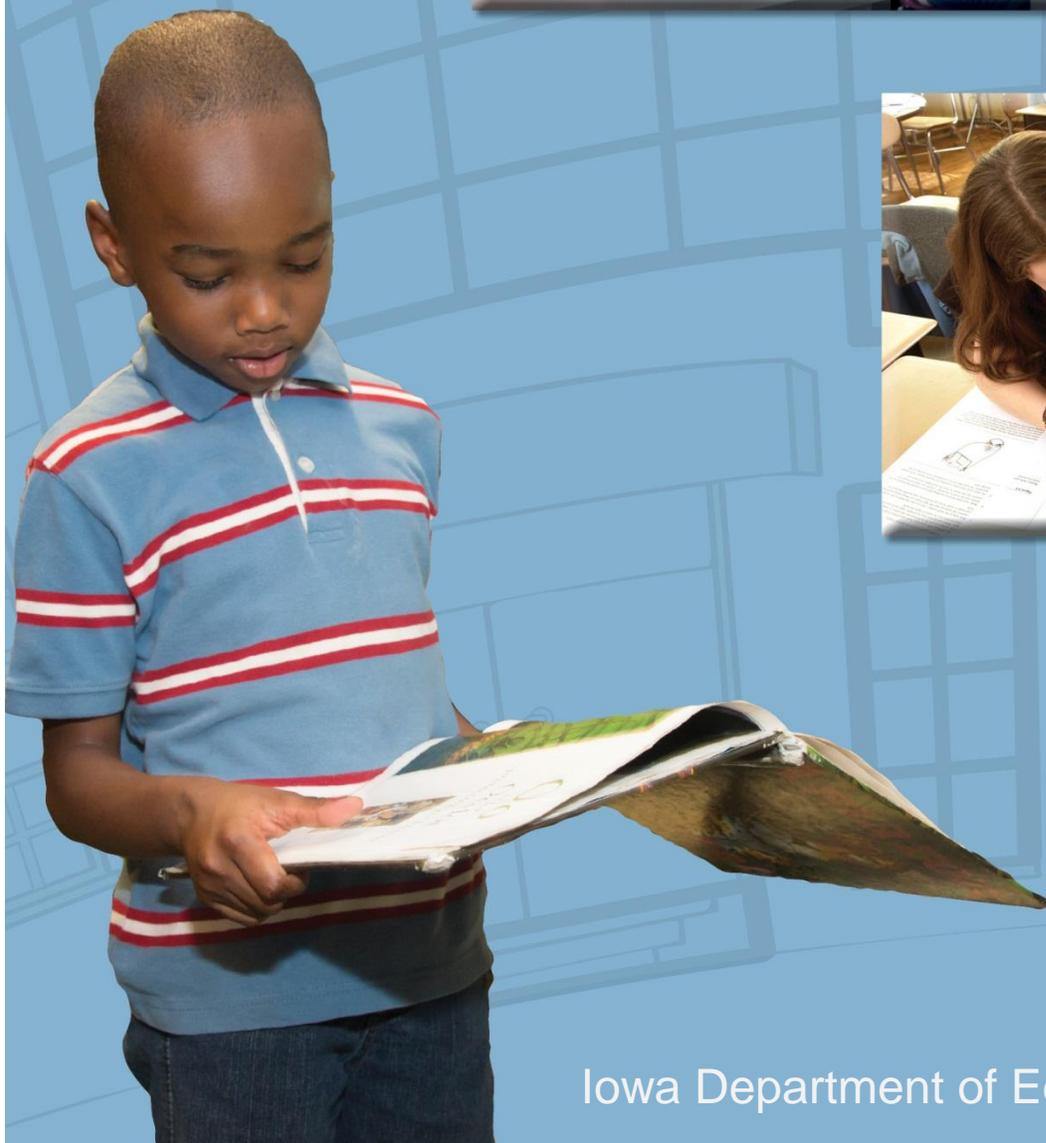


Online Curriculum Study

Uniform Transfer of Academic Credit

1/3/2014



Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Department of Education

Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146



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Brad Buck, Director and Executive Officer of the State Board of Education

Author

Susan Walkup, Consultant, Department of Education

Contributing Authors

Gwen Nagel, Iowa Learning Online, Director, Department of Education
Mike Cormack, Policy Liaison, Department of Education
Phil Wise, Policy Advisor, Department of Education

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Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	3
Stakeholder Input.....	5
Meeting Schedule	6
Terminology	7
Background Information	10
Statistics	11
Online Curriculum	12
Economic and Social Impact of Foster Care Dropouts	14
Recommendations	15
Conclusion	18
References	20
Appendices	22
Appendix A – Iowa Code Reference	23
Appendix B – Principles, Practices and Outcomes Chart (Leone & Weinberg)	28
Appendix C – A Study on the Cost of Dropping Out in Iowa	29
Appendix D – Analysis on the Iowa Transcript Center Pilot Project	32
Appendix E – Data Collection Recommendations	35
Appendix F – Determination of Financial Impact Using Current Data.....	36

Executive Summary

Pursuant to House File 604, Section 7, the Iowa Department of Education was directed by the Iowa General Assembly during the 2013 session to study the topic of potentially establishing an online program of education for those in some non-traditional educational paths. The legislation establishing such a study reads as follows:

Sec. 7. ONLINE CURRICULUM FOR UNIFORM TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT – STUDY AND REPORT.

1. The department of education shall conduct a study regarding the establishment of an online curriculum to facilitate the transfer of academic credits earned by students residing in child foster care facilities licensed under section 237.4, and in institutions controlled by the department of human services and listed in section 218.1, between those facilities and institutions and public and accredited nonpublic schools. The goal of the curriculum shall be to minimize wherever possible the loss of academic credit for coursework completed by such students.

2. Instruction provided through the online curriculum shall be taught by teachers licensed under chapter 272. All courses in the online curriculum shall meet existing accreditation standards.

3. The department shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the general assembly by January 3, 2014.

To meet this directive, the Iowa Department of Education sought the input of multiple stakeholders from the Department of Human Services, Juvenile Court Services, school district personnel, private providers, legislators, local organizations and community members, including students who were currently in foster care or had aged out of foster care. Multiple committees and workgroups have a focus on the educational stability of students in state care.

Schools in Iowa offer multiple avenues for what is called “credit recovery” using online curriculum. The Department of Education’s virtual learning program, Iowa Learning Online (ILO), offers online courses for students in grades 9-12 and was codified in 2012 as Iowa’s model online learning program. In 2013, the Iowa General Assembly allocated \$1.5 million per year for the following three years for expansion of this system. With the foundation of this program established, it remains a viable part of this conversation on how to best meet the needs of children who are impacted by movement throughout their educational experience.

ILO is in the first year of that three-year expansion, with the goal of making online high school courses available to all public, accredited nonpublic, and dually enrolled home-schooled Iowa students who wish to enroll. But, the focus of that expansion has been on traditional students. While it may be part of the solution, it is not likely to be the entire answer for this situation.

As Department personnel participated in conversations with regard to having an online curriculum for transferring credits, it became apparent that having an online curriculum available for students in residential facilities might not solve the problem. Themes that emerged and are common across Iowa and the country were paraphrased by a report by Leone and Weinberg in 2010 (refer to Appendix B):

- Monitor the academic performance and outcomes of students in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- Provide quality educational services to students in residential facilities.
- Ensure that interagency communication and collaboration occur often.

As this report moved forward, it became apparent there are multiple barriers that youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems face in education. Children in foster care and in the delinquency system often miss large portions of the school year because they move from one placement to another. Confidentiality of student education records is mandated by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 34 CFR, Part 99), but issues with interpreting that law cause additional problems. This legislation, which was designed to protect children from unauthorized disclosure of school records, is frequently misunderstood and is cited as a reason why agencies do not transfer school records. When the transfer of student records is delayed, administrators and teachers often do not know how to serve highly mobile students.

Consequently, these students may remain out of school for extended periods of time or, if in school, they may be placed in inappropriate programs and classes (Leone & Weinberg, 2010). Recent amendments to FERPA address this problem of transfer of records for children in foster care; however, they do not address the underlying problems of school instability.

