

# Restoring Iowa's World Class Education System

by Jonathan R. Narcisse  
September, 2010

Iowa's public and private education system evolved as a gift to our children. An agrarian state, the eldest son was most often named heir to our land and lifelong labor. To our other children, we gifted the best education we could provide them at the elementary, secondary and post secondary levels.

For this reason we created not only our free and public k-12 systems, but we created one of the most extensive networks of private colleges, per capita, in the world.

All Iowa's children might not receive land at our passing. They would receive "an Iowa education."

Iowa is a compulsory education state. Throughout Iowa the consequences to parents, unless they have means to afford private or home schooling, is severe if they fail to enroll their child in a public school district. This level of class stratification places a more significant burden on the state to create an accountable education system, and to mandate accuracy, adequacy, and accountability from Iowa's taxpayer financed centers of learning.

Unfortunately, slavish devotion to "No Child Left Behind" and the irresponsible pursuit of "Race to the Top" funds has diminished the excellence of education in our state in general, and placed in peril urban education in Iowa.



Iowa has approximately 250 rural school districts with fewer than 1,000 students. Not a single one of those districts is a "District in Need of Assistance" or officially failing. In contrast, all eight of Iowa's urban school districts are "Districts in Need of Assistance" or officially failing. In our state's ten largest cities - Ames, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Iowa City, Sioux City, Waterloo and West Des Moines - 100% of the high schools are

"Schools in Need of Assistance" or officially failing, and 95% of the middle schools are "Schools in Need of Assistance" or officially failing.

"With few exceptions, politicians, educators, even major media have treated "The State Report Card for No Child Left Behind" findings as insignificant, as if this is just a political document void of consequence. The reality is the officially failing status carries with it devastating consequences to Iowa's urban education.

## The three most significant impacts of NCLB are:

1. Iowa's districts and schools in need of assistance have moved to "teaching the test" strategies, resulting in less relevant instruction. Instead of educating students, our schools have become focused on surviving the political gauntlet created by No Child Left Behind.

2. The human resource infrastructure of our "districts and schools in need of assistance" is being savaged by this law. Great teachers and administrators are

constantly told they are failing, and that their jobs are in jeopardy, demoralizing the system.

3. The diminished emphasis on real education has resulted in the loss of many of our very bright students. The more our schools adapt instruction to survive "No Child Left Behind," the more we see the dreams of our students crushed under the weight of this reckless and irresponsible legislation.

**"No Child Left Behind" should be replaced in Iowa by responsible exit criteria:**

1. Are Iowa students leaving our schools with a high probability of life long success?
2. Are Iowa students leaving our schools with the ability to be gainfully employed?
3. Are Iowa students leaving our schools with the ability to succeed in a post academic environment?
4. Are Iowa students leaving our schools with the ability to acquire new skills as the needs arise?
5. Are Iowa students leaving our schools with the ability to compete in the global marketplace?
6. Are Iowa students leaving our schools for lives of social crisis, chemical dependency, reckless and self-destructive lifestyles, etc...?
7. Are Iowa's students leaving our schools only to leave our state believing there is no future for them here?

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It could be argued Iowa once had the best public education system in the world. There is no reason our state cannot again lay claim to having the world's best public education system.

**There are four major policy changes that are vital:**

1. We must opt out of "No Child Left Behind!" It is destroying our ability to actually educate students as identified above.

2. We need to allow educators to decide how to spend education dollars, rather than mandate strict areas for spending. Does it really make sense for a school completed less than three years ago to add on a \$57 million addition simply because that \$57 million cannot be used to educate students, pay teachers, or purchase academic supplies?

3. Dollars must begin following students to the academic center of the parents' choosing, with the exception of home schooling and ministry based education. In those instances there would be a \$4,500 per child tax credit. This is not an extreme concept. Money already follows the student. If a student open enrolls from West Des Moines to Waukee, the money follows the child to the district of the parents' choosing. Then it gets absorbed by the bureaucracy and never truly arrives in the classroom.

4. Education dollars must be spent in pursuit of education, not in service to the system. Paying teachers \$80,000 – 90,000, on average, will upgrade the caliber of teachers in the classroom, which is a must. As an aggregate, teachers are amongst the lowest-achieving college graduates in America. With real compensation we would be able to compete for the students that currently become accountants, engineers, doctors and lawyers. Under our proposal, teachers could easily make \$100,000 or more, provided they bring excellence to the classroom.

Bad teachers would be dismissed as parents move their children to classrooms able to meet parental expectations and high academic standards.

## "World Class Plus Restoration Plan"

- I. Reorganization of Iowa's Education Apparatus**
- II. Alignment of Iowa's Instructional Mission**
- III. Integration of Iowa's Academic and Non-Academic Infrastructure**
- IV. Restoration of Academic Entrepreneurship and Innovation**
- V. Advancing Core Principles of Parental, Community and Student Accountability**

## **I. Reorganization of Iowa's Education Apparatus**

The first step in restoring a world class plus education system in Iowa is eliminating the waste and inefficiencies of our current state, regional and local education apparatus by replacing it with a single "Iowa Department of Education" that will serve as a comprehensive streamlined bureaucratic/administrative confederation.

