



## AEA 9 Superintendents' Meeting February, 2010

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### UPDATED SNOW DAY GUIDANCE FROM THE DIRECTOR

School Leaders:

This winter has been harsh; we all agree that spring cannot come soon enough. Just two years ago, the winter of 2007-2008 presented unique challenges because the worst of the weather conditions occurred late in the season, leaving schools and school districts with very few options for making up missed days. Thus, in March of 2008, this agency permitted schools and school districts to prospectively lengthen the school day to make up for days missed because of inclement weather. That flexibility was limited to the unique circumstances of that year. Many school administrators have asked the Iowa Department of Education (DE) to permit lengthening of the school day once again this year. Other school administrators have expressed the view that adding time to the end of remaining school days is not a sound educational practice.

To honor the fact that Iowa is a local control state, and in recognition that we know not what the remainder of the winter season will yet bring, the DE is issuing the following updated snow day guidance.

**As instructional leaders, the first responsibility of school officials is to provide quality learning time for students. This entails providing full days of instruction to students and only adding instructional time to remaining school days as a last resort. It is the policy of this state that 180 instructional days is the MINIMUM required for optimal learning. Iowa students are in a global competition and we must maintain opportunities for them to participate in a quality learning environment.**

A school or school district may add instructional time to remaining school days if ALL of the following occur:

1. The local school board makes a finding that to add days onto the end of the school's calendar will substantially interfere with summer educational opportunities for students or staff. In addition, the local school board makes a finding that the missed days cannot be effectively replaced by school being held on weekend days, by reducing the number of scheduled vacation days for the remainder of the school year, or by adding on to the end of the year.
2. The local school board makes a finding that specifies *how staff will provide a quality learning environment for students* by adding instructional time to remaining school days. To this end, the DE requires schools to add no less than 30 minutes to each day if pursuing this option.
3. Sports-related closures must be made up as whole days. (For more information on these closures please visit [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=category&sectionid=41&id=411&Itemid=1](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=category&sectionid=41&id=411&Itemid=1).) This revised guidance applies only to weather-related closures.

This is to be done prospectively only. A school or school district may not go back and add up time exceeding 5.5 hours from each day already passed to achieve the equivalent of 180 days. Nor may a school or school district merely add up the time exceeding 5.5 hours from each day yet to come to get in some make-up time. [Example: Classes are conducted from 8:10 - 3:10 with 30 minute lunch, so there are 6.5 instructional hours. The 8:10 - 3:10 has been the schedule all year. The hour over 5.5 hours does not "count" as make-up time.] What IS allowable is to extend class time to meet from 7:45 - 3:15 with 30 minute lunch. Now the school or school district has an extra 30 minutes per day, 11 days = one make-up day.

Finally, schools and school districts are reminded when developing their calendars for next year (and subsequent years) to consider Iowa's climate. It is reasonable to build in some days that can be used as make-up days. If doing so, for the benefit of staff, students, and students' families, please state so upfront that certain identified days WILL be used by the school as make-up days if needed.

For additional guidance on snow days, please visit the DE's website at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/> and see the [School Calendar/Year](#) section of the DE's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

The 2010 legislative session is off and running! As in past years, the DE legislative liaison (Konnie Cawiezell) will maintain a "Legislative Updates" page on the DE website. This page provides regular updates during the Iowa legislative session on bills related to education in Iowa. Information about new bills, including names, numbers, content, sponsors and status in the legislative process are provided. The page can be accessed at the following address: <https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/web/legisupdate.asp>.

## FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES (FCS) UPDATE

Iowa now has two universities offering a degree in FCS Education! Grand View University has partnered with Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) to offer the four-year degree and Iowa State University (ISU) continues to offer the degree in FCS education. In addition, Ellsworth Community College offers a FCS Education two-year program that is a perfect "link" for secondary FCS Programs of Study; and the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) offers a 2+2 program in FCS Education that transfers to ISU. Please contact Mary Ann Adams ([maryann.adams@iowa.gov](mailto:maryann.adams@iowa.gov) or (515) 281-4716), FCS State Consultant, if you have any questions concerning your FCS program. Also, if your school district has an opening for an FCS position and would like to have it posted on the FCS website ([www.iowafcs.com](http://www.iowafcs.com)), please contact Mary Ann as soon as possible and she will assist your district in filling the position.