Youth in out-of-home care face a number of obstacles to graduation. One major challenge is the high rate of school mobility for youth in care, both when they are initially removed from home, and when they change living placements while in care. On average, youth in care move one or two times each year. When youth in care move schools, they often experience delays in enrollment, inappropriate school placements, lack of educational support services, and difficulties in transferring course credits. Youth in care often lack a strong advocate to help navigate the obstacles associated with changing schools. Moreover, studies have shown youth in out-of-home care lose approximately four to six months of academic progress with each change in school placement (Legal Center for Foster Care & Education, ABA).

In Iowa, local school boards are responsible for setting graduation requirements. Schools in different districts can offer different classes, employ different methods of calculating full and partial course credits, and require students to take different types of core classes to graduate. Thus, when youth in care switch schools, they often cannot obtain full or partial credit for the coursework they completed at previous schools. Even when youth in care obtain credit for courses they took at previous schools, these credits may not count toward core graduation requirements, but instead may count only as electives. This is a complex problem to solve, but it is clear there are barriers in the status quo that make graduation more difficult for youth in care than for the overall student population in Iowa. This report will attempt to help provide some answers on how Iowa might move forward in providing a better educational experience for these students.

Stakeholder Input

The following individuals met in large and small groups to discuss this topic with Iowa Department of Education personnel:

Terri Bailey, Youth & Shelter Services, Achieving Maximum Potential (AMP) Assistant Coordinator

Tom Bouska, Western Iowa Service Area Manager, Department of Human Services

Kim Buryanek, Director of Assessment and Curriculum, Sioux City Community School District

Ruth Buckels, Youth & Shelter Services, AMP Statewide Coordinator

Marilyn Charging, Equity Director, Sioux City Community School District

Angeline C., AMP member, currently living in foster care

Mike Cormack, Policy Liaison, Department of Education

Paul Gausman, Superintendent, Sioux City Community School District

David Gleiser, Siouxland Human Investment Project

The Honorable Representative Chris Hall, District 2, Sioux City

Paul Hayes, Executive Manager of Learning Supports, Cedar Rapids Community School District

The Honorable Representative Ron Jorgensen, District 6, Sioux City

Kathleen Kilnoski, Judge, 4th Judicial District

Jen Lehman, Transition Coordinator, Cedar Rapids Community School District

Thomas Mayes, Attorney, Department of Education

Gwen Nagel, Consultant, Iowa Learning Online, Department of Education

Gary Niles, Chief Juvenile Court Officer, 3rd Judicial District

Jeff Regula, Management Analyst, Department of Human Services

Kara Lynn Regula, Social Worker, Department of Human Services

Timothy Ross, Chief Juvenile Court Officer, 4th Judicial District

Kelly Scott, retired counselor, Council Bluffs Community School District

Roxanne Thompson, retired SAL, Story County Department of Human Services

Jim Vanderloo, Director of Secondary Education, Sioux City Community School District

Kathy Vrieze, Education Liaison, Juvenile Court Services, 3rd Judicial District

Susan Walkup, Consultant, Department of Education

Doug Wolfe, Program Planner, Department of Human Services

We would like to thank all of the people who are passionate about the educational stability of students in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, especially the youth involved in AMP.

2013 Meeting Schedule

Date	City	Facility	Time
July 3	Des Moines	Smokey Row Coffee Shop	2 p.m. to 4 p.m.
October 9	Sioux City	Sioux City CSD/Administration Building	1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
October 30	Des Moines	Smokey Row Coffee Shop	8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
November 26	Des Moines	Iowa Department of Education/Grimes State Office Building	12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Terminology used in House File 604

Placement types described in House File 604/Facilities licensed under Iowa Code section 237.4:

1. *“Child foster care”* means the provision of parental nurturing, including, but not limited to, the furnishing of food, lodging, training, education, supervision, treatment or other care, to a child on a full-time basis by a person other than a relative or guardian of the child.

“Community residential facility” means a facility that provides care for children who are considered unable to live in a family situation due to social, emotional, or physical disabilities but are capable of interacting in a community environment with a minimum amount of supervision. The facility provides 24-hour care, including board and room. Community resources are used for education, recreation, medical, social, and rehabilitation services. The facility is responsible for planning the daily activities of the children, discipline, guidance, peer relationships, and recreational programs.

“Comprehensive residential facility” means a facility that provides care and treatment for children who are unable to live in a family situation due to social, emotional, or physical disabilities and who require varying degrees of supervision as indicated in the individual treatment plan. Care includes room and board. Services include the internal capacity for individual, family, and group treatment. These services and others provided to the child shall be under the administrative control of the facility. Community resources may be used for medical, recreational, and educational needs. Comprehensive residential facilities have higher staff-to-client ratios than community residential facilities and may use control rooms, locked cottages, mechanical restraints, and chemical restraints when these controls meet licensing requirements.

2. *“Residential care facility”* means any institution, place, building, or agency providing for a period exceeding 24 consecutive hours accommodation, board, personal assistance, and other essential daily living activities to three or more individuals, not related to the administrator or owner thereof within the third degree of consanguinity, who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis or who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis if home and community-based services, other than nursing care, as defined by [this chapter](#) and departmental rule, are provided. For the purposes of this definition, the home and community-based services to be provided are limited to the type included under the medical assistance program provided pursuant to [chapter 249A](#), are subject to cost limitations established by the Department of Human Services under the medical assistance program, and except as otherwise provided by the Department of Inspections and Appeals with the concurrence of the Department of Human Services, are limited in capacity to the number of

licensed residential care facilities and the number of licensed residential care facility beds in the state as of December 1, 2003.

3. *“Hospital”* means a place that is devoted primarily to the maintenance and operation of facilities for the diagnosis, treatment, or care over a period exceeding 24 hours of two or more nonrelated individuals suffering from illness, injury, or deformity, or a place that is devoted primarily to the rendering over a period exceeding 24 hours of obstetrical or other medical or nursing care for two or more nonrelated individuals, or any institution, place, building or agency in which any accommodation is primarily maintained, furnished or offered for the care over a period exceeding twenty-four hours of two or more nonrelated aged or infirm persons requiring or receiving chronic or convalescent care; and shall include sanatoriums or other related institutions within the meaning of [this chapter](#).

“Psychiatric medical institution for children” or *“psychiatric institution”* means an institution providing more than 24 hours of continuous care involving long-term psychiatric services to three or more children in residence for expected periods of 14 or more days for diagnosis and evaluation or for expected periods of ninety days or more for treatment.

4. *“Health care facility”* or *“facility”* means a residential care facility, a nursing facility, an intermediate care facility for persons with mental illness, or an intermediate care facility for persons with an intellectual disability.

“Intermediate care facility for persons with mental illness” means an institution, place, building, or agency designed to provide accommodation, board, and nursing care for a period exceeding 24 consecutive hours to three or more individuals, who primarily have mental illness, and who are not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity.

“Intermediate care facility for persons with an intellectual disability” means an institution or distinct part of an institution with a primary purpose to provide health or rehabilitative services to three or more individuals who primarily have an intellectual disability or a related condition and who are not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity, and which meets the requirements of [this chapter](#) and federal standards for intermediate care facilities for persons with an intellectual disability established pursuant to the federal Social Security Act.

5. *“Detention”* means the temporary care of a child in a physically restricting (locked) facility designed to ensure the continued custody of the child at any point between the child’s initial contact with the juvenile authorities and the final disposition of the child’s case.

“Shelter care” means the temporary care of a child in a physically unrestricting (unlocked) facility at any time between a child’s initial contact with juvenile authorities and the final judicial disposition of the child’s case.

6. *“State institutions”* state resource centers (Glenwood, Woodward), mental health institutes (Independence, Cherokee, Clarinda, Mount Pleasant), state training school, and Iowa

Juvenile Home (these are the institutions controlled by the Department of Human Services as described in Iowa Code section 218.1).

7. “*Facility*” means an institution, a detoxification center, or an installation providing care, maintenance and treatment for persons with substance-related disorders licensed by the department under [section 125.13](#), hospitals licensed under [chapter 135B](#), or the state mental health institutes designated by [chapter 226](#).