## **A New Iowa Department Of Education**

**A. Collapse Iowa's several department level education bureaucracies** - Education, Regents, Cultural Affairs and College Student Aid Commission - into a single education bureaucracy. This would result in significant savings for taxpayers by ending administrative duplication and creating synergy in the delivery of education services through Iowa's education apparatus. The Director of Cultural Affairs, the Chancellor of Regents, and the Chief of the Iowa Education Confederation would answer directly to the governor. The head of the division of College Student Aid would be subordinate to the Iowa Education Confederation Chief.

1. Merge all Iowa's division and bureau level education bureaucracies, i.e., the Department of Management's Iowa Community Empowerment and the Department of Human Right's Iowa College Leadership Forum, into the

new Iowa Department of Education. Again, this not only allows significant reductions in administrative costs but creates synergy in the delivery of education services through an improved Iowa education apparatus.

The degree portion of community college education would be subordinate to our Regents leadership.

2. The Iowa School for the Deaf and the Iowa Braille School would be disjoined from The Regents and assigned to the appropriate tier of our Iowa Education Confederation. The Regents Universities would retain their unique identities and classic missions but they would be merged administratively and headed by a Chancellor of Regents who would replace the multiple presidents at our state universities and community colleges.

This would result in an enhanced, more potent, more prestigious university and college system for our state.

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## The Iowa Education Confederation

### **B. The Iowa Education Confederation would serve as the mechanism to support pre-K to 14 education in Iowa.**

To this end a more formal merging of Community Colleges and pre-K to 12 education would take place along with collapsing the bureaucratic functions of school districts into regional support associations. The original purpose of the Area Education Associations was simple - to serve as collaborative support associations.

In 1950 Iowa had 4,652 school districts but it did not have 4,652 bureaucracies. Principals and teachers were instructional leaders, school boards did their jobs, and County Superintendents played their part as strong administrators. By the mid 70s the Area Education Associations were born. Today, the role of these associations has been undermined, but the original purpose is just as valid.

### **1. The first tier of the Iowa Education Confederation would be the Division of pre-K to 14 Education within the Iowa Department of Education.**

The primary role of this division would be to ensure compliance with the law and accountability to the expenditure and the result. Beyond that the current functions of the Department of Education would be decentralized and transferred to the regional support associations.

### **2. The second tier of the Iowa Education Confederation would be the regional support associations or the Area Education Associations.**

They would be restored to their original mission and create bureaucratic efficiency allowing the collapsing of core bureaucratic, administrative and support functions at the school district and community college level. In other words Iowa's school districts, Area Education Associations and community colleges would have their payroll functions, record keeping,

and more, collapsed into the Area Education Associations. Certain functions, such as cutting payroll checks, would be housed in a single office. Other services, like media resources and printing, would be regionalized.

Wal-Mart dwarfs the Iowa education system. It has a 15 member board and its headquarters are located in Bentonville, Arkansas. There is no justification in the 21st Century for every school district to have a payroll clerk, and similar administrative functionaries.

Under our plan, education is much more locally controlled than now. Small towns keep their teachers and students and the dollars that follow them. What we don't do is waste hundreds of millions on duplicative administrative and support services, better spent paying teachers responsibly and educating students effectively.

In addition to traditional administrative services the Area Education Associations would provide technical support in areas like technology, curriculum development, etc...There would also be a "Best Practices Ombudsman" whose primary job would be to find best practices in Iowa and elsewhere and share those findings with our state's schools and educators.

### **3. The third tier of the Iowa Education Confederation would be District Schools. District Schools would have certain advantages, such as access to Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (P.P.E.L.) dollars.**

Districts could still employ superintendents and central administration for academic purposes but a minimum of 90% of the money generated by school districts would have to be spent at the building level. The day of three principals and a superintendent in districts the size of elementary schools must end. So in addition to requiring a high percentage to be spent at the building level, ratios of students to administrators must be established.

With the enhancement of regional support associations, townships, cities, counties and feeder tracks, along with existing school districts, would be allowed to consolidate, maintain their current status or emancipate. Russell or Norway would be able to re-open their schools if the community presented a viable operational plan. Cities and counties could establish school districts and emancipate their schools from existing merged districts. Feeder tracks would also be able to emancipate from their existing districts.

This simply means the schools feeding the high school from the middle and elementary school levels within our urban centers would be able to become independent school districts. In Des Moines, Roosevelt has students flow from Callanan and Merrill at the Middle School level, and King and Edmunds and Greenwood at the elementary level. So all the schools in that feeder track could emancipate on a vote from the residents within those school boundaries and form a new district.

Once upon a time, Iowa had nearly 5,000 school districts and the best public education system on the planet. Today our rural schools are struggling due to a "shortage" of resources and our urban schools are trapped in the nightmare known as "No Child Left Behind." By streamlining the bureaucracy, we allow education in Iowa to become local, independent, innovative and engaging once again. Fewer students get put on busses and shipped across the state. Parents are closer to education and can be more engaged.

