STATEWIDE CONTENT LEADERSHIP TEAMS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A portion of the remaining Iowa Core funds provided by the legislature in 2014, have been used to support Statewide Leadership Teams in the content areas of Literacy, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. The purpose of these teams is to

- Provide ongoing professional learning for content area education leaders in the state
- Encourage a continuous dialogue between DE consultants, district leaders, AEA consultants, and higher education representatives in the content areas about support for administrators and teachers
- Support the development and implementation of deliverables of new professional learning opportunities for teachers to deepen their understanding of the standards and instructional resources.

With current funding, Statewide Leadership Team work is ongoing and continues to thrive. Funding pays for diverse representation throughout the state and different levels in the educational system, with a strong new emphasis on teachers.

Literacy

The State Wide Literacy Team focused on enhancing the learning of their membership during the 2014-2015 school year. Each of the topics and training were taken back to the AEA's and districts to train others. In all, for each of the covered topics at the Statewide Leadership Teams, over thirty additional facilitators were trained beyond the sixty members of the team.

One focus of the learning was C4K-Collaboration for Iowa Kids efforts. C4K is a structure ensuring that initiatives and professional opportunities are standardized and accessible across the state in each of the nine AEA regions. Team members spent time at each of our meetings learning about the current C4K initiatives and the work that was being done with the C4K Partner Schools. This included deliverables from task teams focused on early literacy

achievement through a MTSS district and building structure. Examples included MTSS questions, data-based decision-making tools, evidence-based reading interventions, and an Intervention Intensive Guide. In addition, some of these products and tools that were developed were vetted through the literacy team. Finally, all members were trained to facilitate conversations with districts and schools to review universal instruction in early literacy.

The members of the Statewide Literacy team were also trained to use the Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products (EQuIP) Rubric. These rubrics were designed at the national level to increase the supply of high quality lessons aligned to academic standards and build the capacity of educators to increase the quality of instructional materials. The participants took this training to their AEA literacy teams to use in the field.

Throughout the year, the Statewide Literacy Team was part of a feedback loop guiding decisions and work for the Department and Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC). The members were updated on Department efforts to implement the Early Literacy Implementation (ELI) legislation. This included introducing and reviewing guidance to implement the law, as well as gathering feedback to better understand challenges and issues arising from the field. This feedback helped guide Department work. During 2014, Director Michelle Hosp and two other IRRC staff members presented on their goals and gathered feedback from the members of the Statewide Leadership Team. This helped inform the summer institute the IRRC sponsored.

This year, Iowa's English-Language Arts (ELA) standards will be reviewed as mandated by Executive Order 83. The ELA Review Team was commenced with the goal of creating feedback tools to gather public feedback on the implementation of Iowa's ELA standards. The tools will include a survey of Iowa teachers and administrators regarding the current ELA standards as well as public fora where members of the public can provide input into the content and implementation of these standards. In addition to the review of individual standards, another focus will be on the extent to which current ELA standards are being implemented as well as identifying needs for future professional learning. In sum, the ELA review process is targeted at determining what is working and going well, as well as identifying needed areas for revision, both in content and process. The ELA review will be completed during the 2015-2016 school year and will culminate with recommendations being made in a report to the Iowa State Board of Education.

The Statewide Literacy Team looks to the future of incorporating more work to standardize expectations, assessments, and outcomes for all PK-12 Iowa students in the area of literacy.

Mathematics

The Mathematics Leadership Team membership of approximately sixty members focused on the production of mathematics modules and continued learning.

The team engaged in two book studies during the year targeted to those who lead mathematics professional development in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) from the team. The first was entitled, *Five Practices for Orchestrating Productive Mathematics Discussions*. A discussion website was created to share ideas and reflections about the learning. A second book study group, *Principles to Action: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* was conducted. Both of these studies resulted in development of professional learning materials conducted in respective AEA mathematics teams to share and disseminate to the field.

In addition, the team developed professional learning modules to support teachers in making the content shifts inherent in the Iowa mathematics standards. After a needs assessment, relevant topics were identified for needed professional learning. A set of modules was then created for each level in education: elementary, middle, and high school. The titles include *Introducing Operations and Algebraic Thinking in the Elementary Grades*, *Teaching Geometry in Middle School*, and *Adding Statistics and Probability to the High School Curriculum*. These are currently accessed from the iowacore.gov website. All Iowa mathematics teachers have access to this professional learning. Currently, the Department is collaborating with AEA online to make these accessible on another platform popular with Iowa educators.

