

Iowa Studies Committee Report

to

Iowa House and Senate Joint Education Committee

February 24, 2010

Iowa Studies Bill Update – February 24, 2010
S.F. 2320

Iowa Legislators:

In 2006, the Iowa General Assembly passed and Governor Tom Vilsack signed, S.F. 2320, “An Act Relating to the Development of an Iowa Studies Professional Development Plan and the Establishment of an Iowa Studies Committee.”

The charge of the Iowa Studies Committee is the development of an Iowa Studies Professional Development Plan that includes professional development materials and training measures to provide Iowa’s teachers with effective ways to infuse Iowa Studies into their classrooms. The materials developed shall include an active and innovative Iowa studies learning curriculum that may be integrated into the Social Studies requirements for Iowa’s secondary school students at the discretion of each board of directors of a school district or the authorities in charge of each accredited nonpublic school. The curriculum shall include lesson plans covering Iowa history, civics, government, and heritage studies. The curriculum developed shall contain enough content for the creation of a course of at least one-half unit of credit.

Since the July 1, 2006, enactment date of S.F. 2320, an Iowa Studies Statewide Committee was created and met for the first time on February 22, 2007, in Ankeny at the DMACC campus and at the State Historical Society in Des Moines. The Committee membership list is included in the interim report. Also, the Committee worked diligently to identify high schools that can incorporate Iowa Studies into their curricula and be part of the initial ‘pilot project.’ The response was immediate and overwhelming. No school that we contacted said ‘no,’ and we identified approximately twenty that could begin including Iowa Studies as part of their curriculum within the next few school years. Our goal was to identify and work cooperatively with two dozen high schools by the year 2011. The only obstacle to our identifying and working with more schools has been budget constraints on the collaborative partners in this project.

In addition to the high school pilot project, the Committee contributed ideas and suggestions for Iowa’s first Iowa Studies Forum/Festival on the weekend of April 11-12, 2008, at the Historical Building in Des Moines and at Des Moines Area Community College’s Ankeny and Urban campuses. The academic event was hosted by Iowa’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Des Moines Area Community College, and featured lectures, roundtable discussions, re-enactments, multi-media presentations, workshops, etc. – all focusing on Iowa’s history and heritage. Saturday’s festival was a multi-generational event held on the Ankeny DMACC campus. This was a precedent-setting event and our hope was to make this an annual or semi-annual celebration of Iowa’s part and present.

Since our presentation of an Interim Report to the Legislature on January 23, 2009, our Committee continued to meet and identify schools interested in participating in our 'Pilot Project.' We met with all the Des Moines metro schools and were instrumental in initiating and hosting meetings involving DMACC, Iowa State University, Living History Farms, and the State Historical Society of Iowa – resulting in the awarding of a \$1.5 million Teaching American History (TAH) grant to the Des Moines Public Schools and its aforementioned partners. A major reason the grant was awarded was the strong partnerships, and a focus on national and state history connections.

In addition to the newly identified Iowa Studies-interested schools and the TAH grant, the Iowa Studies Committee hosted a very successful Iowa Studies Forum at DMACC's Ankeny campus on April 3, 2009, involving over 300 participating high school students, teachers, and Iowa history enthusiasts from throughout Iowa. Many of the workshops featured presentations by students and teachers involved in our Pilot Project. A new partnership came out of the conference with Editor/Publisher Mike Chapman and his relatively recent publication, *The Iowa History Journal*. [See attached Summary Report and Program.]

In summary, the Iowa Studies Pilot Project has been an unequivocal success from 2006 to 2010. Iowa high schools, if given the financial support, would like to require the teaching of additional Iowa studies in their curriculum. We're requesting that the Iowa Legislature extend the Iowa Studies Pilot Project for three years with no request for funding at this time, but recognizing that, if and when, Iowa's economy improves, that the State of Iowa would step up and support the teaching of a required semester of Iowa Studies in our high schools.