

Annual Report



iowacollaboration
for**youth**development

State of Iowa
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Executive Summary

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council members are leaders of 10 state agencies with the vision that ***“All Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood”***. The ICYD Council oversees the activities of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC) and has sought input from these youth leaders in the development of more effective policies, practices, programs, and this Annual Report. SIYAC consists of youth between 14 –21 years of age who reside in Iowa, with the purpose to foster communication with the governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families; and to advocate for youth on important issues affecting youth. In 2009, the Legislature passed House File 315 placing the ICYD Council and SIYAC in the Iowa Code, Section 216A.140.

Since becoming a formalized council, ICYD Council members have agreed that the focal point for collaborative efforts should be a specific and aggressive goal for the state. In the first Annual Report, dated February 1, 2010, the ICYD Council identified the goal: ***By 2020 Iowa will increase the graduation rate from 89% to 95%***. It is with the understanding that several issues (e.g. substance abuse, family, employment, and mental health) prevent many youth from graduating from high school, that the ICYD Council agencies work to address these issues as individual agencies and together as a team to maximize efficiency in state government, make the best use of existing resources, and create substantial and lasting positive changes for Iowa’s youth.

Activities and accomplishments in 2010 included taking deliberate steps to identify the issues in communities and to plan for action on these issues. Members of the Council traveled to 10 communities in Iowa to listen and have conversations with school and community people on the challenges students must overcome to graduate, success stories – what is working, and recommendations for the state agencies. In addition, the Council researched several studies and articles and concluded that for youth to be successful in school and be prepared for life, engagement in **all** of the following areas must occur:

- Students Need to Attend School and be Engaged
- Families Need to be Engaged with Schools
- Schools and Communities Need to Support Youth

The ICYD Council will continue to work with these communities to establish supports and services to engage youth, families, schools, and communities.

The ICYD Council is also assisting in the implementation of two federal grants received by the Department of Education in 2010. The grants have overlapping goals that will assist selected schools to assess needs, develop interventions to prevent substance use, improve conditions for learning, and ultimately lead to increased graduation rates.

The ICYD Council’s recommended actions for 2011 are to coordinate efforts with policymakers, schools, and multiple state and community partners in the development of action plans for these five areas:

- Focus on underperforming schools and communities
- Assess current state initiatives and maximize existing resources
- Investigate research-based approaches and effective strategies
- Coordinate across systems to identify and support vulnerable students
- Engage additional stakeholders.



I. Overview of ICYD Council and the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC)

This is the second annual report from the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development (ICYD) Council to the Governor and General Assembly. The report will provide information on the:

- Purpose and membership of the ICYD Council and the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC);
- Re-state the prioritized issue that the ICYD Council identified in the first annual report and provide information on the progress of addressing the issue;
- Actions taken by the ICYD Council to address the prioritized issue; and
- Recommendations actions in 2011 to the Governor and General Assembly.

In 2009, the Legislature passed House File 315 placing the ICYD Council and the SIYAC in the Iowa Code, Section 216A.140. Prior to becoming “formal” councils, both ICYD and SIYAC operated as non-statutory entities. The ICYD began in 1999 as an informal network of state agencies from ten departments serving as a forum to foster improvement in and coordination of state and local youth policy and programs. The ICYD has developed the following Youth Development Result Areas:

- All youth have safe and supportive families, schools, and communities;
- All youth are healthy and socially competent;
- All youth are successful in school;
- All youth are prepared for a productive adulthood.

ICYD has historically participated in a variety of state and national youth initiatives and has been recognized nationally (e.g. National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, Forum for Youth Investment, and the Children’s Cabinet Network) for its work in coordinating youth development efforts. The legislation codifying the ICYD Council strengthens this network to improve results among Iowa’s youth through the adoption and application of positive youth development principles and practices. The formalized ICYD Council provides a venue to enhance information and data sharing; develop strategies across state agencies; and present prioritized recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly that will improve the lives and futures of Iowa youth.

SIYAC was established in 2001 as a vehicle for high school youth to inform legislators on youth issues and currently consists of 19 youth between 14 –21 years of age who reside in Iowa. ICYD Council is overseeing the activities of SIYAC and has sought input from these youth leaders in the development of more effective policies, practices, programs, and this Annual Report.