Other definitions include the following:

“*Teacher*” means a licensed member of a school’s instructional staff who diagnoses, prescribes, evaluates, and directs student learning in a manner that is consistent with professional practice and school objectives, shares responsibility for the development of an instructional program and any coordinating activities, evaluates or assesses student progress before and after instruction, and who uses the student evaluation or assessment information to promote additional student learning. (Iowa Admin. Code r. 281—12.4(8)).

“*Online learning*” (also referred to as digital, virtual, or cyber learning) is generally defined as teacher-led education that takes place over the Internet, with the teacher and student separated geographically. Online learning may be synchronous (communication in which participants interact in real time, such as videoconferencing) or asynchronous (communication in which participants interact separated by time, such as via email or online discussion forums). Online learning may take the form of a single lesson or unit, or an entire course. Students may access online learning while sitting in a physical school as an addition to their curriculum, or the access may be from another location which replaces the physical school for most or all of a student’s courses (Watson & Muir, 2013).

“*Blended learning*” (also referred to as hybrid learning) is an online learning trend in which a student learns at least in part at a supervised physical school setting away from home and at least in part through online delivery with the student having some element of control over time, place, path, and/or pace of their learning (Horn & Staker, 2011).

Background Information

On June 30, 2013, 6,245 Iowa children were living in a foster care home or residential setting. Typically, students who are in foster care will move one to two times per year. When a foster child moves from one school to another, this is known as a school transition specific to children in foster care. Reasons for such movement vary, including the child being placed in a different home, the foster parents moving, and sometimes the school district may choose to move the child to an alternative school or setting within the district that may be better suited for meeting the student's social and emotional needs.

Children who move frequently are prone to developmental issues and behavioral problems and are more likely to be retained, suspended, and/or expelled (LaViolette, 2011). The number of moves a child experiences in his or her school career and at what stage of life the moves occur will affect children in different ways. Children who experience hypermobility move six or more times in their childhood, experience significant gaps in their academic abilities, and may experience more mental health issues as they grow older.

Multiple moves that occur prior to the third grade are more detrimental academically than moves occurring after third grade. In addition, those moving four or more times by the eighth grade correlates to a student who is more likely to drop out (LaViolette, 2011). Highly mobile students have a tendency to repeat grades and experience behavior problems in school, which can lead to more missed days of school.

Placement in foster care can profoundly affect a child's school life. The transient nature of foster care often means that children are abruptly and frequently uprooted from one school and placed in another. Every school transfer requires a child to adjust to new teachers, curricula, classmates, and expectations. For some children, a change in school may offer a fresh start, better services, or freedom from physical danger or emotional harm. For others, particularly adolescents, it can mean separation from friends, community and support systems that serve as a foundation for future success. For every child, school transfers can result in lost school records, delayed school enrollment, and interruption in educational services.

The concern that surfaced with each conversation and meeting with stakeholders was that students who are in a residential facility or family foster care often lack continuity and stability in their educational experiences.

Data gathered and analyzed by the Iowa Department of Human Services (June 30, 2013):

Children in Foster Care by Type of Placement

Placement Setting	SFY 2013	
	N	%
Group Care	726	12%
PMIC (Psychiatric Medical Institute for Children)	151	2%
Shelter Care	158	3%
Detention	62	1%
Hospital	52	1%
Runaway	41	1%
State Institution: Juvenile Home	40	1%
State Institution: Mental Health	6	0%
State Institution: Training School	78	1%
State Institution: Resource Center	2	<1%
Total	1,316	21%

Placement Setting	N	%
Licensed Foster Family Care	1,868	30%
Supervised Apartment Living	59	1%
Relative Placements	1,847	30%
Trial Home Visit	1,155	18%
Total	4,929	79%
Grand Total	6,245	

Number of Foster Care Placements During the Current Episode of Foster Care

Number of Placements	SFY 2013	
	N	%
2 or fewer placements	4,255	68%
3 to 5 placements	1,380	22%
6 to 9 placements	421	7%
10 or more placements	189	3%
Total	6,245	100%

Online Curriculum

Data tell us that students who reside, or have resided, in secure juvenile settings or institutions have less than a 15 percent chance of earning either a high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma (Heussner, 2012). This statistic represents a significant barrier to their eventual transition to higher education, the workplace, and self-sufficiency. Online learning is a tool that, when used with appropriate instructional support, can engage these at-risk students. Online curriculum also helps to continue academic progression and ease their transition back into other settings. These settings include their local schools, other placements, postsecondary options or the workplace. Continuity of academic programming across various academic settings would be beneficial to students in this system.

Any successful online learning solution should include rigorous content that is taught by appropriately licensed Iowa teachers, intense student support, and statewide agreement for acceptance of the student's online credits toward graduation. Providing students with only self-guided online instructional options is generally not an appropriate solution for at-risk students, as they benefit most from personal attention, differentiated instruction, and opportunities for a variety of assessments. Additionally, all online content offered by commercial vendors should be thoroughly reviewed by appropriately licensed Iowa teachers who are endorsed in the course's content area.

The Department of Education's virtual learning program, Iowa Learning Online (ILO), currently offers online courses for students in grades 9-12 and was codified in 2012 by Senate File 2284 as Iowa's model online learning program. Schools make the choice to enroll students in ILO courses. Upon completion of the course, ILO sends a percentage score and grade to the student's school. The local school awards the credit and grade on the student's transcript. ILO is in the first year of a three-year expansion, with the goal of making online high school courses available to all public, accredited nonpublic, and dually enrolled home-schooled Iowa students who wish to enroll. ILO will provide a curriculum that meets Iowa Administrative Code requirements that all school districts "offer and teach" certain types and numbers of courses, with the first wave of additional courses available for enrollment by the fall semester of 2014.

Eventually, ILO courses will also provide competency-based paths to course completion. ILO is implementing a new online Student Information System (SIS), which will be available on a password-protected basis to participating teachers, administrators, students, and parents. As well as a communication and data-gathering tool, the SIS will serve as a transcript delivery system. The SIS will allow a student's progress toward the completion of courses while in placement to be accessed by the local school district upon the student's return. ILO courses and student progress information will be available immediately, once SIS access credentials have been assigned by ILO.

Online learning is not easy, and it does not appeal to everyone. At-risk students need intense support to be successful in any educational setting, including online learning environments. Many at-risk students will flourish in the online environment, as they enter each course with a

“fresh start.” Normal classroom distractions, as well as potential social and/or physical threats are minimized or eliminated. Students can be allowed to move through the content at their own pace, and they can receive the needed extra assistance and individual attention necessary for their academic success. Without motivated students or structured guidance in that learning time, the positive tool that ILO provides cannot be expected to work. With proper structure, it can provide an alternative mode of learning that can assist these impacted students.

The International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL) identified solutions for schools to provide continuity of learning in response to a probable H1N1 pandemic that could have caused widespread school closures. iNACOL states that online learning and continuity of learning is more than just providing curriculum in an online format. It involves the planning, training, and management of delivery of instruction over a new technologically enabled delivery model. This involves three key areas: curriculum materials, people, and technology. The iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses can be used as quality guidelines for online course content, instructional design, technology, student assessment, and course management. Iowa uses these standards in the selection and design of all courses provided by Iowa Learning Online (iNACOL 2011).

Economic and Social Impact of Foster Care Dropouts

The consequences of students leaving high school without a diploma are severe by almost any standard. Students in foster care are more likely than high school graduates to experience unemployment, poverty, incarceration, and health problems. It is estimated that, over their lifetimes, dropouts cost significant, long-term resources in lost tax revenues and increased government expenditures on health, crime, and welfare in Iowa. Because high school completion is so crucial to the future success of students and the state, Iowa educators should be vigilant and closely monitor these rates for student groups already identified at risk of school failure; however, Iowa has not yet begun to track these rates for students in foster care (Barrat & Berliner, 2013).

The demands of a global economy and the future workforce in Iowa and the United States have placed a premium on having more students fulfill high school graduation requirements and earn a diploma that prepares them for college and the workplace. Since earning a regular high school diploma means better economic returns and life prospects than dropping out of school, the state closely monitors the graduation outcomes of student groups identified at risk of school failure; however, here again, students in foster care have not yet been accounted for in such a manner.

