



# THE BEACON

SUPPORTING HIGH ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL CHILDREN THROUGH POLICY RESEARCH

## IOWA LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD



Colette Stotts, Mary Delagardelle and Hilary LaMonte accept the prestigious Shannon Award Feb. 2, 2008.

The 2008 Thomas A. Shannon Award was presented during the NSBA Leadership Conference Feb. 2, 2008 to the Iowa School Boards Foundation's Lighthouse research team. The award, named for former NSBA executive director Thomas A. Shannon, recognizes the achievements and contributions of state association leaders in school board governance.

The Lighthouse team was selected for its research on the link between school boards and student achievement, proving the credibility of local control. The team also was honored for its current efforts to develop a school board curriculum framework for improving student learning, and its success in launching the Iowa School Boards Foundation to fund further research on school governance and education policy.

The Shannon Award winners are honored "as leaders in school board governance, who have created, and continue to create, changes and outcomes to better student achievement for their local school boards," said NSBA President Norman Wooten. "We applaud the leadership and contributions that these individuals make to not only their state school boards association, but also to the education community as a whole."

## LETTER FROM ISBF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MARY DELAGARDELLE

Dear Friends of ISBF,

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing support of the Iowa School Boards Foundation and to provide some updates about work that you have made possible. During the 2007-08 school year, foundation staff were busy conducting research, disseminating information to educational leaders and supporting the use of research in Iowa schools. Some highlights of our recent work include:

- Increasing the number of school districts and states participating in Phase 3 of the Lighthouse Research.
- Developing a growth model for analyzing student achievement data.
- Publishing a significant number of information briefs and tools related to literacy development in young children, quality preschool, community/school connections for improving student learning and the board's role in early childhood education.
- Researching state standards, assessments and accountability for student learning.
- Making the papers from the ISBF national symposium available through the book, *The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation* (Rowman and Littlefield, publishers).
- Receiving national recognition for the Lighthouse Project when selected to receive the NSBA Thomas A. Shannon Award.
- Contributing to the IASB publication, *Leadership for Student Learning*.

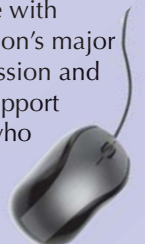
These efforts are having positive effects on district and board leadership for improving student learning in Iowa and across the country. In this new year, we will continue to support educational leaders with objective and reliable information. We also plan to provide support for using the research in ways that benefit students and district leadership. There is no greater time for confronting the challenges of improving public education and ensuring the success of all students. Your support is critical in that process! Thank you very much for your commitment to Iowa students and for your unselfish giving to deliver on the important promise of public education.



Very sincerely yours,

### NEW ISBF WEB SITE LAUNCHING

Our new Web site, [www.iaschoolboardsfoundation.org](http://www.iaschoolboardsfoundation.org), is now live. As we continue to build the site with reports and materials resulting from the foundation's major projects, research articles related to our core mission and information about the foundation and how to support its work, we ask for your input. As the people who make our work possible, we encourage you to visit the site and send us your impressions and suggestions from the "Contact Us" link.



## THE LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT: UPDATES FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

As the Lighthouse Multi-State Research Project spreads to other states, board leadership is building in new districts across the country. Currently, school boards in Iowa, Idaho, Kentucky and Wisconsin are actively engaged, using the Lighthouse materials, conducting board work sessions and offering ongoing technical assistance to staff to improve student learning through board leadership.

Over 100 districts are administering districtwide surveys to find out what people in their districts believe is possible for student learning. The surveys also measure the working culture among faculty and administrators and how it compares to districts with higher levels of student learning. Boards and superintendents use this data to identify the areas in which they need to exercise their leadership to improve student learning.

In just six months, the information collected is truly having an impact. Newspaper coverage of a district in Wisconsin gives a sense of the conversations that boards and superintendents are having to determine a narrow and defined improvement focus of which ongoing success will follow. From the data, the board and superintendent could see that teachers and administrators were not clear on what the district improvement goals were, nor how they related to the work going on in schools and classrooms. The superintendent reaffirmed one of the board's key conclusions from the August Lighthouse workshop.

"We have a lot of people doing a lot of things," he was quoted as saying in the paper. "And we may have to think about doing fewer things to accomplish more."

## CONTINUING TO GROW: UPDATES FROM AROUND THE STATE

It is invigorating to watch the level of interest in Lighthouse partnerships grow in Iowa. In recent months, the number of participating districts in Iowa increased to nearly 20 sites in north central, eastern, central and southwest Iowa. The Lighthouse partnerships in these four regions of the state also involve Area Education Agencies (AEAs). In these partnerships, ISBF/IASB staff members focus their support toward the participating board/superintendent teams, while the AEA staff provides support to district administrators and teachers around their efforts to improve student learning.



This phase of the study in Iowa is led by the ISBF Lighthouse research team, and is a part of the ISBF national study and field test of board development materials and delivery approaches (Phase III of the Lighthouse Project). One of the focal points is to better support whole board/superintendent teams as they provide leadership for strengthening the culture of their districts to improve teaching and learning overall.

Teams from participating districts make a substantial commitment when they engage in this phase of the study. They agree to participate for at least two years with an option of extending their involvement for additional years. Their commitment means the entire board and the superintendent all agree to engage in about 15-20 hours of whole board learning per year and they display a willingness to allocate more time at their local board table for followup work.

## ISBF THANKS ITS 2007-08 DONORS

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The Iowa School Boards Foundation is the research affiliate of the Iowa Association of School Boards, providing a sound base of objective, reliable information and research to IASB and other policy makers in shared commitment to excellence and equity in student achievement.

