REDEFINITION OF HIGH SCHOOL

A Vision for Iowa

By the Member Districts of the Urban Education Network of Iowa, Inc.

August 2001
The UEN is a coalition of Iowa's eight largest school districts, created to serve as a support and information system for its members. It provides a forum for sharing mutual concerns and priorities that impact the education of all children, and specifically, Iowa's urban children. Together, members address challenges, unite to resolve common concerns, and promote positive public policy for urban education. The Urban Education Network of Iowa is a 501(C)3 nonprofit corporation.

Membership in the UEN is open to all Iowa public school districts that reflect these key indicators of urban education: at least two high school attendance centers and/or enrollment of 10,000 or more students. Other common characteristics of urban schools include population density; cultural, social, and economic diversity; broad ethnic representation; and extensive transportation systems.

Visit the UEN Web site at
www.des-moines.k12.ia.us/Other/UEN/index.html

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The Urban Education Network promotes advocacy for all children in Iowa's urban settings through information, legislative positions, and strong ties among network districts.

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expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
Redefinition of High School: A Vision for Iowa

High schools in Iowa and across our nation are more than schools, more than "social institutions"–they are a part of the cultural fabric of our communities. High schools play such a large role in our individual development (for better or worse) that many of us are more likely to attend a high school class reunion than a family reunion. It's an age and an experience that often is captured and idealized in books, movies and television–and in our own memories.

It's no surprise, then, that “redefining” high schools represents a huge challenge. Part of that challenge includes managing the risks involved–and there are always risks in the process of change.

The risks, however, are far greater when high schools are stagnant. Rather, they must be dynamic and responsive to the evolving cultures and communities in which they function. They must take every step necessary to ensure students are fully prepared for college or careers. To reach that goal, we have to ask very hard questions about what students today will need if they are to be successful in their future world–and the answers will not simply point back to the high schools that we attended.

The Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN) serves an important function because it is in a position to ask those kinds of tough questions–the kind that lead to quantitative as well as qualitative answers, the kind that look beyond the simple numbers of how many graduated from high school, for instance, and look instead at how well prepared they were for their postsecondary lives. The UEN is to be commended for the initiative it has taken to pursue these critical issues, and for its commitment to helping high schools take strong steps to improve through change.

I encourage all educators to review the UEN's work carefully, and let it serve as a useful guide for you when you consider how high schools can best prepare students for the future.

Ted Stilwill
Director
Iowa Department of Education
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students

For well more than a century and a half Iowa’s dedicated educators have worked to meet the needs of students and the educational goals of their communities. Iowa’s quality educational system and excellent student achievement is a direct reflection of this commitment.

As we enter a new century, it is time to reflect on past experiences and make the changes necessary for continued success. Iowa’s social fabric is more diverse, and the needs of students are more challenging. Too many students drop out of school, businesses can only thrive if students have more technical skills, the rigor of postsecondary education requires better-prepared students, and parents and community are more anxious than ever before for the safety and success of their family members. These conditions call for a comprehensive review of the way high school is defined.

The Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN) has established a solid information base from which this effort can begin. It is a credible Iowa project. Their work is commendable, and the potential is significant. Broad-based school and community involvement can produce new and better learning environments for Iowa’s youth.

The study and review of our high schools is timely and appropriate. Iowa school districts, in partnership with staff and the community, have the potential of establishing a new standard for all youth through the acceptance of this challenge. We are pleased to endorse the UEN effort and sincerely hope all educators and communities will participate in this exciting project.

Jolene Franken
President
Iowa State Education Association

Jan Reinicke
Executive Director
Iowa State Education Association

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The Redefinition of High School: A Vision for Iowa addresses the critical educational issues facing America’s high schools today. It provides school boards, educators, business leaders, and communities alike a solid base from which to review and redefine Iowa’s high school delivery systems—to capitalize on an Iowa approach to a national concern.

This timely report by the Urban Education Network of Iowa will be a valuable resource as communities confront the needs and expectations of a 21st century high school face-to-face. The lessons learned from this significant effort have the potential to stretch all learners—including all of us—to gain more opportunity, positively impact the workforce of the future, improve the quality of life in our state, and help all of Iowa more nearly reach its full potential.

Clayton M. Jones, President
Rockwell-Collins, Inc.
The Iowa Business Council, Chair
June 2001

The School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) are pleased to endorse and recommend the Urban Education Network of Iowa’s (UEN) study, The Redefinition of High School: A Vision for Iowa. This quality work affords all educators a significant support system as they consider the contemporary needs of high school students as well as the necessary characteristics for an effective 21st century high school.

This study, in all its detail, provides administrators, teachers, board members, and community alike a sound reference base from which to begin, as well as, a framework for consideration from an Iowa perspective. There are no blueprints, mandates, or expectations. There is, however, a great opportunity for all school districts to move forward in response to changing student and community needs and expectations.

We extend our appreciation to the UEN for their professional effort and commitment and wish them the very best.

School Administrators of Iowa
The American high school has been the center of critical observation and discussion in recent months. Everything from achievement levels to dropouts to postsecondary experiences has been under the “microscope.” Many experts are urging a critical review of the current operating system. Responsive school boards, administrators, and teachers are reflecting an open and sensitive attitude toward individual and community needs.

The Redefinition of High School: A Vision for Iowa is a timely and welcomed effort. It details current conditions, reviews the literature, recommends action steps, and identifies possible implications that need to be considered. This work brings a “local” perspective from many of Iowa’s own educators and is applicable to all school districts. The Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN) is to be congratulated for their work in creating this quality reference book.

The Iowa Association of School Boards is pleased to recommend the UEN’s study to school districts across the state as they consider the needs of all high school students and their communities for the 21st century.

Iowa Association of School Boards
The beginning of a new millennium has placed the American high school front and center in the ongoing debate over public education. Almost everyone has an opinion, and because nearly all of us have spent at least some time in a high school, we consider ourselves experts. Consequently, the ebb and flow of information regarding this topic continually accelerates, at times flooding us all.

The impetus for this report, *The Redefinition of High School: A Vision for Iowa*, emerged in April 2000 at the Urban Education Network of Iowa’s (UEN) annual meeting in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The eight UEN secondary education directors agreed that an extensive review of Iowa high schools was timely and that they would be an appropriate group to develop and direct such an effort. The twelve major topics included in the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ (NASSP) 1996 report, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, were selected as the issues to be addressed. The eight UEN member districts were each assigned specific topics to research and report on. All formed study teams that functioned for nearly one year. Their individual efforts were coordinated by the UEN Program Facilitator, Sue Donielson, and editor, Nancy Mcclimen.

The intent of the work was to offer the eight UEN member districts and their school boards a solid information base developed, designed, and delivered by “their own” as they work to strengthen and expand the effectiveness of their high schools—local control, if you will. Though focused toward Iowa’s urban high schools, significant effort was taken to make this report meaningful and applicable to all of Iowa’s 375 school districts.

The report is structured around the twelve related but separate topics, establishing for each a sound rationale, solid strategies, effective action steps, and well-grounded implications for all involved or concerned with the transformation of high schools.

This comprehensive report is packaged to be as utilitarian as possible. It can function as a single, complete document or as twelve separate subsections, each directly relating to a specific priority area. Readers are encouraged to reference the extensive bibliographies, including Web sites, to access the breadth and depth of the topic(s) under consideration. The content and bibliographies combined offer each school district thorough information and data that can and will serve them well.

Please make this document work for you. The Urban Education Network of Iowa is pleased with this effort and wishes the very best to all who strive to expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students. If you would like or need additional information, please contact us.

James E. Wise, Executive Director  
The Urban Education Network of Iowa  
August 2001
We are deeply indebted to the many individuals and groups responsible for creating this report. Specifically, we wish to acknowledge the contributions of the following people:

- James Wise, Executive Director of the UEN, whose vision was the catalyst for the report
- Sue Donielson, UEN Program Facilitator, for her total commitment and professional leadership in moving the project forward
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- Dubuque Community Schools............................................. Jane Petrek
- Iowa City Community Schools............................................. Lane Plugge
- Sioux City Community Schools........................................... Larry Williams
- Waterloo Community Schools.............................................. Arlis Swartzendruber
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
This is a pivotal point in the history of public education. The learner has changed, the social context for schooling is in flux, and today's school leader is in charge of a learning community in a “24/7” world. Spencer Johnson, M.D., author of the best-selling book, *Who Moved My Cheese?* says: “Change happens. Anticipate it, monitor it, and adapt to it quickly. Expect it, enjoy it, and be ready to change again and again.” For the 21st-century high school, the cheese has moved, and members of the learning community need to adapt now.

This report presents a vision developed by members of the Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN). It grew out of their desire to provide each member district, school board, and executive staff a solid support base as they begin to look at the effectiveness of their current high school structures and operational systems. The purpose is to give UEN member districts leverage to apply in arming their high schools to move from where they are to where they need to be. The project began with directors of secondary education in each member district. Some assembled committees within their districts to research and write the reports; others brought together groups from across the state.

The reports address change at every level of the high school community and include the following 12 topics: Relationships, Leadership, Equity/Diversity, Curriculum, Organization and Time, School Environment, Instructional Strategies, Assessment and Accountability, Professional Development, Technology, Postsecondary Education, and Governance. Each report can stand alone or be considered as one element of the comprehensive document.

These reports call for sweeping changes in Iowa's high schools, and the writers acknowledge that implementing them will take time, strength, creativity, and courage. Each report contains an overview of the topic and strategies for redefining the high school. Rationale supports each strategy, as well as action steps that districts can take one at a time or collectively to implement the recommended changes. In addition, each report includes implications these initiatives will have at various levels within a school district.

The reports share common themes, with one overriding theme throughout: **high student achievement—no excuses!** Other pervasive themes include these: high expectations for all, key learnings for everyone in the learning community based on uniform content and performance standards and tied to the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan; deep understandings achieved through interdisciplinary instruction and applied learning; engaging instruction based on best practices; the teacher as the key to all change; the need for intensive, goal-driven, teacher-based professional development that is connected to school objectives and daily classroom activity; and new school organizational structures, including a critical review of the Carnegie Unit, smaller learning communities and student advocate/mentor programs that instill a sense of belonging, block scheduling, and year-long calendars that support continuous learning. Educators must respond to these needs while also addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and responding to and integrating emerging technologies.
The reports conclude that high schools must become more results-oriented and that time must become the variable, even as demonstrated understanding of essential curricular standards and skills becomes the constant. The goal of high school restructuring is to reduce the number of youth being inadequately served in ineffective high schools and maximize students’ preparation for graduation and life beyond high school.

Schools cannot accomplish this task alone—the entire learning community must share in the “work” of the school. The best hope for raising student achievement lies in meaningfully engaging parents and guardians, the extended community, and every available community resource in a cooperative effort that addresses the learning needs of students. The basis for all decisions must be teaching and learning in an environment that focuses on maximum student achievement. In every case, the needs of students must outweigh the convenience of adults.

For each of the 12 chapters contained in the UEN report, this executive summary includes an overview of the topic, plus each of the strategies outlined in the report. Readers must consult the full report for the action steps districts can take to implement the initiatives and the implications these changes have for high school learning communities.

Overview
Meaningful personal relationships, on a variety of levels within the high school learning community, support high student achievement and form the foundation for a safe, thriving learning environment. Schools must personalize education and engage students in significant ways that enhance optimal achievement and ensure that no student feels excluded or “invisible.” The process begins with vital relationships within the school, but success can result only as schools engage parents and guardians as essential partners and join with community organizations and agencies to address the learning needs of students. Peter Benson, president of the Search Institute says, “All kids are our kids. If you’re breathing, you’re on the team.”

Strategies
1. Incorporate processes that focus on developing relationships within a building.
2. Engage parents and guardians as partners in their students’ education.
3. Increase the capacity for developing strong relationships outside the school.

Overview
The focus for leadership in Iowa’s high school today is change! Today’s society demands a leadership role that is more intense, dynamic, and comprehensive than ever before. The 21st-century high school is a “learning organization” where the school leader is a collaborator and a manager of quality, and where leadership is grounded in the role and job description of each member of the high school community. Leadership manifests itself as a function, not a position, and all staff must perceive themselves and be perceived by others as leaders.
Strategies
1. Expect multiple points of leadership, especially from the superintendent and high school administrators, to provide instructional leadership in the high school community by creating and nourishing a vision, specific direction, and a focus for student learning. (adapted from Breaking Ranks)

2. Evolve from a hierarchical leadership model to one of collaboration and shared decision making.

3. Develop a co-responsibility leadership model within the teaching and staff ranks.

Overview
Iowa’s classrooms have become—and will remain—incredibly diverse. This lays the foundation for schools to become culturally responsive institutions—high schools that find strength in differences and proactively provide for equity for all members of the learning community through policies, curriculum, staff diversity, and professional development.

Being culturally responsive means much more than knowing scattered bits of language, singing a song about a culture, or celebrating “Brotherhood Week.” It means modifying curriculum and instruction to serve the needs of all students, interrupting language or behavior that is in any way exclusive or denigrating, and using strategies and resources to address achievement gaps in any segment of the student population. Culturally responsive high schools know that equitable distribution of resources does not mean equal allotments, and they recognize that the highest quality materials and resources that bring accuracy, inclusivity, and fair treatment of all people cost no more than those that fail these tests.

Strategies
1. Ensure that the principal, the school community, and the school board promote policies, practices, and decisions that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and within the mission of teaching and learning.

2. Design curriculum to expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and voices often muted or ignored in the past.

3. Ensure that the teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, support staff, volunteers, and members of the community who staff the high school represent a wide array of talents, perspectives and backgrounds.

4. Offer staff substantive, ongoing professional development to help them deal with issues and dynamics of cultural diversity. (strategies adapted from Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution)
Curriculum

Overview
The number one goal of 21st-century curriculum must be to move beyond easily tested concepts to deep understandings of foundational concepts and skills. For students to gain the most value from their educational experiences, curriculum must be connected—across grade levels and disciplines and to real life. It must be based on well-articulated pre-K–12 standards designed around deep understandings of essential skills, and students must be provided the needed time to meet the expectations defined in the standards. It is essential that high schools ensure clear ties between actual student learning and graduation, as well as life beyond graduation. Time must become the variable, even as demonstrated understanding of core curricular standards and skills becomes the constant.

Strategies
1. Derive all district curricula directly from district Content and Performance Standards, which should also be tied to high school graduation.
2. Develop district curriculum that is integrated and in-depth, with a coherent academic focus for all students, as well as a balance of course offerings.
3. Energize district curriculum through real-life applications, in both instruction and assessment.
4. Provide all students the time needed to learn the required curriculum.
5. Establish and maintain a clearly articulated curricular connectedness across all grade levels and within district feeder systems.
6. Ensure that the high school curriculum requires and supports the development over time of comprehensive career planning for each student.

Organization and Time

Overview
Schools must radically change their traditional organizational structures and schedules if they are to continue to effectively serve students and society. Innovative change in multiple forms, from flexible scheduling and year-long calendars to strengthening curriculum through interdisciplinary connectedness, using multiple measures for assessment, and tapping into community resources, offers solutions for meeting all students’ learning needs and increasing student achievement.

New organizational structures must better reflect student needs while ensuring smaller class loads for staff, fewer class changes per day, and fewer students for each teacher to work with in total. They must enable the use of diverse teaching strategies and allow more time for teacher collaboration. Assessments must evaluate students based on in-depth understanding of clearly defined learning outcomes and demonstrated learning performance instead of simply giving them a grade for seat time. Implementing these significant changes will require strength, creativity, and courage.
Strategies

1. Organize high schools into learning communities that create a sense of belonging for all students.

2. Create an organizational structure that allows teachers to be responsible for a maximum of 90 students each term.

3. Implement flexible scheduling that best reflects the learning needs of high school learning communities.

4. Assess student competence and certify students for graduation through multiple measures.

5. Initiate opportunities for interdisciplinary coalitions among high school departments that help students see the connectedness of their learning.

6. Build high school learning communities on foundations of high expectations for all.

7. Expect high school learning communities to take full advantage of learning opportunities outside the walls of the school building.

8. Implement a twelve-month calendar for high school learning communities.

Overview

High schools have lost their status as “the safest place in town.” The high school of the new millennium must rapidly reestablish itself as a safe haven with a welcoming environment that focuses on the health, welfare, and optimal learning opportunities of all students. This is a community-wide issue that demands immediate attention. The challenge is to meet the personal safety needs of each member of the learning community without turning the schoolhouse into a jail without bars. As schools meet this challenge, they must base all decisions on teaching and learning in a healthy environment that focuses on maximum student achievement. The best interests of students must be at the forefront of every decision.

Strategies

1. Ensure a high school environment that is safe and orderly.

2. Provide a healthy high school environment that promotes positive student-to-staff relationships.

3. Organize and manage school environments to provide optimal use of instructional time.

4. Provide an engaging teaching and learning environment that provides students many opportunities to succeed.
Overview
The use of best instructional strategies is at the heart of transforming Iowa high schools into powerful educational institutions for students. Best instructional practices are those that are solid, reputable, and state-of-the-art. They are based on current research; provide the benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures; and engage students in their own learning.

Because teacher behaviors are the key to successfully using instructional strategies, districts must provide staff development to support the use of best practices. They should connect the staff development to the district's school improvement plan and include the use of effective instructional strategies in teacher evaluation, and even in the negotiated contract. All of these initiatives have one goal: improving student achievement.

Strategies
1. Identify and use instructional strategies based on best practices relative to educational principles of learning.
2. Hire staff with knowledge of best instructional practices.
3. Provide staff development to support the use of instructional strategies based on best practices. Connect the staff development activities to the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), and design the activities to relate to district goals and improve student achievement.
4. Include use of effective instructional strategies in teacher evaluation, and connect the evaluation to the negotiated contract.
5. Collaborate with institutions of higher learning to ensure use of best instructional practices.

Overview
In the 21st-century high school, accountability must focus primarily on improvement. The information schools collect and analyze must help them understand and improve instructional processes to increase student achievement. Teachers must be proficient in using a variety of diagnostic assessments to determine how students are performing, and they must use the information they gain to adjust their teaching. To be truly accountable, schools must involve and inform their communities of their work and progress.

Several factors have delayed the use of assessment in providing strong school improvement, and several barriers exist that need to be addressed. Schools can begin by involving their communities in establishing a common vision of desired outcomes, focusing on short-term as well as long-term achievement goals, and in general, becoming more results-oriented. They must recognize that assessment is not a stand-alone event. Rather, it should permeate all that is in a school. It should be an attempt to look at the big picture through the careful monitoring of everyday acts and practices and continual assessment of student work. Delivering accountability through this type of assessment will produce the high student achievement communities want and expect.
Strategies
1. Ensure that classroom teachers have the knowledge to choose appropriate models of assessment and to use them competently, aligning instruction with goals and assessment.
2. Use multiple assessment tools to evaluate student progress.
3. Encourage principals to set the tone for developing a school's vision by keeping the school's focus on the classroom and on improved student learning.
4. Develop and maintain a personal learning plan for each student.
5. Report annually to the community through a “report card of school performance,” disclosing school-wide assessment results and other pertinent information.

Overview
Previous models of staff development are inadequate for meeting the needs of today's educational demands. Secondary teachers are being asked to implement ambitious changes, from multidisciplinary curriculum to reinventing the school's structure, responding to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, and keeping up with emerging technologies.

These efforts require professional development that is intensive, goal-driven, teacher-based, connected to school objectives, and connected to daily classroom activity. Teachers require time, support, and resources for this development, as well as a school organization that complements their efforts. With these challenges in mind, school districts must empower all administrators and staff through a continuous learning cycle that does not allow the return to old habits. Ultimately, professional development must be evaluated on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Strategies
1. Plan intensive professional development for all district personnel, based on their needs as related to district goals and building school improvement objectives.
2. Provide continuous and sustained professional development experiences over a long period of time that are integrated into the daily routine based on the requirements of daily classroom activity.
3. Incorporate a high level of active learning and demand for participation into professional development activities.
4. Build support systems into professional development.
5. Plan opportunities for practice, follow-up, reflection, and feedback regarding professional development.
Technology

Overview
Technology use in high schools has the potential to generate school reform and to be a transforming agent in the delivery of curriculum and instruction. How schools respond to the anticipated pervasiveness of technology and its potential to improve the learning environment is critical to whether they will move forward or stall at the starting line.

Members at all levels of the school district need to be actively involved in developing a well-reasoned plan for the acquisition, application, and support of technology. They must measure the plan against the district’s long-term goals based on the district’s strategic objectives and ensure that it is an integral, positive part of the overall school plan.

Digital learning will become the norm in the high school of the future, and while widespread availability of technology changes the way educators need to think about teaching and learning, it’s what schools do with the technology—not the availability—that has the potential to change the educational process. The most significant factor in the quality of education is the teacher, not the technology. Educators must remember that technology’s first and foremost function is to support the delivery of the school’s curriculum. When technology is available anywhere, anytime, and when needed, educators can more effectively shift from today’s commonly used traditional instructional model to an extended model of knowledge construction that engages learners.

Schools need to think in terms of not only putting technology into classrooms but into the hands of students and making it available to teachers 24 hours a day. They must realize that acquisition costs are a small part of the costs associated with gaining the most from technology’s potential, and support staff by employing “change-agent” technology resource persons. Adequate support services are likely to provide teachers more time to teach and actually save dollars over time. The ultimate goal, as always, is to improve student achievement.

Strategies
1. Develop and implement a long-term strategic plan for use of technology in the school.
2. Make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize the learning process.
3. Equip individual high school classrooms with the technology necessary to prepare students for life in the 21st century.
4. Ensure that budget allocations are both adequate to maintain current technology and to provide for ever-changing technology needs.
5. Make technology an integral component of both initial and continuing administrator and staff education.
6. Designate a technology “change-agent” resource person in every high school to provide technical assistance and to consult with the staff to assist them in making the best use of technology.

(strategies adapted from Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution)
Overview

Students in postsecondary institutions are failing in shocking numbers, and a high school diploma does not completely fulfill the needs for careers in the workforce. According to a recent study by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year, high schools are stuck in a time warp. The U.S. economy’s transformation from a manufacturing-based enterprise to a more complex, technology-dependent economy requires students leaving high school to move more successfully to postsecondary learning opportunities.

These problems illustrate the need for stronger ties and a greater commitment to collaboration between high schools and institutions of higher learning. Secondary and postsecondary institutions can no longer work in isolation in the development of student expectations, whether they are for academic organizations or career development programs. Change must begin with the common elements that affect students and staff at both institutions. The ultimate goal is to improve student performance at both the secondary and postsecondary level.

Strategies

1. Partner with institutions of higher learning to develop programs that connect high school and postsecondary education.
2. Build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators. (from Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution)
3. Review and align high school graduation requirements and postsecondary expectations.

Governance for Value-Added School Districts

Overview

School governance refers to the vision, leadership, and actions of the board of education and superintendent, functioning as a team. Real school improvement is impossible unless existing governance structures change. The current structure causes role confusion and too often treats the symptoms of district problems such as low test scores, rather than attempting to identify and solve the causes. Good governance is directly linked to student achievement, and forms the basis for creating “value-added” school systems. Students in a value-added system exceed statistical predictors of academic success.

Strategies

1. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of various groups and individuals responsible for public school governance.
2. Recreate governance systems at the local level according to models supported by current research.
3. Recognize and implement practices that enhance the productivity and effectiveness of school boards. Identify and eliminate practices that do not.
CONCLUSION

The journey toward the ideals presented in this report is long and arduous and demands much from all involved. Iowa high schools committed to excellence and supportive of these radical changes for maximizing every facet of high school education must act now, with passion and courage.

Local school boards, executive administrators, and high school principals and staff must muster the courage and determination to lead, establish, and support new expectations for the 21st-century high school—expectations that will ensure expanded achievement opportunities for all students. Leadership, management, and delivery systems must unite, focusing on the learning needs of all students and the expectations of each community.

This report, The Redefinition of High School, calls for the Iowa Legislature and the State Board of Education to take the necessary initiative to ensure that efforts of local school districts are not in vain. It is essential that they release Iowa high schools from the confines of existing elements such as the Carnegie Unit and the disconnection between postsecondary institutions and local high schools.

The transformation will take time and significant effort—it won’t happen overnight. Yet, there is a sense of urgency about delivering a commitment and a plan for change. Districts can begin by taking steps to implement a plan for meaningful, incremental, and continuous improvement processes for student learning. Schools can do no less for students and society. High schools must become laboratories in which students, soon to become full citizens, hone their skills for the rest of their life journeys.
The need for community is universal. A sense of belonging, of continuity, of being connected to others and to ideas and values that make ourselves meaningful and significant—these needs are shared by all of us. –Closing the Achievement Gap

The successful 21st-century high school is based on three things: relationships, relationships, and relationships—respectful relationships, inclusive relationships, and relationships that dignify the humanity of all. Meaningful personal relationships at all levels of the high school and within the total community support high student achievement and form the foundation for a safe, thriving learning environment. These relationships must be grounded in sincerity, honesty, and trust.

To reach this goal, high schools must first establish a true sense of community within a building. Every high school has “invisible” students who have no meaningful connection with any other student or adult in the school. This lack of significant personal relationships has led to increased school violence. Schools must personalize education and engage students in significant ways that lead to vital relationships among students and staff. These relationships must ensure not only student success, but safety for all.

Internal relationships—student-to-student, student-to-staff, and among the professional and support staff—also form the basis for vital connections outside the high school. Relationships beyond the school building must begin with students’ parents and guardians, then extend to involve a wider spectrum of the community.