## IOWA YOUTH SURVEY

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) has received a grant that will make it possible to administer the Iowa Youth Survey in 2010 and 2012. In addition, the IDPH Omnibus bill includes language that would permanently change the cycle from every three years to every two years. More information will be coming later in February about the 2010 Iowa Youth Survey.

## ACCESSIBLE INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (AIM) CD AVAILABLE SOON

In most schools, print-based instructional materials, such as textbooks, are a prime way of delivering curricular content. This system works fine for many learners. But for others – those who struggle to read because of physical, sensory, cognitive, or learning differences – such materials are not usable for learning. These students need Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) in order to access the general education curriculum. Such access is guaranteed in federal statutes, such as IDEA and NCLB, as well as Iowa's Rules of Special Education.

School Improvement Consultants will coordinate the delivery of CDs to each AEA for each superintendent. The CD will contain a variety of helpful documents and resources related to AIM. The True AIM website and this CD are resources for Iowa educators to learn more about the provision of Accessible Instructional Materials. For additional information contact Steve Maurer at [steve.maurer@iowa.gov](mailto:steve.maurer@iowa.gov) or 515-281-3576.

## 2010 INFLUENZA

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) Officials advise seasonal influenza may soon emerge. Vaccination, as soon as possible, will help protect against this possible next wave. Please continue your prevention activities including frequent hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, staying home when ill, and wiping hard surfaces with soap and water to help stop the spread of influenza. The website for the Friday Iowa weekly influenza surveillance report is <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/IdphArchive/Archive.aspx?channel=FluReports>. Please direct any questions or comments to [charlotte.burt@iowa.gov](mailto:charlotte.burt@iowa.gov).

## **NEW Illness web reporting tool**

The Iowa Department of Education and Iowa Department of Public Health are pleased to announce the availability of a web-based reporting tool for schools experiencing high rates of absence due to illness. The purpose of this tool is to allow any school the ability to report days when absence due to illness is 10% and above of the school's enrollment.

This type of reporting has helped immensely in the tracking of the influenza pandemic and other outbreaks of illness occurring in schools. Your reports are reviewed by a team of infectious disease specialists on a daily basis, and in some cases local health departments are asked to help manage an outbreak in a school.

**If your school experiences any single day of absence due to illness that is 10% and above, please submit a report on this website.** Click on this link to access the survey: [http://www.idph.state.ia.us/surveys/school\\_outbreaks/default.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/surveys/school_outbreaks/default.asp).

**Schools must have their building and district code to use the survey.** These codes may be found at [http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=692:iowa-school-district-directories&catid=562:directories&Itemid=1506](http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=692:iowa-school-district-directories&catid=562:directories&Itemid=1506).

### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

February 8, 2010	SBRC Hearing Request (February 8 is the deadline for requests for the March 8, 2010 meeting.) Questions may be directed to <a href="mailto:Su.McCurdy@iowa.gov">Su.McCurdy@iowa.gov</a> , (515) 281-4738
February 9-10, 2010	Iowa Culture and Language Conference at Polk County Convention Center
February 10, 2010	AEA Proposed Budgets Due
February 15, 2010	SBRC Exhibits Due (exhibits for the March 8, 2010 meeting)
February 19, 2010	Whole Grade Sharing Count Date for 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester Tuition
March 1, 2010	Special Education Balances (verify final LEA balances with Department of Management) Questions may be directed to <a href="mailto:Steve.Crew@iowa.gov">Steve.Crew@iowa.gov</a> , (515) 281-6285

You can view a complete Iowa Department of Education calendar of events at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/calendar/calendar.html>