



THE BEACON

SUPPORTING HIGH ACHIEVEMENT FOR ALL CHILDREN THROUGH POLICY RESEARCH

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CARROLL SCHOOLS PUT IGROWTH FINDINGS INTO ACTION



School districts are using data more and more in decision-making. IGrowth is an ISBF-developed suite of tools that helps districts analyze whether students are proficient

and growing, both for subgroups and individuals. Tony VanderZyl, program director, has completed data collection for eight Iowa school districts. The Carroll Community School District is now putting that data to use.

“It allows us to work with our teachers in the classroom,” said superintendent Rob Cordes. “In fact, this year I’m working with a couple of teachers as part of their individual career development plans to take a look at the number of kids that made a year’s growth a year ago and see what the percentage of that was and to increase that percentage.”

Cordes says the growth model used in IGrowth allows the administration team to easily understand what students are

doing well in and what they may need to improve upon. He also says IGrowth offers a focus not offered anywhere else. “I think the strength of it as far as I’m concerned is looking at individual students and indicating how close they were or how much they achieved and grew academically in one year,” he said.

And while some may lose focus on improvement due to the quest for districtwide proficiency, high school principal Steve Haluska says IGrowth data has helped to refocus goals.

“Because of [IGrowth], we truly believe that we will move ahead in the right direction not only with our testing data but as it relates to our progress with the Iowa Core,” Haluska said.

The Carroll High School staff is now implementing a process of using IGrowth to set individual growth goals for each student, as part of the homeroom advisor process. Districtwide, the school board will continue to study their IGrowth files to identify strengths, areas of needed support and to set improvement goals.



TECHNOLOGY GRANTS AVAILABLE

Technology in the classroom gives students an edge in the quest for 21st century skills. For the fourth year, the Qwest Foundation and ISBF are teaming up for the Teachers and Technology Grant Program. Qwest is again giving \$50,000 to

Iowa educators who want to incorporate innovative classroom uses of technology. More details about this program, as well as the application details, can be found at www.iaschoolboardsfoundation.org beginning Nov. 1, 2009.

Letter from ISBF Executive Director Mary Delagardelle



Dear friends of ISBF,

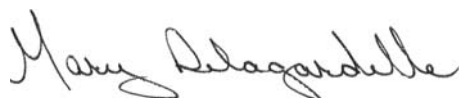
As we near the end of the first quarter of instruction this school year, we are reminded of the importance of establishing priorities and ensuring our actions are grounded in best practices that have the greatest likelihood of improving student learning. In already tough financial times, the looming threat of additional statewide budget cuts will force us to clarify our highest priorities, make tough decisions and monitor the impact of our actions. ISBF is here to help you in whatever way we can. Our research team can gather and summarize research and information to guide your decision making, help you study the current status of your achievement and efforts to improve, and help you establish habits of regular monitoring of progress. Please don't hesitate to call on us for support.

In this edition of *The Beacon*, you will read about some of our work that your support has made possible. You can find more information about these projects and more at www.iaschoolboardsfoundation.org.

The support we are able to provide to districts would not be possible without the generous contributions from donors. Your support of the foundation is being used to promote excellence and equity in public education and to help Iowa school districts ensure all students learn well.

Thank you very much for your commitment and for your unselfish giving to deliver on the promise of public education – a bright and productive future for all of Iowa's children!

Very sincerely yours,



ISBF/IASB LAUNCH NATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT ON SCHOOL BOARDS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Iowa School Boards Foundation and the Iowa Association of School Boards are collaborating with the National School Boards Association (NSBA), the Fordham Institute, and the Wallace Foundation to conduct a national survey of board members and superintendents. The survey focuses on how school board members see their unique work, with special attention to questions about how they see their role in improving leadership, teaching quality and student achievement.



The survey was sent out to a stratified random sample of 4,340 respondents from 511 districts in 50 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. In an effort to target districts serving the majority of students in the United States, the sample includes all districts that are members of NSBA's Council of Urban Boards of Education and a random sample of districts with 1,000 students or more.

The results of the survey are scheduled to be published in a national report in the spring of 2010 and will be released at NSBA's Annual Conference in Chicago, April 10-12, 2010.