Training continued for Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI), “an effective way of implementing the Iowa Core Curriculum for Mathematics at the elementary level.” Five days of professional learning stretched across the academic year, training forty-five participants whom were district and AEA leaders in mathematics. (<https://www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/educator-quality/cognitively-guided-instruction-cgi>)

The Mathematics Leadership Team also works directly with the STEM Council. They help promote, lead, and support the combined ISTS/ICTM joint mathematics conference in which over 500 mathematics teachers attend. In conjunction with the STEM Council, they also help sponsor the pre-conference day in which best practice in STEM is promoted, Presidential Award winners in mathematics are recognized during the conference luncheon.

The Mathematics Leadership Team looks to the future of incorporating more work to standardize expectations, assessments, and outcomes for all PK-12 Iowa students in the area of mathematics.

Science

While the Science Standards Review Team was gathering public feedback, studying the current standards, and working hard to make future recommendations, the Science Statewide Leadership Team of approximately sixty members was preparing to support the recommendations.

During 2015, a subgroup of the Science Statewide Leadership Team wrote the module that all elementary and secondary science teachers and administrators received after the adoption of the new standards. This module was an introduction of the new way of learning that the new standards supports. The module was vetted with a group of teachers and revised using feedback. After the final version was created, all AEA consultants and many district science leaders were trained to deliver it.

Members of the Science Statewide Leadership Team also collaborated with and supported STEM efforts. Many serve on STEM advisory boards in their respective regions. A part of this role is to help select STEM scale-up projects as well as volunteer with STEM festivals for promotion of initiatives, groups, and ideas.

The Science Statewide Leadership Team also works directly with the Iowa Academy of Science. They help promote, lead, and support the combined ISTS/ICTM joint mathematics conference in which over 500 science teachers attend. In conjunction with the STEM Council, they also help sponsor the pre-conference day in which best practice in STEM is promoted, Presidential Award winners in science are recognized.

In addition, the Science Leadership Team worked hard to create recommendations of a restructure to their team and statewide delivery chain with the goal to best rollout the new standards statewide. This year, an implementation plan to rollout the new standards has been written and communicated to the field. Many educators are energized at the opportunity to teach science in a new and engaging way. The progression of the rollout plan is Year 1 Exploration and Capacity Building; Year 2 Classroom Transition, Shifts, and Practices; Year 3 Leveraging Partnerships, Analysis, and Development; and Year 4 Continued Development and Assuring Access for All Students.

The Science Leadership Team looks to the future of rolling out the new standards in a deliberate systematic process with many professional learning opportunities for educators. The goal is to achieve higher learning for all PK-12 Iowa students in the area of science.

Social Studies

The Social Studies Leadership Team is organized into five work teams: Instructional Practices, Instructional Resources, Assessment, Professional Development, and Elementary. These teams worked to create specific tools, resources, and professional development to help implement effective social studies practices statewide.

The Instructional Resources work team created a rubric to evaluate the quality of instructional materials. Some resources from iowalearns.org have been vetted using this tool. Other instructional resources were identified, created and distributed. In addition, guidance for schools and districts undergoing a social studies curriculum revision process was collaboratively written and distributed statewide.

The team was also concerned about best practice in social studies. A rubric to examine if teachers are incorporating social studies best practices within their classroom. In addition, the team identified need areas for professional learning. Modules and training were developed entitled, *Introduction to the Social Studies Standards*, *Overview of the Shifts to the Iowa Core for Literacy*, and *Disciplinary Literacy*. Since AEAs do not have many experts who have been social studies teachers, the state sponsors a cadre of trainers in these disciplines. The members are current social studies teachers. They are trained in the modules developed by the Social Studies Statewide Leadership Team. Then, they hold professional learning for teachers in their respective region two times annually, totally thirty-six opportunities touching over eight-hundred teachers. A statewide conference, *Best Practices in Social Studies Summer Institute* was again held at full capacity last June. Ten best practices in social studies created by the Social Studies Statewide Leadership Team were the focus.

The Social Studies Statewide Leadership Team also was preparing for the long process of writing new standards for the Iowa Core. They worked with national experts to develop recommendations and a paradigm to follow for the writing team. The Social Studies Standards Writing Team commenced in 2016. A review of the new standards will begin after recommendations are made to the Iowa State Board of Education for the new standards.