The Department of Human Rights is the lead agency for the ICYD Council and SIYAC and is coordinating activities of both councils. The agendas and minutes of the meetings are posted on the ICYD website: www.icyd.iowa.gov.

ICYD Council’s Purpose

The ICYD Council’s vision statement, as stated in the legislation is:
“All Iowa youth will be safe, healthy, successful, and prepared for adulthood.”

The purpose of the ICYD Council is to improve the lives and futures of Iowa’s youth by:

- Adopting and applying positive youth development principles and practices at the state and local levels;
- Increasing the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of opportunities and services and other supports for youth;
- Improving and coordinating state youth policy and programs across state agencies.

ICYD Council’s Membership

The ICYD Council’s membership is the director or chief administrator (or their designee) of 10 state agencies and programs that have been participating prior to the legislation. The ICYD Council has the ability to expand membership to include others that will assist the Council in achieving its purpose. In addition to each agency’s director (or designee) serving on the ICYD Council, many of the agencies have additional staff that actively participate in meetings and complete tasks as directed by the ICYD Council on the ICYD Ready by 21 Results Team. Below are the agencies and members of the ICYD Council:

ICYD COUNCIL MEMBERS

Department of Human Rights Isaiah McGee, Director Chair of ICYD Council	Department of Education Jason E. Glass, Director
ISU Extension, 4-H Youth Development Chuck Morris, Director *Keli Tallman, Youth Development Program Specialist	Department of Human Services Chuck Palmer, Director *Wendy Rickman, Administrator - Division of Adult, Children, and Family Services
Commission on Volunteer Service Adam Lounsbury, Executive Director	Iowa Workforce Development Teresa Wahlert, Director
Department of Public Health Dr. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, Director *Kathy Stone, Director, Division of Behavioral Health	Office of Drug Control Policy Mark Schouten, Director *Becky Swift, Prevention and Education Programs Coordinator
Child Advocacy Board Richard Moore, Director	Early Childhood Iowa Shanell Wagler, Facilitator

*Agency Designee when member is unable to participate

The ICYD Council meets monthly to review data, receive reports from state agencies and SI-YAC, and establish priorities and recommended actions on many issues affecting youth. The prioritized issue – **Increasing Iowa’s Graduation Rate to 95% by 2020** - was selected due to its high visibility and as a summative measure of youth development efforts, and the many cross-agency issues that contribute to youth graduating from high school. Each of the agencies represented on the ICYD Council has a role in achieving this goal.

SIYAC's Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of SIYAC, as stated in the Iowa Code, is to “foster communication among a group of engaged youth and the governor, general assembly, and state and local policymakers regarding programs, policies, and practices affecting youth and families; and to advocate for youth on important issues affecting youth.

The mission statement of SIYAC is: ***“To raise awareness of issues that affect young Iowans by providing civic opportunity and to inspire youth to create a better future for Iowa.”***

SIYAC meets at least quarterly in Des Moines to identify issues affecting youth, discuss community needs, plan for activities, form partnerships to meet those needs, draft positions on youth issues and to communicate those positions with legislators.

For 2010-11, SIYAC has formed four committees: Teen Nutrition, Youth Outreach, Substance Abuse, and Life after Graduation. SIYAC will be presenting independent information and recommendations on youth issues associated with these committees, along with other issues, to the General Assembly and Governor's Office during the 2011 legislative session.

In addition to addressing youth issues with the legislature, SIYAC has also committed to providing service in their respective communities and on a statewide basis. Below are the planned activities for each committee:

- ***Teen Nutrition Committee***
 - ◇ Scheduling licensed dieticians from local Hy-Vee food stores for school presentations on healthy food options;
 - ◇ Developing a poster series for Iowa schools that will focus on healthy eating and drinking habits. An example: “Think Before You Drink” with a photograph of a soft drink can including calorie and other nutritional information on soft drinks and suggesting healthy alternative;
 - ◇ Partnering with Team Nutrition to research the effectiveness of the “Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act”.
 - ◇ Researching the Youth Empowered Ambassadors for Health (YEAH!) program to find out if it could be implemented in Iowa. YEAH! was started in Florida with help of the Florida Department of Health to promote grassroots campaigns – involving local media and local communities – to influence change in eating habits.
- ***Youth Outreach Committee***
 - ◇ Partnering with Kids with a Cause (KWAKers) again this year to expand and refine the toolkit – a how-to guide for communities on organizing youth-led service projects;
 - ◇ Partnering with the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Services (ICVS) to review the Volunteer Generation Fund and Statewide Service-Learning grant competitions;
 - ◇ Partner with ICVS to promote service-learning across the state and be active on the Global Youth Service Day Planning Coalition.
- ***Substance Abuse Committee***
 - ◇ Partnering with the Office of Drug Control Policy to research and review schools' Good Conduct Policies;