### **4. The fourth tier of the Iowa Education Confederation would be Independent Academic Academies.**

A core policy change we recommend is allowing the money to follow the child to the academic center of the parent's choosing whether to a district school or an Independent Academic Academy, with our two exceptions intact.

Each Independent Academic Academy would be required to file a plan with the state detailing how it will address instruction and development of proficiency in core academic areas - reading, math, science, history, etc...and what its unique academic mission is; how it will address instruction in that area and the measurements to determine mastery of the unique academic mission.

For example if a community collaborative developed an International Business and Diplomacy Academy one of the measurements might be mastery of German, Chinese and Japanese by graduation. The first tier of our Confederation would make sure the school spent the money properly. It would make sure students were proficient in core areas like reading and math. But it would also hold the school accountable by independently confirming compliance with the unique academic mission.

The Iowa School for the Deaf and the Iowa Braille School are assigned to this tier because a compelling argument can be made these students might be better served if competition for the vast dollars they generate was opened. For example if Gallaudet University, the world's preeminent deaf school of higher learning, were allowed to compete for those dollars, would it do a better job than the Iowa School for the Deaf?

Could the Central Iowa Center for Independent Living form a board of directors and collaborate to better serve their target population than our current government schools do? In speaking with the agency's director, he indicated they certainly could, given the same dollars the public schools receive for those students.

**[Note: The savings realized by the above measures are significant. The elimination of more than 12,000 duplicative positions from Regents through K-12 and the state bureaucracies result in savings up to one billion dollars.]**

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## Frontloading Iowa's Schools

**C. Frontloading Iowa's education system is a timely and necessary measure to accelerate the learning process. It will give us a competitive advantage** as a state, and it will benefit our students individually. The concept is a simple one. Most Iowa students will benefit from starting their formal education at three instead of five; not just pre-school or head start, but fully engaged, age appropriate instruction. The nature of this will be addressed in our next section.

To pay for this, we eliminate the last two years of high school through our traditional schools - years we now know, under our current system, are all but wasted. Before we allocate the dollars to the front end, however, we move our 16 and 17 year olds into a flexible academic environment embedded in our community college structure.

This, again, is not a giant leap. In the fall of 2009 ,26,111 high school students were enrolled in our community colleges.

The cost to educate a community college student in Iowa is a fraction of what it cost to educate a junior or senior high school student in Iowa. The savings are used to fully fund education for three and four year olds. This allows us to both continue the education of our older students in a more flexible and relevant environment, while engaging our students in meaningful instruction when they turn three.

### The Genesis Of Our Frontloading Proposal

In the fall of 2001, an unprecedented examination of education in Iowa was initiated by the "State of Black Iowa Initiative." **On September 4, 2001, Dr. George Jackson, Dean for Recruitment and Outreach, Iowa State University,** completed his commissioned task to develop a questionnaire that would serve as the foundation for surveying school districts and colleges throughout Iowa. His effort yielded 25 questions focused on students, parents and staffing in Iowa education.



Then on September 21, 2001, educators from around the state, representing all aspects of education from early childhood education to graduate education, assembled. One of the outcomes was the 16 page questionnaire that would be provided to every school district in Iowa and every college - public and private - in the state. It examined issues ranging from parent participation to staffing efficiencies.

Over the following weeks, one, two and three day hearings were conducted in a dozen cities throughout Iowa. Many significant developments came out of this process, including legislation endorsed by both the state's NAACP and the rural legislative caucus, and a collaboration with the White House and the U.S. Department of Education.

One of the key developments, however, was the creation of a Feasibility Study Group to Examine Frontloading education in Iowa.

The primary purpose of this group was to study the feasibility of frontloading Iowa's education system.

### The questions were simple:

Would students be better served by advancing the start of access to public education by two years or by a year?

Would frontloading improve academic performance? If so, how do we pay for it?

Part of the examination was to determine if it made sense to utilize the community college structure to complete years 16-17? The question was also asked: Do we need to develop a pre-k2 through 16 approach to educating Iowa's students?

Other feasibility issues included costs, facilities, transportation, political consideration, etc. Would frontloading be an option primarily available in urban centers or throughout all of Iowa? What are the curriculum and instruction issues involved?

The Study Group consisted of two key committees. The first examined feasibility issues. The second examined curriculum and instruction issues. While group one examined feasibility issues as their primary charge, e.g., costs, facility requirements, integration of high school with community colleges, group two was required to stay within the universe of realistic and fiscal responsibility.

For example, it might be nice for every three year old to begin multiple language instruction, but how does this get implemented? That's not to say it couldn't happen, but simply to suggest a course of action without providing insight into how to accomplish it was not allowed. So while group two focused on curriculum and instruction issues, it was also a feasibility group.