This report presents strategies, rationale, and actions for building and strengthening three types of relationships that are essential to the successful high school of the future: (1) internal relationships, (2) relationships with parents and guardians, and (3) relationships within the community.

**Incorporate processes that focus on developing relationships within a building.**

**Rationale**

The climate of a school has much to do with whether individuals feel a sense of inclusion. Successful high schools establish an atmosphere of common respect and unity while recognizing and valuing differences among individuals and groups.¹ Like the fine strands of a spider web, each link among students, teachers, and other staff contributes to the overall strength of the school.

The U.S. Department of Education has created a grant program to develop smaller learning communities within high schools. The grant is intended to support programs that enable students to experience more success through the development of closer relationships with teachers and other staff. A host of studies have shown that smaller

¹See Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for a more complete discussion of equity and diversity in high schools.
schools and schools within schools that allow students to focus on particular areas of interest produce high achievers who drop out at lower rates. At Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas, for example, the school’s 1,250 students have been divided into eight learning communities. Preliminary data shows an increase in student achievement and involvement, more parent/guardian participation, and a reduction in disciplinary referrals.

Many high schools have created an advocate program that connects a staff member with a small group of students. Others have developed mentoring programs that pair one adult with one student. Teachers, counselors, administrators, and support staff often fill the roles of advocates or mentors. Advocates and mentors regularly meet with assigned students to encourage communication and support for individuals. These programs create a sense of intimacy and connectedness not usually available in high schools. They establish a climate of caring for students and also provide another communication link to parents and guardians.

Relationships among the professional staff directly influence the quality of a high school’s educational programs. Too often, teachers have viewed themselves as independent contractors who entered a school, closed their classroom doors, and delivered their educational services—many of them excellent—in private. The result has been isolated pockets of excellence and an ineffective organization that fell short of its promise of quality. Today, teachers understand that the walls between themselves and other educators must come down if they are to teach all students to perform at high levels.

Growing evidence indicates the value of staff collaboration in elevating student achievement. Reorganizing large high schools into smaller units creates smaller communities of teachers as well as students. This team structure brings teachers together in an atmosphere where collaboration not only occurs, but also is encouraged and expected. Teaming is one way teachers can come together to develop strategies for school improvement. In “Fixing Your School” (2000), author Ted Gest states that staff collaboration is one of the keys that has turned student failure into success. “Instead of teaching classes in isolation, the school now has several teams of teachers who work together and confer daily to discuss the progress of students.”

A school’s interior focus on building relationships not only enhances student success but resonates positively throughout the community, engaging many in supporting the work of schools. High schools where the faculty and administration are committed to helping all students learn produce goodwill ambassadors who garner interest in and enthusiasm for their schools. A pervasive sense of caring within a school creates a communal feeling of pride that extends into the community.

**Actions**

- Identify and implement successful programs that lead to collaboration and team building among all within a school.
- Limit the size of high schools, and develop smaller learning “support communities” within them.

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• Incorporate programs such as the student advocate program and mentoring programs, where staff and students form personal connections.
• Establish a process to ensure collaboration among the professional staff.
• Develop school-climate surveys for both staff and students to monitor success in building positive relationships at all levels within the school.

Engage parents and guardians as partners in their students’ education.

Rationale
One of the more frequently asked questions in high schools is “Why do the parents and guardians lose interest by the time their child comes to us?” Perhaps we are asking the wrong question. Maybe we should ask, “What have we done to discourage the parent/guardian from being involved in the high school?”

“Fixing Your School” (Gest, 2000) indicates that “the key to turning a school around is parent involvement.” Traditional parent/guardian involvement in most high schools seldom goes much beyond booster club membership and attendance at athletic contests, plays, and concerts. A commercial for a large bus company implores passengers to “leave the driving to us.” Secondary educators too often have had a tendency to see themselves in the driver’s seat, with parents and guardians doing little more than good-luck waving from the curb. It’s time to change the paradigm. The best hope for raising student achievement lies in a cooperative effort with parents and guardians. Success will come as a result of schools and families together addressing the learning needs of the students.

Schools That Learn (Senge, 2000) identifies parent attendance at conferences as a good indicator of a school’s relationship with them. Many schools hold conferences in gyms and expect parents/guardians to race from table to table to be told they need to hurry up because others are waiting. Often the student is not involved. Research shows that schools using student-led conferences have more than a 90-percent attendance rate.

Another effective strategy for involving parents and guardians is the creation of personal learning plans that are reviewed with parents/guardians at least twice a year. Including parents/guardians in designing the plan connects the learning process between the home and the school. An additional benefit is that the parent or guardian becomes more accountable in the child’s education. (If the plan exists at the high school only, it is developed at the end of the 8th grade year as students build their freshman schedules.)

Finally, schools must include parents and guardians in advisory roles. They must be invited not only to serve on committees and boards such as site-based councils, but schools must allow them to serve in meaningful, real, and action-oriented ways and include them in the process of recommending action.

3See Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” and Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for more information about personal learning plans.
**Actions**

- Expect parents and guardians to be involved in their high school students’ education, and develop and implement strategies that invite and support that involvement.

- Implement student-led conferences, and revise the format to ensure meaningful parent/guardian involvement.

- Create a personal learning plan with the following components:
  - Involve parents/guardians in the planning process and in monitoring their children’s progress.
  - Include a review of test data, grades, and interests in both the planning and in the learning plan.
  - Review the plan at conferences and during schedule selection for the following year.
  - Include parents/guardians in all reviews of the plan and in making changes or revisions.

- Engage parents/guardians in meaningful roles on school committees and advisory boards.

**Increase the capacity for developing strong relationships outside the school.**

**Rationale**

Schools alone cannot meet the needs of today’s students. District personnel must identify and share methods of enlisting meaningful support from various community resources. Strong, vibrant connections to the community maintain the sense of teamwork essential for school success.

Districts across the nation are asking the business community to be more supportive of schools. Many high schools can claim a business partner; however, that partner’s involvement may be limited to a yearly financial donation. With industry facing a critical shortage of skilled employees, the time has never been better for expanding the school-business relationship. The benefits to both businesses and students can be unlimited. Business alliances increase opportunities for work-based learning, job shadowing, employee mentors, and the application of curriculum concepts in the working environment. Schools must ensure that these partnerships benefit businesses as well as schools and that they are tied to school improvement and increasing student achievement.

Many school districts are using a process called “community conversations” to build relationships with a wider spectrum of the community. The conversations center on education and how the total community can address students’ needs. The discussions are held across the district and include teachers, administrators, support staff, students, parents, and community members. Training and planning are key to the success of community conversations. These discussions need to be held at times convenient for all. They must encourage open dialog that results in an action plan.
Districts can better meet the needs of their students, staff, and parents/guardians by combining personnel and resources with other public and private agencies. As high schools strive to increase graduation rates, they have found good partners in government and community agencies and organizations. These alliances benefit some of the most needy students. Although the collaboration may result in some cost saving by reducing the duplication of services, the real benefit comes from the strength of a common vision and united effort targeted on specific, measurable goals.

**Actions**

- Identify successful programs with strong community links. Districts can gain this information by reviewing journals, contacting other urban districts, and meeting with organizations such as Junior Achievement.
- Provide staff development training on building relationships with groups outside the school.
- Develop opportunities for students to participate in job shadowing, employee mentoring, service learning, and work-based learning within the community.
- Link school-business partnerships to school improvement and student achievement, and invite business representatives to serve on site-based councils.
- Train staff in the structure and design of discussion groups such as community conversations.
- Establish working relationships with community agencies such as juvenile court, police departments, United Way, and other social services agencies; share research and data with them regarding the needs of youth and parents; and develop programs that combine the strengths of the district with those of the agencies.

**Implementing these strategies has the following potential implications for districts:**

**Overall Implications for Districts**

- Increase confidence for all that each high school is a safe, welcoming place.
- Ensure that administrators and staff are knowledgeable in building relationships within a building.
- Ensure that communication to parents and guardians is inviting as well as informative and welcomes their participation as essential partners in their children’s education.
- Dialogue with the total community in a way that encourages collaboration and a desire to work together to benefit students and enhance their education.
- Allow the necessary time to build relationships in the total community.

**Implications for Staff**

- Assess knowledge of the best practices and methods for developing relationships both in and outside of the school building.
• Accept responsibility for establishing and maintaining communication between the district and parents/guardians, as well as the community.

• Participate in active learning about relationship building. (This effort involves both professional and support staff.)

Implications for Organization and Management
• Develop effective, efficient communication techniques within the organization. Appoint one or more individuals at each site, as well as someone in a leadership role in the district, to take the lead role in building relationships.

• Provide time for all staff to participate in training as well as attending meetings to create the needed relationships.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
• Design all attempts to build relationships to improve student learning.

• Collaborate to provide new learning opportunities for students and staff.

Implications for Resources
• Review budgets at the district and building levels for their support of building relationships within the community.

• Build relationships with community agencies and the business community to leverage resources to provide additional programming.

Personal relationships, on a variety of levels, are the foundation for building a true sense of community within a school. These relationships form the basis for high student achievement and a safe school environment conducive to learning. Schools must incorporate systems to ensure a sense of belonging for every student. It is critical that each student feels a strong personal connection to other students and to at least one adult in the school. High schools cannot afford to let even one student feel isolated or invisible.

In addition, through building strong, healthy relationships, the high school can become a critical element of the extended learning community and its lifelong learning systems. The community becomes the extended classroom through work-based learning and service learning projects.

High schools cannot accomplish this task alone. They must enlist the help of others—beginning with parents and guardians—to provide student-support systems. Student achievement and success are a community issue that can be realized only through a sense of genuine teamwork among school leaders, students, parents and guardians, businesses and industries, government, and community organizations. As author Peter Benson, president of the Search Institute, says, “All kids are our kids. If you’re breathing, you’re on the team.” Only by working together can learning communities truly fulfill their responsibility to prepare youth for the bright tomorrows they so richly deserve.
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expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
This is a pivotal point in the history of public education. No longer the only game in town for educating children and youth for the 21st-century information age, the present-day school must move aside for the “learning organization” of the future. Learning organizations require outstanding leadership. Leadership that is prudent, able, in touch, and tenacious—and most important, visionary—is absolutely vital if public education is to survive, much less, thrive.

America, currently in a flurry of social and demographic transitions, needs leaders who have a compelling vision of school quality that no obstacle can deter. America must nurture leaders who “walk the talk” of reasonable risk-taking in pursuit of quality learning for every student—leaders, with shoes laced, who are “marathon runners” on behalf of their schools and districts, and who create a safe place to talk about “dangerous” ideas. In summary, leadership must manifest itself as a function, not a position. All staff are teachers, all are models for emulation, and all must perceive themselves and be perceived by others as leaders.

Some “dangerous” ideas that need exploration in the quest for the successful high school of the 21st century include these:

- The learner has changed and must be educated in a fundamentally different way than educators running the schools were educated.
- The social context for schooling is in flux. In the 1950s, a “gum” violation drew the attention of teachers and parents. In 2001, a “gun” violation is more likely to draw attention—and end lives.
- The school employee is not the stereotypical “school teacher” depicted in lore and in the media. Talent now is drawn to a dynamic work environment and to a community’s lifestyle assets. The kind of educator all schools seek strives for the capacity to innovate and to work in a vibrant professional culture.
- Today’s school leader is in charge of a learning community in a “24/7” world, a world where information may exceed wisdom.

The leader in most effective organizations is the “lead leader.” This concept is central to the life of a learning organization such as a high school. The paradigm of school leadership that served the educational community over time—the leader “on the mountaintop” who controls the data and issues mandates—is obsolete. Today’s school leader is a collaborator and a manager of quality.

This mandate for a new leadership paradigm is due to many variables, both within the school and in society at large. First, the leader as “hero who can save the rest of the community” is no longer possible. Second, no one can win all the time. Third, negative situations cannot be shielded from the public. And fourth, the world, ours and the one at large, is not always rational.
LEADERSHIP

High school leaders must acknowledge that embarrassment; threats to the school, students, and staff; personal vulnerability; and occasional feelings of incompetence are inevitable in 2001 and beyond. Today's high school needs leadership grounded in the role and job description of each member of the high school community, not leadership based on position. High school leadership certainly begins with building administrators, but it must extend to include all who care about the school.

This report presents three strategies for transforming high school leadership to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It addresses the need for (1) multiple points of instructional leadership, (2) collaborative leadership and shared decision making, and (3) a co-responsibility leadership model within the teaching and staff ranks. The strategies include rationale, plus actions that districts can take immediately to begin to make these initiatives a reality. These recommendations have broad implications, which are outlined at the conclusion of the report.

Expect multiple points of leadership, especially from the superintendent and high school administrators, to provide instructional leadership in the high school community by creating and nourishing a vision, specific direction, and a focus for student learning.

—Adapted from Breaking Ranks

Rationale
The superintendent and high school administrators represent the starting point for school improvement. They must display the courage to lead, even when no one else offers leadership, and keep the objectives of improvement in everyone's sight, even during difficult times. These leaders must inspire and lead by example. They must defend academic integrity. They need to know about instruction that takes into account students' individual needs, as well as the latest in brain research, cognitive theory, etc. Furthermore, they must be able to rally others in behalf of improvement. High school leaders need a clear vision, charisma, and decisive leadership.

According to the “E-Myth Mastery Program,” a prominent leadership program designed to educate business leaders in processes to create and operate a profitable, predictable business organization, leadership has these three components:

- **Vision** – the dream for the future of the organization and the path taken to make it a reality. Everyone in the organization must understand it and believe in it. It must become their vision as well as the organization’s vision.

- **Action** – what you do and the way you do it. The example a leader sets as a role model sets the tone for everyone.

- **Spirit** – the way a leader does things and the energy put into whatever is done. It is a positive outlook, the respect and concern with which people are treated, and a belief in the organization and its future.
This program suggests that leaders, including the superintendent and high school administrators and whoever else demonstrates leadership, can translate their vision and spirit by considering the following concepts:

Vision and Spirit—Next Steps
- Assess positive personal characteristics used to lead and inspire others.
- Develop a written vision for their organization that supports the strategic objective.
- Identify and learn to communicate the essence of what makes their organization special.
- Envision the desired status of the education system and tenaciously seek to attain it above all else.
- Learn techniques for managing time by sharing leadership responsibility.

In addition, school leaders can take the following specific actions to create a greater focus on student learning:

Actions
- Provide the most appropriate space for teaching and learning.
- Encourage and support teachers in their competence in a variety of engaging instructional strategies that accommodate individual learning styles.
- Model new learning, both professional and personal, for teachers and staff in their commitment to learning.
- Support teachers during times of short- and long-term change.
- Provide regular, systematic opportunities for teachers to be educated in state-of-the-art teaching and learning.
- Model leadership in the community and to agencies and institutions that support students.
- Evaluate all high school programs, based on the mission, beliefs, and strategic plan of the school.
- Empower teachers, staff, students, parents, and community residents to exert active leadership roles.

Evolve from a hierarchical leadership model to one of collaboration and shared decision making.

Rationale
High school leaders require different skills than those that distinguished administrators only a few years ago. Today’s leaders need to be able to work with teams and stakeholders from all groups in the school and community. Collaboration is the trademark of all successful organizations in today’s “information age.” Achieving this model will require major shifts in leaders’ thinking and performing.
A successful high school leader will be able to do the following:

- Mobilize the talents of staff to tackle tough problems
- Leverage the dynamics of the system within which the group operates
- Demonstrate leading as a learner, not an authoritarian
- Develop a keen sense of self-awareness of personal and professional values

In his book, Restructuring Our Schools (1994), Patrick Dolan states, “Wherever you encounter the Steady State, that is where you will find: a Top Down, deeply layered pyramid, gridded into vertical and horizontal silos.” (See diagram below.)

In order to change the Steady State, Dolan believes organizations must move toward a more collaborative decision-making model. He also states, “A design for change, then, is not a series of good ideas for how to do things better. It is a series of stages that lead to something else:

- Understand the system-in-place and its dysfunctions.
- Begin to design the scaffold or temporary structures that require opposite behavior or processes.
- Create “moments” in which key leadership in the organization must reflect together on these activities, the stresses that have arisen, and what is going on between the new structures and the old.
- Redesign more permanent structures based on these learnings.”

The model that best represents the complex reality of leadership challenges is from Peter Senge’s A Fifth Discipline: Schools That Learn (2000). See Appendix. Although it has a certain Rube Goldberg quality, it dramatically demonstrates the interconnectedness of school life.

As school leaders move in this collaborative and site-based direction, the leadership skills needing to be fostered may be quite different from those skills that succeeded in the 20th century. Just as the Founding Fathers struggled with determining the desirable fulcrum point of balance between federal authority and state autonomy,
so the conversation between district boundaries and school-site latitude of decision making must be candid, public and frequent. Consequently, site leaders must do the following:

**Actions**

- Transition from top-down management to a more collaborative model involving all stakeholders, including teachers, support staff, community, and students.
- Develop consensus building, conflict management, and team building skills.
- Inspire and lead by the power of personal example.
- Set the climate for change; avoid impeding change.
- Adopt a “warm demander” approach in which expectations are high and relationships produce a culture of collegiality.
- Create a climate of innovation where teachers are free to take risks and move in new directions.

**Develop a co-responsibility leadership model within the teaching and staff ranks.**

**Rationale**
A lack of leadership plays a pivotal role in the overall disparities that exist among high schools, and thus, not all high schools are equally in need of change. If our high schools are to meet the goal of high school restructuring—reducing the number of American youth being inadequately served in ineffective high schools—staff must assume more leadership roles. The high school needs leaders defined by function, not position. To navigate the waters of improvement, all staff need to know how to steer while in “the rapids.” All staff need to see themselves and be seen as leaders. Remember, change is inevitable; progress is optional.

**Actions**

- Prepare staff to cope with school change that produces greater student success.
- Provide vocal support to staff members and to all colleagues and decision makers who are working to restructure schools.
- Develop customized staff development that builds stronger teacher-student learning relationships.\(^1\)

**Implementing these strategies has potential implications at various levels throughout a district, as follows:**

**Overall Implications for Districts**
- Spend more time in a “think tank” mode, using district resources and leadership to address new paradigms of thought for the high school.

\(^1\)See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for an in-depth discussion of staff development.
• Develop and support participatory leadership.
• View administrators more as instructional leaders than as managers.
• Hire principals who demonstrate competence in student learning and achievement strategies.
• Invest in new learning by providing purposeful, intensive staff development.
• Provide time for staff to learn new practices and engage in collaborative coaching to reinforce skills.

Implications for Staff
• Investigate and take on new or different leadership roles in the high school.
• Gain new knowledge about systems, instructional strategies, advisory roles with students, and collegial collaboration.
• Be open to new ways of being rewarded and assessed.
• Become allies with other staff during the change process.

Implications for Organization and Management
• Clarify the role of shared decision making between the high school and the district.
• Support site leaders with time, freedom to innovate, and the needed resources to implement agreed-upon changes.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
All parties in the high school need to...
• Focus on documenting student learning gains and setbacks and, as a result, correlate school strategic planning to high student achievement.

Implications for Resources
Leadership encourages creativity in reallocating resources and in bringing all available human and material resources to the school. To gain the support of board members, the superintendent, and central office administrators in the planning and implementation of school-level improvements, a leader will do the following:
• Initiate a line item in the budget for staff development related to school transformation.
• Incorporate the transformation of high school education into the district strategic plan and include the following information:
  – A dollar amount committed to the plan
  – The time frame for implementation
  – The staff development required to add new knowledge and change behaviors
  – Person(s) responsible for implementation
• Collaborate with other schools in the district, or other schools in the state, to provide large-group transformative-thinking opportunities through the following:
  – High-quality consultants
  – Site visits
  – On-site collaborative learning using local expert staff
Conclusions

Transforming the high school is a critical task—and one that absolutely must be accomplished. Although today’s educators, along with other professionals, expect continued changes during the course of their careers, they may be well served by the words of Spencer Johnson, M.D., in his book, *Who Moved My Cheese?* Johnson reminds us that because change happens, we should anticipate it, monitor it, and adapt to it quickly. He advises us to expect change, to enjoy change, and to be ready to change quickly.

The successful high school—and its leadership—will continually adapt with increasing speed. It will serve a vastly diverse array of learners, and serve them without excuses. It will graduate students with both academic skills and life skills that apply to different roles and life applications. It will require visionary school leaders who serve as instructional leaders, share decision making, and help all staff develop as leaders. The successful high school will be more about *questioning the answers* than *answering the questions* in the education of the students of the 21st century.

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LEADERSHIP APPENDIX

The Complex Reality of Leadership Challenges

expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
The high school seeks to be a model of equity for its educational peers and for the community within which it lives. It cannot meet its mission of educating youth for the 21st century, much less be exemplary, without the osmosis of a diversity paradigm into its “life systems.” High school is the last “commons” experience our students can draw from in shaping the information base, attitudes, and social skills they will need as workers, neighbors, and most important, citizens for their lifetime.

Every high school is a cultural place. The accumulation of the social norms, explicit and implicit rules, language—both spoken and unspoken, dispensation of power, and access to full opportunity are only a few of the benchmarks of the high school where attention is paid to equity for all.

The diversity of staff and clients in Iowa’s high schools, in one form or another, has been present for a long time. Recently, however, the variables of race, ethnicity, language, religion, socioeconomic status, and disability have become more apparent. This trend of increasing diversity is not an anomaly—it is the norm for the future. It, literally, represents the “faces and voices” of Iowa’s future.

As a result, achieving equity for diverse participants in the public high school will require significant learning, examination of past practices, and openness to new ways of enhancing student achievement and school success. Educational equity will become a reality as a result of inspecting, questioning, and discussing every nook and cranny of school life.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals’ (NASSP) report, Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution, makes recommendations in these four areas as a basis for “finding strength in differences” in 21st-century high schools: (1) school policies, (2) curriculum (3) staff diversity, and (4) professional development. This report adapts those recommendations, presenting them as strategies accompanied by rationale and actions for transforming Iowa’s high schools into learning communities that model equity for all.
Ensure that the principal, the school community, and the school board promote policies, practices, and decisions that recognize diversity in accord with the core values of a democratic and civil society and within the mission of teaching and learning.

Rationale
The achievement of educational equity and recognition of diverse needs begins with the formation of policy. Without clear policies that reflect a school’s values and a commitment to social justice for all in its midst, confusion, inconsistency, and conflict is inevitable.

Educators recognize, however, that documents, by themselves, do not guarantee compliance with the law or the achievement of best practices. All positive change begins with thoughtful reflection and the opportunity to share ideas, concerns, strengths, and current realities. High schools will benefit from reviewing the aspects of diversity currently present in their schools. In addition, forward-looking research on school improvement, demographic data, and the results of local needs assessment, both within and outside the high school, can be the basis for extended conversations about the role of diversity in the daily operations the school uses to reach its educational mission.

Many communities in Iowa are changing demographically, and this gives high schools several opportunities. First, the high school can be a convening point for community conversations, a haven for people to meet and help knock down stereotypes. Second, the high school, together with the school district, can collaborate with city government, arts groups, human rights agencies, and school partners to create public events that inform, discuss, and celebrate the community’s distinctive elements of diversity.

School leaders need to be in continual conversation with other people of influence in the community. As the school’s clientele and base of support, these individuals deserve to know how students are being prepared to succeed in today’s multicultural, globalized society and world. Whether communicating with the Chamber of Commerce, parent groups, civic clubs, local colleges, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), or The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), a school’s ability to explain its program, listen to questions and concerns, and create allies and partners is essential. High schools benefit both from going “on the road” for such encounters and inviting community members into the school on a regular basis.

Administrators, teachers, and staff must be students’ first model for learning. Many educators have an inadequate knowledge base regarding issues of culture, race, ethnicity, language, and religion as factors that impact learning and the curriculum. High schools would be well advised to plan or accelerate learning sessions on issues related to culture and human diversity in their comprehensive plans. Local, state, and regional resources are available to assist in this process, with an emphasis on the application of new information, concepts, and skills for the classroom and in the school overall. Some valuable resources are listed in the bibliography following this report.
As more children of immigrants enter school, the need for ELL (English Language Learners) programs is obvious. Less obvious is the need for interpreter/translator services so that communication with non-English-speaking parents can occur. From printed school policies to signs to parent conferences, both written translation and oral interpretation will make communication meaningful and provide fair treatment of these parents.

Actions

• Adopt a working model for implementing multicultural education. Such a model needs to consider the research done by Dr. James Banks and other experts in multicultural education. This research clearly points to the need for a multipronged approach to school transformation. See Appendix A following this report for details about this approach.

For a list of model policies generated by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) in their Policy Reference Manual (1994) and continually updated in their Policy Primer CD-ROM, see Appendix B.

• Involve students, parents, community, and staff in a comprehensive (360-degree) review of school policies, procedures, and practices.

• Review policies for omissions, amendment, or deletion to attain congruence with Iowa Code and federal education legislation. The use of school advisory groups, student government, and any external review, such as NCA (North Central Association), are appropriate vehicles for gaining perspective and collecting data on the effectiveness of the policies.

• Examine current dispositions in the high school, the district, and the community about the paradigm of cultural diversity and human heterogeneity as it applies to the high school.

One helpful tool in an assessment of current school thinking and behavior is the “Building Level Assessment” published by the Midwest Equity Assistance Center in Manhattan, Kansas.