- ◇ Researching and creating a toolkit for youth to audit local grocery stores and convenience stores;
- ◇ Providing input for the planning and implementation of the Department of Public Health’s federal Strategic Prevention Framework-State Incentive Grant (SPF- SIG).
- ***Life after Graduation Committee***
 - ◇ Researching different strategies and methods for conducting a summit for 7th–9th graders that will focus on the importance of graduation and the benefits of higher learning. It is hoped to host the summit during the Spring of 2011. The summit is being co-hosted by Iowa’s Jobs for America’s Graduates (I-JAG).

2010-2011 SIYAC Members:

Name	Office Held	City	County
Jonathan Beatty		Des Moines	Polk
Jeffrey Critchlow	Service Coordinator	Carlisle	Warren
Zack Elsner	Chair, Youth Outreach	Boone	Boone
Khayree Fitten	Chair, Legislative Affairs	Mt. Pleasant	Henry
Joanna Hodder		Keota	Keokuk
Jacob Mallams		Mt. Union	Henry
Jessa Marfal	Chair, Life After Graduation	Des Moines	Polk
Maxwell McGee	Chair, Substance Abuse	Cedar Rapids	Linn
Quincy McGee	Chair, Teen Nutrition	Cedar Rapids	Linn
Jennifer Nieuwsma		Marion	Linn
Lauren Opp	Secretary	Garner	Hancock
Sean Ryan	Vice-Chair of SIYAC	Waterville	Allamakee
Eliot Sayavong		Sioux City	Woodbury
Hanley Sayavong		Sioux City	Woodbury
Vanessa Shearer		Keokuk	Lee
Alexia Stone		Grinnell	Poweshiek
Saranya Subramanian	Media Relations	North Liberty	Johnson
Olivia VanAntwerp		Cedar Rapids	Linn
Gabriel Walsh	Executive Chair of SIYAC	Alta	Buena Vista

II. Prioritized Issue: Increasing Iowa's Graduation Rate

Good is the enemy of great. And that is one of the reasons that we have so little that becomes great. We don't have great schools, principally because we have good schools.
--Jim Collins in *Good to Great* (2001)

During the time the ICYD Council was an informal network, there were many positive things accomplished, including:

- Promoting youth development and community planning on youth issues in communities;
- Providing resources and assistance addressing the needs of youth transitioning to adulthood;
- Creating a results framework for Iowa youth; and
- Providing technical assistance and training on quality youth development practices.

However, during that time the ICYD Council was not able to build consensus on an overarching youth issue that each agency could embrace.

Since becoming a formalized council in the Iowa Code, the ICYD Council members have agreed that the focal point for collaborative efforts be a specific and aggressive goal for the state. The ICYD Council has prioritized two of the Youth Development Result Areas: *All Iowa youth are successful in school; and all youth are prepared for a productive adulthood.* Graduation and dropout rates are both included as measures, or indicators, for these result areas. The ICYD Council agreed on the following goal in the first Annual Report, dated February 1, 2010:

By 2020 Iowa will increase the graduation rate from 89% to 95%. If the cohort enrollment remains approximately 39,000 students, about 2,000 additional youth will graduate each year.

In addition to this overarching goal, an intermediate goal is: *By 2015, Iowa will decrease the number of annual dropouts by 25%, or 1,100 youth.*

It is with the understanding that several issues (*e.g.* substance abuse, family, employment, and mental health) prevent many youth from graduating from high school, that the ICYD Council agencies work to address these issues as individual agencies and together as a team to maximize efficiency in state government, make the best use of existing resources, and create substantial and lasting positive changes for Iowa's youth.

The below measures are critical in monitoring progress for all Iowa youth towards the graduation goal:

1. The number of students at each high school grade level who are on the trajectory to graduate on time.
2. The gaps for graduation and dropout rates for subpopulations (*i.e.* race, ethnicity, second language learners, low socioeconomic, and students with disabilities).
3. The number of youth age 16-19 who are not in school and not working.