*The groundbreaking work from this effort formed the foundation for today's recommendations, although major tweaking has taken place since the group first convened.*

**One of the key questions asked was: "Would Iowa's students be better off if they were educated from 3-15 or 5-17?"**

The near unanimous answer was 3-15. So we commissioned a group to study it. Efforts by other groups, such as the Urban Education Network's "Re-Inventing High School" initiative, provided additional evidence that our examination was timely.

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## Composition of the Committees

### The following individuals were members of the Feasibility Study and Curriculum Committee:

**Ruth Ann Gaines, Minister of Education of the State of Black Iowa Initiative Education Initiative, technically chaired both committees, and as President of the State of Black Iowa Initiative, Jonathan Narcisse served as the facilitator.**

### Committee #1: Feasibility Group

1. Ted Stilwill, Director  
Iowa Department of Education
2. Dr. Evelyn Anderson, Chief Bureau of Community Colleges  
Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Preparation  
Iowa Department of Education
3. Mary Beth Schroeder Fracek, Administrative Consultant  
Special Programs  
Iowa Department of Education
4. Dennis Dykstra, Administrative Consultant for Finance  
Special Programs  
Iowa Department of Education
5. Rich Varn, Director  
Department Information Technology
6. Dr. Glenn Pelecky, Executive Director  
Mississippi Bend AEA 9
7. Aaron Green, Student Services Facilitator  
Cedar Rapids School District
8. Howard Hunigan, Deputy Superintendent  
Davenport School District
9. Eric Witherspoon, Superintendent  
Des Moines School District
10. Linda Lane, Chief Operations Officer  
Des Moines School District

11. Graham Gillette, School Board Member  
Des Moines School District  
Gillette Strategic Resources
12. Thomas Determan  
Dubuque School District
13. Dr. David Haggard, Superintendent  
Ft. Dodge School District
14. Dr. Lane Plugge, Superintendent  
Iowa City School District
15. Dr. Linda Madison, Asst. Superintendent  
Sioux City School District
16. Dr. Dewitt Jones, Superintendent  
Waterloo School District
17. Dr. Beverly Smith, Associate Superintendent for Human Resources  
Waterloo School District
18. Dr. David England, President/CEO  
Des Moines Area Community College
19. Dr. Charlie Bruner, Executive Director  
Child & Family Policy Center of Iowa
20. Paul Hedquist, Executive Director  
Employee & Family Resources
21. Dr. Hal Chase, Educator & President of the Bank Corp. Farmers & Merchants State Bank
22. David Oman, Executive Director  
Iowa Child Institute
23. Ronald M. Rice, Executive Director  
Iowa Association of School Boards
24. Sam Carrell, Executive Director  
Advocate for the Question: Is it good for the kids?
25. Lois Tate, Iowa/Nebraska NAACP Youth Director & ACT-SO Coordinator  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Appointee
26. Mary Lynn Jones  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Appointee
27. Dr. David England, President  
Des Moines Area Community College

### Committee #2: Curriculum and Instruction

1. Dave Winans, Bureau Chief  
Instructional Services  
Iowa Department of Education
2. Penny Milburn, Consultant  
Early Childhood Development  
Iowa Department of Education
3. Jesse Rassmussen, Director  
Iowa Department of Human Services
4. Anita Walker, Director  
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
5. Dr. Wayne Rand, Executive Director  
Heartland AEA 11
6. Jean Davidson, Program Facilitator K12  
Social Studies  
Cedar Rapids School District
7. Ethelene Boyd, Lincoln Fundamental School (1st Grade Teacher)  
Davenport School District
8. Dr. Thomas Drake, Executive Director  
Middle & High School Programs  
Des Moines School District
9. Dr. Judi Cunningham, Executive Director  
Early Childhood & Elementary Programs  
Des Moines School District
10. Thomas Simmons, Principal  
King Elementary  
Des Moines School District
11. Nancy Duey, Head Start Coordinator  
for DMPS  
Des Moines School District
12. Margaret Borgen, Ex-President of Des Moines School Board  
Des Moines School District
13. Diane Muir, Early Elementary Education  
Dubuque School District
14. Judge Brown, Equity Director of F.D. Schools & ICCS  
Ft. Dodge School District
15. Marian Coleman, Equity Director  
Iowa City School District
16. Marilyn Charging, Equity Director  
Sioux City School District
17. Dr. John Van Pelt, Associate Superintendent for Educational Services  
Waterloo School District
18. Robert Tyson, Principal  
Central Middle High School  
Waterloo School District
19. Jacquie Easley, Human Resources Director  
American Republic Insurance
20. Dr. Carline Phillips  
Education Consultant
21. Susie Olesen, School Improvement Director  
Iowa Association of School Boards
22. David Payer, CEO  
Online Media Network of Iowa
23. Dr. Beth Jorgenson, English Professor  
Iowa State University
24. Dr. George Jackson, Dean for Recruitment and Outreach  
Iowa State University
25. Christine Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Elementary Educator  
Iowa Commission on Latino Affairs
26. Joel Obleton, Pres. of Dav. Branch NAACP; Transfer Center Counselor at Blackhawk College  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Appointee
27. Tom Andersen, Consultant for Equity and School Improvement  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Appointee
28. Beth Beals Walling  
Iowa Program for Infant & Toddler Caregivers

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## II. Alignment of Iowa's Instructional Mission

One of the foundational problems with Iowa education is the lack of communication, particularly following our students or educators.