Nationally, more than 50 percent of students in foster care end up dropping out of high school. In 2011, 5,070 students dropped out of school in Iowa, and 34 percent of those students were in foster care or in a foster care facility prior to dropping out. Although the number of students who drop out in Iowa, and are in foster care, is lower than the national average, the cost to our families and citizens is significant.

The dropout rate is much higher for those in foster care in comparison to those students in traditional learning models. There is a need to focus on the needs of this subgroup and to determine how to better address their academic needs to prevent such high dropout rates.

The reasons students in foster care or who have recently aged out decide to drop out can vary from too much academic time lost, being over-age and under-credited (behind in credits compared to grade-alike peers) or not being engaged at the school they are attending. Whatever the reason they are disaffected with their education, the costs of dropping out are astronomical to Iowa.

With the high dropout rate in foster care, we encourage reducing barriers that stand in the way of those students who truly want to receive a high school diploma. For both the individual and for our state, it is important to do all that we can to provide the best educational experience possible for this portion of the overall student population in our state.

See Appendix C: A Study on the Cost of Dropping Out in Iowa.

See Appendix F: Determination of Financial Impact of Iowa Dropouts Using Current Data

Recommendations

Although online curriculum could be a distinct advantage for the students who are in residential facilities, it would not be a guarantee that credits are being transferred and accepted by the home school / last school attended. Again, it can be part of the solution, but is not a solution by itself. Therefore, the Department of Education recommends the following to meet the student need that brought forward this study. Each of the recommendations has demonstrated effectiveness and, when taken together, would be a comprehensive solution to problems identified in this report.

- 1) Iowa should collect data on the performance of students in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and report those findings to the General Assembly annually.
 - a. This can be done by a data-sharing agreement between the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services.
 - b. Such a data collection system would require an appropriation from the General Assembly.
 - c. Examples of current reports can be found in California and Washington.
 - d. See Appendix E: Data Collection Recommendations.

- 2) Each district in the state that has a residential educational program(s) within its boundaries should be required to house the information in its student information system (Infinite Campus, PowerSchool, JMC) for all students being served in the on-campus program. State juvenile facilities and mental health institutes are currently using PowerSchool, and the Department will begin collecting student-level information from these facilities as required of all districts through Student Reporting Information (SRI).
 - a. This can easily be accomplished by adding a building number for each of the residential education campuses and allowing secure access of the information by teachers located at the facility.
 - b. This allows for e-records transfer of required data fields between schools and facilities for immediate record transfer. It also allows the Department of Education to know where students are located for student ID and verification of certified enrollment through the state-owned Iowa Transcript System, which should be utilized for this.
 - c. This would also allow parents to view their child's current information while in care, just as if the student were in the school at home.
 - d. With a sharing agreement between the local district and DHS service areas and judicial districts, DHS workers and juvenile court officers who have access to a permanency plan could have a secure log-in enabling the workers to view "live" data on their students and have the ability to print timely reports for court hearings and transition planning.

- 3) The Department of Education should prepare protocols for the process of academic intake, determining course of study and transition planning for all residential facilities providing an "on-campus" educational program. The Department may accomplish this

through its responsibility to apply and implement the Iowa Code's current requirement that children in foster care have "immediate and appropriate enrollment" when a child in foster care changes schools (Iowa Code § 280.29).

- a. The Department should provide guidance to all districts and professional development to all AEAs so assistance can be given to districts in providing quality educational services to students in residential education programs.
 - b. Department membership is required on multiple committees that are working on educational stability for students in state care, so this task could be taken care of with those representative groups (DHS, JCS, private providers, etc.).
- 4) School districts should ensure that students in care settings are treated in the same manner as traditional students with regard to providing an offer-and-teach curriculum as required by Iowa Administrative Code. If access is a barrier for students in care, accommodations should be made.
- 5) Use the Iowa Core Requirements (4-3-3-3 + PE + 21st Century Skills) and create a standardized set of competencies/requirements/credits that can be easily transcribed and inserted onto a transcript between districts, facilities and district to facilities.
- a. Currently, course and graduation requirements are locally determined, which creates an administrative nightmare for creating credit equivalencies. Four examples:
 - Cedar Rapids Community School District has trimesters and requires 300 credit hours for graduation (15 credit hours is equivalent to a yearlong course)
 - Bondurant-Farrar Community School District has semesters and requires 48 credits (2 credits is equivalent to a year long course)
 - Des Moines Public Schools has semesters and requires 23 graduation requirements (1 credit is equivalent to a yearlong course)
 - The State Training School at Eldora has semesters and requires 38 credits (2 credits is equivalent to a yearlong course)
- 6) Require each AEA to have child welfare advocates or liaisons as part of its representative Learning Supports Teams, to be in charge of tracking down information and guiding smooth transitions for students who are in facilities with an on-campus residential education program and out-of-state placements. AEA 11 has such a position that could be modeled. Such a requirement would require an appropriation from the General Assembly to the Area Education Agencies.
- a. Liaisons/Advocates could assist in facilitating appropriate and immediate enrollment of students, transition planning, ensuring the correct courses are being taken, and compiling records for continuity in learning.
 - b. Provide guidance and oversight to ensure PL110-351, *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008* (immediate and appropriate school enrollment of foster care students and records transfer within 5 days), and PL 112-278, *The Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA)* (amends FERPA

requirements and allows for improved information-sharing between education and child welfare agencies) are being followed by the districts.

- c. Starting with the students who are in residential facilities (approximately 1,316), first, liaisons could be housed at each of the AEAs based on population of students in a residential education program in that AEA.
 - d. Des Moines Public Schools currently has a position that sets an example of how procedures can be scaled to a state level. The Solano County California Office of Education and Human Services has an excellent interagency agreement that could be reviewed.
- 7) Consider following the example set by several states in creating rules with regard to unilateral transfer and acceptance of any partial or full credits earned while students are in residential care. They direct the receiving school district to accept and compile the credits into a readable format so students are able to enroll into appropriate courses within one day of transfer. Utah and Texas are examples of states that have rules with regard to transfer and acceptance of credits.
- 8) Multiple committees and task forces around Iowa have referred to a “Children’s Cabinet” to help increase interagency communication and collaboration to oversee the best interest of children. The Department of Education has supported this concept. The 2012 Mental Health Redesign – Children’s Disability Workgroup recommended that the General Assembly create through statute a state-level Iowa Children’s Cabinet to provide guidance, oversight, problem-solving, long-term strategic thinking, and collaboration among stakeholders. Such a Children’s Cabinet was to be led by the Department of Human Services and was to include representatives of state child-serving agencies, providers, family members, and other critical stakeholders to support them in the creation of specialized health homes and building out from serving a discrete population to a comprehensive, coordinated system for all youth. That concept should be revisited by the General Assembly.
- 9) School district stakeholders recommended that the state study the feasibility of having a statewide, Department of Education-managed student information system. This would be in lieu of the current 338 separate systems that are housed at each individual district. The belief is that the unified system would be an improvement for access to student records over the current status quo. In 2007-2008, the Iowa Department of Education wrote a study with regard to the feasibility of a statewide student information system, and it continues to be a topic of discussion within the Iowa educational community.

This is a worthy goal that we believe has merit, and future implementation should be studied. Lawmakers, as well as all Iowans, should know that the benefits of the system would help greatly in playing a role in providing solutions on this area of study, as well as having other benefits to the overall educational system. However, it is accurate to note that while there would be the potential for long-term savings from a statewide system, there are upfront costs on such a system that would be prohibitive. It would take a great

infusion of state resources to develop this system. The General Assembly would need to make a coordinated student information system a priority to fund it at a level where it would provide the effectiveness needed to contribute in this area. It is certainly the largest request in this report. Our recommendation would be to have policymakers continue to study this system and update the 2007-08 study to see if the conditions pertaining to that report remain or have changed in this dynamic technological environment. But, it is a solid idea from the educational community that is certainly worth additional consideration.

Conclusion

Several factors influence whether a student in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems have a positive school experience, which will depend mostly on the adults in their lives. Whether or not an online curriculum will be the solution for students in a residential setting is unknown. Online curriculum is a tool, and students in residential facilities should have equal access to quality educational experiences at the same level as their non-system involved peers.

Iowa should be a leader in educating our most vulnerable citizens, whose futures are in our hands. They cannot afford to wait any longer (Barrat & Berliner, 2013).

