

**Iowa State Board of Education**  
**Work Session to Discuss Legislative Issues and Priorities**  
Room G19 (Reagan Room), State Capitol  
January 26, 2012, 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Invited:

Honorable Senator Herman Quirnbach, Chair, Senate Education Committee

Honorable Senator Shawn Hamerlinck, Ranking Member, Senate Education Committee

Honorable Senator Brian Schoenjahn, Chair, Senate Education Budget Subcommittee

Honorable Senator Bill Dix, Ranking Member, Senate Education Budget Subcommittee

Honorable Representative Greg Forristall, Chair, House Education Committee

Honorable Representative Sharon Steckman, Ranking Member, House Education Committee

Honorable Representative Cecil Dolecheck, Chair, House Education Budget Subcommittee

Honorable Representative Cindy Winckler, Ranking Member, House Education Budget Subcommittee

# 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.