The institutions that train our teachers have poor communication with the districts that hire them. At the same time elementary schools communicate poorly with middle schools, who communicate poorly with high schools, who communicate poorly with our state colleges and universities. Meanwhile our school districts complain about teacher preparation, while our colleges complain students are entering poorly prepared.

Beyond that, Iowa does not have a comprehensive education philosophy or vision. This section proposes the first half of a bolder vision for Iowa's education mission, and applies primarily to student matriculation from the womb to life long learning and success.

### Parental Support

**A. Parental responsibility and accountability are essential to academic success.** Unfortunately too many of our parents are found wanting. Our first investment, therefore, is in providing \$50 to \$75 million in resources to work with parents of children from zero to three years old. This effort will cover areas ranging from proper nutrition to the impact of reading to a child.

It would also support the creation of parent universities.

### Frontloading With Purpose

**B. We make a serious investment in three and four year education by frontloading the system instead of backloading it.** We are much more likely to engage and keep a child early on then to reclaim an older

student we've lost. But it is not enough to have our students in class at three and four. We must engage them in the type of instruction that truly enhances their academic experience throughout their school years and serves as a foundation for life long learning and success.

The four pillars of this early childhood academic experience are art instruction, music instruction, language instruction and physical fitness. We know if we teach art, music and languages to healthy children at three and four we not only will yield more well rounded and able citizens but we will cultivate much better scientists and mathematicians.

This initiative truly places Iowa on the path to restoring a world class plus education system.

Another benefit from this level of aggressive instruction at such an early age is that it saves potentially \$500 million to \$750 million annually on child care expenses in Iowa.

### The Foundational Years

**C. From five to fifteen, we focus on foundational academic instruction, such as reading, math, science, history, geography, etc.** We introduce a number of key paradigm shifts:

1. We move from age grade progression to skill based progression. It is irresponsible to know third graders left in June at different points of academic proficiency, but to treat them in September at the start of fourth grade as if they are all on the same page in the text book.

2. We move from rigid traditional instruction designed to introduce rote conditioning to the masses, to exploring multiple methods of instruction, i.e., hands on learning, interactive instruction, project based learning, as opposed to just sitting at a desk and being lectured for eight hours.

3. We move from disconnected instruction to relevance based education, i.e., a group of 11 year old boys might struggle with 96 divided by 16, but they can calculate Adrian Peterson's yards per carry average or Albert Pujol's slugging percentage.

4. We move from traditional grades to requiring that students master essential skills and concepts. To go along with this, we move from viewing mastery of theory as the ultimate academic achievement to prioritizing the ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge in relevant settings. In our current system, we give the student the A+ that can tell us how to start a fire with two rocks, but shouldn't we value even more a student's ability to actually start a fire with rocks?

5. We move from "teaching the test" curriculum back to meaningful academic instruction. This also requires that we get away from our current bubble test base to using authentic measures and assessments. When we use these, it

is so we can determine where students are and what they need to maximize their academic potential; not as a class stratification tool.

6. We value development of the whole person. This means we engage students in physical activity, and introduce them to multiple thought skills - constructive, synthetic, analytical. We cultivate their appreciation for art, music and culture. And we challenge them to be functional members of the 21st century, which means we push them in areas like the sciences. We have an opportunity in Iowa to produce renaissance learners. We should accept no less.

### Flexible Instruction

**D. At this point our 16 and 17 year olds move to a more flexible structure embedded within our community colleges, offering a strong vocational/technical education path, or intense college preparation and an early A.A. degree option.** This approach recognizes several key factors:

1. Older students do better when they start school later and have flexibility in their scheduling.

2. All students are not going to go to college. In a state, particularly in our urban areas, where we struggle to graduate students from high school, it is unwise not to provide academic instruction, such as technical schooling, that will allow them to be gainfully employed upon high school graduation.

3. Our current pre-k to 12 system is not designed to do remediation. Currently our community colleges are required to bring students up to speed in staggering numbers because our graduates are entering post-secondary education lacking minimal academic skills. By doing it this way remediation doesn't become a disruptive factor in our community college classrooms.

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## II. Alignment of Iowa's Instructional Mission (continued)

4. Our current high schools too often cannot provide bright students what they need, so they end up going to an area community college for instruction. In the fall of 2009, Iowa claimed 74,718 students were enrolled as juniors and seniors. This is a dubious figure, but for the sake of our point we'll accept it. In the fall of 2009, 26,111 high school students were concurrently enrolled in our state's community colleges.

5. A number of high paying jobs, e.g., welder, don't require a college education. They require skill proficiency and competence. Students can leave high school competent in the high paying skilled trades. At the same time, we create a clear path to affordable post-secondary education for every Iowa high school graduate.