• Assess diversity dynamics of the community, and become involved in cross-institutional initiatives to address concerns and also to celebrate contributions in building a vibrant community.

• Increase attention to incidents of harassment and discrimination as obstacles to learning and working for all involved in the education process. Establish and distribute policies to all parties involved in the school.

• Commit to high academic achievement standards for all students.

• Accelerate learning sessions that enable staff to more capably deal with culture and human diversity in their daily work.

• Ensure that district and school leaders can articulate the role of diversity and equity in the school and that they incorporate facets of diversity and equity in strategic planning, allocation of resources, and community involvement.

• Devise school schedules and calendars that demonstrate awareness of cultural and religious dimensions of clients.
• Maintain membership and involvement in professional organizations involved in diversity.
  Local groups such as NAACP, La Raza chapter, disabilities advocacy groups, and others reflect each community’s cultural realities. Additionally, connections to governmental assistance centers such as the Midwest Equity Assistance Center, the Southern Poverty Law Center, The National Association for Multicultural Education, and others are invaluable in designing curriculum, conducting action research, and receiving technical assistance.

• Ensure equitable access to district resources by all attendance centers.
  **Note:** Equitable distribution of resources does not mean equal allotments. Schools that educate higher concentrations of poor students need more educational resources and support systems to achieve the same educational objectives.

• Assess accommodation strategies for assisting students with particular learning needs.
  The high school needs to work with the district administration to assess needs for compliance with federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (revised). In addition, educators need to adjust their practice to meet the needs of the 10–20 percent of students with legally identified learning needs.

• Provide translators/interpreters.

**Design curriculum to expose students to a rich array of viewpoints, perspectives, and experiences of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and voices often muted or ignored in the past.**

**Rationale**

Traditional curriculum has been Eurocentric, less than gender fair, and has failed to offer global perspectives for students. Consequently, high schools need to utilize multicultural and global education models to review curriculum. Additionally, the use of local/regional colleges of education, technical-assistance centers, and equity advisory committees working within the district will result in the adoption of curriculum and materials that reflect today’s society and world in the most accurate way possible.¹

High schools must commit to student accessibility to all courses of study in all facets of the high school curriculum. They must review and eliminate limitations to course work by physical inaccessibility to a portion of the school, inappropriate prerequisites, inhospitable learning conditions for nontraditional students, or expectations by staff that “steer” students based on stereotypical or prejudicial notions.

Assessment of student work must ask the best of all students. A diversity paradigm requires not that schools ask less, but that they accept the product of student knowledge and creativity in different modalities.

¹See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for a more complete discussion of curriculum.
The goal of high schools is to graduate all students. All graduates who step across the stage in this important rite of passage need the essential skills, dispositions, and brainpower to be contributing citizens. With a push from the Iowa Department of Education in its 280.12 and 280.18 reports, schools are now looking at achievement data in more precise ways. Data, both aggregated and disaggregated, needs to drive managerial decisions that affect student achievement, not in averages, but targeted specifically to subgroups within the student population. It is in the high school's self-interest to use this data to maximize use of the scarce resources available. The relatively new practice of norming standardized testing in Iowa schools is another means of providing inclusive testing while measuring student progress in a more accurate fashion.²

**Actions**

- Review curriculum organization and content.

- Ensure accessibility to all facets of curriculum by all students.

- Review best instructional practices research.³

  Another excellent resource is the “engaged learning model” of Barbara Means of SRI International. This model focuses on the examination of school-wide and classroom practices related to variables such as the role of teacher as facilitator, heterogeneous groups, interactivity of instruction, student performance of real tasks, and nature of student collaboration.

- Review assessment/evaluation instruments used to measure student achievement and success.

- Review student achievement and participation data in a disaggregated manner, including variables of race, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and disability.

- Provide current, varied curricular resources for students and staff.

**Ensure that the teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, support staff, volunteers, and members of the community who staff the high school represent a wide array of talents, perspectives, and backgrounds.**

**Rationale**

Building an inclusive staff is a major challenge for Iowa schools. With the coming retirement of many school leaders and staff, a wonderful opportunity awaits. The

²See Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” for further discussion of assessment.

Iowa Department of Education has published “Envisioning Inclusive Communities and Schools for the 21st Century.” Principle 8 states:

School staff members should reflect the diversity of the school’s student population and ideally reflect the diversity of the broader society. There should be a renewed commitment on the part of the state, local districts and colleges to recruit, train, hire and retain staff members of diverse backgrounds.

Because Iowa can be a tough sell to nontraditional potential employees, school districts need to cast the widest possible net to increase the pool of candidates from diverse backgrounds. Including community members of various ethnic backgrounds in the recruitment process appears to increase the authenticity of the community portrait drawn for the candidates.

Each school district likely has constructed a network of collaborative links within the community. These might include the city government, Chamber of Commerce, local employers, social services agencies, faith communities, local institutions of higher education, and others. Establishing an equity/diversity-focused group to generate ideas for events, activities, initiatives, and sharing of information is an effective way to move the entire community toward a common vision. This increases the community’s marketability to new business and the accompanying new residents’ attachment to those businesses. The synchronicity of such an effort benefits all parties and also reinforces working relationships between people in all sectors of the community.

The high school typically has several types of advisory groups, including booster groups, site councils, and advisory committees, and these, too, should model inclusion. With forethought, the high school needs to reach out to the various demographic groups in the school community to be part of these organizations. With personal contact, a cross section of the school’s population can be constructed. This initiative will generate greater enthusiasm and support for the school mission regarding diversity and equity.

Actions
- Assess the presence of diversity in the leadership team and staff in all categories.
- Examine and/or devise affirmative strategies to achieve staff diversity.
  An initiative with major potential is the Professional and Technical Diversity Network. This organization, established in Cedar Rapids/Iowa City, is a model of private sector and public sector organizations collaborating to attract and retain candidates for their professional/technical employment needs. This concept, begun in Seattle, is replicable in other urban areas of Iowa.
  Additionally, the Des Moines school district has used creative strategies to hire and retain minority teachers. Individuals have opened their homes to newly hired minority staff who lacked the resources to immediately acquire housing, and minority businesses have provided incentives to assist new hires in purchasing autos and other durable goods.
- Examine retention-of-staff patterns and devise plans to increase retention.
- Collaborate with community leaders to coordinate the marketing of the community to potential workforce recruits in both the public and private sectors of the economy.
• Incorporate diverse community representation in the school’s accountability reporting and in advisory capacities.

• Provide opportunities for staff to work in heterogeneous work teams with staff of both genders and various cultural and religious backgrounds, sharing ideas and perspectives on teaching and learning.

• Provide resources for recruiting of a diverse staff.

**STRATEGY 4**

**Offer staff substantive, ongoing professional development to help them deal with issues and dynamics of cultural diversity.**

**Rationale**

Author Gary Howard of REACH (Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage), in the title of his new book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* (1999), succinctly hits the mark regarding the need for staff education. As the high school becomes more of a mosaic resembling the American society, the imperative to equip staff with the skills to recognize multiple perspectives, defuse conflict, and teach with cultural insight is immediate and integral to the future of the high school.

Students of color are on the rise in Iowa schools. So are students with special needs. Students with limited English fluency likely will increase in the next decade. Students of various faith backgrounds populate Iowa schools. All these facts point to the necessity of emphasizing staff education on equity and diversity in the various components of the high school.

The Iowa classroom has never been truly homogeneous. In recent years, the diversity and heterogeneity has simply become more obvious. Issues of culture and disability, plus new research about the brain, demand that educators upgrade their knowledge base and increase their array of instructional tools to address and solve student learning issues. Ask yourself this: If your dentist indicated to you that he or she last attended a professional workshop in 1973, how fast would you be out the door?

Because time is so precious for school employees, staff education initiatives cannot be “one shot” immunizations. Rather, they are likely to succeed as a series of learning sessions built around local needs assessments. Additionally, the learning needs to be on the 20/80 rule: 20 percent theory and 80 percent application and practice. 4

Most successful staff development programs are based on multiple encounters with new ideas and include time for staff to practice new skills. The high school staff, using both heterogeneous groups and job-alike groups, can generate a critical mass of new practices that will raise the achievement of all students. Much like staff development for increasing technology skills, skills in addressing diversity dynamics will be baseline for the beginning and veteran teacher alike.

A critical empowerment measure in reaching the mission will be assistance from the high school in coordinating schedules of both professional and support staff to enable

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4See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for additional information about staff education.
them to participate in equity/diversity activities and learning. The inclusion of equity/diversity rubrics needs to be built into the cycle of curriculum study. Staff will need time to review curriculum, content materials, and instructional skills during the planning, budget, and implementation phases of each study.

Staff must be educated regarding the need for immediacy in interrupting incidents of racism, sexism, and all other forms of bigotry and harassment in a systematic fashion. The high school needs to implement or review its procedures for the reporting, investigation, and remediation of all incidents of discrimination or harassment. This system needs to be easily accessible, confidential to the extent possible, with one or more persons designated to conduct investigations of alleged incidents. Working with the school district administration, schools need to analyze the collection of data on a regular basis.

Districts need to include information about school policies in staff handbooks for easy reference in addition to making it accessible to any stakeholder. Periodic reference, explanation, and discussion of these policies in staff meetings is a useful way to keep their enforcement on the “front burner” as staff monitor daily activity at the school. For example, staff will increasingly need skills in interacting with students who are English Language Learners (ELL). A review of policy regarding ELL leads to both procedural knowledge and practical ideas for communication and student learning.

**Actions**

- Plan Pre-K–12 staff development activities to enhance knowledge and skills related to multiculturalism, global perspectives, socioeconomic status and poverty, and related equity issues.
  
  Programs to assist in achieving this goal are available from nationally based organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League, the REACH Center, and others. Additionally, Iowa-based programs are burgeoning. The National Council for Community and Justice in Des Moines offers educational programs. High schools with the motivation to engage in this effort can work with the Area Education Agencies (AEA), the Department of Education, and the Midwest Equity Assistance Center to locate human and technical resources to fill this need. AEA staff will customize workshops to meet specific needs. The UEN Equity Directors are another source for workshop ideas and human resources (see the committee roster following this report).

- Educate all staff regarding the district policies relating to equity and diversity.

- Implement learning programs that enable staff to interact with students of various backgrounds, experiences, and capabilities.

- Train staff to recognize, report, and respond appropriately to incidents of harassment and discrimination.

- Designate an annual allocation of money for staff development dedicated to various forms of staff learning in equity/diversity education.

- Create a resources commitment to mandatory all-staff learning related to district initiatives, updates, and skills training within the regular format of the workday.
Note: These four strategies will be most effective when acted upon in concert with other equity/diversity standards, initiatives, and research under way in the state of Iowa. See Appendix C, which follows this report, for three examples:

1. Chapter 12—General Accreditation Standards of Iowa
2. “Envisioning Inclusive Communities and Schools in the 21st Century”
3. Iowa 2010: The New Face of Iowa

These initiatives have potential implications at all levels of a school district, as follows:

Overall Implications for Districts
- Recruit and retain an increasingly diverse staff to interact with an increasingly diverse student clientele.

Implications for Staff
- Develop and maintain knowledge and skills to interact with an increasingly diverse student clientele, giving all students an equal opportunity to succeed.

Implications for Organization and Management
- Review the organizational structure as it relates to diversity/equity.
- Provide structures that allow all members of the learning community the opportunity to interact with others of various backgrounds, experiences, and capabilities.
- Provide time and opportunities for ongoing staff development based on application and practice.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
- Recognize that teaching and learning with cultural insight is integral to the high school.

Implications for Resources
- Recognize that the highest quality materials and resources that bring accuracy, inclusivity, and fair treatment of all people are no more expensive than those that fail these tests.
- Allocate funds for translators and interpreters, curricular resources for students and staff, recruiting and retention of a diverse staff, and staff development dedicated to equity/diversity education.
- Commit resources to mandatory all-staff learning within the regular school workday.
The equitable, diverse high school is a culturally responsive institution. This means much more than knowing scattered bits of language or singing a song about a culture. It is much more than a “special day” or a celebration of Brotherhood Week.

Culturally responsive high schools use and apply key equity concepts and knowledge to everyday classroom activities. They modify curriculum and instruction when the needs of students have not been served. They interrupt language or behavior that is racist, sexist, or in any way exclusive or denigrating, preventing student potential for achievement. And culturally responsive high schools use strategies and resources to address achievement gaps in any segment of their student population. Such a high school is a place where patience, curiosity, enthusiasm for learning, hands-on—and minds-on—activity, and the active practice of nonauthoritarian democracy are evident. Finally, there is a real and honest connectedness between the cultural values and needs of teachers and students. These are the hallmarks of a culturally responsive high school.

The journey toward this ideal, which brings schools to many of the dilemmas to be faced in the American society, is a long one. For hundreds of years, United States history is one of conflict between the white majority and various peoples of color who suffered oppression, slavery, exclusion, and inhumane treatment. In the past 40 years, the process of repair, healing, and compensatory action have begun. The journey must continue until we, as a nation, are whole again. It is a challenging journey that will demand much of all. It is especially vital that the high school become the laboratory in which students, soon to be full citizens, hone their skills for the rest of their life journey.

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National Alliance of Black School Educators, 2816 Georgia Ave, NW, Washington, DC 20001; 800-221-2654; www.nabse.org
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 4805 Mt. Hope Dr., Baltimore, MD 21215; 410-521-4939; www.naacp.org
National Association for Multicultural Education, 3145 Geary Blvd., PMB 275, San Francisco, CA; www.nameorg.org
National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2121 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20037; 800-321-6223; Askncbe@ncbe.gwu.edu
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EQUITY/DIVERSITY APPENDIX A

A Working Model for Implementation of Multicultural Education

Research by Dr. James Banks and other experts in multicultural education clearly points to the need for a multipronged approach to school transformation.

This approach addresses the following:

- The integration of curriculum content
  Educators use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, and theories in their subject area or discipline.

- The processes by which knowledge is constructed
  Educators assist students in the investigation and determination of how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases influence the ways knowledge is constructed.

- Pedagogy based in equity principles
  Educators modify their teaching in ways that facilitate academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

- The reduction of prejudice
  Educators focus on the attitudes of students toward others and use teaching methods and materials to reduce stereotypes and bigotry built upon prejudice.

- The creation, enhancement, or maintenance of an empowering school culture and accompanying social structure
  Educators examine grouping and labeling practices, participation in school activities, any disproportionate academic achievement, and the interaction between staff and students as measures of a school culture that empowers students from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups.
EQUITY/DIVERSITY APPENDIX B

Iowa Association of School Boards Model Policies

The following list of model policies generated by the Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) in their Policy Reference Manual (1994) and continually updated in their Policy Primer CD-ROM will assist high schools (and school districts) in reviewing current policies. It is a starting point for discussion of the need for new policies and/or the amendment of current policies that affect equity and diversity:

- Attendance (501)
- Student Rights and Responsibilities (502)
- Discipline (503)
- Student Scholastic Achievement (505)
- School Calendar (601.1)
- Special Education (603.3)
- Multicultural and Nonsexist (Gender Fair) Education (603.4)
- Teaching About Religion (603.8)
- Academic Freedom (603.9)
- Teaching Controversial Issues (603.9 R1)
- Global Education (603.10)
- Religious-Based Exclusion from a School Program (604.5)
- Foreign (International) Students (604.8)
- Instructional Materials Selection (605.1)
- School Ceremonies and Observances (606.2)
- Buildings and Sites Adaptation for Persons with Disabilities (802.5)

This list is formulated with the clear understanding that it does not address every policy with equity and diversity implications for the high school. Local leaders are encouraged to explore other areas of the IASB manual or seek assistance from organizations listed in the bibliography of this chapter.
EQUITY/DIVERSITY APPENDIX C

Equity/Diversity Standards, Initiatives, and Research
Under Way in Iowa

1. Chapter 12—General Accreditation Standards of Iowa

Sections of these standards directly and specifically call for practices in school administration, instructional/learning program, and data collection that are congruent with this initiative. These sections in 281 include, but are not limited to:

- 12.5 (7) Career Education
- 12.5 (8) Multicultural and gender-fair approaches to the educational program
- 12.5 (11) Global Education
- 12.7 ((256) (1) (2) Staff Development
- 12.8 (256) Accountability for Student Achievement
  - (a) community involvement
  - (b) data collection, analysis, and goal setting
  - (c) content standards and benchmarks
- 12.8 (2) Submission of a comprehensive school improvement plan
  - (a) state indicators
  - (b) annual report
- 12.8 (4) Comprehensive school improvement and the accreditation process

Compliance with these standards is essential for every high school in Iowa. Attention to these dimensions of the standards is required by law. Equally important is the inclusion of these standards in the reimagining of the operation of the high school that seeks to be successful for all its diverse students.

2. Envisioning Inclusive Communities and Schools in the 21st Century

A second Iowa initiative is “Envisioning Inclusive Communities and Schools in the 21st Century.”

This initiative, originated by the Iowa State Board of Education, is a vision paper, based on community input, for how communities and schools will collaborate to ensure high achievement for all students. In addition, schools and communities will partner to provide learning experiences for students and adults. This learning, focused on knowledge, skills, and life habits needed to be successful in diverse social environments and in a global economy, is essential to the future economic growth and social vibrancy of the State of Iowa.

This document details 16 principles for the successful transition of the school from traditional educational practices based on a homogeneous population to one ready and able to address the heterogeneous learners of the year 2000 and beyond.

3. Iowa 2010: The New Face of Iowa

A third critical initiative, emanating from the office of Governor Tom Vilsack, is Iowa 2010: The New Face of Iowa. Based on the ideas of more than 100 Iowa citizen volunteers, this work challenges Iowans to determine what Iowa needs to look like in 2010 and what we need to do to achieve our goals, dreams, and translate Iowa’s “Fields of Opportunities” into successes and high quality lives for all living here. The first goal in this blueprint for our future that most directly impacts the high school of the future in Iowa is:

Iowa’s population increases by 310,000 working people by retaining Iowans of all ages and welcoming diverse new residents, including immigrants, who perceive Iowa as providing economic, political, cultural and social opportunities.
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
Roger Williams and Melanie Shellberg
Council Bluffs Community Schools

Schools are finally overcoming the agelong tendency to equate learning with inputs and time. Successful 21st-century schools realize that curriculum is more about uncovering important ideas than “covering everything.” They recognize that clearly defining student results—through products, demonstrations, standardized tests, and other means—as proof of deep learning and understanding is far more effective as both a philosophical and practical approach to education.

The key to school reform is using standards to define what communities expect graduates to know and be able to do when they receive their high school diplomas. Students must leave high school with skills and understandings that serve them well throughout their lives. All learning must be continuous and developmental across grade levels, building on previous learning, and increasing in complexity and sophistication to increase understanding. The comparison between this focus and high schools’ previous “seat time” paradigm is distinct.

This report outlines six strategies to bring about curriculum changes needed within 21st-century schools, especially at the secondary level, to ensure success for all learners. The strategies address the following topics:

1. Deriving district curricula from district content and performance standards that are tied to high school graduation
2. Developing integrated, in-depth curriculum with a balance of course offerings
3. Energizing district curriculum, instruction, and assessment through real-life applications
4. Providing all students the time needed to learn required curriculum
5. Establishing and maintaining a clearly articulated curricular connectedness across grade levels and within district feeder systems
6. Ensuring that high school curriculum requires and supports comprehensive career planning

Rationale and actions support each strategy. The report concludes with the significant implications these initiatives have at various levels within a school district.

**Derive all district curricula directly from district Content and Performance Standards, which should also be tied to high school graduation.**

Rationale

Districts must use standards to define what they expect graduates to know and be able to do when they receive their diplomas. Preliminary findings of recent research at the Mid-Continent Regional Education Lab (McRel) in Aurora, Colorado, indicate a high

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1Curriculum and assessment are intertwined without exception. Alignment of what is taught and how well students are learning what was actually taught is critical to assessing student-achievement goals. See Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” for additional information on this topic.
positive correlation between employing standards to focus and provide feedback on both instruction and assessment (including the attainment of graduation requirements) and improved student learning.²

As districts develop content and performance standards, they will need to enlist significant community input. Involving the community makes it nearly impossible for patrons to ignore the standards. Standards must be carefully culled from the current National Standards, as well as the best of various state-level efforts (available from McRel), and kept to a reasonable number. Bob Marzano of McRel notes that trying to reach the National Standards available at this time would require at least 23 years.

High schools must ensure clear ties between actual student learning and graduation.³ They may accomplish this through a strictly focused curriculum designed to develop deep understanding of the standards over time, as measured by imbedded assessments within the classes and grade levels, and/or through a set of additional graduation requirements designed to provide valid performance levels of the district standards.

Boards of education should make the district standards official by formally approving them as the district framework and adopting the newly developed assessment plan to guide instruction across the district. Districts should provide students and parents with a clear picture of the ongoing process of developing the necessary deep understandings over time.

**Actions**

- Focus all curriculum and instruction, pre-K–12, on identified district standards, and specify expectations for student learning across the district.
  - Reference all Pre-K–8 curriculum to district standards.
  - Base 9–12 curriculum on district standards.

- Enlist the high school community to establish graduation requirements that reflect achievement related to district standards.

**Develop district curriculum that is integrated and in-depth, with a coherent academic focus for all students, as well as a balance of course offerings.**

**Rationale**

Research centered on how the human brain makes meaning from new information clearly reveals that connections among and between subjects are essential to promoting student understanding of curriculum. Purposefully defining and using these connections extends the content of the core curriculum beyond its traditional boundaries to real-life applications, and also to greater depths. Integrating knowledge and concepts reinforces essential learnings across all subject areas and requires less time in any one area.

²This research supports McRel’s earlier work reported through the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and involves individual school and district standards rather than state standards. Improved student learning is based on norm-referenced test scores and/or the attainment of specific performance requirements.

³See Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” for further discussion of graduation requirements.
Focusing on the core areas also promotes more time to develop the necessary understandings and high levels of skill needed to extend learning into areas of potential careers or further study. This strong focus is best developed and maintained when it is comprehensive across all grade levels (K–12).

Restructuring and integrating K–12 district curriculum will require significant direction and support from building-level and district instructional leaders.

**Actions**

- Increase core requirements for graduation.
- Assist existing staff to become licensed in core areas as needed.
- Engage staff in ongoing professional development opportunities focusing on multi- and interdisciplinary studies.
- Focus all curriculum on the development of the same set of content standards across all grade levels.
- Organize smaller units of students, with “teaching teams” responsible for those students’ learning and support throughout their high school careers. 4
- Purposefully tie together overlapping content standards and skills within all core areas in a district curriculum map or matrix.
- Evaluate essential areas of learning in relation to the support they provide to the school’s objectives, ensuring connections to learning.

**Energize district curriculum through real-life applications, in both instruction and assessment.**

**Rationale**

The ability to apply what is learned—especially when that learning is significant and based directly upon content standards—is an area of serious need within high schools today. High dropout rates, low attendance, and a general lack of connectedness to the real world all are cited as evidence that students currently see little practical reason for becoming engaged learners. High schools can overcome these trends only by placing learning in contexts valued and understood by students.

Evidence collected by the American Psychological Association and by John Kendall and Robert Marzano at McRel strongly suggests that students who are purposefully taught how and why to apply what they learn in real-life settings have increased interest in and connections to what they are asked to learn. Current brain research shows that this, in turn, increases actual learning and true understanding. Research also shows a strong link between the ability to demonstrate authentic application of learning (curriculum) and the ability to retain and make use of information and skills over time and removed from the class or textbook context.

Teachers must focus significant instruction on the district’s standards-based, authentic curriculum and use a mix of assessments to guide their instruction, including performance assessments that require students to meaningfully apply their learning. Learning is best measured through students’ clear demonstrations of their understanding and ability to apply critical components of the standards.

Training in the development and use of both curriculum and assessment based on real-life applications will be necessary for the entire district over a sustained time period. Initial investment in staff development and curricular design across all grade levels will require significant, ongoing district resources. Additional money also will be necessary to both design and reliably score various district authentic performance assessments.

**Actions**
- Revise district curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments to include real-life applications.
- Provide ongoing professional development to assist teachers in providing challenging instruction that requires application of knowledge and concepts.

**Provide all students the time needed to learn the required curriculum.**

**Rationale**

Most high schools today leave time constant, and thus, the variable becomes the level of learning. Although research supporting the development and implementation of standards-based curriculum is pervasive, one note of caution is sounded uniformly throughout: While we should hold all students to the same content standards and should expect them to reach the same high levels of understandings regarding significant portions of the curriculum, we must realize that not all students are able to attain these levels in the same amount of time. Diverse learners learn in different ways and at different paces. To achieve true understanding of high-level content and to fully internalize significant processes and skills, time must become the variable.

This simple yet monumental refocusing will require high school schedules and the high school day to change significantly. No longer will all staff be required to work the same eight-hour period of time within the high school schedule. Staff will need to be reassigned to fill the needs of the various programs and choices. Some staff members will become experts in the education and remediation of at-risk students while others will provide nontraditional instruction to qualifying students at nearly all hours of the day and in locations outside of the traditional building.

Both hours and days of operations will change and require significant extensions. Building and district administrators will be required to work flexible schedules to

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5See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for additional information about appropriate, effective professional development.

6See Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for additional discussion of diverse learners.

accommodate the extended school schedule. High school students may receive in completes in required core courses at reporting time versus failing grades.