Continued commitment to this issue from the Department of Education, resources from the Iowa General Assembly, and strong focus from the institutions and districts that directly work with this population can bring positive results to help address the needs in this policy area. Continued communication, such as that which was held in the process of this study, will be crucial to trying to find answers that work on an issue that doesn't have a single easy answer. Following the recommendations in this report and continuing to place the spotlight on this topic provides the key to making progress on this topic. We believe Iowa stands ready to move forward and change lives for the better with implementation of these ideas and sustained resources to do so.

Reducing the dropout rate in this state and, most importantly, changing individual student lives for the better, require serious consideration of this report. While not easy, it is possible to enact reforms that would help these Iowa students receive the quality education that they need for their present and future needs in our society. The findings of this report suggest that can be accomplished. It is our hope that all policymakers take this information into consideration when trying to help these Iowa children at risk.

Thank you for your attention to this report, and we do hope it generates positive discussion that leads to concrete action on behalf of our students who are striving to do their best. We conclude this report by sharing an account of the positive impact that good care can have on students when it is done right. We hope all Iowa students can leave the foster care system with an experience such as this:

My name is Nayeli. I am now 18 years old and living on my own. I just got back from military training as I joined the Army this past February. I finished my CNA class before I left and I look forward to continuing my education in the medical field now that I have returned.

When I was about 8 or 9 years old, I entered into my first foster home. I have been to a number of homes throughout the years. I've been to many different schools and had to readjust myself multiple times. Moving wasn't easy because starting over is really hard, but I can say that I really am grateful for my worker, Peggy F., and my CASA worker, Meaghen W., who have been in my life now for several years.

They have helped me reach my goals and have always wanted the best for me. They have pushed me to continue when I wanted to give up. They believed in me. Their hearts were always in it for me. Even when I tried pushing them away, they would still be there. They still keep in touch with me, and it's absolutely wonderful because I wouldn't be able to have come this far without them pushing me and believing in me.

Despite all the ups and downs I've gone through with being in the system, these two ladies have been with me just about every step of the way. Not many people really get close or are able to trust their workers, but I took a chance and I am truly blessed to still have them in my life.

For motivated students like Nayeli, the educational opportunities in our state should match their desire to learn and to grow. When dedicated workers give their all, it can change lives for the better. If our school districts, advocates, and institutions can work together, we will have more stories like Nayeli's to share. With better access to information and everyone on the same page in trying to help our students in care, we will do just that.

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Blueprint for Change: Education Success for Children in Foster Care (Iowa uses this framework)
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Text of Iowa Code Sections 237.1 and 237.4

Foster care facilities licensed under section Iowa Code section 237.4 –

237.1 Child Foster Care Defined

4. “*Child foster care*” means the provision of parental nurturing, including but not limited to the furnishing of food, lodging, training, education, supervision, treatment or other care, to a child on a full-time basis by a person other than a relative or guardian of the child, but does not include:

- a. Care furnished by an individual person who receives the child of a personal friend as an occasional and personal guest in the individual person’s home, free of charge and not as a business.
- b. Care furnished by an individual person with whom a child has been placed for lawful adoption, unless that adoption is not completed within two years after placement.
- c. Care furnished by a private boarding school subject to approval by the state board of education pursuant to [section 256.11](#).
- d. Child care furnished by a child care center, a child development home, or a child care home as defined in [section 237A.1](#).
- e. Care furnished in a hospital licensed under [chapter 135B](#) or care furnished in a nursing facility licensed under [chapter 135C](#).

237.4 License required — exceptions.

An individual or an agency, as defined in [section 237.1](#), shall not provide child foster care unless the individual or agency obtains a license issued by the administrator under [this chapter](#).

However, a license is not required of the following:

1. An individual providing child foster care for a total of not more than twenty days in one calendar year.
2. A residential care facility licensed under [chapter 135C](#) which is approved for the care of children.

“*Intermediate care facility for persons with mental illness*” means an institution, place, building, or agency designed to provide accommodation, board, and nursing care for a period exceeding twenty-four consecutive hours to three or more individuals, who primarily have mental illness and who are not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity.

9. “*Intermediate care facility for persons with an intellectual disability*” means an institution or distinct part of an institution with a primary purpose to provide health or rehabilitative services to three or more individuals, who primarily have an intellectual disability or a related condition and who are not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity, and which meets the requirements of [this chapter](#) and federal standards for intermediate care facilities for persons with an intellectual disability established pursuant to the federal Social Security Act, § 1905(c)(d), as codified in 42 U.S.C. § 1936d, which are contained in 42 C.F.R. pt. 483, subpt. D, § 410 – 480.

13. “*Nursing facility*” means an institution or a distinct part of an institution housing three or more individuals not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity, which is primarily engaged in providing health-related care and services, including rehabilitative services, but which is not engaged primarily in providing treatment or care for mental illness or an intellectual disability, for a period exceeding twenty-four consecutive hours for individuals who, because of a mental or physical condition, require nursing care and other services in addition to room and board.

17. “*Residential care facility*” means any institution, place, building, or agency providing for a period exceeding twenty-four consecutive hours accommodation, board, personal assistance and other essential daily living activities to three or more individuals, not related to the administrator or owner thereof within the third degree of consanguinity, who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis or who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis if home and community-based services, other than nursing care, as defined by [this chapter](#) and departmental rule, are provided. For the purposes of this definition, the home and community-based services to be provided are limited to the type included under the medical assistance program provided pursuant to [chapter 249A](#), are subject to cost limitations established by the department of human services under the medical assistance program, and except as otherwise provided by the department of inspections and appeals with the concurrence of the department of human services, are limited in capacity to the number of licensed residential care facilities and the number of licensed residential care facility beds in the state as of December 1, 2003.

3. A hospital licensed under [chapter 135B](#).

“*Hospital*” means a place which is devoted primarily to the maintenance and operation of facilities for the diagnosis, treatment or care over a period exceeding twenty-four hours of two or more nonrelated individuals suffering from illness, injury, or deformity, or a place which is devoted primarily to the rendering over a period exceeding twenty-four hours of obstetrical or other medical or nursing care for two or more nonrelated individuals, or any institution, place, building or agency in which any accommodation is primarily maintained, furnished or offered for the care over a period exceeding twenty-four hours of two or more nonrelated aged or infirm persons requiring or receiving chronic or convalescent care; and shall include sanatoriums or other related institutions within the meaning of [this chapter](#). Provided, however, nothing in [this chapter](#) shall apply to hotels or other similar places that furnish only food and lodging, or either, to their guests or to a freestanding hospice facility which operates a hospice program in accordance with 42 C.F.R. § 418. “*Hospital*” shall include, in any event, any facilities

wholly or partially constructed or to be constructed with federal financial assistance, pursuant to Pub. L. No. 79-725, 60 Stat. 1040, approved August 13, 1946

4. A health care facility licensed under [chapter 135C](#).

6. “Health care facility” or “facility” means a residential care facility, a nursing facility, an intermediate care facility for persons with mental illness, or an intermediate care facility for persons with an intellectual disability.

“*Intermediate care facility for persons with mental illness*” means an institution, place, building, or agency designed to provide accommodation, board, and nursing care for a period exceeding twenty-four consecutive hours to three or more individuals, who primarily have mental illness and who are not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity.

9. “*Intermediate care facility for persons with an intellectual disability*” means an institution or distinct part of an institution with a primary purpose to provide health or rehabilitative services to three or more individuals, who primarily have an intellectual disability or a related condition and who are not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity, and which meets the requirements of [this chapter](#) and federal standards for intermediate care facilities for persons with an intellectual disability established pursuant to the federal Social Security Act, § 1905(c)(d), as codified in 42 U.S.C. § 1936d, which are contained in 42 C.F.R. pt. 483, subpt. D, § 410 – 480.

13. “*Nursing facility*” means an institution or a distinct part of an institution housing three or more individuals not related to the administrator or owner within the third degree of consanguinity, which is primarily engaged in providing health-related care and services, including rehabilitative services, but which is not engaged primarily in providing treatment or care for mental illness or an intellectual disability, for a period exceeding twenty-four consecutive hours for individuals who, because of a mental or physical condition, require nursing care and other services in addition to room and board.