Economic Impact of the Graduation Rate on Iowa's Economy

Iowans can take pride in having one of the highest graduation rates in the nation. The overall graduation rate in 2009 was 87.2%. While Iowa's dropout rate of 2.16% is also low in comparison with other states, the loss of 4,807 students from the graduating class of 2009 damages Iowa's economy. The "costs" of dropping out include decreased personal income and revenues, increased unemployment and welfare burden, and increased risk of incarceration and poor health outcomes. These "costs" affect all of the ICYD partnering state agencies.

A closer look at graduation and dropout rates in Iowa reveals that there are **significant gaps for students enrolled in urban districts, minority students, and students with disabilities**. In order to compete nationally and globally and to overcome current economic challenges, all students in Iowa need to graduate prepared for college, work, and life. What will it take to move Iowa from good to great in graduating Iowa students?

Graduation for "some" is not acceptable in Iowa.

The graduation rate has significant implications for Iowa's economy. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education:

- More than \$336 million would be added to Iowa's economy by 2020 if students of color graduated at the same rate as white students
- Iowa would save more than \$84.4 million in health care costs over the course of the lifetimes of each class of dropouts had they earned their diplomas.
- Iowa's economy would see a combination of savings and revenue of about \$44 million in reduced crime spending and increased earnings each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5 percent.

Dr. James R. Veale reported in his presentation at the Risky Business Conference held in Des Moines in September, 2009, that 57.2% of the Iowa inmates are dropouts. The Department of Corrections' *FY 2009 Annual Report* states the average cost of incarceration in 2009 was \$31,518. The Department of Education's *2010 Annual Condition of Education Report*, states the average total per student expenditure for 2008-09 was \$9,203.



Graduation and Dropout Data

As mentioned above, there are significant gaps between the overall graduation and dropout rates of Iowa students and the rates for subpopulations, as reflected in Figure 1 (below).

Figure 1

IOWA PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL NGA ADJUSTED COHORT GRADUATION RATES BY SUBGROUP GRADUATING CLASS OF 2009			
Group	Numerator	Denominator	Graduation Rate
All Students	33,478	38,387	87.21%
African American	1,299	1,895	68.55%
American Indian	149	215	69.30%
Asian	616	691	89.15%
Hispanic	1,307	1,826	71.58%
White	30,107	33,760	89.18%
Disability*	4,445	5,586	79.57%
ELL**	664	993	66.87%
Low SES***	9,779	12,891	75.86%
Migrant	115	184	62.50%
Female	16,814	18,857	89.17%
Male	16,664	19,530	85.33%

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Planning, Research, Development and Evaluation Services, Project EASIER files.
 Notes: *Disability Status is determined by the presence of an individualized education plan.
 **ELL indicates English Language Learner.
 *** Low SES is determined by eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

For the class of 2009, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) is reporting the National Governor Association (NGA) Adjusted Cohort Rate, in Figure 1 (above), which is the first group of students to have a statewide identification number for five years. With this identification system and data, Iowa can now follow the same group of students over several years and implement the first-time freshman cohort rates (students who repeated their freshmen year were not included in the cohort). The 2010 Annual Condition of Education Report provides the following explanation on the NGA Adjusted Cohort Rate. The NGA rate is calculated by dividing the number of on-time graduates by the number of first-time 9th graders four years previous minus the number of transferred out and plus total transferred in students. The NGA formula used by the DE allows an adjustment for special education students who take longer to graduate and early graduates who take less than four year to complete high school. Students included in the denominator of the cohort graduation rate calculation are first-time freshmen and students who transferred in a given cohort in grades 9 to 12.

Students receiving regular diplomas are included as graduates in the numerator. Other completers, students who have finished the high school program, but did not earn a diploma are neither counted as graduates nor counted as dropouts.

Although the NGA graduation rate and other cohort rates expect students to complete high school in four years, the Iowa Department of Education plans to calculate extended year graduate rates in 2010 and beyond when six years and more of student-level data are available.