The Social Studies Leadership Team looks to the future of writing and reviewing new standards as they continue to support the existing social studies standards for literacy with professional learning opportunities for educators. Over the past few years, a strong infrastructure to identify needs, create deliverables, and provide professional learning and instructional resources has been created. The goal is to achieve higher learning for all PK-12 Iowa students in the area of social studies.

21st Century Skills

The Financial Literacy Network is comprised of mainly stakeholders from outside of the field of education. Several times a year they meet to discuss needs, requirements, and supports for financial literacy education.

An outgrowth of this group was the *Financial Literacy Summit* in May of 2015. Over 250 students, parents, and educators attended. “The purpose of the summit was to help Iowans understand the important role of financial literacy in education, to raise public awareness of community resources and programs, and to provide resources for teaching financial literacy.” (<https://www.educateiowa.gov/article/2015/07/06/advisory-branstad-reynolds-department-education-host-iowa-financial-literacy>)

Other

The summer conference in 2015 sponsored by the Iowa ASCD had a strand of best practices in many of the content areas and competency-based education. All of our Iowa Core consultants held widely attended sessions reflecting much work of the statewide leadership teams.

This current year, 2015-2016, the Bureau of Standards and Curriculum is excited to welcome new consultants in mathematics, science, literacy, fine arts, and gifted and talented to lead Statewide Leadership Teams.

DISTRICT RESOURCES

Iowa Curriculum Alignment Toolkit

Funding was given to support the Iowa Curriculum Alignment Toolkit, (I-CAT). “It was a set of processes and web-based tools that can be used by school districts in Iowa to collect, store, analyze, and use curriculum alignment data.” Schools have used I-CAT to make sure standards are being taught, support school improvement and as part of professional growth. This tool has been helpful in the initial rollout of the Iowa Core standards.

<https://sites.google.com/site/aea11alignment/learningcenter/icattutorial>

STANDARDS REVIEW PROCESS

Science

Executive Order 83 calls for a review of Iowa’s academic standards, including public comment, to determine the content of, and to continually improve, the standards.

“The State of Iowa, not the federal government or any other organization, shall determine the content of Iowa’s state academic standards, which are known as the Iowa Core. The Iowa Department of Education shall develop a regular review cycle for the Iowa Core, including public comment, to determine the contents of and to continually improve state academic standards.”

Nineteen Iowans were named to the Science Standards Review Team, whose charge was to review Iowa’s science standards, as well as rigorous science standards from other states and organizations; to take a preliminary recommendation to the public for feedback; and to consider the public feedback before sending a final recommendation to the Iowa Department of Education director and to the Iowa State Board of Education. Team members included educators representing early childhood through higher education. The workforce representation included employees from agricultural, medical, aerospace engineering, and youth outreach programs. The voices on the review team represented a wide range of the state’s population who have a stake in the science education of Iowa’s youth.

After more than seven months of work and careful study, the Science Standards Review Team reached a recommendation for the State Board of Education through large and small group discussions, a thorough analysis of data from a public state survey and public forums, a review of science standards from other states, comparisons to the current Iowa Core standards, and clear, consistent voting procedures.

The Science Standards Review Team made the following recommendations:

“We recommend the Next Generation Science Standards performance expectations be adopted as Iowa’s science standards, grade specific for grades K-8 and grade span for grades 9-12, acknowledging the importance of integrating the disciplinary core ideas, cross-cutting concepts, and science and engineering practices in achieving these standards. The performance expectations are statements of what students should be able to do to demonstrate their learning. They represent big ideas that combine content from the disciplinary core ideas, cross-cutting concepts, and science and engineering practices portions of the Next Generation Science Standards.”

The State Board considered a motion to adopt the Iowa Science Standards, as recommended by the Science Standards Review Team, and direct the Department of Education to develop guidance on the implementation of the Standards.

CONCLUSION

The Iowa Core funds make a difference in the implementation of the Iowa Academic Standards for the students of the state. With the funding to support AEA consultants and professional learning, statewide leadership teams, district resources, and standards review processes, standards are being implemented in Iowa classrooms. More collaboration, professional learning, and instructional resources surrounding the Iowa Core will continue this evolution to best practice for Iowa students.