Without time as a limiting factor, teachers will be more able to concentrate on guiding and coaching all students toward successful demonstrations/exhibitions of their knowledge of key content and skills. Teaching toward true understanding and then coaching toward high-level demonstrations of that understanding must become the norm within all classrooms versus simply occupying a seat for a given period of time.

To achieve extra time for learners, high schools likely will have to move in several directions at once. Examples include the following:

- **Schools-within-schools** will be needed for nontraditional students who need more focus and intense instruction on various aspects of the curriculum.
- An **accepted five-year plan** for learners to reach graduation may also be necessary for part of the student population, especially those learners who require a shorter instructional day for a multitude of legitimate reasons.
- **Various alternative choices** should also be built in to the high school program, including the following: evening and weekend offerings, Internet course work, and Iowa Communications Network (ICN) classes, as well as summer and between-session opportunities.
- An **extended calendar** that provides 10-15 days between sessions (quarters) would provide most of the extra time needed for remediation. It also would provide enrichment opportunities within the curriculum for advanced learners, and it would be a natural time for the additional staff development needed to implement most of these proposed curricular changes.

**Actions**

- Construct schools-within-schools to allow nontraditional students/learners an appropriate learning environment for mastering the required core.
- Offer alternative choices for catch-up, including a five-year graduation plan, online and ICN courses, evening and weekend courses, and summer learning opportunities.
- Implement an extended calendar that provides 2-3 weeks for remediation and enrichment between quarters of the current 180 days.

**Establish and maintain a clearly articulated curricular connectedness across all grade levels and within district feeder systems.**

**Rationale**

A Pre-K–12 district curriculum that is defined by uniform content standards, clearly articulated, and spiraled out as students progress through grade levels and courses increases student learning, especially by creating deeper understandings of core content and skills over time. The focus within a district must be on depth of learning, not
breadth, or simply “covering material.” Districts must recognize that depth in a subject area leads to breadth of knowledge, but breadth does not lead to depth.

Communicating across grade levels and content areas helps students and the community see a consistent focus on the same high-level areas of content and skills throughout the grade levels. A common district-wide curriculum-management system greatly facilitates this effort and allows a much richer picture of each student’s progress toward the demonstrations of true understanding necessary to eventually reach graduation.

**Actions**

- Develop and implement district curriculum on a pre-K–12 basis.
- Develop curriculum as an unfolding over time of understandings and skills related to the district content standards, striving for depth of understanding rather than breadth.
- Establish communication links within and among elementary, middle, and high schools.

**STRATEGY 6**

**Ensure that the high school curriculum requires and supports the development over time of comprehensive career planning for each student.**

**Rationale**

Curriculum becomes significant to students, teachers, and the community when it is connected to some final, adult-type product such as a required personal learning plan that is linked to solid plans for life after high school. Career awareness should begin in elementary grades, be reinforced in middle school, and a career plan formally developed as part of a personal learning plan during the four years of high school. The development process should be carefully monitored with built-in checkpoints along the way, rather than waiting until the final plan is due during the senior year. Potential final audiences for the plan may include members of the community and/or a school-to-career committee as required by state code.

Comprehensive career planning provides focus for high school course selections and for the optimal development of a polished graduate portfolio suitable for use in applications for college and/or jobs. A graduate portfolio gives colleges and businesses a clearer picture of a student’s accomplishments, interests, and potential.8

**Actions**

- Revise K–12 curriculum to include specific references to grade- and age-appropriate career-planning components across all curricular areas.
- Establish as a high school graduation requirement the development by each student of a quality and comprehensive school and career portfolio.

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8See Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” and Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” for further discussion of personal learning plans and student portfolios.
Preparing for and implementing these initiatives has the following potential implications:

**Overall Implications for Districts**

- Allocate significant time and money, and solicit community input for establishing district content and performance standards and aligning curriculum, assessment, and graduation requirements with the standards.
- Implement changes in a district’s calendar, continuum of opportunities for high school students, and use of time, including extended and more flexible staff and building schedules.
- Focus on engaging all students and building the necessary understandings for graduate-level performances and achievement.
- Ensure that virtually all district decisions are guided by the standards-based curriculum and the assessment information gathered from students.
- Engage parents in acting as advocates for their children and supporting the school.
- Ensure that high school administrators provide vision, leadership, and support, while also monitoring teaching and learning and creating a supportive learning environment for students and staff.
- Involve the community at large, individuals, and organizations; keep them knowledgeable about student achievement efforts; and enlist their assistance in gaining financial support for the schools.
- Develop, share, reinforce, and maintain across the community a refocusing of the true place of the high school within the greater picture of life preparation.

**Implications for Staff**

- Hire additional staff, and/or possibly recertify or replace some staff.
- Implement nontraditional hours and days to meet student needs.
- Increase communication opportunities across grade levels, within feeder systems, and with other high schools.
- Assist students throughout high school in developing and implementing effective career plans.
- Utilize significant time (for teachers and teacher teams) for the following:
  - Aligning district curriculum with content and performance standards
  - Collaborating in job-alike areas on curriculum development and assessment
  - Devising integrated, in-depth curriculum
  - Rewriting district curriculum and assessments to include real-life applications
  - Building in the required curricular connections within feeder systems
  - Developing and implementing student career plans
  - Gaining knowledge of challenging multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary studies, teaching strategies, thinking skills, and application strategies
• Provide extensive planning time and subsequent staff development for the following:
  – Aligning district curriculum with content and performance standards
  – Writing, using, and assessing curriculum standards in real-life applications
  – Gaining knowledge of best practices regarding remediation offerings
  – Developing and using online courses
  – Developing and effectively implementing articulated curriculum aimed in all grade levels and courses at the same set of district graduate content standards
  – Developing and implementing student career plans

Implications for Organization and Management
• Restructure district curriculum and course requirements for all students, including enhanced graduation requirements, with parental/community input as core foci are defined for the district.
• Ensure significant direction and support from building and district administrators.
• Select texts and materials to best facilitate attainment of standards.
• Implement a computerized district curriculum-management system to track student progress and student report cards that reflect progress in meeting standards.
• Issue incompletes versus failures in required courses for students who are unable to clearly demonstrate understanding.
• Extend both hours and days of school operation, and implement a plan for flexible availability of building administrators.
• Devote more time to inter-level study team meetings and sharing, as well as time built in to the school day, within the district calendar, specifically for continual contact between students and their faculty/career advisers.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
• Redefine learning as clearly demonstrated understandings produced over time and reflected through multiple assessments designed around the content standards, without time as a limiting factor.
• Focus instruction on attainment of course/district content standards, mostly at the application level, through a continuously unfolding spiral in all areas pre-K–12, with current brain research as the basis for building understanding within the curriculum.
• Design assessments specifically to provide clear information on student growth toward graduation standards and focused on meaningfully applying significant content in real-life contexts.
• Combine some core areas for instruction, especially through 10th grade.
• Ensure that clear rationale for all course selections as related to various career options is made available to all students and continually reflected by instructors and monitored by advisers.
Implications for Resources
Provide time and/or money for the following:

- Supporting the development, use, instruction in, and assessment of the district Content and Performance Standards
- Restructuring and redesigning curriculum, developing and scoring appropriate assessments, training staff, and continually monitoring student progress
- Upgrading and focusing district-to-patron communication on reporting student progress toward the community-developed standards
- Freeing up staff and buildings to allow flexible scheduling of students and to provide time for remediation
- Supporting the development and implementation of alternative options for students, including evening and weekend offerings, Internet and ICN course work, as well as summer and between-session opportunities
- Implementing a curriculum-management system across the district
- Providing career counseling and assisting in the development and implementation of a solid career plan by each student at the high school (additional staff may also be required in the role of school-to-career coordinators, if not already in place)

Curriculum is the heart of students’ educational experience, and it must meet their learning needs. Curriculum is what students grapple with each day when they step through the doors of the school, and what connects their daily learning with real life. High schools must identify the key learnings students need when they graduate, build curricula around those key learnings, and articulate them throughout the school experience to support student success. This requires well-developed performance standards, appropriate instruction, and alignment with assessments in high schools that provide well-balanced course offerings, comprehensive career planning, and curricular connections to real life.

The number one goal is to progress beyond easily tested concepts to deep understandings of foundational skills. Time must become the variable, even as demonstrated understanding of required curricular standards and skills becomes the constant. Achieving knowledge and skill must become the pathway to success, rather than simply putting in a required amount of time. Shifting the focus from “seat time” to ensuring that students leave high school with the skills, knowledge, and understanding that will serve them in their commitments as adults and throughout their lives is the only acceptable choice.

Center on Education and Work. http://www.cew.wisc.edu


North Central Region Educational Lab (NCREL). “Critical Issue: Integrating Standards into the Curriculum.” http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/currclum/cu300.htm


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High schools must reorganize to allow time for learning in a way that will reach all students. According to reports such as A Nation at Risk (1983), the “Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills” (SCANS) (1991), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ (NAASP) Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution (1996), the traditional high school structure is leaving myriad students behind. Too many graduates lack the academic and/or interpersonal skills required in today’s society. Schools are obliged to research, restructure, and implement changes to improve student achievement.

High schools organized in the traditional structural manner are not unlike the old factory model in which diversity was ignored, everyone was treated alike, worker creativity was suppressed, and everything marched to the factory whistle. This attitude does not work today in industry. How can we expect it to work in our educational system?

This report recommends sweeping changes to the traditional high school organizational structure. Eight strategies address the need for the following:

1. Smaller learning communities
2. Modified organizational structures
3. Flexible scheduling
4. Multiple assessment measures
5. Interdisciplinary coalitions
6. High expectations for all
7. Learning opportunities beyond the school building
8. A 12-month school calendar

Each strategy includes rationale, as well as actions that schools can implement, one at a time, to make these initiatives a reality. The strategies have significant implications for everyone in a school district, and these are outlined at the conclusion of the report. Making such monumental changes will be difficult, but districts must begin with small steps and expect the process to take much effort and time. This is essential if 21st-century schools are to meet the learning needs of all students.
Organize high schools into learning communities that create a sense of belonging for all students.

Rationale

Students need a sense of belonging that is lacking in many larger school settings. While all students benefit from interactions they experience in small class settings, this is especially critical for those who are at risk, either because they lack academic skills or because they simply feel left out or different. Smaller learning communities have been credited with increasing student achievement and involvement, expanding parent/guardian participation, and reducing disciplinary referrals.

The transition from intermediate or middle school to high school is the time when students need to begin the process of preparing for life beyond graduation. It can be a difficult period for any student. If a student is not ready for high school and becomes frustrated, discouraged, and even decides to end formal education, this severely hampers his or her ability to acquire the skills and social guidance needed for success in adulthood. This should be a concern for all of society, for eventually, everyone feels the social and economic impact of students who have chosen to drop out of school. It is imperative, therefore, that students continue to be guided and informed throughout their high school careers, with special focus on the ninth grade level, and continued focus until graduation.

One way to address the need for smaller, more personalized educational settings is to implement a new delivery system in subject-specific academies. In these academies, school staff oversee a maximum of 25 students per grade level. Students who successfully complete core subjects gain the opportunity to focus on higher learning in an area of interest, in many cases, outside the school building. Schools collaborate with businesses to design curriculum, create on-the-job experiences, and expand job shadowing and job-internship programs. This also enhances students' understanding of real-world expectations and helps them make better decisions when planning beyond high school.

A mentor/adviser program is another tool for instilling a sense of belonging in students. Staff members (teachers and/or administrators) act as mentors/advisers to advocate for a student's needs, ideally being assigned no more than 20 students for the duration of the students' high school years. High school counselors can assist mentor/advisers and support them when they encounter concerns or situations beyond their expertise.1

As a prerequisite to implementing a mentor/adviser program, staff development, flexible time allotments, and flexibility in curriculum and instruction are essential. Schedule changes are needed to allow students and mentors/advisers adequate time to meet during the school day. This time is especially important for monitoring students who are having problems and who may even be on the verge of dropping out of school. Because ninth graders are especially vulnerable, creating a team of mentors/advisers to work specifically with them is recommended.

1See Chapter 1, “Relationships,” and Chapter 6, “School Environment,” for additional discussion of smaller learning communities and mentor/adviser programs.
“Looping” classes also gives students a greater sense of inclusion. Students remain with the same teacher and group of students for more than one semester, gaining the opportunity to develop more meaningful relationships with other students and with staff.

Actions

- Organize schools into subject-specific “academies” featuring career paths and a core curriculum.
- Implement a mentor/adviser program, providing an advocate for each student throughout the high school years, with special emphasis on the transition to ninth grade.
- “Loop” classes to allow students to spend extended time with the same students and teachers.

Create an organizational structure that allows teachers to be responsible for a maximum of 90 students each term.

Rationale

Schools must review the relationship between time and classroom structure. Creating smaller class loads for staff allows greater depth of instruction and lets teachers focus more directly on the needs of individuals. Going from 150 students, the average number of students in a 50-minute classroom day, to 90 also enhances the development of personal relationships and trust between the student and teacher. Block and modified block structures allow teachers to spend more time with fewer students. For these reasons, many Iowa schools are already adopting a four-block schedule.

Studies show that students participating in a four-block schedule do not seem to miss study hall time because it has been replaced with the opportunity to complete classes that didn’t fit in to a traditional schedule. Students who have difficulties can redo a class and/or complete a class in a shorter time, making learning more immediate and manageable. One high school reports that 230 students who have completed the traditional graduation requirements on the block schedule now have time to take community college classes for credit. This, of course, gives them a head start on their college years.

Furthermore, the classroom transitions that occur six times during the traditional 50-minute-period day may overwhelm at-risk students. The four-block learning structure requires fewer classes and fewer transitions. It is more conducive to these students’ learning, and it also promotes good attendance.

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2 See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” and Chapter 6, “School Environment,” for further discussion about time as a variable regarding curriculum and instruction.

3 See Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” for additional discussion about providing secondary students access to college courses while in high school.
Increased staff development and training is essential for introducing teachers to the newest research-based instructional strategies that better address students' needs and increase student achievement in these new organizational structures.\(^4\)

**Actions**

- Implement an organizational structure that creates smaller class loads for staff, fewer class changes per day, and gives teachers fewer students to work with in total.
- Utilize this structure to create a more personalized, tailored program based on the instructional needs of the student.
- Provide staff development and training that supports increased attention to a personalized curriculum and raising student achievement.

**Implement flexible scheduling that best reflects the learning needs of high school learning communities.**

**Rationale**

Time must be structured to reflect student needs. While some students benefit most from a block schedule, others may gain more by attending traditional daily classes ("skinnies"). If a school feels that some classes benefit by meeting daily, they may combine a block schedule and traditional classes to give students the best of two worlds. This option will require significant effort and a strong commitment to meeting the learning needs of all students.

Flexible scheduling may include block or modified block schedules; evening classes; and electronic classes offered online, via Web TV, or through the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). All of these options enable the use of diverse teaching strategies and allow more time for teacher collaboration.

**Actions**

- Offer flexible scheduling through a combination such as block scheduling and traditional daily classes.
- Offer some classes electronically; for example, through the ICN.
- Offer classes at various building sites throughout a district.
- Offer accredited night classes for working students.

**Assess student competence and certify students for graduation through multiple measures.**

**Rationale**

All Iowa school districts are working on standards and benchmarks guided to some extent by expectations written in Chapter 12 of the Iowa Administrative Code, “School Rules of Iowa.” By utilizing standardized test scores and a variety of other alternative assessment tools, schools can determine student progress in relation to these benchmarks.

The effectiveness of a school is judged by evaluating student achievements in reading, math and science. Schools need to better reflect student progress; seat time is not the best indicator of student achievement. In many cases, students advance at their own rate and not necessarily in accordance with the calendar and/or grade level. Students who need additional time to grasp a concept should be afforded that opportunity. Students who need less time should be encouraged to advance to the next level.\(^5\)

Schools should use alternative assessments to determine student performance for meeting graduation requirements. This might require that portfolios be kept for each student and that students show they have attained a certain degree of proficiency through testing and/or performance assessments in required areas. Students who have met district standards would be certified graduates.\(^6\)

Implementing these changes will require significant time and effort.

**Actions**

- Eliminate a four-year high school commitment for all students, and instead, require students to demonstrate a certain degree of proficiency in required areas, based on district standards and benchmarks.
- Evaluate students based on in-depth understanding of clearly defined learning outcomes and demonstrated learning performance instead of simply giving them a grade for seat time.
- Use a variety of assessments, including portfolios and performance assessments, in addition to standardized tests to measure student achievement.
- Work with postsecondary educational institutions to align graduation requirements with requirements at the post-high school level.\(^7\)
- Develop vital partnerships with businesses to ensure authentic assessments.\(^8\)

**Initiate opportunities for interdisciplinary coalitions among high school departments that help students see the connectedness of their learning.**

**Rationale**

Curriculum must be rigorous, relevant, and engaging if students are to develop the necessary skills required beyond high school. Using an interdisciplinary approach, teachers have the opportunity to work together to provide more enriched learning opportunities for students.\(^9\) Staff may integrate departmental areas such as art, social studies, and English as part of a humanities class. Family and consumer science departments may work with health and physical education departments to teach the

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\(^5\)See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for additional discussion about giving students the needed time for mastering skills and concepts.

\(^6\)See Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” for further discussion of this topic.

\(^7\)See Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” for an in-depth discussion about aligning graduation requirements with postsecondary expectations.

\(^8\)See Chapter 1, “Relationships,” for additional discussion of business partnerships.

\(^9\)See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for further discussion about an interdisciplinary approach to curriculum and instruction.
importance of healthy lifestyles. Integrating concepts and knowledge in these ways enhances student learning far more than teaching isolated facts.

Another advantage of an interdisciplinary approach is that special needs teachers can co-teach with regular-education teachers. This benefits regular, special needs, and at-risk students in respect to curriculum content and instructional strategies.

If schools combine this concept with the use of mentors/advisers and peer-tutoring groups and continually work together to make changes in the teaching/learning structure, students will be better prepared to succeed beyond high school.

**Actions**

- Replace subject-matter departments with broad units that support inquiry-based learning.
- Provide interconnected learning experiences through integrated curriculum.
- Provide common preparation times for team teaching.
- Designate an instructional leader to be responsible for developing interdisciplinary coalitions.

**Build high school learning communities on foundations of high expectations for all.**

**Rationale**

High expectations for all students and staff is one of the elements that sets effective schools apart from ineffective schools. All students must be exposed to a rigorous curriculum, a variety of instructional strategies, and a diverse classroom environment. As schools challenge students to achieve more, they must provide the necessary time and organizational structures for a diverse student population to meet those expectations. Quality time with teachers, advising, and tutoring increase the chances for student success. Help from parents and the community also is essential. Schools must hold equally high expectations for staff and provide them with the tools and support to meet those expectations.

**Actions**

- Develop a rigorous, relevant core curriculum to guarantee student mastery of local standards and benchmarks, with various paths available beyond the core.
- Provide staff development about instructional strategies that promote high expectations, as well as staff development regarding current brain research.
- Develop a “no excuses” approach for staff and students.
- Hire additional staff and/or use tools such as the ICN to offer greater course selections.
- Provide student and staff support through tutoring and/or mentoring.

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10See Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for an in-depth discussion of diverse school populations.
• Enlist parents in teaching students to prioritize, putting homework before an after-school job, assisting in the selection of classes that promote successful graduation, and encouraging participation in school-related activities that build good citizenship.

• Work with businesses to set limits on hours students work per week or on weekends.

Expect high school learning communities to take full advantage of learning opportunities outside the walls of the school building.

Rationale
Rare are the opportunities for students to learn in an environment beyond the school building. Schools must do a better job of soliciting community resources. A school should be known by the opportunities it offers more than by its mailing address. Collaborative efforts with agencies such as YMCAs allow schools to expand beyond their buildings, providing students more opportunities to learn. In addition, these coalitions allow students and members of the community to interact, leading students to a better understanding of the roles they can play in society. This collaboration takes time, effort, careful planning, and a full commitment from all parties.\textsuperscript{11}

Actions
• Schedule classes both on and off campus.

• Utilize satellite classrooms.

• Retrain and refocus personnel as needed.

• Develop stronger partnerships with business/industry and community agencies, and offer reciprocal or joint staff development.

• Implement strategies that ensure more application and relevance of learned course work to real life.

• Increase the use of technology.\textsuperscript{12}

Implement a 12-month calendar for high school learning communities.

Rationale
Changing the student/teacher academic year to 12 months allows more time for continuous learning, additional learning opportunities for students, and professional development for staff. Trying to accomplish these things after school and on weekends has proven to be a real challenge. Providing appropriate time allotments is a gigantic step forward in creating an adequate environment for teachers to learn and

\textsuperscript{11}See Chapter 1, “Relationships,” and Chapter 5, “Organization and Time,” for further discussion about collaborating with community agencies and organizations.

\textsuperscript{12}See Chapter 10, “Technology,” for an in-depth discussion of technology in the high school.
implement new concepts and instructional strategies that will have a positive impact on student learning.

Some studies have centered on a yearly schedule, similar to the 12-month, where educational programming allows students to attend school for four quarters with breaks of two to three weeks in between. Students who choose to do so use the breaks for mini classes, internships, job shadowing, special trips related to various classes, or catching up on missed class time.

This change requires an increase in support services, such as transportation, food service, and custodial services, and also an increase in operational expenses. Once again, a total commitment to this change has to be shared among students, staff, parents, and community. Opposition to the change must be addressed early in the process.

**Actions**

- Provide research-based professional development for study teams who carefully plan all changes to be implemented.
- Seek a total commitment to this change among students, staff, parents, and community, addressing any opposition early in the process.
- Increase support services as needed.
- Implement a yearly high school schedule.

**Preparing for and implementing these initiatives has numerous potential implications, including the following:**

**Overall Implications for Districts**

- Focus on the instructional needs of the student.
- Restructure time to meet student needs.
- Ensure a collaborative, cooperative environment built upon effective communication.
- Use district and community facilities more effectively and efficiently.

**Implications for Staff**

- Better utilize staff strengths. In addition, districts may need to hire additional staff in core areas. Some staff may have flexible assignments that call for a wider range of skills, requiring multiple certifications and/or retraining, including retraining of counselors. Some schools may use business partners or other noncertified staff as teachers and retirees as mentors.
- Facilitate more; lecture less.
- Spend extended time with the same students through flexible scheduling and looped classes.
- Participate in additional staff development, increased collaboration, and team planning time.
Implications for Organization and Management

• Base organization and management on clearly defined learning outcomes. This will require changes that may include the following: Organize schools into learning teams, create schools within a school, provide scheduling choices for administrators, rotate building supervisors, and establish satellite classrooms.

• Ensure fewer duplications among high schools within districts.

• Redefine what constitutes a credit.\(^{13}\)

• Initiate reciprocal staff development with business and industry.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

• Increase accountability for both teachers and students; expect success, with no excuses.

• Implement rigorous, relevant curriculum and instructional strategies, including diverse teaching strategies based on current brain research and interdisciplinary instruction, with goals of relevancy, in-depth understanding, greater continuity, reduced learning gaps, and increased retention of learning.

• Establish support structures, such as student advisers/mentors, to give students more individualized attention and an increased sense of belonging.

• Carefully monitor student learning.

• Offer the option of early high school graduation.

Implications for Resources

Allocate or reallocate resources for the following:

• Total site-based management
• Additional staff
• Additional staff development
• Parent and community awareness
• An Iowa Communications Network (ICN) site
• Use of district sites beyond a particular high school
• Funding to offset students graduating early
• Time and money to develop curriculum
• Portable technology
• Transportation
• Community collaboration
• Air conditioning
• Expanding allowable growth options

\(^{13}\)See Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” and Chapter 6, “School Environment,” for additional discussion of the need for alternatives to the Carnegie Unit.
If schools truly believe in the concept of increasing student achievement, they must reexamine traditional high school structures. Innovative change is required in multiple forms—from changes in the school day to changes in the school year. The change will take time; it won’t happen overnight. Districts can begin by implementing a plan for meaningful, incremental, and continuous improvement processes for student learning.

The relationship between educator and student is the most important one that exists in the high school; it has a direct impact on student learning and achievement. Educational leaders must gain the trust of subordinates and influence them toward a common vision of change that provides students with a personalized education based on the instructional needs of the student. This requires a thoughtful and specific process of change in the high school’s organization and structure. It will take everyone involved, working together as a cohesive team, to deliver the product of a quality education to all students.


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School environment should be a catalyst for ensuring that students pursue their education under circumstances that foster the very difficult work of teaching and learning. This means that the principal and everyone else responsible for the high school must create a climate favorable to education, whether it occurs inside or outside the main building, and do everything possible to sustain that climate.

—Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution

The high school learning environment is threatened as never before. Families are upset; students are scared. School violence is the culprit. What once was perceived to be “the safest place in town” is now looked upon with suspicion and fear. The high school of the new millennium has to deal up front with these conditions and reestablish, in quick order, what it truly is and needs to be—a safe haven focused upon the health, welfare, and optimal learning opportunities of all students.

A welcoming school environment where staff embrace the best teaching techniques and strategies to meet the individual needs of each student is the all-encompassing essential element of the 21st-century high school. Each student must feel a sense of trust and a meaningful connection to at least one adult in the school. All students need the opportunity to meet success head-on and grow socially, physically, and intellectually in an environment where high expectations prevail. The learning experience must be a triad involving the student, the home, and the school staff.

Larry Lezotte, in his effective schools research, states, “In the effective school, there is an orderly, purposeful businesslike atmosphere which is free from the threat of physical harm. The school climate is not oppressive and is conducive to teaching and learning.” Lezotte’s current research supports promoting positive behaviors through collaborative learning.

