

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Iowa Core Curriculum

**Annual Report
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Introduction. The Iowa Core Curriculum is about helping all students, from pre-kindergarteners to high school seniors, improve their academic achievement in the classroom. But it is also about helping prepare every student to live, learn, work, and succeed in the 21st century.

The Iowa Core Curriculum is an innovative, comprehensive student-based approach to education that supports high expectations for all students. It engages them in more relevant learning experiences and helps them attain deeper knowledge through problem-solving and inquiry. With the Iowa Core Curriculum, instruction focuses on challenging students and providing assessments that give teachers, students and parents feedback to tailor instruction that will maximize the potential of each and every learner.

The impact of the Iowa Core Curriculum goes beyond the classroom. When fully implemented, communities and schools will be working together. The Core Curriculum will improve teaching and learning by bringing together educators, parents, and community members to strive toward a common goal of increasing student achievement.

The Iowa Core Curriculum identifies essential concepts and skills in literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, and 21st century learning skills (civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills) that all students must know by the time they graduate from high school.

To help teachers implement the Iowa Core Curriculum, the Iowa Department of Education (IDE) and Iowa's area education agencies (AEAs) are working together to offer assistance to school districts. This assistance is required because effective implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum is not a simple check list; it fundamentally addresses the content taught, the instruction of the content, and types of assessment.

Therefore, the Iowa Core Curriculum not only describes what students must master, but it helps teachers determine effective instruction through statewide and AEA-level professional development opportunities.

The vision of the Iowa Core is to ensure the success of each and every student by providing a world-class curriculum. It is designed to improve achievement of all students, preparing them for the world of work and citizenship.

Legislative Foundation. 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 Curriculum — in high schools by 2012-2013 and in K-8 by 2014-2015. Implementation plans are required for high schools by July 1, 2010, and by K-8 schools by July 1, 2012. The Department is encouraging K-12 school systems to develop a K-12 implementation by July 1, 2010.

Current Status. Full implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum is an extensive multi-year process which takes place in three main stages:

- **2008-2009:** Leadership Development
- **2009-2013:** Planning and Implementation
- **2014-2015 and Beyond:** Full Implementation

The IDE is currently working with all AEAs to support the roll-out of the Iowa Core Curriculum with local schools districts and accredited nonpublic schools. Funds provided by the legislature in 2009 have established the Iowa Core Curriculum Network, which consists of teams from each AEA that provide ongoing support and professional development to schools.

The IDE and the network collaboratively developed six leadership modules which were delivered to each of the district and building leadership teams in each of the AEAs. The target audience included school administrators, teacher leaders, representatives of institutions of higher education, and community members. Participants acquired knowledge and skills regarding: 1) the purposes, requirements, rationale, and implications for districts; 2) leadership behaviors to support and sustain the Iowa Core Curriculum; 3) roles and responsibilities of leaders; 4) characteristics of effective instruction; 5) essential concepts and skills and 21st century skills; 6) alignment definitions and processes; and 7) implementation plan and self-study processes. Across all AEAs, a total of 362 public school districts participated in the six Leadership Modules presented by the Iowa Core Curriculum Network (over 80 nonpublic schools also engaged in the modules). Evaluation data collected in the spring of 2009: 3,171 respondents reported in an online survey in a variety of areas regarding the rollout of the Iowa Core Curriculum. Overwhelmingly, respondents reported very positively to the training and information they received. Examples of the evaluation findings include:

- Seventy-five percent (75%) thought the structure and delivery of module training was good or excellent;
- Ninety-three percent (93%) agreed or strongly agreed the content was relevant to their work with the implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum;
- Eighty-three percent (83%) thought the content advanced their learning;
- Ninety-one percent (91%) agreed or strongly agreed the session contained sufficient information to enable the individual or the team to use the learning back in their district; and
- Eight-nine percent (89%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Iowa Core Curriculum Network facilitators were providing support necessary to learn about the Iowa Core Curriculum.

The Network also collaborated with the Department in the development of a self study and implementation plan aimed at the following outcomes:

- School leaders build and sustain system capacity to implement the Iowa Core Curriculum;
- Community members and other supporting agencies work together to support the implementation of the Iowa Core Curriculum;
- A continuous improvement process to improve teaching and learning is used at the district and school level;

- District leaders and other educators monitor and use data to increase the degree of alignment of each and every student's enacted curriculum and other relevant educational opportunities to the Iowa Core Curriculum;
- Educators engage in professional development focused on implementing Characteristics of Effective Instruction and demonstrate understanding of Essential Concepts and Skill Sets; and
- Educators implement effective instructional practices to ensure high levels of learning for each and every student.

A current focus is professional development, with opportunities being developed to support quality teaching with high student expectations. Of the \$1,980,000 allocated by the Iowa General Assembly in support of the Iowa Core Curriculum, \$1.2 million has been distributed to the AEAs to support 16.5 full-time equivalent positions and associated expenses for professional development and training. The AEAs also contributed staff time and resources beyond these funds to accommodate local school needs and development efforts. The remaining \$78,000 is committed to the continued development of the Iowa Core Curriculum through the development of processes and tools needed to support school implementation as well as the preparation of unique professional development materials.

Student Benefit. The Iowa Core Curriculum works to ensure that students will have a deep understanding of the essential concepts and skills in the key areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies as well as the areas of civic literacy, financial literacy, technology literacy, health literacy, and employability skills, which are critical to being prepared for the 21st century.

By focusing on what is being taught as well as how to teach, the Iowa Core Curriculum provides high expectations for quality student work. It moves students beyond just knowing content to deeper thinking, understanding, problem solving, and inquiry.

These are the teaching methods that are used in countries that are outpacing the United States.

The Iowa Core Curriculum enhances student engagement by involving students in interesting, relevant learning experiences that are motivating and lead to positive outcomes. Students will leave school equipped to succeed regardless of their postsecondary plans.

For more information, please visit

http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=674&Itemid=1249.