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GROWTH MODELS

IASB/ISBF staff members have developed a compelling new suite of tools called "IGrowth". The IGrowth toolkit contains several visual models showing the achievement growth for all students, subgroups of students and for individuals. These models enable leaders to measure achievement growth against growth objectives and to measure progress toward closing achievement gaps.

Board members and educational leaders can use the tools to create urgency around the need to improve, to identify strengths and areas of need, to set goals and to monitor progress.

The toolkit can be used in conjunction with IASB cost-effectiveness tools to evaluate effectiveness of intervention strategies. Several school districts are using the tools, others are signed up and many have expressed interest.

If you would like a demonstration of the tools, contact Mary Delagardelle or Tony VanderZyl at the IASB office by calling 1-800-795-4272.

## ISBF TEAM CREATES SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT

The ISBF team has developed a process to help board/superintendent teams pinpoint where they stand in their current school improvement work so they can create a baseline from which to measure progress along the way.

It is the only districtwide Comprehensive School Improvement Assessment (CSA) of which we are aware that focuses on the board/superintendent team.

CSA uses many tools developed in the Lighthouse Project and will help district leaders study their districts in relation to conditions and beliefs

necessary to improve achievement. This service helps districts understand their current status in areas such as commonly held beliefs, assessment practices, professional development and leadership.

Interested board/superintendent teams begin with an informal interview by ISBF staff to determine which tools will be most useful. For example, they may want to administer the Lighthouse Beliefs and Conditions Surveys and have their board policies and district professional development calendars, among other documents, reviewed. They may want information from classroom walkthroughs, interviews or a time-study of the district's leadership, focused on instructional versus managerial leadership.

Please contact Mary Delagardelle at [mdelagardelle@ia-sb.org](mailto:mdelagardelle@ia-sb.org) or 1-800-795-4272 for more information.

## THE CLIK PROJECT: MAKING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

ISBF's commitment to promoting quality early childhood education has been recognized throughout the state and the nation. In an effort to raise the visibility of the foundation as a credible and unbiased source of education information and research, the CLIK (Communities for Literate Iowa Kids) project made significant progress in Iowa, and recently made news in two national publications.

The National School Board Association's Center for Public Education e-newsletter featured the work of CLIK as its central article in October 2007, discussing ISBF's work related to Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

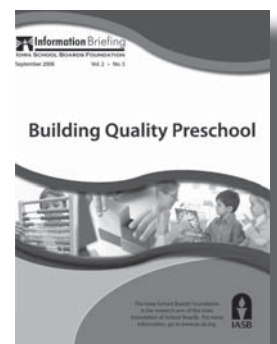
ISBF was also chosen as one of Pre-K Now's "Top Picks" of the month in December 2007. Pre-K Now is a national advocacy group with a sole mission to advance quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds. The monthly e-newsletter featured ISBF's Preschool Collaboration Toolkit.

Recent statewide accomplishments include:

- The premier of our DVD, "Collaborative Relationships: The Building Blocks of Quality Preschool" at Gov. Chet Culver's Early Childhood Summit; it was viewed by more than 200 school and community leaders across the state.
- The inclusion of two CLIK information briefings as part of the University of Northern Iowa's Early Childhood Summit; they were distributed to more than 150 Iowa policy makers and education leaders.
- CLIK project director Lou Ann DeMarie-Gvist's participation on the Department of Education's K-8

Iowa Core Curriculum Literacy Team. She contributed her expertise to help develop the essential concepts and associated skill sets of the literacy portion of newly adopted K-8 Iowa Core Curriculum.

- The foundation's contribution to the new, statewide publication *Getting School Ready in Iowa*. This guide provides readiness tips for parents and providers, acknowledges the foundation for content development and the CLIK funders for their support.
- DeMarie-Gvist authored *Building Quality Preschool*, which was sent to district leaders throughout Iowa. The 12-page publication informs educators and district leaders on how best to apply for and implement Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.



ISBF is proud to provide tools and publications that support leaders and policy makers as they work to increase quality early childhood education. However, our work is not done. The truth is that real barriers still exist, preventing many Iowa children from attending quality preschool. Realizing that quality preschool greatly influences students' future academic achievements, the foundation's commitment continues, to ensure all Iowa children experience a quality early childhood education.



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## LEADERSHIP FOR STUDENT LEARNING

In April, the Iowa Association of School Boards published a series of resources based on widely accepted practices of school improvement and original, objective research. They include a book, study guide and DVD, identifying the key roles of school boards that can have a positive impact on student achievement.



The *Leadership for Student Learning* book provides board members with expert guidance and fundamental information. It is also a great reference for staff leadership teams and school improvement committees. The study guide is a tool that includes instructions and reflection questions to be used to facilitate 20- to 45-minute study

sessions. The four-minute motivational DVD “Committing to Success for All Students” embodies the research in the book, reminding us that all students can succeed with the commitment of the board members and educators. It may be shown as a companion to the other tools or separately. These resources can be purchased directly at [www.ia-sb.org](http://www.ia-sb.org).

## SYMPOSIUM BOOK

ISBF held the symposium, “School Board Research: Main Lines of Inquiry,” Sept. 14-15, 2007. This was an exciting event in the history of sharing knowledge about local school boards. It brought together researchers from across the country to discuss and debate school governance issues. The information from that event is now captured in the book, *The Future of School Board Governance: Relevancy and Revelation*. This book, published by Rowman & Littlefield, is a collection of the papers presented during the symposium and it can be ordered directly from the publisher at [www.rowmanlittlefield.com](http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com).



## IN THIS ISSUE...

### Shannon Award

ISBF receives prestigious education award.....p. 1

### The Lighthouse Project

Updates from around the country.....p. 2

### To Those Making this all Possible

ISBF thanks 2007-08 donors.....p. 2

### The CLIK Project

Making significant progress.....p. 3

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