The September 2000 issue of the NASSP Principal Leadership (P. 4) describes how important it is that a school culture clearly “articulate the shared values, goals and beliefs in a school; implement the organizational structures and practices that support them; and, ensure that these practices...establish the foundation for everything else the school does.”

Purkey and Asby (p. 5) conclude, “High schools need to foster a positive caring environment where learning is valued and differences are accepted, so as to ensure the development of each student’s intellectual, social, physical and emotional growth.”

School environment incorporates every element of the high school, from the curriculum and organizational structure to the staffing and policies and procedures adopted in the building. This report presents strategies to address four areas that
are critical to establishing the optimal school environment for today’s students: (1) assurance of a safe, orderly environment; (2) positive student-to-staff relationships; (3) optimal use of instructional time; and (4) an engaging teaching and learning environment. Rationale and action steps support the strategies, and these are followed by broad implications that may occur at various levels within a school district.

### STRATEGY 1

Ensure a high school environment that is safe and orderly.

**Rationale**

Erosion has set in. Student safety seems to be on the wane. Fear is permeating too many high schools today and quickly corroding an already too-fragile school climate. This critical condition is a community-wide issue that demands immediate attention, constant monitoring, and effective response systems. Doing less is not only shortsighted, but may scar the learning environment and impede learning opportunities for all students.

Beginning with Maslow’s hierarchy and continuing through a litany of worldwide experts, all agree that psychological and personal safety needs must be met before students are fully able to successfully apply themselves to academic tasks. Yet, the schoolhouse cannot become a jail without bars, nor a place limited by locks and chains or sentries standing at the door. School must go on and trust must prevail.

**Actions**

- Initiate community conversations to develop an appreciation for the depth and breadth of current safety conditions; establish a plan, and enlist support to address the issue school by school and community-wide.

- Establish clear and expected student-behavior guidelines, policies, and procedures that reflect community expectations; are written in handbooks; displayed prominently; and understood by staff, students, parents, and the community.

- Implement the following measures to create a safe, secure environment: a high priority on staff visibility, clearly defined crisis procedures, firm but fair administration of policies and procedures, and a zero-tolerance policy, with hearings and alternative placements. Schools may also consider employing security personnel and police liaisons.

- Deal swiftly and firmly with students who bring weapons to school, sell or use illegal drugs in school, or behave violently in the school.

- Expect all school personnel to assume ongoing responsibility for enforcement of policies and procedures and for keeping the building safe, secure, attractive, and clean. Work closely with community agencies in developing emergency and crisis plans and/or procedures.

- Provide training and practice in emergency evacuation procedures to all staff and students.
Provide a healthy high school environment that promotes positive student-to-staff relationships.

Rationale
Research shows a high correlation between a healthy, safe environment and positive student-to-staff relationships.¹ In the September 2000 issue of Principal Leadership, Dennis Harding states, “Productive staff-student relationships not only enhance the school learning climate, but also help decrease the probability that school violence will occur.” This type of climate is characterized by a staff that honors diversity, respects students, responds appropriately to them, and genuinely cares about their overall well-being.

Harding and others recommend the following practices that help build this kind of healthy, welcoming environment: Staff and students show mutual respect for one another, they share high staff and student expectations, and there is a caring atmosphere where high value is placed on treating the student as an individual. The staff treats students humanely; they listen and respond to students appropriately. The staff avoids modeling negative behaviors ranging from losing self-control to treating students with indifference. Collectively, all staff members share the responsibility of enforcing school rules and regulations uniformly, yet fairly.

High schools need to ask themselves whether each member of the learning community can see a piece of themselves in the operations, climate, and learning that takes place in the school. Some students are being omitted, or even ridiculed or actively excluded. Some observers of today’s high schools have gone so far as to ask: Does anyone know...does anyone care?

Every individual at the high school must have opportunities to be an integral part of the school culture, rather than experiencing only casual or sporadic involvement. This is well recognized as vital to student and school success. The goal of this involvement is to help students display and develop their academic, physical, and creative talents; develop socially; learn how to work productively with others toward setting and achieving common goals; develop healthy relationships with fellow students, teachers, and adults; learn to accept personal responsibility; and learn to respect human diversity through the contributions of all students, staff, and adults.²

In addition, students must feel that there is at least one person in the school that trusts them and cares about them as an individual and who will step forth and be their advocate. Finally, the best interests of students must be at the forefront of all decisions.

Actions
- Provide abundant opportunities, including a wide range of curriculum offerings and cocurricular activities, for students, teachers, and adults to positively interact with one another.
- Provide appropriate, meaningful opportunities for all students to formally or informally connect with at least one adult in their school.

¹See Chapter 1, “Relationships,” for a detailed discussion of developing relationships within the school, with parents and guardians, and within the community.
²See Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for an in-depth discussion of equity and diversity in high schools.
• Adopt a “student impact” statement—designed to keep the best interests of students at the forefront of all decisions—as part of the negotiated contract to demonstrate the idea that all personnel have a stake in creating a welcoming, caring learning environment.

• Require staff development designed to help teachers expand their skills in dealing with behavior issues; classroom management; and effective communication with students, staff, and parents.

• Restructure the parent-conference delivery system to include students and to enhance teacher-parent contact, as well as maximizing the use of time.

Organize and manage school environments to provide optimal use of instructional time.

Rationale
Many educators believe the Carnegie unit based on seat time is not the best way of judging how and when students best learn. They suggest that more flexibility with instruction time and organizational structures would allow teachers to address the individualized needs and different learning styles of students.3

Research also suggests that limiting the size of high schools or organizing buildings into smaller units creates more opportunity for teachers to team with one another and to plan more integrated units of study. This also addresses the concern that in larger high schools, students may become almost invisible and more easily disconnected.4

A longer and/or modified school calendar affords more students the opportunity for support and/or enrichment experiences not currently available or easily scheduled within the traditional calendar year.5

Actions
• Establish a goal with the school board, administrators, and the entire learning community to review and strengthen the current school organizational structure to better meet the learning needs of all students.

• Apply a flexible attitude when dealing with issues of teaching and learning time.

• Seek alternatives to the Carnegie Unit.

• Keep class loads realistic (90 students or fewer).

• Limit the size of the school or develop practical substructures (for example, school within a school or smaller learning communities) that reflect and support each student’s academic and social needs.

• Modify the school calendar to more effectively maximize teaching and learning time for all students.

3See Chapter 5, “Organization and Time,” for additional discussion of flexibility with instructional time and organizational structures, as well as student advocates/mentors and smaller learning communities, and Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” for more information about the need for alternatives to the Carnegie Unit.

4See Chapter 1, “Relationships,” for additional information about smaller learning communities, staff as student advocates/mentors, and parent/guardian conferences.

Provide an engaging teaching and learning environment that provides students many opportunities to succeed.

Rationale
Perhaps the most important element in the school environment is the actual teaching and learning that takes place in the classroom. Healthy schools have teachers that place a high priority on engaged learning, differentiated instruction, student productivity, and genuine learning experiences designed to allow all students the opportunity to experience success.\(^6\)

The National Association of Secondary School Principals’ (NASSP) report, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, states, “Teachers should identify students’ strengths and then structure teaching to appeal to these attributes, lending students the help they need to succeed… High schools need to foster experiences that lead to genuine success for students, experiences upon which youngsters can build confidence.”

In the *Principal Leadership* article, “Secure Schools: An Instructional Approach” (2000), Leslie Kaplan and William Owings state, “Giving students control over their learning builds confidence, competence, and reduces feelings of helplessness… Using learning as they would in the ‘real world’ increases student mastery, builds competence and extends their ability to use learning in new situations.”

Kaplan and Owings suggest the following actions to foster students’ academic learning, engagement, and achievement:

**Actions**
- Maintain high expectations for all students’ achievement.
- Design a curriculum that students find meaningful, relevant, and challenging; strive to find real meaning in everything students are learning.
- Give students choices about what they learn, how they learn it, and how their mastery will be assessed.
- Utilize small groups to practice and use new information and to help reduce isolationism in learning.
- Provide frequent checks for understanding to allow the teacher to adjust instruction.
- Give prompt and specific feedback that clarifies, corrects, or reinforces new learning as students learn new material, to strengthen their understanding.
- Provide opportunities to use new learning in meaningful ways: debates, drawing, research, formal essays, videos, or community research and service.

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As the responsible organization for all aspects of quality education, local school districts should consider the full short- and long-term implications of these initiatives, which may include the following:

**Overall Implications for Districts**
- Initiate community conversations regarding school safety, and invite outsiders in to help the district evaluate its school environment.
- Hire teachers of diverse backgrounds that reflect the values of the organization. Hiring practices should honor building requests when feasible and connect strong candidates with the most appropriate positions.
- Consider all staff members, certified and noncertified, valued members of the district team, and regularly seek their input on issues affecting school environment.
- Implement curriculum that supports instruction of commonly held values such as honesty, trust, and tolerance, with the goal of all students learning to be responsible members of their communities. Provide a wide variety of cocurricular activities that teach values and lifelong skills.
- Engage parents and guardians as partners in their students' education.
- Commit to the value of staff development and offer a wide range of learning opportunities for all staff.⁷

**Implications for Staff**
- Participate directly in setting goals for school improvement plans. (Staff must feel valued and feel that their input is highly regarded.)
- Know the district’s expectations, and share responsibility and accountability for maintaining a safe, orderly, welcoming school environment.
- Emphasize the value of working toward goals, improving oneself, having high expectations, and achieving one's potential.
- Connect with and appreciate students through volunteer/student mentoring programs, shared cocurricular activities, and alternative education programs.
- Work directly with outside agencies to provide support for all students.

**Implications for Organization and Management**
- Review the current school structure, K–5, 6–8, 9–12, to determine its effectiveness in responding to the needs of all students. Consider alternative organizational structures such as trimesters or a four-block schedule to allow students to take more course offerings and have more choices.⁸
- Provide smaller classes, alternative educational programs, and specialized group activities for students considered at high risk of dropping out.

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⁷See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for an in-depth discussion of effective professional development.
⁸See Chapter 5, “Organization and Time,” for further discussion of alternative organizational structures such as block and modified-block schedules.
• Establish student advisory committees to provide student input on a wide variety of high school issues.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

• Develop programs to help staff learn, appreciate, and address the unique differences and abilities of students.

• Review the value of the broad use of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) for most students.

• Give students many opportunities through in-school and out-of-school activities to realistically apply their learning and provide service to others. Support special-needs students, and give them opportunities to help others.

• Give students choices in terms of teachers and curriculum; for example, career academies and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

• Give staff the freedom and responsibility to set academic goals and to seek and apply resources to meet identified students’ needs.

• Design and implement an improved and engaging teaching delivery system (staff, with student input).

Implications for Resources
The use of resources should be reviewed annually for maximum return and applicability toward each school’s specific goals and objectives regarding school environment. Resources for these initiatives may be required as follows:

• Resources to maintain safe, well-equipped, and vastly improved and attractive learning environments

• Staff and financial resources to support reduced class size, and/or the reorganization of larger schools into smaller units

• Resources to meet the special needs of students, plus financial support for alternative programs for students not able to be successful in their current environment

• Ongoing funding to keep instructional technology current and to provide corresponding staff development

• Time and resources for ongoing staff development necessary to address students’ needs and issues related to teaching and learning

In summary, school environment is, perhaps, the most inclusive area affecting high schools. It addresses all elements that are a part of or influence the climate and culture of a school. A healthy school environment is mandatory and must reflect positive staff-student relationships, high expectations for all, and a climate where both students and staff feel safe. It is a place where curricular and cocurricular opportunities are abundant, and each student feels trusted, valued, and closely connected to at least one adult.
Organizational and management issues in the successful 21st-century high school are constantly evaluated to ensure how they best support teaching and learning. Decisions are seen as enhancing a safe and secure teaching and learning environment for both students and staff. The basis for all decisions must be teaching and learning in a healthy environment that focuses on maximum student achievement. The staff in such a high school connects with each student and provides challenging, yet rewarding learning experiences for all.

Finally, adequate resources need to be allocated to create the conditions necessary to promote a sensitive, healthy, safe environment in all schools. Districts must annually review resource allocation needs to ensure that appropriate fiscal support is directed to the goals and objectives of the school district and of all schools within the district.


Jim Thornton, Executive Administrator - Secondary Education
Paula Vincent, Associate Superintendent
Bob Tesar, Principal, Jefferson High School
Mary Wilcynski, Principal, Kennedy High School
John Humphrey, Principal, Metro High School
Ralph Plagman, Principal, Washington High School
Cedar Rapids Community Schools
Bill Dutton and Pam Ehly
Iowa City Community Schools

Curriculum and instruction drive student learning at the classroom level. Curriculum is the “what” of teaching, while the use of instructional strategies is the “how.” To meet the needs of today’s students, educators must identify and use only the best instructional strategies—those that are solid, reputable, and state-of-the-art. Best practices are based on current research, and they provide the benefits of the latest knowledge, technology, and procedures. Best instructional practices engage students in their own learning.

This report presents five strategies addressing the following issues to ensure that high school educators base their instructional strategies on best practices:

1. Identifying best practices
2. Hiring staff with knowledge of best practices
3. Providing staff development to help staff maintain and stay current with best practices
4. Evaluating staff in their implementation of best practices and tying the evaluation to the negotiated contract
5. Collaborating with institutions of higher learning regarding best practices

Rationale and actions support each strategy. Implementing the strategies will require significant time and effort and will have extensive implications, which are outlined at the conclusion of the report.

Identify and use instructional strategies based on best practices relative to educational principles of learning.

Rationale
Instructional strategies significantly impact student learning. Educators must identify best practices relative to educational principles of learning and communicate them throughout their school districts. Some best practices are global; others are specific.¹

In Iowa, each accredited school district is required to adopt a statement of mission and/or philosophy. To be effective, a district’s instructional strategies must support this statement. In addition, on a district-wide basis, connections must be made between instructional strategies and the district improvement plan, as they relate to reporting student achievement and student achievement goals.

¹An example of a specific best practice is the following: The writing program involves the complete writing process, meaning that students engage in the following multiple-step process: selecting a topic, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.
Actions

- Identify district-supported best instructional practices, and ensure that they support the district's mission and/or philosophy and the district improvement plan. Knowledge of best practices can be gained by attending workshops, graduate classes, and conferences; reading professional literature; and visiting demonstration classrooms verified as models of a particular best instructional strategy.²

- Identify multiple ways, including participation at workshops and seminars, graduate classes, district inservice sessions, and visits to demonstration classrooms, for teachers to acknowledge or gain new information relative to instructional strategies and to implement best instructional practices.

- Devise a long-range implementation plan to annually update newly hired staff regarding best instructional practices.

- Identify effective, efficient methods to communicate best practices to teachers, administrators, and support staff. Designate individuals at each site, perhaps an administrator or department chairperson, to take a leadership role in the communications process.

- Consider beginning the process of implementing a new instructional strategy with a pilot program to determine its credibility.

- Administrators are wise to acknowledge both the stages of change and levels of concern as identified in CBAM, the Concerns Based Adoption Model.

- Recognize technology as one powerful tool among many to provide an array of instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners.³

- Identify and utilize mechanisms such as Area Education Agencies, technology, and online resources for keeping up-to-date with new research regarding best instructional practices.

Hire staff with knowledge of best instructional practices.

Rationale
The skills possessed by newly hired staff have a major impact on the course of action the district takes relative to monitoring the use of best instructional strategies. Knowing that administrators are consciously hiring new staff that have knowledge of best practices implies that they are current in their own knowledge base. This implies that central-level administrators need to identify the strengths and limitations of district staff responsible for hiring new teachers. Because research on best practices is an ongoing process, districts need to use a variety of resources to keep up to date, including Web-based networks that connect school districts with teacher-preparation divisions at institutions of higher learning.

²Two outstanding resources for districts are 1) Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America’s Schools by Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde, published by Heinemann, Portsmouth, N.H. (1993), and 2) the North Central Regional Education Laboratory’s (NCREL’s) Web site, http://www.ncrel.org/info/curriculum/. (This site contains a link to “Literacy Research and Best Practices.”)

³See Chapter 10, “Technology,” for a more in-depth discussion of technology in high schools, and Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for detailed information about diverse learners.
Districts need to ensure that interview questions assess teacher candidates’ knowledge of best instructional practices. This may require utilizing the expertise of content-area teachers, particularly department chairpersons, and creating documents that list the various desirable characteristics of new hires, making sure that knowledge of instructional strategies is included. Those responsible for hiring should require additional evidence of candidates’ knowledge, such as a videotape or CD-ROM that demonstrates the candidate’s five most proficient instructional strategies.

Newly hired staff require support to be successful in implementing best instructional practices. Such support may include the assignment of a teacher mentor, opportunities to attend conferences and workshops, one-on-one meetings with an administrator, and opportunities to visit classrooms identified as models of best practice.

**Actions**

- Assess the knowledge of principals and other administrators involved in the hiring process regarding best instructional practices, and provide training as needed.

- Establish interview questions that assess a candidate’s knowledge of best practices, both universal and disciplinary, related to instructional strategies. Employ additional methods such as videotapes and CD-ROMs to assess candidate knowledge.

- Assess new hires’ knowledge of best instructional practices, and provide them with orientation as well as technical and emotional support regarding best instructional practices.

**Provide staff development to support the use of instructional strategies based on best practices. Connect the staff development activities to the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), and design the activities to relate to district goals and improve student achievement.**

**Rationale**

*Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution,* the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ report on the high school of the 21st century, identifies nine recommendations relative to instructional strategies, each of which involves the teacher. Clearly, teacher behaviors are the key to successfully using instructional strategies that assist students in engaging in their own learning. A primary consideration for administrators must be the connections made between staff development activities and the district’s (CSIP).4

**Actions**

- Align staff development activities with the district CSIP.

- Assess individual teacher knowledge of best instructional practices.

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4See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for additional discussion about connecting staff development to the district’s Comprehensive School Improvement Plan.
• Designate time for staff development by allocating additional time or prioritizing the time currently available.

• Implement a plan for staff development that mirrors the needs of the staff, determining which audience(s) to initially target.

• Create support teams, which may potentially include teachers, counselors, and administrators, for new employees.

• Identify experts in an instructional strategy to model and be observed by any teacher seeking greater expertise in that strategy.

• Monitor and evaluate the staff development plan so that adjustments can be made as needed.

Rationale
Use of effective instructional strategies indicates effective teaching, and effective teaching results in increased student achievement. Expectations regarding best instructional practices must be a part of the written teacher evaluation process. Linking the evaluation instrument to the negotiated contract implies a set of expectations agreed upon by both parties.

To ensure optimal teacher evaluation, district administrators need to be trained to effectively assess and evaluate teacher knowledge and abilities. According to recommendations regarding effective staff development practices, such training needs to be relevant to the administrator, it needs to be ongoing (not a one-time event), and it needs to be practiced. Just like teachers, administrators need feedback about their skills as an evaluator.

Using technology to communicate electronically facilitates communication during the pre-conference and post-conference phases of evaluation, as well as expediting continual updates. Electronic communication and electronic templates save administrators time—time that can be redirected toward face-to-face communication with staff.

Actions
• Include effective use of instructional strategies in the formal evaluation of teachers.

• Identify and/or establish connections between teacher evaluation of effective instructional strategies and negotiated contracts.

• Train administrators to effectively evaluate staff.

• Utilize technology to facilitate administrators’ communication with staff.
Collaborate with institutions of higher learning to ensure use of best instructional practices.

**Rationale**

Positive, ongoing communication between personnel at high schools and institutions of higher learning facilitates the sharing of resources and expertise, including the codirecting of grants. Central administrators should promote open communication with postsecondary institutions regarding learning theory and teaching strategies/methodologies. Left to chance, communication may not take place.

School staff must identify ways to break down the perceived barriers that may exist between the institutions. Distance between high schools and postsecondary institutions may be an issue for both students and staff members. Also, with turnover of staff, both at the district and the postsecondary institution, repeatedly establishing relationships will require time and effort. Electronic devices such as the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) and shared Web sites and networks facilitate increased communication between the two.

Districts need to consider the hosting of college students for student teaching and practicums as a professional obligation, realizing these partnerships benefit both institutions. Sharing of research benefits the high school, and observation of theory put into practice benefits the college/university students.

Collaboration between high schools and postsecondary institutions may also include conferences, workshops, institutes, best practice demonstration sites, teaching teams, and summer internship opportunities.5

**Actions**

- Designate district staff to develop and maintain communications with postsecondary institutions. This will involve the following:
  - Identifying contacts
  - Addressing distance as an issue
  - Addressing staff turnover at both institutions by establishing mechanisms such as checklists and duties of positions to maintain contacts
  - Utilizing technology to maintain open communication
- Establish links between postsecondary institutions’ placement centers and school district human resources divisions.
- Establish connections with postsecondary institutions’ offices of admissions, offices of the registrar, and colleges of education.
- Host college and university students as practicum students and student teachers.
- Collaborate to establish shared activities such as conferences, workshops, institutes, best practice demonstration sites, teaching teams, and summer internship opportunities.

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5See Chapter 11, “Postsecondary Connections,” for further discussion of the need for connections between high schools and postsecondary institutions.
These initiatives have the following potential implications at various levels within a school district.

Overall Implications for Districts
- Ensure that administrators are current in their knowledge of best instructional practices.
- Identify the strengths and limitations of district staff responsible for hiring new teachers.
- Design the interview process to include documentation of a candidate’s knowledge of best practices related to instructional strategies.
- Include expectations regarding best instructional practices in the written evaluation process and connect teacher evaluation to the negotiated contract.
- Accept as part of their professional obligation the hosting of college and university students as practicum students and student teachers.
- Assist teachers in moving from where they are to the next level in their use of effective instructional strategies.

Implications for Staff
- Assess knowledge of best instructional practices.
- Accept responsibility for maintaining communications between the high school and postsecondary institutions.

Implications for Organization and Management
- Identify effective, efficient communication mechanisms within the organization; appoint one or more individuals at each site to take a leadership role in the process.
- Consider time as a resource when providing staff development opportunities. Time usually equals money.
- Utilize electronic communication to facilitate connections among high schools and between high schools and postsecondary institutions.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
- Aim all instructional strategies at improving student achievement.
- Recognize technology as a means rather than an end regarding instructional strategies.

Implications for Resources
- Identify whether new funding is necessary or whether the reallocation of existing resources is an appropriate course of action.
- Categorical funding currently exists from the following sources: Phase III funding, Eisenhower funding, state-mandated staff development funding, Area Education Agency professional development funding, and local-district professional development funding through media centers. Clearly, there is a connection between
best instructional strategies practices and a district’s Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. A challenge to all educators is identifying what no longer works or is productive in the district and reallocating both time and funds to new areas. Such a practice is an ongoing process.

- Analyze budgets at the district, building, and department levels for their support of staff development opportunities.

High schools must implement instructional strategies based on best practices. These strategies need to align with each district’s mission/philosophy statement and have one goal: improving student achievement. This will have an impact on a district’s hiring practices, its staff development, teacher evaluation, teacher contracts, and connections with institutions of higher learning.

Instructional strategies connect the curriculum to student learning. Instructional leaders and teachers have a responsibility to be reflective in their implementation of instructional strategies and to align daily lessons with identified best practices. It is imperative that communities, educational leaders, teachers, and students set high expectations for creative implementation of best instructional practices in the classroom. Anything less misses the target of improving student achievement.


Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education.


Electronic links to Regional Educational Laboratories and organizations:
  www.ncrel.org          www.nca.org     www.ceoforum.org
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
Tom Drake and Committee
Des Moines Independent Community Schools

High achievement—no excuses! Until schools are willing to make this statement and stand by it, school improvement will never reach the level students and communities deserve. How do high schools begin moving in the direction of ensuring that all students will learn and that the achievement gap that now exists will be eliminated? The emphasis must be on school improvement and its results. Ted Stilwill, Iowa's Director of Education, stated, “Schools have to become more results oriented.”

A consistent pattern of school improvement involves four steps: (1) a process for setting both long-range and annual achievement goals; (2) a clear, concrete action plan tied to student performance; (3) a process for planning and implementing data-driven, site-based staff development; and (4) a consistent and clear process to measure success.

Several factors have delayed the use of assessment in the school improvement process. Many schools and districts establish goals that are not tied to student achievement. This is primarily because most goals are long-term and focus more on process than on results. Another factor is the reluctance to use data to constantly monitor results. Furthermore, over the years, educators have depended too much on experience as the evaluator. They have seldom made the kind of systemic, organized effort that produces results. Finally, politics often enters into school improvement and causes delays and a limited effort.

Once educators realize the need for assessment in school improvement, several barriers need to be addressed. Standardized tests may not be aligned to curriculum objectives. Teachers may be reluctant to have test scores of transient students tied to their own instructional effectiveness. Parents sometimes judge the schools based on their own personal history and school success. Schools often are ineffective in communicating the purpose of assessment to parents and community, and without this understanding, data may simply become a convenient tool for ranking and labeling schools.

Research provides direction in dealing with some of the barriers. Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) join others in expressing the need to create an assessment literacy among educators, parents, and the community. They define assessment literacy as follows:

- The capacity of teachers (individually, but especially, together) to examine student achievement data and student work, and make critical sense of it
- The more difficult capacity of developing and implementing classroom and school improvement plans arising from the data and designed to get better results
- The political capacity to enter the debate and to be positively influential in discussions about the uses and misuses of achievement data

To truly redefine high schools for the 21st century, accountability must focus primarily on improvement. The information schools collect and analyze must help them understand and improve instructional processes to increase student achievement. In
addition, schools must involve and inform their communities of their work and progress.

