



STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR
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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KEVIN FANGMAN, ACTING DIRECTOR

DATE: September 13, 2010

TO: Accredited Nonpublic School Administrators
Area Education Agency Administrators
Local Education Agency Superintendents

FROM: Kevin Fangman
Acting Director

RE: Iowa Core Update

The State Board of Education's vision states "Iowa students will become productive citizens in a democratic society and successful participants in a global community." As a system, we have a collective responsibility to strive toward this vision together as we educate all of Iowa's students.

Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." These words may hold more truth today than when he spoke them years ago. The emergence of technology and a global community has created competition for jobs and the ability of isolated and poor nations to reinvent their economies and education systems.

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the work that is happening pertaining to the Iowa Core. The scope of work continues to grow and is moving forward in many different areas. Cindy Yelick serves as the administrator for the Core and can be reached at Cindy.Yelick@iowa.gov or 515.281.8423 and Rita Martens is the lead consultant for the Core and can be contacted at Rita.Martens@iowa.gov or 515.281.3145.

Common Core Standards :

The State Board adopted the Common Core Standards for mathematics and English language arts (ELA) in July. These standards will replace the content in the Iowa Core in mathematics and ELA. The state may exercise its option to adopt an additional 15% of content in both areas at the State Board meeting in November. Additional information on the adoption of the Common Core Standards can be accessed at http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2025:state-board-of-education-adopts-common-core-state-standards&catid=666:highlights.

School Implementation:

The work with the Iowa Core this year will emphasize taking the Iowa Core to the classroom level. Representatives from the Iowa Department of Education (DE), area education agencies (AEAs), and local education agencies (LEA) are developing professional development opportunities to help teachers engage in learning, and plan instruction around the Iowa Core. The structure is built on collaborative learning teams and allows them to study the characteristics of effective instruction to improve instruction design. To support this work, a Moodle site is being developed which houses exemplar video clips, facilitator guides, and discussion questions. This resource will be available for district use on October 1, 2010.

Outcome 4 alignment work helps connect the Core to the classrooms this year and engages teachers in reflecting on their enacted curriculum or what they actually teach in their classroom and compares this to the Iowa Core. The Iowa Curriculum Assessment Tool (ICAT) is available for districts to use when engaging teachers in this process. The Department recommends that the ICAT be used in science, social studies and 21st century skills first and used in ELA and mathematics after the state board meeting in November.

District Plans:

The vast majority of districts in the state completed and filed an Iowa Core Implementation plan by July 1, 2010. The AEA system is supporting a series of sessions so that districts can work with colleagues to review their plans, gain feedback, and discuss ideas for implementation. These sessions are currently being held within each AEA. These sessions will also be offered in the spring so that districts can capitalize on the discussion and feedback as they plan for 2010-11. For more information, please contact your AEA Iowa Core Lead.

The DE is aware of the demand on school districts' time to meet state and federal accountability requirements. The DE has a team examining the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, School in Need of Assistance/District in Need of Assistance plans, the Iowa Core Implementation Plan, and Special Education Delivery Plan. Our goal is to see how we can alleviate the burden on districts for having responsibility for multiple plans. The extent to which this can happen is unclear. Impending changes at the federal level also complicate this process. However, the U.S. Department of Education appears

to be listening to state feedback on the redundancy of reporting across federal programs. How this will impact future reporting requirements is uncertain.

The DE is reviewing Iowa Code 256.11 and Administrative Rules Chapter 12 General Accreditation Standards for modifications needed to implement the Iowa Core. Areas under study include Division II – Definitions, Division V – Education Program (including content specifications), and Division VIII – Accountability.

Iowa Testing:

The Iowa Testing Program is updating the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED). New multiple choice forms of the tests will better cover the Iowa Core. Districts will be able to order additional assessment items in multiple formats to measure student learning in a variety of ways. Iowa Testing Programs will be introducing these enhancements with a graduated implementation plan over the next three years as state needs and federal requirements merge into a more comprehensive assessment system.

In the fall of 2011, new paper/pencil forms of the ITBS and ITED will be introduced with an online testing option in the fall of 2012. Additional assessment items in various formats will be offered online beginning in 2011-2012 academic year.

The Iowa End-of-Course Assessments will continue to expand content coverage of the Iowa Core through the introduction of new item types and additional content modules. An online option of the end-of-course assessments is being planned for the spring of 2011. Information about the Iowa End-of-Course Assessments can be accessed at <http://www.education.uiowa.edu/itp/updates.aspx>.

Iowa Collaborative Assessment Modules:

Many Iowa school districts administer the Iowa Collaborative Assessment Modules (ICAM). ICAM are stand-alone assessments that can be used to meet state requirements for multiple measures. Each module has been designed to align with a content standard in either mathematics or reading. Districts can independently determine which assessment module(s) they will administer as part of their district-wide assessment system.

An initial alignment was done between the Iowa Core and the ICAM last year. A determination will be made this year if the ICAM will be updated to measure the content of the Iowa Core.