17. “*Residential care facility*” means any institution, place, building, or agency providing for a period exceeding twenty-four consecutive hours accommodation, board, personal assistance and other essential daily living activities to three or more individuals, not related to the administrator or owner thereof within the third degree of consanguinity, who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis or who by reason of illness, disease, or physical or mental infirmity are unable to sufficiently or properly care for themselves but who do not require the services of a registered or licensed practical nurse except on an emergency basis if home and community-based services, other than nursing care, as defined by [this chapter](#) and departmental rule, are provided. For the purposes of this definition, the home and community-based services to be provided are limited to the type included under the medical assistance program provided pursuant to [chapter 249A](#), are subject to cost limitations established by

the department of human services under the medical assistance program, and except as otherwise provided by the department of inspections and appeals with the concurrence of the department of human services, are limited in capacity to the number of licensed residential care facilities and the number of licensed residential care facility beds in the state as of December 1, 2003.

5. A juvenile detention home or juvenile shelter care home approved under [section 232.142](#).

[232.142 Maintenance and cost of juvenile homes — fund.](#)

1. County boards of supervisors which singly or in conjunction with one or more other counties provide and maintain juvenile detention and juvenile shelter care homes are subject to [this section](#).

2. For the purpose of providing and maintaining a county or multicounty home, the board of supervisors of any county may issue general county purpose bonds in accordance with [sections 331.441](#) to [331.449](#). Expenses for providing and maintaining a multicounty home shall be paid by the counties participating in a manner to be determined by the boards of supervisors.

3. A county or multicounty juvenile detention home approved pursuant to [this section](#) shall receive financial aid from the state in a manner approved by the director. Aid paid by the state shall be at least ten percent and not more than fifty percent of the total cost of the establishment, improvements, operation, and maintenance of the home.

4. The director shall adopt minimal rules and standards for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of such homes as shall be necessary to affect the purposes of [this chapter](#). The rules shall apply the requirements of [section 237.8](#), concerning employment and evaluation of persons with direct responsibility for a child or with access to a child when the child is alone and persons residing in a child foster care facility, to persons employed by, residing in, or volunteering for a home approved under [this section](#). The director shall, upon request, give guidance and consultation in the establishment and administration of the homes and programs for the homes.

5. The director shall approve annually all such homes established and maintained under the provisions of [this chapter](#). A home shall not be approved unless it complies with minimal rules and standards adopted by the director and has been inspected by the department of inspections and appeals.

6. A juvenile detention home fund is created in the state treasury under the authority of the department. The fund shall consist of moneys deposited in the fund pursuant to [sections 321.218A](#) and [321A.32A](#). The moneys in the fund shall be used for the costs of the establishment, improvement, operation, and maintenance of county or multicounty juvenile detention homes in accordance with annual appropriations made by the general assembly from the fund for these purposes.

6. An institution listed in [section 218.1](#).

218.1 Institutions controlled.

The director of human services shall have the general and full authority given under statute to control, manage, direct, and operate the following institutions under the director's jurisdiction, and may at the director's discretion assign the powers and authorities given the director by statute to any one of the deputy directors, division administrators, or officers or employees of the divisions of the department of human services:

1. Glenwood state resource center.
2. Woodward state resource center.
3. Mental health institute, Cherokee, Iowa.
4. Mental health institute, Clarinda, Iowa.
5. Mental health institute, Independence, Iowa.
6. Mental health institute, Mount Pleasant, Iowa.
7. State training school.
8. Iowa juvenile home.
9. Other facilities not attached to the campus of the main institution as program developments require.

7. A facility licensed under [chapter 125](#).

125.2 Definitions.

7. "*Facility*" means an institution, a detoxification center, or an installation providing care, maintenance and treatment for persons with substance-related disorders licensed by the department under [section 125.13](#), hospitals licensed under [chapter 135B](#), or the state mental health institutes designated by [chapter 226](#).

8. An individual providing child care as a babysitter at the request of a parent, guardian or relative having lawful custody of the child.

Appendix B: Principles, Practices and Outcomes Chart (Leone & Weinberg, 2010)

Figure 1. Principles, Practices, and Outcomes Associated with Meeting the Education Needs of Youth in the Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Systems

Leone & Weinberg, 2010

Principles	Quality Education Services Are Critical	Early Education is Essential	Outcomes That Matter Are Measured	Individually Tailored Support Services for Youth Are Provided	Interagency Communication and Collaboration is Vital	Change Requires Within-Agency and Cross-Agency Leadership
Practices	Provide high-quality evidence-based services comparable to those available to other youth	Ensure that vulnerable youth enter school well prepared; address emotional and behavioral problems early on	Identify, quantify and measure outcomes associated with student well-being	Employ evidence-based academic and behavioral interventions	Engage in collaborative decision making; share resources and expertise; target services to meet the needs of children, youth, parents, and caregivers	Clarify expectations about how youth are served; exercise strong leadership when redesigning the service system
Outcomes	Improved literacy and high school graduation rates; increased numbers of youth enrolled in post-secondary education	Vulnerable children achieve greater success in the primary grades; children who need support upon entering school are identified early on	Greater accountability and efficiency in providing effective programs and services; improved program management and support	Improved performance on academic and social measures of student performance; improved attendance and engagement	Duplicative efforts are minimized or eliminated; fewer students fall through cracks in the various systems	Improved access of children to services; improved academic performance and lower rates of special education identification; fewer crossover youth

Appendix C: A Study on the Cost of Dropping Out in Iowa

(As presented by Jim Veale & Ray Morley at Risky Business State Conference, October 2013)

Definition of dropout:

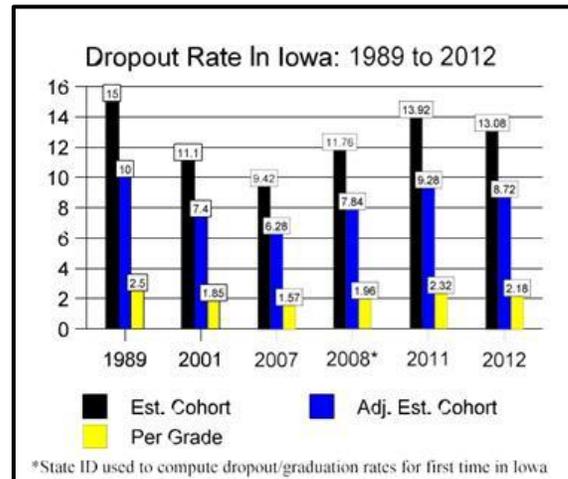
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definitions used for dropouts include students who satisfy one or more of the following conditions:

- Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and was not enrolled by October 1 of the current year or
- Was enrolled in school at some time during the previous school year and left the school before the previous summer and
- Has not graduated from high school or completed a state or district-approved educational program; and
- Does not meet any of the following exclusionary conditions: a) transfer to another public school district, private school, or state or district-approved educational program, b) temporary school-recognized absence for suspension or illness, c) death, or d) move out of the state or leave the country.

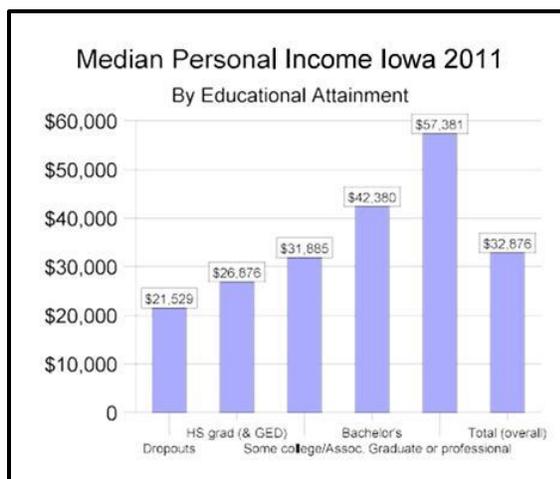
A student who has left the regular program to attend an adult program designed to earn a General Educational Development (GED) or an adult high school diploma administered by a community college is considered a dropout. However, a student who enrolls in an alternative school or alternative program administered by a public school district is NOT considered a dropout.