This report focuses on the assessment and accountability that is critical in today’s high schools by addressing the following areas: (1) teacher competence in understanding and using appropriate assessments, (2) multiple assessments, (3) principals as instructional leaders, (4) personal learning plans, and (5) reporting to the community. It presents five strategies that schools must consider and act upon if they are to meet the needs of all students. Rationale and actions follow each strategy. The report concludes with implications for districts, staff, organization and management, teaching and learning, and resources.

**STRATEGY 1**

Ensure that classroom teachers have the knowledge to choose appropriate models of assessment and to use them competently, aligning instruction with goals and assessment.

*We have yet to put into operation the simple principle that for improvement to occur, instruction must align with goals and assessment.* –Walberg, cited in Cawelti

**Rationale**

Assessment must relate closely to instruction and achievement. Its purpose is to inform teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching and the progress of their students. Consequently, it is critical that teachers’ knowledge includes skill in assessment. Schools are quick to tie low test scores to characteristics of learners, such as socioeconomic level, ethnicity, lack of motivation, or unsupportive parents. They seldom emphasize the critical role of teacher competence in understanding and using appropriate assessment.

Educators want to increase student achievement and are quick to develop improvement goals. Too often, however, these goals are process- and procedures-oriented and focus too little on results. Although some movement is occurring in this area, schools are still reluctant to use assessment to monitor targets. If they do, it is usually over a long period of time, and the data is of little use in redesigning or adjusting instructional goals.

Schools must learn to establish short-term as well as long-term goals. They must use assessment more frequently and systematically. This should be done to let staff know they are moving in the right direction. Boston School Superintendent, Thomas Pazzart, observed, “You simply can’t wait until the end of the year to take stock of how you are doing. You have to monitor along the way and assess continually.” When data shows goals are being achieved, it reinforces what is being done and helps keep everyone focused on the target. Finding out that results are not good also can be useful, because adjustments can be made sooner. In most cases, the data can be a motivator for staff and students.
STRATEGY 2

Use multiple assessment tools to evaluate student progress.

Rationale
Good assessment begins with a common vision of desired outcomes—what the school and community want for their children. At its very best, assessment is able to clearly measure progress in realizing that vision. Assessment is not a stand-alone event. It is not a table of composite scores used to rank and sort students and schools. It does not exclude some students. Rather, it should permeate all that is in a school. It should be an attempt to look at the big picture through the careful monitoring of everyday acts and practices and continual assessment of student work. Multiple measures, including performance assessments, presentations, and student portfolios, must be used. A single method, such as standardized tests, cannot provide a clear, valid picture of student progress.

The use of multiple assessments requires significant amounts of time. To make this a realistic expectation for staff, schools must create organizational structures that allow teachers to be responsible for fewer students (ideally, a maximum of 90) each term. Many high school teachers currently are assigned 150 students or more on a daily basis. Block scheduling or modified block scheduling, in which teachers are assigned fewer students for longer periods each day, can provide an avenue for increasing the amount of time available for planning and assessment. Block scheduling allows teachers more time with students in the classroom each day and more time to evaluate student work.²

Actions
• Review current assessment tools to determine whether they are effectively measuring student progress toward the district’s desired outcomes.
• Develop and use alternate forms of assessment, such as criterion-referenced tests, portfolios, student presentations, and other performance-based evaluations.
• Implement organizational structures that allow teachers more time with students in the classroom and more time to evaluate student work.

¹See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for an in-depth discussion of this concept.
²See Chapter 5, “Organization and Time,” for additional discussion of alternate organizational structures such as block and modified-block scheduling.
STRATEGY 3

Encourage principals to set the tone for developing a school’s vision by keeping the school’s focus on the classroom and on improved student learning.

Rationale
The principal sets the academic tone for the school. Unfortunately, management tasks often usurp the time required for thoughtful, consistent leadership focused on student classroom performance. Leadership that focuses on the classroom has been recognized as the key to raising achievement and clearly defining assessment and accountability. Most teachers rate principals as effective when they are visible, motivating students, and available in the classroom and office.

Countless schools across the country have made great strides in improving student achievement. In every situation, the principal emerged as a visionary who not only understood the importance of strategic plans focused on outcomes, but was able to involve others in working collaboratively to reach a common goal. These principals focused on improved student learning by recognizing and reinforcing improvement efforts. In Brazosport, Texas, Independent School District, for example, the principal spends 50 percent of the time in the classroom. Achievement is up, teacher enthusiasm has increased, and parent support is growing.

Even the best principals with outstanding leadership skills cannot be effective by themselves. They understand that leadership is a shared commodity and engage many in a concerted effort to attain specific, measurable goals. Strong schools rely on their master teachers to raise the bar for the entire professional staff. ¹

Actions
- Ensure that principals serve as instructional leaders, being visible and spending time in the classroom; provide the support and resources to make this a realistic expectation.
- Expect principals to collaborate with teachers regarding student achievement.
- Encourage principals to reinforce and recognize improvement efforts.
- Cultivate and designate master teachers to assist the principal in these roles.

A recent ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) publication, Results, provides a list of suggestions for expanding the role of the master teacher (page 117). See the Appendix following this report for this list.

Develop and maintain a personal learning plan for each student.

Rationale
A personal learning plan can play a key role in ensuring student and parent involvement in the learning process. In addition to noting progress and increasing accountability, it can assist students in planning for the future. Too often, programming at the high school is disconnected, and the student is not focused. The use of this plan is a step toward creating a sound basis for achieving the goals of a diploma.4

Actions
- Develop a personal learning plan beginning in Kindergarten (preschool, if possible) for each student, that includes achievement levels, success and high-interest areas, and narratives on test data.
- Design the personal learning plan to follow the student from grade to grade.
- Designate an advocate at each level (elementary, middle, and high school) who will be responsible for regularly monitoring and updating the plan with the student and parent.
- Use the plan as a foundation for the development of a portfolio for transitioning to postsecondary education or career entry. Include performance assessments in the portfolios.

Report annually to the community, through a “report card of school performance,” disclosing school-wide assessment results and other pertinent information.

Rationale
A report card of school performance can be an effective, powerful means for schools to inform their communities of their work and progress. Schools pay attention when they are publicly compared to other schools. Parents also benefit from more complete information about the quality of their children’s schools. In addition, using the information to improve student achievement rather than to identify or eliminate poor teachers encourages staff to use the data in the school improvement process.

Unless schools are able to understand and interpret assessment measures, they risk losing community support. The public has a vested interest in schools. They want to know how well the schools in their communities are performing. Educational issues sell newspapers, attract TV viewers, and garner votes. Without clear information and creditable assessment, this widespread scrutiny of schools can result in erroneous conclusions, not to mention, huge problems.

The state is requiring that districts annually report student progress on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in grades 4 and 8 and on the Iowa Tests of Educational

Development (ITED) in grade 11. Reporting achievement data alone, however, is misleading. Other factors, such as student ethnicity, socioeconomic level (percent of students on free/reduced lunch), student mobility, teacher mobility, percentage of teachers/administrators with advanced degrees, district financial resources, student and staff attendance, graduation rate, scholarship information, number of Advanced Placement (AP) students, and parent and student satisfaction also are key indicators of success. This additional information, reported uniformly across the state, should be included along with ITBS/ITED results. Including this information allows comparisons to be made among schools with similar populations.

School report cards should be widely distributed. Mailing them to parents, newspapers, alumni, and area businesses increases the report cards’ influence. Also, this helps the school, rather than someone else, control the data.

**Actions**

- Develop a standard system of evaluating the school.
- Ensure that report card data reflects teacher and student performance and is aligned with district goals and objectives.
- Allow teachers, by school or team, as much autonomy as possible in selecting report card data.
- Include a variety of types of information in the report cards, and ensure uniformity in reporting data to give a more accurate composite picture of a school’s progress.
- Ensure that report cards are easy to interpret.
- Widely distribute the report cards.

**Districts will need to consider the implications of these initiatives, which may include the following:**

**Overall Implications for Districts**

- Strengthen and require staff development to ensure that administrators and staff are assessment-literate. (A few states hope to accomplish this through requiring an assessment endorsement.) Time must be made available in team building and assessment training. The focus should be on student achievement, staff collaboration, and the appropriate role of assessment.
- Design the interview process of new employees to include the candidate’s ability to use assessment in the school improvement process.
- Disaggregate assessment data to determine whether all groups are performing at the same degree and rate. Ensure that clear, concise, and timely data is available to staff.
- Hold buildings and districts accountable for raising student achievement. Establish a time line for improvement to occur. If accountability is not built into the improvement process, then change will not happen. Professional development should
be focused on student learning. Area Education Agencies (AEAs) should be the support system for school districts not demonstrating success in raising student achievement. Evaluator training should emphasize a review of teacher-created assessments accompanied by a review of actual student work.

- Recognize and reward buildings that do well to reinforce team building and the creation of an organization focusing on systemic development.
- Provide clear and understandable reports on student achievement to the public.

**Implications for Staff**
- Develop proficiency in using a variety of diagnostic assessments to determine how students are performing, and use this information to adjust instruction.
- Demonstrate how assessment is used to increase student achievement in the classroom.
- Accept accountability through the reporting of student achievement to other publics.
- Move to more collaboration and teaming as it relates to assessment and school improvement.

**Implications for Organization and Management**
- Reinforce the concept that the building principal is the instructional leader in regard to the use of assessment as it relates to school improvement.
- Ingrain systemic development into buildings to facilitate using assessment of students in school improvement.
- Ensure that the board of education, central office, and individual buildings have the same mission, purpose, and understanding of assessment as it relates to school improvement.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning**
- Include assessment as a key component of all instructional goals.
- Ensure that all assessment tools provide accurate and timely information about student achievement.
- Use classroom and building assessment and the results to increase student learning.

**Implications for Resources**
- Review allocations of expenditures on assessments and training in the use of assessments, ensure adequate funding for additional assessments and the training of staff in the use of such assessments, and increase present budget expenditures for assessment tools and the reporting of student achievement to staff and the community.
- Address funding from existing resources such as Phase III, staff development, Eisenhower dollars, grants, Area Education Agency support, and build funding into general fund expenditures for staff development regarding assessments.
- Create time for training of staff, and develop new methods of delivering staff development.
A no-excuses attitude toward high student achievement requires everyone in the learning community to roll up their sleeves, remove barriers, avoid delays, and decisively implement the bold use of appropriate assessment. For schools to be successful, the community must participate in determining the goals and purpose of the school, the standards and expectations created for all students, and methods for holding the school accountable. Teachers must be proficient in using diagnostic assessments to determine how students are performing, and they must use this information to adjust their teaching. It is essential that principals serve as instructional leaders, and that each student’s learning is guided by a personal learning plan.

High schools of the future are accountable to the community—both the learning community and the lay community—and must regularly provide information on their performance. Schools can no longer wait or sidestep the difficult issues surrounding this issue. They must move forward boldly, with strong determination, demonstrating that delivering accountability through assessment produces the high student achievement communities want and expect.

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**COMMITTEE**

Tom Drake, Executive Director, Middle and High School Programs
Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent
Thomas Jeschke, Director of Student Services
Joan Roberts, Principal, North High School
Des Moines Independent Community Schools
Suggestions for Expanding the Role of the Master Teacher

1. Designate—and cultivate—talented teacher leaders at every school.
   Ideally, they should be both competent and respected members of the faculty. Department heads or the equivalent should be chosen on this basis—rather than on seniority or popularity.

2. Pay them a reasonable stipend. Leadership is not free.
   Teacher leaders should be given at least a modest stipend. Hour for hour, their compensation should certainly be no less than what we pay coaches.

3. Provide them with release time.
   Find ways to relieve them with substitute teachers or by finding creative ways to give them a few hours whenever possible. Even modest amounts of regularly scheduled time can go a long way.

4. Include them in administrative training.
   Teacher leaders become a principal's most valued ally and interpreter of effective structures and methods.

5. Involve the faculty in their selection.
   Invite teachers and administrators at the district level to establish results-oriented criteria and expectations for these positions. Then on the basis of the criteria, ask school faculties to help select the teacher leaders, perhaps for a designated term.

expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
Helping High School Staff Members Fulfill Their Potential

John Van Pelt and Mary Meier
Waterloo Community Schools

Professional development is essential to improving the learning of all students. Recent educational literature recognizes professional development as an important component both in achieving educational reform and increasing student achievement. Because inservice offerings of the past no longer meet all of the challenges today’s educators encounter, professional development has become a primary focus of research in its own right.

Some of the research has focused on the limitations of traditional staff development. Historically, professional development involved teachers attending lectures, workshops, or conferences. The customary approaches often rewarded teachers for course work unrelated to their needs or concerns; failed to stimulate intellectual or teaching capacities; lacked focus, intensity, or follow-up; reinforced passive learning; was unconnected; and lacked teacher input. These approaches were inadequate for traditional teaching and are certainly inadequate for teaching in reform settings (Guskey and Huberman, 1995).

Today’s secondary teachers are being asked to implement ambitious changes, from multidisciplinary curriculum to higher standards for all students. [These changes include reinventing the school’s structure, responding to diverse participants, and utilizing emerging technologies. 1] These efforts require that teachers be engaged in professional development that is intensive, goal-driven, teacher-based, connected to school objectives, and connected to daily classroom activity (Little, 1993). Teachers require time, support, and resources for this development. Teacher evolution must take place within a school organization that complements their efforts.

A focus on professional development for all district personnel must permeate the entire school culture. Sparks & Hirsch (2000) propose a new Learning School model of professional development. Learning School staff members are involved in sustained, intellectually rigorous study of what they teach and how they teach it. The traditional model is replaced with the entire school focused on increasing learning collaboratively. Staff development is integrated in all of the daily activities. The school culture and staff attitudes enable educators to become better equipped to help all students achieve. Learning Schools allow time for staff to work and plan

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together. Collegiality replaces isolation. Sets of teachers are responsible for sets of students and analyze student work, conduct research, participate in peer coaching/observation, and share successful methods and teaching tips. The whole staff determines its needs and decides how to meet those needs in relation to specific school improvement goals.

This report presents five strategies for providing high-quality professional development that addresses the need for the following: (1) involvement of all district personnel, based on their needs as related to district goals and school improvement objectives; (2) continuous, sustained professional development that is integrated into the daily routine; (3) a high level of active learning and participation; (4) support systems that ensure implementation; and (5) opportunities for practice, follow-up, reflection, and feedback. Rationale and actions follow each strategy. These initiatives have broad implications, which are outlined at the conclusion of the report.

Plan intensive professional development for all district personnel, based on their needs as related to district goals and building school improvement objectives.

Rationale
Professional development plans should be aligned with long-range Comprehensive School Improvement Plan goals and support individual buildings’ school improvement efforts related to student learning, building climate, and student achievement. Relating professional development to the vision and mission of the school makes the training and study more meaningful as an integral part of the teaching/learning process. Aligning all training with school objectives enhances student achievement.

Professional development needs vary according to knowledge and experience, and the content, structure, and process of professional development must recognize those needs. Including all district personnel in professional development as it relates to their position helps everyone share the responsibility for the “work” of the school.

Note: Several resources are available to assist districts in developing high-quality professional development. See Appendix A following this report for two examples:


Actions
• Build professional development objectives into the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan, and align district goals, school improvement objectives, and training.
• Survey district personnel to assess their current knowledge base and to determine their training-structure preferences.
• Include teachers and other staff in the planning of professional development activities.
• Involve all staff, including administrators, administrative assistants, custodians, and associates, in professional development.
STRATEGY 2

Provide continuous and sustained professional development experiences over a long period of time that are integrated into the daily routine based on the requirements of daily classroom activity.

Rationale
The “one-shot” inservice of the past is not an effective way to deliver professional development. Current literature states that in order for professional development to produce positive changes or allow for real learning, it must be ongoing and directly apply to what the teacher does in the classroom. Connecting training to what is happening in the classroom gives it immediate importance. Professional development that takes place within the school day is more easily seen as vital than something added to the end of the day.

Actions
• Plan ongoing activities and/or content study that last the entire school year or longer.
• Provide professional development for knowledge expansion of content areas and instructional strategies.²
• Be creative in finding time for professional development on a daily or weekly basis; consider late starts, early dismissals, release time, and use of planning/preparation times.³ Schools may also consider providing professional development without the need for substitute staff during times when students are released for service learning or other learning opportunities outside of the school.
• Compensate staff for extra hours spent on staff development.

STRATEGY 3

Incorporate a high level of active learning and demand for participation into professional development activities.

Rationale
Like students, staff need to be actively involved in learning. Lectures, watching, and listening are far less effective than doing, participating, and discussing.

Note: See Appendix B following this report for a model implemented in Waterloo Community Schools that illustrates this concept.

Actions
• Plan staff development sessions that require a high level of participation, group work, discussions, reflection, and application to real teaching situations.
• Expect trainers to model a variety of high-involvement strategies and incorporate appropriate methods for adult learners.

³See Chapter 5, “Organization and Time,” for a discussion of alternate organizational structures that provide additional time for professional development.
Build support systems into professional development.

Rationale
Staff needs to know they have support from administration and peers as they try new processes. School administrators must encourage new strategy and knowledge use by staff in a nonthreatening atmosphere. Teachers must know that it is okay to risk failure when implementing a new idea. Without ongoing support, staff quickly revert to previous practices.

Actions
- Expect school administrators to act as models of professional growth. Districts must support them with the dollars, time, and training to make this possible.
- Utilize small groups, learning teams, coaches, mentors, study groups, content-area work groups, and teacher leaders to support staff in their professional development efforts.

Plan opportunities for practice, follow-up, reflection, and feedback regarding professional development.

Rationale
Positive change will occur only with the opportunity for practice and the ability to reflect on that practice. Participants in professional development become proficient only when they can practice and then compare experiences with one another. Positive feedback is essential to ensuring success.

Actions
- Plan for reflection time and follow-up activities as a part of the professional development process.
- Require practice of concepts in a risk-free environment during actual classes and/or daily work experiences.
- Invite mentors to observe and provide feedback.

Implementing these strategies has the following potential implications:

Overall Implications for Districts
- Align professional development with long-range Comprehensive School Improvement Plan goals, and support individual buildings’ school improvement efforts related to student learning, building climate, and student achievement.

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5See the appendix in Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” for information about developing Master Teachers as leaders.
• Require professional development for all employee groups, develop job descriptions that include professional development as an integral component, and provide all staff with opportunities for advancement through training.

• Provide sustained, ongoing time for buildings to “do” staff development, demonstrating the understanding that professional development is ongoing and progress incremental. Publicly support ongoing professional development, and provide administrators with the dollars, time, and training to act as models of professional growth.

Implications for Staff
• Write and implement personal learning plans to facilitate self-appraisal, to improve personal awareness, and to examine professional knowledge/abilities and make adjustments. See themselves as part of a learning community in which their own improvement is connected to the growth of students.

• Provide one another with support and feedback by sharing professional development information.

• The principal acts as a model of professional growth; enables staff to set goals based on needs, provides support, and reviews ongoing progress toward goals; and creates a climate for learning through expectations and empowering teachers to direct their own growth.

Implications for Organization and Management
• Value intellectual development and articulate support for it, provide structures to foster it, and enable staff to learn in a supportive, nonthreatening climate that complements their efforts. Administrators design and carry out their own professional learning plans while providing support and guidance for staff.

• Base the learning community’s professional development on school goals and teacher objectives, and organize it around the school’s goals for students so that teachers equip themselves to help students meet the goals.

• Design professional development to be content- and skill-specific, and include discussion of implications for instructional practices. Teachers and principals primarily determine the content and design, based on staff need; and staff participates in devising the plan.

• Provide time for staff to plan the program of staff development; provide time on a daily and ongoing basis for participation in professional development (common planning, time to reflect and share, “memo” staff meetings replaced with professional development opportunities); reduce nonteaching duties of staff; and provide release time as needed.

• Design professional development as an intensive, ongoing, comprehensive, long-range plan for growth that seeks incremental annual improvements related to a set of common objectives over a 3–5 year span.

• Plan opportunities for groups and individuals to study, practice, reflect upon, and apply the research on teaching and learning, including peer coaching, team
teaching, peer observation, collaboration, study groups, opportunities for staff to work and learn from one another throughout the day, and mentors for new staff.

• Evaluate professional development plans.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
• Offer opportunities that provide meaningful participation in a variety of professional and personal growth activities to a staff committed to their own growth and sharing a belief in lifelong learning.

• Give staff opportunities to develop new understandings of the subjects they teach; the ways in which they teach; and the roles they play in the school, the classroom, and the larger learning community.

• Provide time and mental space for staff to be involved and reflective in the process of changing roles and improving practice.

Implications for Resources
• Creatively seek ways to reallocate existing resources, and secure new funding sources such as the following:
  – Partner with other high schools, other districts, Area Education Agencies (AEAs), the state, universities and colleges, and private business
  – Grant writing
  – Private funding

• Allocate monies both at the district and building levels for professional development—materials, equipment, substitute time, pay for beyond-contract hours, and outside speakers if requested (should equal 5% of annual budget).

• Ensure that buildings remain flexible in their use of time.

Educators will require time, support, and resources to evolve to this model for professional development. School districts must empower all administrators and staff through a continuous learning cycle that does not allow the return to old habits. Ultimately, professional development must be evaluated on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Any changes in teacher compensation should be tied to professional development and student achievement.
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Committee

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPENDIX A

Guidelines for Professional Development

1. Criteria for High-Quality Professional Development
   - Focuses on teachers as central to student learning, yet includes all other members of the school;
   - Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement;
   - Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of teachers, principals, and others in the community;
   - Reflects the best available research and practice in teaching, learning, and leadership;
   - Enables teachers to develop further expertise in subject content, teaching strategies, and uses of technologies and other essential elements in teaching to high standards;
   - Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools;
   - Is planned collaboratively by those who will participate in and facilitate that development;
   - Requires substantial time and other resources;
   - Is driven by a coherent long-term plan; and
   - Is evaluated ultimately on the basis of its impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning, and this assessment guides subsequent professional development efforts.


2. Recommendations for Achieving Meaningful Professional Development
   Breaking Ranks provides a forceful and challenging vision of the 21st-century high school. It offers the following recommendations to provide high school administrators and teachers with a framework for achieving meaningful professional development that will result in improved student achievement:

   1. Every high school will be a learning community for teachers and for the other professionals it employs.
   2. Each educator will create a Personal Learning Plan that addresses his or her need to grow stressing knowledge and skills related to improved student learning.
   3. The high school, with the help of the school district, will provide adequate funding, time, and other resources to ensure that professional development is a continuous, ongoing process.
   4. The principal of a high school, as a model for the staff, will pursue his or her own ongoing professional growth while helping to lead the professional development for the entire school.
   5. The support staff of a high school—secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, and others—will also be encouraged and assisted in their own career growth and drawn into the larger school community as adults who can promote the well-being of students.

What does Effective Professional Development look like? (A Model from Waterloo Community Schools)

District Goal:
To increase student achievement in reading.

Building School Improvement Team

School Improvement Goal:
Increase reading performance of students in all content areas

Reading Goal Focus Team

Plan and lead process to involve all staff in the development of building goals that are aligned with district goals, student data, and staff needs

Plan and devise action plans to achieve goal, include professional development plan based on effective practices and on staff needs

Meets once a month with “expert” to devise the ongoing study group strategies that will be practiced. Devises evaluation of the training and adapts process as necessary

“Outside expert Kick Off”
Reading in the Content Areas
Distribution of Content Reading Text for staff

Department Study Groups-
Reading and/or Discussion of assigned strategy

Practice of strategy in classes
Peer observation/coaching opportunities

Department Study Groups-
Discussion, reflection, evaluation of assigned strategy that was practiced

REPEAT STUDY GROUP PROCESS FOR EACH STRATEGY
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
Russ Novotny, Cedar Rapids Community Schools
and Committee

*Just as business and industry are establishing high-performance enterprises, so must education. The goal should not be just to improve schools through the effective use of technology—it should be to reinvent the structure of schools, building into that structure the ability to quickly respond to societal changes, emerging technologies and promising research.*

—Transforming Learning Through Technology, Milken Exchange

Technology can be a significant catalyst and contributor in the process of redefining high schools. The National Association of Secondary School Principal’s (NASSP’s) report, *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution,* states, “Technology is revolutionizing education and educators cannot afford to regard it as a frill or simply as an add-on.” This comment is even more compelling today than in 1996 when the report was published.

This report addresses each of the six technology recommendations presented in the *Breaking Ranks* report, and considers them as strategies to be applied in Iowa today. In summary, these strategies are:

1. **Strategic Plan** – long-term strategic plan for using technology in the school
2. **Integral Technology** – integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment
3. **Technology Available** – classrooms equipped with needed technology
4. **Adequate Budget** – both current and ongoing, to provide for ever-changing technology needs
5. **Staff Skills** – initial and continuing teacher and administrator education
6. **Resource Persons** – a “change agent” available to provide technical assistance and consult with staff

The report considers the anticipated pervasiveness of technology, as well as its ability to improve the learning environment and either magnify or diminish equity issues.¹ Each strategy is supported by rationale, plus actions for implementing the strategies. The report concludes with the significant implications these initiatives have at various levels within a school district.