### Free College Education

**E. We will provide a free college education to Iowa students at Iowa's Regents Universities, or a comparable cash match to a private school in Iowa, if they give us "40 hours of community service and stay in the state one year for every year of education we pay for."** This goes a long way towards addressing one of our gravest issues - the brain drain.

At the end of the 102nd Congress, on January 3, 1993, Iowa had six members in the U.S. House of Representatives - Jim Leach, Jim Nussle, Dave Nagle, Neal Smith, Jim Ross Lightfoot and Fred Grandy. On January 4, 2013, Iowa will send a four member delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives. This loss of congressional representation speaks powerfully to our population plight.

If we can keep our students in the Iowa three or four years, we will keep

many of them in Iowa for three to four decades.

There are two other huge benefits to this:

1. Iowa families with college age students will get to keep potentially one billion to one and a quarter billion per year in their coffers.

2. Our college graduates will enter the world with little or no college debt, which means they can pursue equity credit right away. These young people, coupled with our rural and urban revitalization campaigns, will be able to acquire very inexpensive home ownership because they won't leave school owing \$50,000 to \$100,000.

### True Community Schools

**F. Community Schools are a key part of what we propose. Opening our schools early in the a.m. for things like fitness classes and tutoring, and closing them late at night after adult education and computer training will transform communities.** In many countries, schools operate nearly 24 hours and are centers of empowerment for adults and youth alike. With the money saved by gutting excess bureaucracy, this becomes a very affordable option for schools and a way to transform the economies of our growing impoverished communities in Iowa.

With community schools, child care becomes less necessary, juvenile crime goes down, recreation and socialization for youth and adults late afternoon and early evenings becomes much more affordable, etc.

## III. Integration of Iowa's Academic and Non-Academic Infrastructure

Iowa's education system plays a key role in our day to day lives.

Yet there is a lack of true integration of academic and non-academic infrastructure. As a result, we lose a great deal of potential because we have loose associations instead of well defined collaborations.

To remedy this, we define the integrations in one of two ways - host and supportive. Host integrations are where the academic institution is the base of operation. Supportive is where the academic contribution is embedded in the social or governmental institution.

### A. Host Integrations

There are four areas where our academic institutions will serve as hosts to the integrations:

1. In order to improve government, public official training academies would be based at our community colleges and regents institutions. These would be independent efforts designed to train elected officials, members of boards and commissions and high level bureaucrats on their fiduciary responsibilities and the legal mandates of their office. School Board members being trained by Superintendents; City Council members being trained by City managers, etc., hasn't worked.

Do state board and commission members really understand their responsibilities? Do legislators know their job, other than doing what their leadership tells them? We can blame the Culver administration for not firing Lynn Walding, but what responsibility did the government oversight committee have prior to the story breaking in the press? This is also true with the Iowa Association of School Boards.

2. Research and development is a vital part of the academic mission of our

state funded colleges and universities. If taxpayers foot the bill, taxpayers should reap the rewards much like residents of Alaska receive oil dividends.

There are several areas where our academic institutions will host research integrations but one of the key ones should be in the area of developing clean, alternative energies and technologies to take advantage of the practical application of those energies. This integration would absorb a core part of the mission of the Office of Energy Independence. The portion not absorbed would be eliminated.

3. Small Business Development is another area where our academic institutions are the logical choice to serve as the integration host. While our administration's overall economic development strategy does not provide cash grants to businesses it does prioritize providing technical support, advice, guidance, legal support, etc., to entrepreneurs in Iowa. Of course this wouldn't be as necessary if the government wasn't one of the leading causes of why small businesses struggle and fail.

# Restoring Iowa's World Class Education System



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## III. Integration of Iowa's Academic and Non-Academic Infrastructure (continued)

4. Iowa's academic centers have wonderful cultural venues and resources. We need to celebrate and utilize them more fully. We also need to create collaborations where our communities take greater advantage of the cultural opportunities found on our academic campuses.

4. Perhaps one of the most potent supportive integrations would take place in the area of health. Iowa's 99 county health system is really designed to react to health crisis, or to advance medical options to a healthier community, such as immunizations. What these departments lack, however, are strong health,

## B. Supportive Integrations

1. Culture is also on this list. Iowa's academic centers have students, staff and programs that can seamlessly be integrated with community theater, art in the park, community concerts and plays, art displays, etc...

2. Recreation offers wonderful opportunities for supportive integrations, especially if we create community schools in Iowa. A truly visionary approach to this could lead to a more club sport culture in our schools where all students engage in constructive athletic competition, not just the jocks. Other aspects of recreation could also be explored, such as collaborations to create youth clubs and community-based recreational adventures.

3. Communiversities were very popular in urban areas at one point. They didn't catch on in Iowa as much, but in collaboration with our academic centers, hundreds of these could exist in community centers, schools, churches, parks and neighborhoods. They could focus on instruction as simple as a class in a local church kitchen teaching members how to make better BBQ sauces to website design instruction.