ISBF PRESCHOOL RESOURCES MAKE NATIONAL IMPACT

ISBF recently experienced national exposure related to the foundation's research, resources and tools to increase preschool attendance in Iowa. Pre-K Now, a national advocacy organization promoting quality early childhood education, listed ISBF's Preschool Collaboration Toolkit as a key resource in their recent publication, *Beyond the School Yard: PreK Collaborations with Community-Based Partners*. The report is currently being disseminated across the country and can be found at www.iaschoolboardsfoundation.org in the Early Childhood section.



In addition, the Kentucky School Boards Association recently adapted important content from the ISBF Information Brief, *The Board's Role to Ensuring Quality Preschool*, for an article in the August edition of their statewide journal, *The Kentucky Advocate*. This article can be found at www.ksba.org/advocate.

ISBF is excited and honored that this work is reaching beyond Iowa's borders to impact the vital work of educational leaders in other states, ultimately increasing the quality of early childhood education nationwide.

UPDATES FROM IDAHO AND BEYOND

In the midst of economically challenging times for school districts, a silver lining of good news is emerging from Idaho Lighthouse districts that have been actively involved in the project since 2006.

Survey results show that across the districts, board members, administrators and teachers have rising expectations about what children can achieve and what schools can do to help them. Boards and superintendents are actively working to drive organizational changes into the schools and classrooms to directly impact the environment in which students are learning.

“[We have seen] significant growth in all schools on the number of AYP targets met,” said one Idaho superintendent. “In my opinion, it is clearly and most definitely linked to the Lighthouse single goal and board training. We do business as a board/superintendent team way differently now—clear and constant single focus. Our agenda and tone of meetings has noticeably changed as well. Thank you, thank you.”

The expansion of this work continues as Lighthouse facilitators launched work with districts in Washington, Oregon and Connecticut this fall.

IOWA BOARDS MOVING FORWARD WITH INFORMATION AND STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS



Nearly 20 Iowa districts continue to participate in the Iowa Lighthouse Partnership. A majority of the districts are now in the second

or third year of involvement. In several of these districts, the board/superintendent teams are preparing to, or are moving into, the progress-monitoring phase. This gives district leadership teams, like the one at Malvern Community Schools, the chance to report findings to the school board. The board in turn can ask questions about the data they use to make important decisions.

“Our staff leadership is really encouraged by the upcoming opportunities to meet with the board on a regular basis during this school year,” said Malvern superintendent, Curtis Barclay. “During those meetings, staff will report progress of the actions and professional development they are implementing to improve instruction and the impact it is having on student learning.”

These monitoring meetings will typically take place each quarter in the Lighthouse districts. Teams say not only are they becoming more aware of overall district goals and successes, but at Ruthven-Ayrshire Community Schools, they are also developing better working relationships.

“We are a much more unified team as a result of the board and district’s involvement in the Lighthouse Partnership,” said Lisa Berkland, board vice president at Ruthven-Ayrshire. “The board, administrators and the staff leadership team are all moving toward the same common goal of improving student reading comprehension.”

That common goal has Ruthven-Ayrshire leaders already putting structures in place as they prepare to implement the Iowa Core Curriculum. And as the Iowa Lighthouse work continues, ISBF staff plan to see even more successes created at the hands of these devoted district leaders.

For information on any of these services, contact the ISBF staff, at 1-800-795-4272.

FINE FOUNDATION HELPS ISBF MAKE ASSESSMENT GUIDE A REALITY

The ISBF team will soon release *A Guide to Districtwide Assessment*, a document for use by school boards and school district leaders in the development of district comprehensive assessment systems for assessing student achievement. This guide is designed to help school leaders understand:

- the role of assessment in school improvement in Iowa.
- the board’s role in developing and implementing an assessment system.
- that a primary purpose of assessment is to guide instruction and improve student learning.
- how to be informed consumers of assessment information.

One copy of this guide will be furnished to Iowa school board presidents and superintendents as a member service of the Iowa Association of School Boards. Additional copies may be purchased from ISBF. Thanks to the FINE Foundation for making this important project possible.



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ISBF 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.

The Beacon editor: Summer Evans. *The Beacon* is published twice a year.

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