¹See Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for an in-depth discussion of equity/diversity issues.
Develop and implement a long-term strategic plan for use of technology in the school.

Rationale
A school’s Technology Plan should reflect technology’s potential to generate school reform, especially as these plans are used to support transforming high schools.

Iowa currently requires all school districts to develop a Technology Plan (a strategic plan for the use of technology) and also requires that the plan be part of the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). Even without these imposed requirements, it would be imperative for school districts to follow a well-reasoned plan for the acquisition, application, and support of technology. A wise principal once said that without a plan, most ideas look pretty good. Only by measuring ideas against a plan and long-term goals can schools most efficiently and directly reach their objectives. This is especially true in the dynamic field of technology, where people are attracted by its “flash” and novelty, and where costs for using and maintaining items generally far exceed acquisition costs.

Developing a technology plan is not a job just for “techies”; members at all levels of the school district need to be actively involved. School leaders should help set this expectation and model such involvement. They need to make sure that technology is an integral, positive part of the overall school plan. The importance of this strong leadership is the reason companies are naming Corporate Technology Officers (CTOs) and Corporate Information Officers (CIOs)—to bring focus and demonstrate commitment to this core area.

Actions
• Base the high school’s Technology Plan on District Strategic Objectives.
  District Strategic Objectives are a required part of the CSIP. The Technology Plan portions of the CSIP should directly relate to those objectives. The State of Iowa provides a matrix indicating where it is appropriate to include aspects of the Technology Plan within the CSIP.

• Ensure that the Technology Plan meets requirements for Universal Services Fund (USF) funding.
  Technology plans are required for a school to be eligible for USF e-Rate discounts. Iowa school technology plans will be reviewed by the Area Education Agencies (AEAs) during 2001. Assistance from the Federal Government’s Schools and Libraries Program is available on the Web at http://www.sl.universalservice.org/apply/step2.asp.

• Involve school administrators in developing the Technology Plan.

• Identify “needed and appropriate technology” versus “wanted technology.”
  Several sources referenced in this report (EdMin’s Technology Use Planning tools, http://www.edmin.com/tp/tp_over.cfm, and the CEO Forum on Education and Technology’s School Technology and Readiness (StaR) charts, to name two) suggest tools for determining necessary, appropriate technology at various levels of technology integration and maturity of use. This is, of course, a “moving target” and must be given in the context of a specific time, specific teaching and learning objectives, and technology’s ability to support those objectives.
Strategies

**TECHNOLOGY**

**STRATEGY 2**

Make technology integral to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, accommodating different learning styles and helping teachers to individualize the learning process.

**Rationale**


This report also points out that “the creative use of digital content allows teachers and students to transform the learning environment into a more dynamic, demanding, vibrant, and interactive exchange. These environments combine the best of traditional learning with the unprecedented opportunities created by technology. Once digital content is integrated into curriculum, the learning process becomes:

- Problem- and project-centered
- Student-centered
- Collaborative
- Communicative
- Customized
- Productive
- Lifelong at anytime, from anywhere

Widespread availability of technology changes the way educators need to think about teaching and learning; yet it’s what schools do with technology—not its availability—that has the potential to change the educational process. Educators must remember that technology's first and foremost function is to support the delivery of the school's curriculum. When technology is available anywhere, anytime, and when needed, educators can more effectively shift from today’s commonly used traditional instructional model to an extended model of knowledge construction.

**Actions**

- Assess the district’s status regarding technology to determine where to improve.

The Milken Foundation published a report in 1998 titled *Technology in American Schools: Seven Dimensions for Gauging Progress*. It asks broad questions and implies that positive responses indicate an environment where technology is truly integral to improving the educational process. See Appendix A following this report for these seven dimensions and key questions.

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²See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for an in-depth discussion of high school curriculum.
• Assess teachers’ knowledge and expertise regarding technology, to better support their needs.

Several sources have developed effective tools for assessing a teacher’s status in the evolution of effectively integrating technology into the learning process. See Appendix B for two yardsticks that help define targets educators can strive for in teaching and learning effectiveness: the CEO Forum on Education and Technology’s “Digital Learning Profile” and EdMin’s “Technology Maturity Benchmarks.”

• Shift from a “Traditional” (instruction) education model to an “Extended” (knowledge construction) model.

Apple Corporation’s Apple Learning Community of Tomorrow (ALCOT) project found that technology can be an important catalyst and tool in making this transition, as summarized below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Traditional (instruction)</th>
<th>Extended (knowledge construction)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher role</td>
<td>Teacher-centered and didactic</td>
<td>Learner-centered and interactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student role</td>
<td>Listener and learner</td>
<td>Collaborator and sometimes expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Emphasis</td>
<td>Facts and replication</td>
<td>Relationships and inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of knowledge</td>
<td>Accumulation</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration of success</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Norm-referenced and multiple guess</td>
<td>Criterion-referenced and performance portfolios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Usage</td>
<td>Seat work</td>
<td>Communication, collaboration, information access, and expression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 Equip individual high school classrooms with the technology necessary to prepare students for life in the 21st century.

**Rationale**

Twenty-first-century curriculum will be digital, and delivery will be Web-based (or some derivation of an equipment-neutral standard-delivery model). Delivery devices will be pervasive, and students are likely to have their own. This will facilitate varying levels of individual study—anywhere, anytime, and not necessarily at school. Schoolwork will take on new meanings as Web-based study, self-paced learning, and new collaborative learning models become commonplace.

This conversion to digital learning will transform the basic fiber of high schools. Districts will need to ensure that all students have equitable access to information. This technology availability, both in the school and the community, also will profoundly affect how schools and communities communicate. In addition, technology will facilitate the availability of pertinent data, allowing all parties to make more informed decisions.
Only a few years ago, Iowa’s goal was to get Internet access into all classrooms. Thanks to the Universal Services Fund e-Rate discounts and the State Technology Act, Iowa schools are well on their way to acquiring this connectivity.

The next challenge is to get technology tools into the hands of all students, whenever they need them. Schools will not be able to afford to provide the current version of a desktop or laptop computer for every student. However, the concept of an Internet connectivity device is changing as mass-marketing and mass-production allow schools to consider providing smaller, more powerful, less costly devices. In fact, in the next few years, schools likely will transition from an emphasis on providing computing devices to providing the material used over the Internet on these devices. The devices themselves may even become common personal property of students and staff. Regarding student-owned technology, schools need to examine some of their current prohibitions of student technology devices at school.

To keep everyone in the district “moving in the same direction,” the district’s Technology Plan needs to be complete enough to guide efforts to equip schools with appropriate technology while not becoming a mere “shopping list” of equipment. The plan should provide guidance for making decisions about individual technology deployments while allowing the district to respond to ever-growing technological options. This plan must not be developed to fill a requirement and then ignored.

Educators cannot even imagine some of the most perplexing questions they will be facing in just a few years. School districts must be flexible and develop processes that will help learning communities adapt while staying true to their underlying beliefs. As James Collins and Jerry Porras point out in their book, Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies (1994), we must first decide what is so basic to our beliefs that we will not change that, and then all other things are “fair game” to be questioned and changed. As districts equip their schools with technology, new and difficult questions will need to be addressed, such as these:

- When and where is a teacher expected to teach?
- Who owns the intellectual property in a digital curricular element?
- How do you compensate teachers and for what?
- What kind of facilities do you really need?

Actions

- Use the district Technology Plan as a guide to equipping classrooms.
- Put technology tools into the hands of students, not just into classrooms.
- Be prepared to address difficult technology-related questions early.
TECHNOLOGY

STRATEGY 4

Expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students

Ensure that budget allocations are both adequate to maintain current technology and to provide for ever-changing technology needs.

Rationale
The Technology Plan should provide sound guidelines and/or procedures for making particular selections of the most appropriate technology expenditures. However, districts must be aware that acquisition costs are just a small part of the costs associated with gaining the most potential from technology. One common complaint from classroom teachers about technology has been that they have been given new technology but they don’t know how to use it, or it doesn’t work. Schools must avoid this waste of money and resources.

When determining what “adequate budget” should be, schools need to consider both:

- What technology is necessary/appropriate
- Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) for that technology
  These costs include the traditional acquisition and maintenance costs, as well as the cost for using that technology (primarily the time staff must invest to be able to make good use of the technology).

An important component of technology support is maintaining competent staffing capable of providing adequate assistance. Staffing for technology support has been difficult for schools, because this need has literally exploded in the past few years. The demand is likely to continue expanding in complexity as both the quantity and the necessity of this equipment increases. Often these needs have been addressed in an evolutionary fashion, drawing upon internal experiences and personnel.

Schools may already be spending more than they realize on technology support. The TCO for technology is surely higher than realized because of hidden costs. The Gartner Group has identified wasted user time as a major cost of technology ownership. This is often time employees spend “spinning their wheels,” or “playing around,” to figure out how to do something.

In Sara Fitzgerald’s report, Technology’s Real Costs, Protect Your Investment With Total Cost of Ownership, published in the National School Board Association’s (NSBA’s) Electronic Schools, she addresses the issue of hidden costs. This report notes:

“You might appear to save money, for instance, by cutting back on the number of computer support staff you hire, but unless you evaluate how this affects the productivity of teachers and other staff members who are forced to troubleshoot their own computer problems, you will not have a complete picture of costs. To cite one example, a consultant reviewing the computer support needs of the Fairfax County [Virginia] Public Schools calculated that
The district, which has 225 schools, was actually spending the equivalent of 330 full-time equivalent teaching positions, or $16.5 million a year, in the amount of teacher time devoted to computer support. (This calculation assumed that each teacher spent an hour a week trying to fix a problem that could have been avoided with better support or standardized equipment, and that 5 percent of teachers are ‘technical wizards’ who have to spend an additional 1.5 hours a week helping peers who call on them for assistance.)”

The conclusion is that adequate support resources are likely to provide teachers more time to do what they actually are hired to do and save dollars over time.

Regarding TCO for owning and supporting technology, schools can look to industry for models to identify all aspects of associated costs. Several studies have endeavored to adapt TCO concepts to the educational arena. See Appendix C for information about two resources: Technology’s Real Costs, Protect Your Investment With Total Cost of Ownership, published in NSBA's Electronic Schools, and Taking TCO to the Classroom, published by the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN).

**Actions**
- Adhere to the Technology Plan, and focus on technology needs, not wants.
- Understand and consider Total Cost of Ownership when determining the technology budget.
- Develop a technology-support staffing model.

Several good sources exist to assist in planning and organizing staffing for technology support in both the corporate and school environments. Schools generally “get by” with less direct support costs than industry, but some of these savings are actually false savings, as they are offset by hidden costs in other areas.

**Make technology an integral component of both initial and continuing administrator and staff education.**

**Rationale**
Technology has a dual impact in the area of staff skills:
- The influx of technology will require staff to develop new skills to effectively make use of technology as a tool to improve their instruction.
- Technology can provide tools to facilitate the training of staff.

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1 One source that addresses technology-support staffing in an educational environment is the “Michigan Technology Staffing Guidelines” report, http://techguide.merit.edu/. These materials were developed through a grant awarded by the Michigan State Board of Education under the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund Grant Program. Of particular interest is their Appendix 2 Resources, http://techguide.merit.edu/resources.html, which contains links to a number of resources, articles, and research studies that may be useful in researching what other areas are doing, trends in the field, and additional matters related to the technology staffing guidelines.
The single most significant factor in the quality of education is the teacher, not the technology. Only when that teacher effectively uses the technology to improve the learning process does the technology meet its objectives. Surveys indicate that the growth of technology has generally outpaced teachers’ ability to effectively use it. In general, many teachers do not feel well prepared to use the technology they now have. In the high schools of the future, technology will continue to play an increasing role, but only if the staff is prepared to use it effectively.⁴

Studies show that staff members require extensive staff development and familiarization with technology before they make truly creative uses of it—in fact, that the process takes years, not months. Staff members need support over extended periods of time to develop the necessary skills.

Use of and commitment to taking advantage of technology must be a pervasive attitude throughout the organization. All levels, especially leadership, must be involved. Setting high expectations for both existing and new staff members is necessary. In addition, technology competencies should be considered in the new-staff selection process.

Many reports have been written to describe the stages teachers progress through as they learn how to incorporate technology into classroom environments. Perhaps one of the most well-known is from Apple Corporation’s ALCOT research project. See Appendix D for this example and the various stages it suggests teachers go through.

The future high school will use technology to help teachers focus on knowledge construction rather than instruction. To do so effectively, it will need teachers that move quickly through the stages of incorporating technology to the highest levels. The ALCOT project found the following types of supports helped speed this evolution:

• Mentors that are further along in the process
• Opportunities for reflection
• Encouragement to question beliefs about teaching and learning

**Actions**

• Make technology competencies a priority for ALL staff members.
• Help teachers move through stages of technology use.

⁴See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for an in-depth discussion of staff development.
Designate a technology “change-agent” resource person in every high school to provide technical assistance and to consult with the staff to assist them in making the best use of technology.

Rationale
The best way to help someone is to be there when they need help, with the help they need. However, the call for a “Technology Resource Person” as suggested in the Breaking Ranks report seems too narrow. This is one case where this report “breaks ranks” with the report’s recommendations. High schools must look at the need for a resource person more broadly—as the need for a change agent, not just a technology support person. Of course, technology is a great catalyst to change, but it is not the objective in itself. These support persons should be there to help teachers improve the educational process, any way possible (and technology will often be a significant component). Teachers want to better serve students, and they plead for help.

People often get so involved in the “race” that they don’t take time to see if there might be a better way to get to the “finish line.” Such is the case in the teaching profession, and with the integration of technology. Change-agent resource persons could help educators take a step back and ask, “What really is the best way to accomplish my objectives?” They could then help these educators move through the often scary, unknown realm of change. It is said that people don’t resist change, they resist being changed. An effective change-agent resource person can help educators become a part of the change process that will be necessary and continuous.

According to Gartner Group studies, NSBA (National School Board Association) reports:
- A major part of Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) is wasted user time.
- Adequate support staffing ratios can reduce TCO. Look at industry best practices.

The resource person could provide some of the support staffing needed to reduce demands placed on teachers to perform tasks they are not hired or prepared to do.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is getting support of the district and administration for such a position. How do educators convince school leaders that this is what they need...convince them that by having these “change agents,” schools will improve student achievement? This is not without a cost, however, so districts must find ways to improve the teachers’ environment so they can justify diverting other resources to support this need.

For change-agent resource persons to be truly effective, they need the full support of building administrators. But where does this support come from? Maybe high schools need an “Associate Principal for Change and Improvement of Instruction.” Perhaps they should expand the role and staffing of media centers. The key here is that change-agent resource persons are supported by the administration, trusted by the staff, and committed to change in the interest of better instruction and improved learning.
**IMPLICATIONS**

**TECHNOLOGY**

**EXPAND THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR IOWA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**Actions**

- Establish a base of support for a “change-agent” resource person.

- Ensure an administrative commitment to the concept of a change-agent resource person.

- Consider the support of a change-agent resource person as part of the Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

**The impact on districts, as they try to take the best advantage of the technology revolution, touches every aspect of the school, from the very teaching process itself to the administrative activities. Several implications emerge through the six strategies discussed above. In summary, they are as follows:**

**Implications for Districts**

- Involve the entire learning community: No one group can do it alone, and everyone needs the support of those around them. Give people the time and continuing support necessary, realizing that use of technology is an evolutionary growth process.

- Understand the profound impact technology is having on the educational process and the students, and lead and demonstrate that understanding. Administrators must be highly committed to the needed changes.

- Articulate and demonstrate the belief that staff development is critical. Increase both the competency and confidence of staff by integrating technology into whatever they are doing. Provide teachers access to technology 24 hours a day to ensure they will be able to use it.

- Expect the teaching process to change. With anytime availability of technology and tools, districts can shift more to knowledge building and relevant experiential learning.

**Implications for Staff**

- Require significant staff time for planning, data gathering, consensus building, and documentation. Many people will need to be involved, including staff, community, and business representatives/experts. The breadth of issues and variety of necessary participants makes this an extensive task.

**Implications for Organization and Management**

- Actively involve representatives from all levels of the organization in developing a technology plan.

- Address new and difficult questions, such as when and where a teacher is expected to teach, how to compensate teachers and for what, what types of facilities are needed, and who owns intellectual property—both teacher- and student-created materials.
Implications for Teaching and Learning

• Adapt to the world’s ever-explooding technology, and ensure that teachers embrace it and students have access to it, recognizing that school districts can’t change high schools by working only with the administrators, but that the teachers will be where the change happens.

• Allow teachers to teach and not be “do-it-yourself” technology-support staff.

• Provide educators with the needed tools and resources to move from instruction to more-effective knowledge construction, becoming co-learners with their students.

Implications for Resources

• Consider and plan for all TCO factors; purchase is one small part. Equipment and staff support are the major costs and factors effecting success.

• Allocate funds for a “change-agent” resource person. Recognize that simply “tacking on” technology will mean added costs and that changing the way schools do things to improve them through technology can potentially yield better results and lower overall costs.

Considering today’s technology, it is hard to imagine another time when educational institutions benefited more from products developed for the mass market. Think about the percentage of the world’s production of globes used in classrooms versus the percentage of the world’s personal computers used in schools. If the only market for personal computers was for schools, they would still cost millions of dollars and be the size of entire classrooms. But they do have mass-market appeal, and that appeal has driven competition to produce extremely powerful tools that schools can afford and use effectively. Couple that with the pervasiveness of access to technology outside the classroom, and schools have the makings of a true revolution in the learning process.

Schools can’t hide from the technology revolution—they must either seize its opportunity or be “left in the dust.” Educational institutions (public or private) that evolve, grow, and offer students skills and experiences they need will flourish, and those that don’t will wither, as they should.

However, schools must not just use technology to improve the way they do what they do now. They need to use it to do things they never before could consider. No one can pretend to know what these things will be. Those great teachers who devised creative lessons without technology will find ways to maximize this tool as well. Schools need to create an environment friendly to this growth, recognizing that staff needs support over extended periods of time to become familiar with technology and make the best use of it. The teacher is the key to change, not the technology.
Perhaps even more important, schools need to capture the energy and opportunity offered by the current technology revolution to serve as a catalyst for reinventing the way they educate. The first goal of utilizing new technology must be to transform the delivery of the district's curriculum. Sure, blame the change on technology if that helps, but do take the opportunity to encourage change and improvement. This certainly applies to the high school environment as learning communities attempt to reinvent/transform this important institution and strive to make it relevant and vital in the current environment.


EdMin. Technology Use Planning. www.edmin.com/tp/tp_over.cfm


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TECHNOLOGY APPENDIX A

Technology in American Schools: 
Seven Dimensions for Gauging Progress

This report asks broad questions and implies that positive responses indicate an environment where technology is truly integral to improving the educational process.

1. **Learners** – Are learners using the technology in ways that deepen their understanding of the content in the academic standards and, at the same time, advance their knowledge of the world around them?

2. **Learning Environments** – Is the learning environment designed to achieve high academic performance by students through the alignment of standards, research-proven learning practices, and contemporary technology?

3. **Professional Competency** – Is the educator fluent with technology and does he/she effectively use technology to the learning advantage of his/her students?

4. **System Capacity** – Is the education system reengineering itself to systematically meet the needs of learners in this knowledge-based, global society?

5. **Community Connections** – Is the school-community relationship one of trust and respect, and is this translating into mutually beneficial, sustainable partnerships in the area of learning technology?

6. **Technology Capacity** – Are there adequate technology, networks, electronic resources, and support to meet the education system’s learning goals?

7. **Accountability** – Is there agreement on what success with technology looks like? Are there measures in place to track progress and report progress?

**Note:** Districts need to strive to make technology integral in all of these areas.

TECHNOLOGY APPENDIX B

Tools for Assessing a Teacher’s Status in the Evolution of Effectively Integrating Technology into the Learning Process

1. Digital Learning Profile

The CEO Forum on Education and Technology has issued three reports. Each contains a School Technology and Readiness (STaR) chart to help evaluate readiness and effectiveness in using technology in education. The most recent report, titled The Power of Digital Learning: Integrating Digital Content (2000), helps a school determine its “digital learning profile.” Schools and teachers are categorized as being at Low, Mid, High, or Target tech levels. The Target tech level is that at which the available technology is being integrated to its fullest. This level is best understood by comparing the rubric entries at adjacent levels, but in summary, teachers at the Target tech level have the following characteristics:

- Integrating digital content to enhance instruction has changed the teaching process, allowing increased inquiry, analysis, interest, collaboration, creativity, and content production.
- The teacher’s role is that of teacher-facilitator.
- Digital content is seamlessly integrated throughout all classes/subjects on a daily basis.

Source: The CEO Forum on Education and Technology.

2. Technology Maturity Benchmarks

This measure of a teacher’s maturity in integrating available technology uses benchmarks to identify the stages of technology use as follows:

- Emergent Systems
- Islands of Technology
- Integrated Systems
- Intelligent Systems

This report suggests that educators examine these benchmarks fully and strive for the Intelligent Stage where...

- The teacher’s work is not possible without technology
- Teachers have access to appropriate technology in their work area

TECHNOLOGY APPENDIX C

Models to Identify All Aspects of Costs Associated with Using Technology: Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)

1. Technology’s Real Costs, Protect Your Investment with Total Cost of Ownership

This report notes “TCO combines the ‘hard costs’ of operating a network—including, for instance, the costs of training employees, maintaining a help desk and support staff, and repairing computers—with some calculation of ‘soft costs,’ namely the loss in productivity when users have to stop and fix their own computers or the network is down because of poor maintenance.”

Note: This report is available at http://www.electronic-school.com/199909/0999sbot.html.

Source: The National School Board Association’s (NSBA’s) Electronic Schools.

2. Taking TCO to the Classroom

CoSN is a nonprofit association that promotes the use of telecommunications to improve K–12 learning. Its members include state departments of education, state networks, school districts, schools, individuals, and companies that are committed to this goal. This report addresses technology TCO in the education environment and includes sections on costs for the following:

- Professional Development
- Support
- Connectivity
- Software
- Replacement Costs
- Retrofitting

Note: This report is available at http://www.cosn.org/tco/.

TECHNOLOGY APPENDIX D

The Apple Corporation’s Apple Learning Community of Tomorrow (ALCOT) Research Project Model for Stages Teachers Progress Through as They Learn How To Incorporate Technology into Classroom Environments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>EXAMPLES OF WHAT TEACHERS DO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entry</td>
<td>Learn the basics of using new technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>Use new technology to support traditional instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>Integrate new technology into traditional classroom practice. Here, they often focus on increased student productivity and engagement by using word processors, spreadsheets, and graphic tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriation</td>
<td>Focus on cooperative, project-based, and interdisciplinary work— incorporating the technology as needed and as one of many tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invention</td>
<td>Discover new uses for technology tools; for example, developing spreadsheet macros for teaching algebra or designing projects that combine multiple technologies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
expand the teaching and learning opportunities for Iowa high school students
Paul VanderWiel and Committee
Sioux City Community Schools

The fortunes of secondary education and higher education are inextricably linked and institutions on both levels must cooperate in all ways for the mutual benefit of students.
—Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution

Students in postsecondary institutions are failing in shocking numbers. After graduating from high school, approximately 24 percent of postsecondary students fail to receive a degree or certificate and, of these, the largest noncompletion rates are among African-Americans and Hispanics.

Even though postsecondary graduates enjoy significant advantages in the labor market, research shows that high school graduates continue to make poor choices regarding which college courses to take or, moreover, choose not to pursue an advanced education at all. An ever-increasing number of high school and college graduates have recognized the strength and value of community colleges and are enrolling in record numbers to obtain the necessary skills for employment.

A recent study by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year concludes that high schools are stuck in a time warp. The U.S. economy has been almost completely transformed since the 1950s, evolving from a manufacturing-based enterprise to a more complex, technology-dependent economy that requires workers with better academic skills. “Even 15 year ago, a high school diploma was a ticket to the middle class. Those days, and those jobs, are gone,” says Jacquelyn M. Belcher, the chairwoman of the commission. To achieve economic security, the panel concludes, seniors now must leave school prepared for postsecondary study, whether that comes in a community college; a traditional, four-year college; or some other educational program.

Problems such as these aptly illustrate the need for stronger ties and a greater commitment to collaboration between high schools and institutions of higher learning. Effective redesign of high schools cannot occur without these strong, meaningful connections. Change must begin with the common elements that affect students and staff at both institutions. Educational content, organization, and processes and procedures that sharply focus upon the needs of students and staff must be developed at both levels. Only by working together can high schools and postsecondary institutions realize the needed changes.

There is an urgent need to develop a mechanism for bringing together appropriate secondary and public and private postsecondary institution representatives to address the growing need for expanded institutional connections. Both organizations have similar interests that need to be clarified and discussed concerning the transition from
one learning environment to the other. This body could be similar to the College Board organizations and identified as “The Iowa High School/University Consortium.”

This report presents four strategies for strengthening connections between secondary and postsecondary institutions in ways that will dramatically increase student success during and beyond high school. These initiatives address the following: 1) partnering to develop programs that connect students’ high school and postsecondary education; 2) partnering to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators at both levels; 3) aligning high school graduation requirements and postsecondary expectations; and 4) developing high school exit-level performance standards. Each strategy includes rationale, as well as actions that can be taken to implement the strategies. These recommendations have extensive implications, which are outlined at the conclusion of the report.

**Partner with institutions of higher learning to develop programs that connect high school and postsecondary education.**

**Rationale**
The turf wars between high school and postsecondary institutions must come to a halt. Each institution needs to stretch itself toward the other to forge creative and innovative options that involve high school students with their own learning destinies.