Learning should never end. But, unfortunately in our society it does too often – we become too singularly focused on paying off debt and working to pay taxes, that learning and growing takes a back seat.



fitness and nutrition components. This is where the supportive integration comes in.

We take the health and nutrition components that currently thrive in our extension service and embed them in the county health departments. This truly transforms county health service delivery and it also makes more effective and relevant the wonderful resources of the extension service.

## IV. Restoration of Academic Entrepreneurship and Innovation

True innovation would revolutionize our schools. Not only should we let the money follow the student, but if a person is licensed to teach in Iowa, they would be able to compete for education dollars.

Imagine what would happen if we allowed education collaboratives to open schools of fine arts, and business academies, and advanced science academies, because the thousands of dollars of state and local funding could now go to those places where a parent wanted the child to attend school. This is how true competition fuels excellence and innovation at the highest levels.

## A. Educators can compete for dollars directly as individuals or education collaboratives.

Mrs. Smith has 25 students in a classroom. Each student generates \$10,000 in state and local funds, totaling \$250,000 for the classroom. Under our current system, that teacher might make \$45,000 and the rest of the resources get swept away. Under our system, she would be able to compete for the students and for each student that followed, so would the money.

Let's say Mrs. Smith gets 20 students to follow her. That would be \$200,000. She could pay herself \$90,000, pay a second teacher \$60,000 and still have money left over to pay for space, supplies, technology and cut the ratio of students to adults in half.

## B. Parents, universities, industry concerns could initiate an academic center in collaboration with a college, school district, an education collaborative or educator.

The impact of this is limited only to the imagination of the schools founders and the educators. Schools of Performing Arts, Advanced Academic Academies, Science and Business Schools, etc...would populate the education landscape, but they would also challenge our existing school districts to become lean and compete or die.



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## V. Advancing Community, Student And Parental Accountability

Systemic reforms are essential to fixing Iowa's education system but there are three areas where our bureaucrats and politicians are not responsible - community, student and parent accountability. Politicians rarely talk about these three areas of accountability because no funds need to be appropriated to fix them. We, however, address all three below:

### A. Community Accountability

1. Establish community standards and expectations: The failure of our youth is not due to a lack of system accountability. It has much more to do with our diminished values and expectations. We must re-establish them.
2. Life long learning: Life long learning and adult education must become part of our education strategies.
3. Participation: The community must get involved in the academic life of our children. This includes the creation of initiatives outside the school setting.
4. Accountability: The community must hold the education establishment, the parents, the students and other key parties accountable to the success of the student.
5. Standing in: Many of our students don't have parents that will fight for them, or even a committed adult in their life. We must stand in for that child. The extended family is nothing new. We've just abandoned it.



6. Door-to-door: If we are going to reach parents, the kids, the community, the church, educators, civic leaders, then those of us who care must do more than talk and meet. We must seek out precinct by precinct door knocking to bring this directly to Iowans.

### B. Student Learner Accountability

1. Expectations: We must develop high expectations for students if they are to achieve.
2. Support and Resources: Students must have both the resources and the support to achieve.
3. Consequences: Children desire boundaries and expectations. If they do not apply themselves or strive there must be consequences. Our kids are bright, talented and able. Letting them fail does not serve us or them, and they require no less from us, than to push them towards excellence.
4. Prioritization: Students that master the entire Guitar Hero library struggle with the alphabet. Students that memorize playbooks and rap songs can't read, write or compute. We must help them to place a renewed value on academic success in a way that ranks it with athletic prowess or entertainment success.
5. Purpose and Vision: The major priority in the life of too many of our youth is to become an entertainer. Whether on the field, the stage, or the Octagon, their vision is often limited to the claps, cheers or laughs they receive. Excellence beyond

- these areas must become part of the effective vision promoted for our youth.
6. Respect: We must teach our kids to respect themselves, their peers, their elders, authority and Iowa's legacy of academic excellence.
7. The Peer Advocate Initiative: This is a three pronged effort to engage peer leadership in helping their fellow students succeed academically, socially and in other key ways.
8. Recognition of Excellence: Many Iowa students are achieving at the highest levels. We must strive to recognize their excellence in the best possible ways, allowing their successes to get swallowed up in system traps like "No Child Left Behind."
9. Stop the Brain Drain: We must seek creative ways to prevent the loss of many of our best and brightest from the state of Iowa.

### C. Parental Accountability

The Single Most Important Factor In A Child's Academic Success

Throughout this plan we have proposed to reform a broken education system. But it's not the solution to the crisis affecting Iowa's kids. The breakdown of the family, values and standards have created our current situation. And only the reconstruction of our families and the reclaiming of our values and standards will get us out of this mess. At some point the shame associated with our lack of responsibility became the guilt of those who call for accountability. Two people who enter into the sacred covenant of creating life ought to invest the time, energy and effort to create a lasting bond. They owe their child/children no less. They ought to plan to provide for the child financially, emotionally, spiritually, culturally, etc...Parents make the difference. They, next to faith, are the most important part of a child's life. Yet in 2010 the proponents of the two parent home are vilified, while the reckless procreation of life, or the aborting, thereof, is considered normal, acceptable, even reasoned behavior.