Dropout rate in Iowa (Grades 7-12):

Per grade dropout rate was 2.5 in 1989 (when first study on costs of dropping out of school was conducted), decreasing to 1.57 in 2007; State ID was used to compute dropout/graduation rates for first time in 2008, and rate increased to 2.32 in 2011; decreased to 2.18 in 2012. Cohort rate is found by multiplying the per grade dropout rate by 6 (# years between grades 7 and 12); adjusted cohort rate is cohort rate multiplied by 2/3 (to adjust for dropouts coming back into the system). (See figure to right.) The number of dropouts in 2011 was 5,070; the number in 2012 was 4,733.



Variation in personal income by education level (Iowa, 2011):



Less than HS (dropouts) \$21,529, HS graduate (incl. GEDs) \$26,876, some college or associate degree \$31,885, bachelor's degree \$42,380, graduate or professional degree \$57,381, total (overall) \$32,876. (See figure on left.)

Interpretation of difference in dropout and HS graduate (incl. GED) personal income (suggested by Del Holland, Metro HS):

Five course hours per year, 180 days per school year, and four years of high school yields 5 x 180 x 4 or 3,600 hours of high school. The difference between the HS graduate and dropout personal income (\$5,347) multiplied by 45 years is \$240,615. Dividing this by 3,600 hours yields about **\$67/hr**. This may be compared to \$7-8/hr for a typical high school student job, which may be beneficial or necessary, but can lead to absenteeism, skipping classes for work, and eventually dropping out of school. (Comparing dropout income to that of *all working Iowans*, yields about **\$142/hr**.)

Cost in reduction in revenue due to dropping out (Iowa, 2011):

- Reduced state tax revenues over 45-year lifetime of work due to reduced personal income of dropouts was **\$129.36 million** (“opportunity cost” to state treasury) [“ (\$1,192-\$625) taxes/year x 5,070 dropouts x 45 years];
- “One-time” state cost to educate 5,070 dropouts to high school completion: **\$65.62 million** [“ \$5,883 state cost/student for 2012 year x 5,070 dropouts in 2011 x 2.2 years (to graduate)];
- Potential net increase in state treasury over 45 year lifetime of work of 2011 dropouts associated with educating them to the status of graduates:
 - \$129.36 million - \$65.62 million = **\$63.7 million**, or **about \$1.4 million** per year (Bob Rogers, Revenue & Finance, and Lisa Oakley, Management, personal communications, March 2013).

Cost in reduced payments by state to school districts due to dropouts in district:

Since 2008, the state has tracked dropouts (and graduates) via State ID student numbers. This resulted in an increase

in the number of dropouts that year and in the next two years. Thus, to some extent, the increase in the dropout rate in these years was a statistical artifact. However, the reality is that many school districts (especially the large ones, with the highest number of dropouts) have experienced reductions in state funding for education due to these dropouts, in proportion to the number of dropouts. For example, a district with 100 dropouts in 2012 would lose (a minimum of) \$5,883 x 100 or \$588,300. Including other than regular education costs (e.g., special education), this would be \$8,743 x 100 or about \$874,300 that would have been lost in this district.

Cost in increased risk of incarceration due to dropouts:

Incarcerated in 2011: 8,788

Education level grades 1-11 (dropouts): 2,020

High school graduates, college (post-secondary): 2,373

Total (not counting GEDs, unknown or no data on education level): 4,393

Increased risk of incarceration = odds (dropout among incarcerated)/odds (dropout among general population) = (2020/2373)/(.1392/.8608) = **5.3**

This is using the cohort rate for the general population for 2011 (13.92% or .1392). Using the adjusted cohort rate (9.28% or .0928) for the general population, we get an increased risk of incarceration of **8.3**. This is the increased risk of incarceration that is associated with dropping out of school. In other words, dropouts have from 5 to 8 times the risk of incarceration as graduates.

The cost of incarceration for each inmate in Iowa in 2012 was \$84.85/day or about **\$30,970/year**. This is more than five times the regular state cost of education per pupil. This cost of incarceration does not

include court costs, damage to property, loss in productivity, increased insurance rates, loss of human life, incapacitation, and/or hospital costs for the victim—all of which may be due to the criminal act.

Cost in increased welfare payments to dropouts due to their higher unemployment rates:

Food assistance (“food stamps”): \$1,486/year

FIP (Family Investment Program): \$1,572/year Medicaid: \$8,736/year

Total welfare payments: \$11,794/year

Unemployment rate (dropouts): 12.32%

Unemployment rate (high school graduates): 5.65%

Estimated cost of increased welfare payments for 5,070 dropouts = $(5,070)(.1232 - .0565)(\$11,794)$
or **\$3,988,082**—just under **\$4 million per year**. (This is somewhat higher than in previous years, since the unemployment rates are much higher and the number of dropouts was also higher, than in those years.)

Appendix D – Analysis on the Iowa Transcript Center Project

In the fall of 2011, Siouxland Human Investment Partnership (SHIP), a non-profit grant administering and servicing agency in Sioux City, Iowa, was awarded a \$250,000 federal grant from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families, to implement a 17-month long demonstration project, otherwise known as a child welfare/education stability grant.

SHIP's project was named the Collaboration of Agencies for Permanency and Stability (CAPS), and was designed to address the educational stability of youth ages 13 and older who were from either Pottawattamie or Woodbury County, Iowa, and were currently in an out-of-home group foster care placement.

To improve educational transitions, increase permanency, and reduce reentry into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the CAPS project's goals were to:

1. Raise awareness of education-related issues within the child welfare, education and legal communities;
2. Create electronic academic records shared across the three systems;
3. Provide Education Advocates to help youth and their families navigate educational systems.

Project partners included:

- Iowa Department of Education;
- Iowa Department of Human Services;
- Iowa Third & Fourth Judicial District Juvenile Court Services;
- Council Bluffs & Sioux City Community School Districts;
- Green Hills Area Education Agency & Northwest Area Education Agency;
- Iowa Third & Fourth Judicial District Court Appointed Special Advocates;
- Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association;
- Achieving Maximum Potential; and
- Siouxland Human Investment Partnership.

As one of the CAPS project's main goals were to create electronic academic records that could be shared across education, child welfare and legal systems, the project engaged the Iowa Department of Education for technical assistance, guidance and support.

In 2010, the Iowa Department of Education launched the Iowa Transcript Center (ITC) – a system that enables the electronic exchange of student records and transcripts from all Iowa public PK-12 schools. The ITC also allows all colleges and universities to receive any transcript electronically. Since the ITC facilitates the data flow from one education entity to another, the Iowa Department of Education offered to provide access to Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) and Iowa Juvenile Court Services (JCS) caseworkers in Pottawattamie and Woodbury counties, so that academic records could be shared across the three systems. The Iowa Department of Education and the developer of the ITC granted access and provided training to DHS and JCS caseworkers in the two counties and established the ITC pilot project in Western Iowa. Parties of the ITC pilot project in Western Iowa included the Council Bluffs Community School District, the Sioux City Community School District, as well as DHS in the Western Service Area and JCS in the 3rd & 4th Judicial Districts.

Essentially, the ITC pilot project in Western Iowa provided DHS & JCS caseworkers with the ability to notify high schools in the Council Bluffs and Sioux City school districts of when a high school student would be going to or coming from a group foster care placement via the ITC. It also provided caseworkers

with the ability to request that a school district send a student's records to the group care facility, as well as receive copies of those records via the ITC. It prevented the need for caseworkers to provide school districts with a signed parental consent form or court order which would identify them as a legal party to that information, and it eliminated the guesswork of who they need to contact at a school during a student's educational transition.

As part of the pilot project, upon receiving the notification of a student's transition and the request to send a student's official transcript to a group care facility or to a caseworker, schools were also being required to attach an updated record of a student's current course schedule and their academic standing in those courses in order to help facilitate a more successful transition. By doing so, all parties would know what a student's short-term academic goals are and what courses the student should be enrolled in, which would prevent the student from losing any credits they deserved. In addition, during a transition, caseworkers were to inform schools of whether the intent was for a student to graduate from their home-school district or from the school district from which the group care facility is operating. By doing so, all parties would understand what a student's long-term academic goals are and what graduation requirements a student would need to meet in order to graduate, which would prevent the student from losing any credits they deserved.