Collaboration is a must! It needs to address the issues of shared sequential curriculum as well as dual-enrollment agreements that allow high school students to take courses for college credit. This process helps high school students make a smooth transition from one level to another and ensures that more graduates will enter and succeed in postsecondary institutions.

**Actions**
- Initiate a “summit conference” composed of executive administrators at both institutions to establish a formal, working, and permanent connection between high schools and postsecondary institutions.
- Convene a program-review committee composed of high school and postsecondary core-area curriculum chairpersons to share mutual concerns and priorities; develop priority issues that will be individually addressed; and establish a regular, ongoing meeting schedule.
- Establish a dual-credit and advanced-standing program for students pursuing academic and/or vocational/technical training; utilize 28E agreements (Chapter 28E of the Iowa Code) to provide secondary students access to college courses for dual-credit opportunities, as well as Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), which permit secondary students access to college course work outside the high school curriculum.¹

¹See Chapter 5, “Organization and Time,” for a discussion of organizational structures that provide increased time for high school students to take courses for college credit while attending high school.
• Review the current program-delivery systems to ensure that students have access to advanced or specialized courses through the Internet and Web technology, as well as the electronic classroom (ICN, the Iowa Communications Network).

• Develop and expand opportunities for students to combine high school learning experiences with postsecondary options. These may include on-the-job placements, summer research internships, campus visits, and student-support systems such as parental-communication programs.

• Formally request the Iowa Department of Education to initiate “The Iowa High School/University Consortium” to address the imperative of expanded institutional connections.

### Build partnerships with institutions of higher education to provide teachers and administrators at both levels with ideas and opportunities to enhance the education, performance, and evaluation of educators.

*Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*

#### Rationale

Strong connections between high school and postsecondary staffs benefit students and staff at both institutions. High schools can be no better than the teachers and administrators who staff them. These professionals prepare for their careers and pursue continuing education as students in institutions of higher education. This bond directly ties the quality of high schools to programs for training educators. The ultimate goal is to improve student performance at both the secondary and postsecondary level. Recruiting and retaining highly prepared and skilled staff must be a high priority and include comprehensive mentoring and professional development programs.

#### Actions

- Collaborate to redesign and deliver effective teacher and administrator training programs that include student teaching, job shadowing, and extensive practicums with successful practicing mentors who utilize “best practice” sites.¹

- Initiate a collaborative future teachers’ organization that regularly meets on campus, cosponsored by both high school and college faculty members.

- Require graduating college seniors to produce a comprehensive portfolio—print, video, and/or CD-ROM—that accurately reflects their knowledge, talent, and skill as a professional educator.

- Work together to develop effective, meaningful staff development programs for both institutions, and share faculty and staff in these efforts.²

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¹See Chapter 7, “Instructional Strategies,” for more information about best instructional practices.

²See Chapter 9, “Professional Development,” for an in-depth discussion of effective professional development.
• Ensure that research at postsecondary institutions focuses on issues of teaching and learning that directly affect students in elementary and secondary schools.

• Hire educators who have prepared for teaching by studying in high schools that model “best practice” and whose preparation is attained in colleges and universities whose teacher education program bears the stamp of an external accreditation agency.

**Review and align high school graduation requirements and postsecondary expectations.**

**Rationale**

A high school diploma does not completely fulfill the needs for either postsecondary education or careers in the workforce. Connections need to be made with postsecondary institutions to ensure greater student success; high school curriculum also must be designed to address the needs of students who plan for careers in the world of work. Many students entering the workforce will need additional training in postsecondary institutions to attain the increasing technology skills required in the workplace. A seamless, articulated training curriculum to meet the demands of all students is a necessity. Strategies that provide support for increasingly diverse student populations must be a priority.

A successor to the time-warped and inflexible Carnegie Unit needs to emerge. The value of equating seat time to student achievement has long expired. New and different individualized methods of instruction and subsequent assessment are necessary to meet the needs of all students. This is easily said, yet difficult to accomplish. Legislators and state boards of education need to take the initiative of reassessing existing policies and regulations that relate to this time-based measure. *Breaking Ranks* (page 48) references Oregon’s initiatives that focused on new proficiency-based admissions standards for the 2001 freshman class at the state’s seven institutions of higher education. The impact of such a change is all-encompassing and demands new and improved assessments, modified instructional delivery systems, and, above all, a commitment to aggressively respond to the learning needs of all students.

**Actions**

• Implement an internal and external standardized means of evaluating both student and staff performance and levels of success.

• Establish higher levels of expectations and assessments for the level of instruction, multi-learning options, and teaching styles at the high school.

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4See Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!” for additional discussion of diverse student populations.


6See Chapter 7, “Instructional Strategies,” and Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” for additional discussion of these topics.
• Continually assess and realign all high school curriculum and instructional elements on a regular and systematic basis.

• Work with the state Board of Education and the state Legislature to assess existing regulations relative to the Carnegie Unit; develop and offer alternatives to meet individual student needs.

• Involve all students in grades pre-K–12 in ongoing career-awareness activities.\(^7\)

• Initiate an ongoing career-planning program for all students in grades 9–12 that includes a comprehensive student-performance portfolio to be completed at the conclusion of the senior year.\(^8\)

**Establish exit-level performance standards for high school graduates.**

**Rationale**

Student performance, at all levels, is evaluated internally, as well as externally, by multiple means. High school exit-level performance standards and postsecondary entrance expectations require continual review and updating to meet the needs of society. Each secondary and postsecondary program must reflect existing societal priorities.

A means of assessing these standards needs to be developed. If standards are collaboratively formed, both institutions, as well as workforce development programs, will be more able to meet the needs of all students. Secondary and postsecondary institutions can no longer work in isolation in the development of student expectations, whether they are for academic organizations or career development programs. Both entrance and exit-level performance standards must be clear and meaningful, with outcomes designed to meet the needs of all student populations.

**Note:** See the Appendix following this report for a set of exit-level performance standards developed by Sioux City Community Schools. This model may serve as a starting point for other high schools as they review and develop their own exit-level expectations.

**Actions**

• Form appropriate committees of representative disciplines from both secondary and postsecondary schools to discuss what their governing bodies have set forth in their guiding philosophies.

• Develop a set of performance standards that express the philosophy and expectations for high school graduation requirements.\(^9\)

• Develop and align performance-expectation entrance standards for postsecondary institutions and exit-level standards for high school students.

\(^7\) See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for further discussion of the need for career awareness in grades Pre-K–8 and career planning in grades 9–12.

\(^8\) See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” and Chapter 8, “Assessment and Accountability,” for additional discussion of student portfolios.

\(^9\) See Chapter 4, “Curriculum,” for further discussion of developing performance standards.
A great deal of commitment, time, and collaboration by both organizations is needed to be successful in these efforts. Potential implications for school districts follow:

Overall Implications for Districts
• Coordinate administrative efforts between institutions.
• Implement time lines and schedules.
• Evaluate high school course content to ensure it meets college-entrance standards.
• Commit to the “best practice” concept at both secondary and postsecondary schools.
• Expand electronic equipment needs as necessary.

Implications for Staff
• Work together in shared committees of secondary and postsecondary faculty to review high school course content and development, develop exit-level performance standards for high school graduates, and develop and clarify course standards and requirements regarding college admissions.
• Maintain an open, committed spirit of cooperation, with the goal of increasing student achievement and success.

Implications for Organization and Management
• Build and strengthen collaboration between both institutions, and commit dedicated time to these tasks.

Implications for Teaching and Learning
• Base teaching and learning on best practices.
• Collaborate to create ideas and opportunities that directly affect secondary student learning and enhance the training and performance of educators.
• Expand educational opportunities through Internet and Web technology to allow fast learners to complete courses at speeds comfortable for them and slower learners to proceed at their own pace, without peer pressure.10 (This type of education will benefit alternative education students and homebound students, as well as students in need of expanded educational offerings. Internet technology can offer solutions to the increasing course demands of students.)

Implications for Resources
• Collaborate in seeking alternative financial resources to support educational opportunities.

Rhetoric must end; action must begin. Critical conditions dictate that high schools and postsecondary institutions cooperate with each other for the good of all students. Public education systems are facing greater demands and expectations than ever before. Varying conditions are emerging within both systems, most often along social and economic lines. This is a significant challenge. Flexibility and accountability for increasing the number of students that experience long-term success is crucial and must become “a way of life.”

The Iowa Department of Education must take the lead to review and modify the binding and restricting elements of the Carnegie Unit. This action is essential if Iowa is going to significantly increase its high school graduation rate and students’ level of success in postsecondary learning experiences. This, combined with close collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions, is a giant step that can and will provide opportunity for dramatically increasing success for all students.


Paul VanderWiel, Director of Secondary Education/Curriculum
Diane Fleming, Secondary Education/Language Arts Head Teacher
Brenda Horst, Secondary Education/Curriculum Administrative Assistant
Sioux City Community Schools

Note: Paul VanderWiel is currently a member of collaborative working committees with three postsecondary institutions to develop program ties, and much of the information contained in this paper is derived from these discussions.
POSTSECONDARY CONNECTIONS APPENDIX

Sioux City Community Schools Exit-Level Performance Standards

As a result of their education, all graduates will be:

1) Effective communicators who read, write, listen and respond to the messages and ideas of others, who generate ideas and relate information in various contexts, and who demonstrate fluency in written and oral English;

2) Collaborative individuals who use reasonable social, group and leadership skills to develop and manage interpersonal relationships within a variety of cultural and organizational settings;

3) Problem solvers who identify problems, use strategies and apply mathematical, logical and creative reasoning to solve problems and make responsible decisions;

4) Technological practitioners who use advanced technologies, including but not limited to the computer, to create, access, integrate and use information in a variety of contexts;

5) Resourceful/goal-oriented learners who create a positive vision for themselves and their future, view themselves as lifelong learners, set priorities and achieve goals, create options for themselves, monitor and evaluate their progress;

6) Quality workers who demonstrate a strong work ethic and create and/or appreciate intellectual, artistic, practical and physical services or products which reflect originality and high standards; and

7) Life managers who demonstrate the motivation and skills necessary to persevere, make wise decisions, and accept responsibility for actions that contribute to self and society.
For Value-Added School Districts

Arlis Swartzendruber, Superintendent
Waterloo Community Schools

School governance refers to the vision, leadership, and actions of the board of education and superintendent, functioning as a team. Governance is about stewardship of human potential. Governance roles vary from overseer, policy setter, and comptroller to visionary, provocateur, and implementer. The only common trait too rarely focused on is that of learner. Learners know that human potential is infinite.

Good governance forms a vision for youth, crafts long-range goals to raise student achievement, and improves professional development and the status of teachers. A value-added school district is one in which the academic performance of students has little or no relationship to their socioeconomic status, gender, race, or disabling conditions. Students in a value-added system exceed statistical predictors of academic success.

Productive governance of the public school systems of the 21st century is presently being reimagined, or even reinvented. Nationwide, debate of school governance is being viewed by those conducting formal research, school administrators, school board associations, school board members, and even by many in the general public, as critical for the future of public education and student achievement. Various organizations, emerging legislation, and research findings have focused on creating more effective and productive governance for public schools.

According to published studies, school boards tend to micromanage. As reported by Russell Edwards in “A Board View: Let Educators Do Their Job” (2000), if existing governing structures remain unaltered, real school improvement is impossible. Governing boards tend to treat symptoms, such as low test scores, rather than attempting to identify and solve the symptoms’ causes.

Two trends are becoming evident throughout the nation regarding school governance: 1) low voter turnout in board elections and 2) a reluctance to run as a board candidate. In addition, lines are unclear concerning the role of the board of education, the relationship with the superintendent, and the management of the organization.

The article, “Clarifying Board and Superintendent Roles” (2000), by Linda Dawson and Randy Quinn stated, “The real problem is the traditional governance culture in which most school boards try to function. The traditional process of doing board business not only allows role confusion, it causes it.” Dawson and Quinn further report that many decisions boards make are operational issues, generally prepared by the superintendent; therefore, role
confusion should not surprise anyone. They state that the board has only one employee—the superintendent. Yet, board policies are directed at all employees. The problem is that shared decision-making occurs at the operational level rather than throughout the system.

Public school governance surfaced as a topic of discussion at several recent Urban Education Network of Iowa (UEN) meetings, including the May 2000 steering committee meeting. The topic became the focus of discussion at the August 2000 UEN general meeting. While economic conditions throughout the nation are judged to be good, Iowa is facing significant challenges to properly educate all its youth and, likewise, to improve its economic conditions. The following trends all indicate the need for the best possible organizational leadership for Iowa’s public schools:

- Demographic changes and greater diversity of students
- Widening variance in students’ socioeconomic status
- An aging population with less direct connection to students
- Increasing competition from other states for college graduates, especially for educators
- A higher percentage of jobs with below-average wages awaiting graduates
- Increasing cultural (linguistic, religious, and ethnic) diversity of students
- Pockets of static, even decreasing, population growth in Iowa
- Risk of losing the perception of Iowa as a leader in attaining high student achievement

This report equates policy and governance to student achievement and proposes strategies to strengthen school board/superintendent leadership and teamwork. The strategies address three topics: 1) clarifying roles of those responsible for school governance, 2) basing governance systems on models supported by current research, and 3) implementing practices that enhance board productivity while eliminating those that do not. Rationale supports each strategy, and actions clarify steps districts can take to implement the initiatives. These changes will have important, far-reaching implications, which are outlined at the conclusion of the report.

**STRATEGY 1**

**Clarify the roles and responsibilities of various groups and individuals responsible for public school governance.**

**Rationale**
Redefining and clarifying roles and responsibilities of those involved in school governance increases the probability that the system will become value-added. The intent of effective governance is to improve student performance to the extent that traditional academic predictors of success have little or no relevance. A value-added system contributes positively to the continuous improvement of public schools and leads to greater public support and involvement in schools.
Richard Goodman and William Zimmerman Jr., in their publication, “Thinking Differently: Recommendations for 21st Century School Board/Superintendent Leadership, Governance, and Teamwork for High Student Achievement” (2000), outlined significant changes necessary for school governance. Their recommendations are the result of two major studies, the most recent funded by a Ford Foundation grant to the New England School Development Council. Goodman and Zimmerman examined the qualities needed to create and support the type of district leadership (board/superintendent team leadership) that will contribute to achieving the goals of healthy development and high achievement for every child in America. Their outline of responsibilities follows:

The Board/Superintendent Team

- Have as its top priority the creation of teamwork and advocacy for high achievement.
- Provide leadership for the development and implementation of a vision and long-range plan.
- Create strong linkages with social service, health and other community organizations.
- Set district-wide policies and annual goals, tied directly to the community’s vision and plan.
- Approve an annual school district budget.
- Ensure safe and adequate school facilities.
- Provide resources for professional development for all staff.
- Evaluate its own leadership, governance and teamwork.
- Oversee negotiations.

The Responsibilities of the Superintendent

- Serve as chief executive officer to the board, including recommending all policies and the annual budget.
- Support the board by providing good information for decision-making.
- Provide continuous leadership to ensure that the board policies and responsibilities of the board/superintendent team are addressed each day.
- Oversee the educational program.
- Take responsibility for all personnel matters.

State legislation that:

- Establishes a foundation for strong board/superintendent leadership with roles as outlined above.
- Mandates orientation programs for school board candidates and continuing education for the board/superintendent team.
- Authorizes private board/superintendent self-evaluation and team-development workshops that are not subject to open meetings laws.
• Authorizes the board to establish the annual district budget, with authority to raise the necessary local share.

• Changes financial disclosure laws (in states that have them) so that they are not a barrier to public-spirited citizens who want to serve on a school board.

In addition to the legislation outlined above, Goodman and Zimmerman recommend sweeping changes in standards, assessments, and professional development for teachers, as well as in the preparation programs for superintendents. They also recommend the creation of a National Center for School Board/Superintendent Leadership to complement the training and certification process and to work collaboratively with the American Association of School Administrators and the National School Board Association to carry out recommended reforms.

The American Association of School Administrators, in their publication, The School Administrator (2000), recommends the following actions:

**Actions**

• Clarify that the role of the board as policy makers is to set direction for the organization and that administration’s role is management of the organization according to policy.

• Develop guidelines and a process for holding board members accountable for operating at the policy level.

• Develop state and national training programs for boards and superintendents to ensure that each performs their respective roles.

**Recreate governance systems at the local level according to models supported by current research.**

**Rationale**

John Carver has moved the concept of governance theoretically beyond the recommendations outlined above. In his article, “Toward Coherent Governance” (2000), he describes a new role in which the superintendent operates like a “genuine CEO.” In his Carver Guide—Basic Principles of Policy Governance (1996), he cites ten significant and detailed principles designed to move governance to the level he describes. See Appendix A at the conclusion of this report for Carver’s list of principles.

A rather significant attempt to redefine school governance has occurred within the Urban Education Network, with the Iowa City Community School District (ICCSD) Board’s effort to increase their own effectiveness. The ICCSD is in the process of evolving new governance policies modeled on the ideas of John Carver.

The Iowa City Board believes that most superintendents have total responsibility for too many tasks. These responsibilities range from writing the board agenda
and district policies to recommending how the board should think and vote. The Board viewed their previous role as a “rubber stamp board,” or, when some board members meddled, a “micromanaging board.”

The ICCSD Board is interested in providing leadership in this area and wants to do some research, thinking, and writing for themselves. In doing so, they wish to make decisions with the superintendent. They neither want to rubber stamp nor micromanage.

Note: The following actions are practices adopted by the ICCSD, based on Carver principles.

**Actions**

- Organize board policies into four Carver categories: board governance, executive limitations, board-superintendent linkage, and ends policies.

- Devote meeting times to policy development and management information.
  
  The ICCSD Board has developed a Management Information System that calls for regular reports that are data-driven and focused on established board policies.

**Recognize and implement practices that enhance the productivity and effectiveness of school boards. Identify and eliminate practices that do not.**

**Rationale**

Small-group discussions at the August 2000 UEN meeting addressed what school boards ideally do versus what they may actually do. The discussion mirrored the many publications relative to governance to date, including those cited in this report. The intent of this discussion was to create a governance picture to use as rationale for the degree to which schools may take steps to improve local governance. Approximately 30 UEN board members and executive administrators compiled a list of best practices and nonproductive practices. See Appendix B at the end of this report for a preliminary list of these “best practices” and “nonproductive practices.”

All Iowa high schools must review and revise their districts’ governance practices, as should individual districts within the UEN. The public education system has thrived on local experimentation. There is now an opportunity to build on the achievement of each school system. Conclusions and action plans can evolve from well-informed and productive dialogue. Systems can prosper as they effect the best governance possible to address the growing complexities revolving around teaching and learning.

**Action**

- Use the Urban Education Network’s list of “Best Practices and Nonproductive Practices” (Appendix B) and other resources cited in this report as tools for recognizing and implementing best practices and eliminating those that are nonproductive.
  
  The UEN list addresses the topics of “Policies and Planning,” “Board-to-Superintendent Relationship,” “Board Interpersonal Relationships,” and “Board Operations.”
Implementing these strategies has the following potential implications:

**Overall Implications for Districts**
- Think beyond the traditional consideration of administratively prepared exhibits for board action.
- Reflect on and clarify the board of education’s role and responsibility to address student achievement.
- Ensure that the needs of students outweigh the convenience of adults.

**Implications for Staff**
- Share in decision making at the building level, while boards set policy for the district.
- Ensure that the district’s staff development, staffing patterns, and administrative duties reflect the district’s highest priorities and goals.
- Align accountability through staff evaluations, administrative job targets, performance evaluations, and school improvement plans with district goals and priorities.

**Implications for Organization and Management**
- Recognize that roles of the board and superintendent may change as responsibilities are clearly defined.
- Devise structures to obtain relevant and useful input from students to assist in the primary purpose of improved governance.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning**
- Resolve contract issues that hinder student learning.

**Implications for Resources**
- Align budget planning and actual expenditures with the goals annually established by the district.
- Ensure that annual budgets are more professionally developed and curriculum-driven than they currently are.
- Tie monetary and human resource allocations directly to productivity. Realign or discontinue less-than-effective or nonproductive programs and services.
Public school governance is a core issue school districts must examine as they transform themselves to meet new challenges. This topic must be candidly addressed by the UEN, the Iowa Association of School Boards, and the Iowa Legislature. The concept of “adding value” to the quality of the educational experience of each student begins with the values and efficient practice of local school districts’ governance structures.

The UEN is in a unique position to model effective governance and to successfully address a changing and more diverse student population.1 To demonstrate that the purpose of good governance is to provide teamwork for high student achievement, Iowa high schools must consider the recommendations outlined in this report. In addition, the timely advice contained in various Governor’s task force publications, plus the publications cited here, bear thoughtful consideration and subsequent action.


1For an in-depth discussion of diversity in the high school, see Chapter 3, “The Equitable, Diverse High School...Naturally!”
GOVERNANCE APPENDIX A

Summary of Carver’s Basic Principles of Policy Governance

Principle 1: The Trust in Trusteeship.
Boards function on behalf of identifiable ownership to which they must answer. The directors must establish, maintain, clarify, and protect its responsibilities with the “owners” of the district.

Principle 2: The Board Speaks with One Voice or Not at All.
The strength of a single voice arises from diverse viewpoints and intentions. Focus is forged from multiplicity into unity.

The governance model embodies the board’s beliefs, commitments, values, and vision. The policy categories should revolve around: a) ends, b) executive limitations, c) board-staff linkage, and d) governance process.

Principle 4: Boards Should Formulate Policy by Determining the Broadest Values Before Progressing to More Narrow Ones.
Hands-on control and policies for the larger issues establishes a foundation for detail to be carried out by others.

Principle 5: A Board Should Define and Delegate, Rather Than React and Ratify.
The act of approving forces boards to become entangled in trivia. Approval of details then “freezes” the plan for its implementers which otherwise might necessitate creative modifications due to changing conditions.

The definition of this principle is as follows: “Only those issues that directly address what benefit, which recipients beyond staff, and what cost for the benefit are ends issues.”

Principle 7: The Board’s Best Control over Staff Means Is to Limit, Not Prescribe.
By distinguishing between ends and means, the board is then able to free itself from trivia, and is able to delegate appropriately. This delegation, however, should not translate into prescribed delegation. The board can then focus on the large issues.

The board outlines its own code of conduct, the way it plans and controls its agenda, and treats its policies as commitments.

There is no relationship in the organization as important as that between the board and the superintendent. A balance of proper delegation must be attained.

Principle 10: Performance of the CEO Must Be Monitored Rigorously, but Only Against Policy Criteria.
Boards only have the right to ask about the conditions and expectations that have been described in policy. Criteria should be set, then information should be demanded.

Note: A description of these principles is outlined in the Carver Guide—Basic Principles of Policy Governance (1996).
GOVERNANCE APPENDIX B

Governance – “Best Practices” and “Nonproductive Practices”

Members of the Urban Education Network generated the following list at their August 2000 general meeting. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or conclusive. The purpose of including this summary is to provide a basis for future discussions at the local district level or at future UEN meetings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Best Practices</th>
<th>Nonproductive Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies and Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sets mission, goals and objectives</td>
<td>Ignores policy, sets policies that are too rigid, or sets too many policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews policies on a regular basis</td>
<td>Sabotages superintendent and each other with hidden agendas or surprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works together to define goals for the district, then decides together how to hold administration and board accountable for these goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board-to-Superintendent Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hires superintendent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluates superintendent based upon vision, mission, strategic plan and goals, and evaluates the district through the superintendent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serves as a sounding board for superintendent and each other in framing issues for consideration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts as an adviser to superintendent and does not attempt to do his/her job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board Interpersonal Relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusts each other</td>
<td>Shows lack of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develops and keeps an attitude of compromise</td>
<td>Individual members work outside the parliamentary framework to pursue a disagreement with full board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks as an entity, not as an individual</td>
<td>Refuses to support board consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares varied viewpoints</td>
<td>Carries personal agendas under the guise of “doing what’s best for the kids”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaves personal agendas at home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GOVERNANCE APPENDIX B continued

**Board Operations**
- Represents the underrepresented
  - Represents less than all
- Satisfied not knowing every detail
  - Micromanages issues because of customer complaints
- Lets administrators do their job
  - Involved in everyday business
- Tries to keep a focus
- Pays attention to results
- Leads, creates and maintains environment that fosters dispersed and emergent leadership
  - Sees “rubber stamping” as leadership
- Takes pride in schools
- Spends time visiting schools
- Provides answers to the community
- Communicates effectively (intra board, board-superintendent, board-community)
  - Uses media inappropriately and makes public comments that may be destructive to the district
- Respects democratic process—if an issue passes, lets it go
  - Hangs on to some issues too long
- Establishes credibility and trust for the district
- Helps build ownership
- Looks beyond vocal minority (gains knowledge and scope of situation—big picture)
  - Focuses on negatives rather than the big picture
- Interacts with other organizations and agencies
- Reads research and is well-informed
  - Comes unprepared to board meetings
- Learns about education and future trends
- Builds bridges between diverse groups and the community
- Advocates for quality education for the district and for all children (including legislative advocacy)
  - Forgets the powerless
- Synthesizes public opinion and considers this in the framework of other available information about the district when making decisions
- Promotes best possible education at the best price
- Functions as fiscal steward
- Complies with state and federal law
- Holds realistic expectations for staff in light of resources