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## V. Advancing Community, Student And Parental Accountability (continued)

We ought to be outraged that our children can't read, write, or compute at acceptable levels. We ought to be outraged at the ongoing and systemic abuses in our current education system. The lack of accountability in education in Iowa should set us ablaze.

The behavior of our teens ought to also cause us to burn with shame, guilt and outrage! Teen drug and alcohol use is rampant and teen sex is the norm. Even amongst the children of our state's most powerful so called leadership. We ought to be incensed over this. Some kids get pregnant. Others avoid pregnancy, or abort life. It's all wrong!

Many parents are clueless. In our Sioux City hearing, we learned of a 12 year old girl that had sex with more than a half dozen men. She wasn't even a teen. Her mom was so out of touch with her daughter she thought she was a virgin, until she was informed by a youth worker who knew her daughter better than she did. We can't blame schools or the youth worker for this family's issues. Yet the hunt continues for a social program to nurture the madness. Discussion of family accountability is taboo, and under no circumstances are we to say, "you're behavior is unacceptable."

Iowans spend between \$8 to \$15 billion (depending on whose numbers you use) getting high, medicating, or in some other way servicing their chemical dependencies. The state's appropriation for education is dwarfed by our funding of our addictions. What's wrong with this picture? Have we become so selfish that our need for immediate gratification is more important than our children?

Turn on the television in your local community. The school board meeting isn't well attended. Visit your local school. Parents are not investing meaningful time as partners in the education of their

children. In too many communities, the school, has become cheap babysitting; the teacher, the surrogate parent. We expect, without the authority to adequately discipline our children, the educator to raise them.

Our teachers can no longer focus on education. Today the school must feed our kids, instill character and values and monitor the emotional, psychological, and physical harm done to them by unfit, uncaring parents. The school has become responsible for so many areas of the child's life that time to cultivate academic excellence is non-existent. And even when a child doesn't need the extra attention, so many other kids in the class do, that the teacher has little time left to cultivate excellence in our best and brightest students.

### So here's what we propose as a start:

1. We must praise, not condemn the value of mothers and fathers, yoked and laboring to raise and nurture their children. We must regain our shame at reckless behavior in general, and irresponsible parenting, in particular.

2. We must strive to create clean and sober communities. We must move beyond the commodification of crisis as our chief economic empowerment strategy. Prisons, county jails and gambling dens don't build wealth or uplift Iowans. They diminish Iowans, and drain vital Iowa resources. We must also treat the sickness of immediate gratification.

3. We enjoy the life we have because our parents and grandparents sacrificed. We must do no less to build a bright future for our children.

4. We must develop partnerships where all the caring, committed adults in our children's lives who are on the same page. Parents need to raise their children; schools need to educate students.

5. We must set high expectations for our kids and work together, parents and educators, to push our kids beyond the mediocrity of today's "proficiency."

Thank you for reading and sharing this vision for restoring Iowa's world class education system. I would love to hear from you and answer any questions you may have or help you in any way I can to advance this restoration.



Photo by  
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6. We must recognize that children need boundaries, guidelines, challenges and discipline. Our desire to spare their feelings or to rationalize their poor behavior does not serve their interests. If we love our children we chastise them. To fail to do so is simply to postpone consequences until harsher disciplinarians - the officer, the prosecutor, the judge, and the warden - chastise them.

7. We must recognize the purchase of material goods is no substitute for family and parental love, guidance, example and instruction. Parents must become prima-

ries in the lives of their children. Currently, of the people that regularly interact with our children, parents spend less time with them than their peers, their teachers or the community center staff.

8. We must significantly reduce the time spent in front of the television or video game and replace that with creative, active, interactive and stimulating social and recreational adventures. Hobbies, reading, learning to play an instrument, etc., must once again become staples of our children's free time activities.

9. We must authorize the adults we give our children over to, to effectively correct them. Currently, children understand there are no consequences for their poor behavior. Rather than label them, we exact consequences for their actions.

10. We must embrace individual and parental responsibility and accountability as cornerstones of the character education of our children. Building character should not be a three period curriculum. Character should be born of the example set by a loving mother and father committed to raising healthy, productive Iowans.

### Additional Parental Challenges:

1. Parent accountability: First and foremost it is the parents responsibility to support, fight for and strive to ensure their child's academic success.

2. Parental participation: Parents must be present on behalf of their children.

3. Parenting: Parents must raise their children, not expect others to do this.

4. Parental involvement: Parents must participate in those efforts that enhance their children, e.g., PTA.

5. Parental example: Parents must not let poverty, or other factors stop them from doing their job.

6. Parental prioritization: Kids value what parents demonstrate as important; parents, therefore, must make education a top priority.

7. Parental encouragement: We must mobilize parents to work on behalf of our children and give them structure, encouragement, support and resources to do so.

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