Initial analysis of the ITC pilot project usage in Western Iowa demonstrated that the system was useful to DHS & JCS caseworkers as it eliminated the guesswork of who they need to contact at a school when they have a student going to or coming out of a group care facility placement, and it also eliminated their need to provide a signed parental consent or court order. Caseworker access to the system also benefited schools by eliminating their validation process in order to determine whether or not the caseworker is a legitimate party to a student's records, and it provided a safe and secure platform for sending personally identifiable student information to a caseworker. Furthermore, the pilot project demonstrated the effectiveness of including additional student data and recommendations, such as their current course schedule and academic standing as well as a recommended course of study, in addition to the official student transcript. The pilot project also demonstrated the need for parties to have an understanding of a student's long-term education goals and what graduation requirements need to be met in order to prevent credit loss and duplicative course enrollment.

Where the pilot project seemed to fall short on expectations was when schools were supposed send student records to a group care facility. Often times the Council Bluffs and Sioux City school districts would default to "old practice" and send a student's records to a group care facility via postal mail, email or facsimile transmission. Feedback from practitioners in these school districts suggested that the ITC system was not fully ready to support data sharing with group care facilities in the state as many of the group care facilities did not have access to the system. It seems that there is much ambiguity to which group care facilities in Iowa are connected to the ITC system, and whether or not they have been trained on how to use the system. Although the school districts from which the group care facilities operate out of have more than likely been granted access to the ITC and have been trained on how to use the system to send student records to other PK-12 schools and higher education institutions, it is apparent that they have not been fully engaged with respect to the concepts of ITC pilot project in Western Iowa.

Key lessons learned from the ITC pilot project in Western Iowa relate to the need for clear and constant communication between schools, DHS and JCS during a student's education transition. As the passage of the Uninterrupted Scholars Act of 2012 has helped to increase the understanding of child welfare agencies' legitimacy to personally identifiable information, it seems as if schools at the local/practitioner level are still uncertain as to when it is appropriate for them to release such information, which is why parties involved in the pilot project seemed to benefit so much from having access to the system. With respect to key factors of a successful school transition, time and communication are of the essence to

these situations. It is evident that schools need to be informed and included in a student's case plan as it relates to their education, and they need to be updated and involved throughout the entire time of an out-of-home placement. Although the ITC system ensures a safe and secure platform to send information electronically, and it ensures that the right people are receiving the information, it is not necessarily the greatest factor for ensuring a successful school transition. Final thoughts from the parties of the ITC Pilot project in Western Iowa demonstrate their willingness to continue working with the Iowa Department of Education in an attempt to overcome issues related to the system and sustain efforts to maximize the effectiveness of the project's concepts.

Appendix E: Data Collection Recommendations

Data that should be collected and analyzed by the Department of Education and the in collaboration with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Public Health and compared to the general population of students with subgroup comparisons (could include, but not be limited to):

Number of students in foster care – by fiscal year

Demographics (race/ethnicity, MF, IEP, at risk, ELL, TAG)

Graduated (on time)

Graduated (but not in their cohort)

Dropouts (at a district level)

Dropouts (at a state level)

Discharge setting (returned to home district)

Discharge setting (to different school district)

Achievement levels

State assessments

Attendance

Number of school moves per child

Quality of education in residential facilities

Longitudinal information (entry into foster care, moves, until foster care terminated or age out-age 21)

(California and the State of Washington have provided their legislature annual reports of the state of education for students in the child welfare and juvenile justice system).

Appendix F - Determination of Financial Impact of Iowa Dropouts Using Current Data

Dropout rate in Iowa (Grades 7-12):

Per-grade dropout rate was 2.5 in 1989 (when the first study on costs of dropping out of school was conducted), decreasing to 1.57 in 2007; state ID was used to compute dropout/graduation rates for the first time in 2008, and rate increased to 2.32 in 2011; decreased to 2.18 in 2012. Cohort rate is found by multiplying the per grade dropout rate by 6 (# years between grades 7 and 12); adjusted cohort rate is cohort rate multiplied by 2/3 (to adjust for dropouts coming back into the system). The number of dropouts in 2011 was 5,070; the number in 2012 was 4,733.

Variation in personal income by education level (Iowa, 2011):

Less than HS (dropouts): \$21,529

HS graduate (incl. GEDs): \$26,876

Some college or associate degree: \$31,885

Bachelor's degree: \$42,380

Graduate or professional degree: \$57,381

Total (overall): \$32,876.

Interpretation of difference in dropout and HS graduate (incl. GED) personal income:

Five course hours per year, 180 days per school year, and four years of high school yields $5 \times 180 \times 4$ or 3,600 hours of high school. The difference between the HS graduate and dropout personal income (\$5,347) multiplied by 45 years is \$240,615. Dividing this by 3,600 hours yields about \$67/hr. This may be compared to \$7-8/hr for a typical high school student job, which may be beneficial or necessary, but can lead to absenteeism, skipping classes for work, and eventually dropping out of school. (Comparing dropout income to that of all working Iowans, yields about \$142/hr.)

Cost in reduction in revenue due to dropping out (Iowa, 2011):

- Reduced state tax revenues over 45-year lifetime of work due to reduced personal income of dropouts was \$129.36 million ("opportunity cost" to state treasury) [$(\$1,192 - \$625)$ taxes/year \times 5,070 dropouts \times 45 years];
- "One-time" state cost to educate 5,070 dropouts to high school completion: \$65.62 million [$\$5,883$ state cost/student for 2012 year \times 5,070 dropouts in 2011 \times 2.2 years (to graduate)];

- Potential net increase in state treasury over 45-year lifetime of work of 2011 dropouts associated with educating them to the status of graduates: \$129.36 million - \$65.62 million F \$63.7 million, or about \$1.4 million per year. (Bob Rogers, Revenue & Finance, and Lisa Oakley, Management, personal communications, March 2013).

Cost in reduced payments by state to school districts due to dropouts in district:

Since 2008, the state has tracked dropouts (and graduates) via state ID student numbers. This resulted in an increase in the number of dropouts that year and in the next two years. Thus, to some extent, the increase in the dropout rate in these years was a statistical artifact. However, the reality is that many school districts (especially the large ones, with the highest number of dropouts) have experienced reductions in state funding for education due to these dropouts, in proportion to the number of dropouts. For example, a district with 100 dropouts in 2012 would lose (a minimum of) \$5,883 x 100 or \$588,300. Including other than regular education costs (e.g., special education), this would be \$8,743 x 100 or about \$874,300 that would have been lost in this district.

Cost in increased risk of incarceration due to dropouts:

Incarcerated in 2011: 8,788

Education level grades 1-11 (dropouts): 2,020

High school graduates, college (post-secondary): 2,373

Total (not counting GEDs, unknown or no data on education level): 4,393

Increased risk of incarceration = odds (dropout among incarcerated)/odds (dropout among general population) = (2020/2373)/(.1392/.8608) = 5.3

This is using the cohort rate for the general population for 2011 (13.92% or .1392). Using the adjusted cohort rate (9.28% or .0928) for the general population, we get an increased risk of incarceration of 8.3. This is the increased risk of incarceration that is associated with dropping out of school. In other words, dropouts have from 5 to 8 times the risk of incarceration as graduates.

The cost of incarceration for each inmate in Iowa in 2012 was \$84.85/day or about \$30,970/year. This is more than 5 times the regular state cost of education per pupil. This cost of incarceration does not include court costs, damage to property, loss in productivity, increased insurance rates, loss of human life, incapacitation, and/or hospital costs for the victim—all of which may be due to the criminal act.

Cost in increased welfare payments to dropouts due to their higher unemployment rates:

Food assistance (“food stamps”): \$1,486/year

FIP (Family Investment Program): \$1,572/year

Medicaid: \$8,736/year

Total welfare payments: \$11,794/year

Unemployment rate (dropouts): 12.32%

Unemployment rate (high school graduates): 5.65%

Estimated cost of increased welfare payments for 5,070 dropouts = $(5,070)(.1232 - .0565)(\$11,794)$ or \$3,988,082—just under \$4 million per year.

(This is somewhat higher than in previous years, since the unemployment rates are much higher and the number of dropouts was also higher, than in those years.)