Figure 2

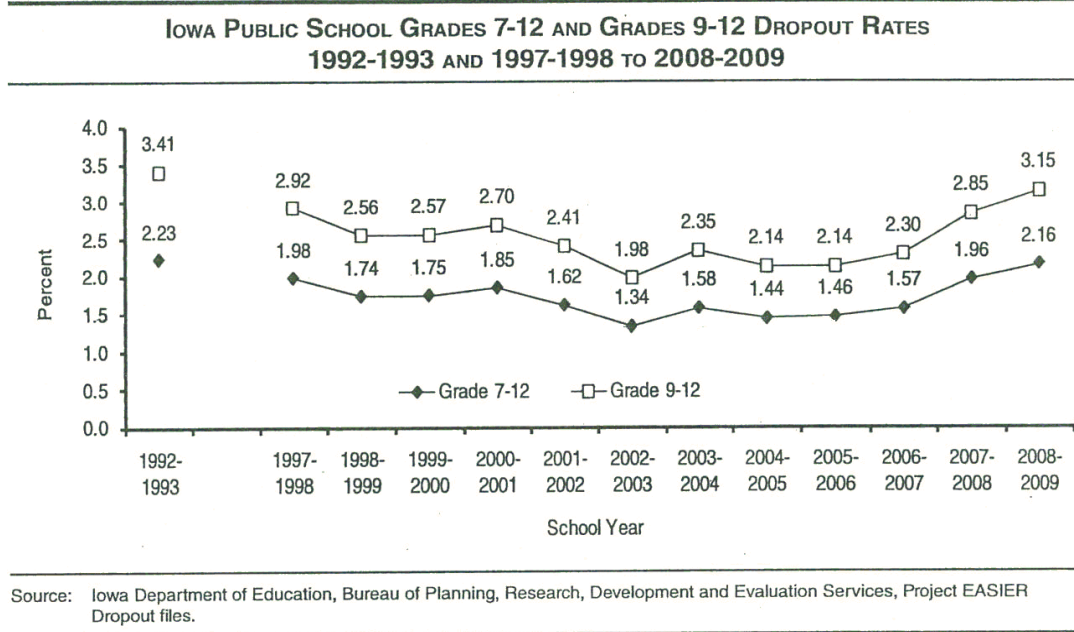


Figure 2 (above) shows an increasing trend in dropouts since a low of 1.34 percent in 2002-03. The 2.16 percent dropout rate for 2008-09 is the highest rate in the past 12 years. Figure 3 (below) provides a comparison of dropout rates by Race/Ethnicity with the corresponding enrollment rates for minority populations. A percentage of the total number of dropouts for any particular minority population that is higher than the corresponding percentage of the total enrollment reflects disproportionality. For example, while African American students represent 5.14% of the total enrollment, they account for 10.65% of the total dropouts in Iowa in 2008-09. For African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic youth, their representation in the dropout rate is nearly double their representation in the statewide enrollment.

Figure 3

**2008-2009 IOWA PUBLIC SCHOOL GRADES 7-12 DROPOUTS
AND ENROLLMENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

Race/Ethnic Group	Dropout Rate	Total Dropouts	% of Total Dropouts	Total Enrollments	% of Total Enrollment
All Minority	3.92%	1,195	24.86%	30,502	13.71%
African American	5.29	615	12.79	11,623	5.22
American Indian	4.06	53	1.10	1,306	0.59
Asian	1.64	74	1.54	4,506	2.03
Hispanic	3.47	453	9.42	13,067	5.87
White	1.88	3,612	75.14	191,922	86.29
State*	2.16	4,807	100.00	222,424	100.00

Source: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Planning, Research, Development and Evaluation Services, Project EASIER Dropout files.

Note: *Figures may not total 100 percent due to rounding.

Barriers To Learning

The reasons that students drop out of school or do not graduate on time are many and varied. Some students have negative experiences at school and simply don't like school in general. Other students have responsibilities that compete with school such as helping to support their families. There are often multiple reasons that students leave school. Contributing circumstances are in place long before the actual event of "dropping out."

Dropping out of school is a process that can begin very early in a child's life. An example of this would be a child with behavioral challenges in an early childhood program who may experience challenges as they enter school and begin to fall behind both academically and socially. Children who do not acquire the necessary reading skills at the elementary level will continue to "learn to read" as they enter middle school while their peers are "reading to learn". A student who does not feel accepted by peers in the early years will become socially isolated and by the time they reach high school, will not feel competent or connected and may give up on academics, connect to peers with similar problems, and eventually drop out.

Reasons for dropping out of school can be described as "push" and "pull" effects. Push effects occur within the school such as not liking school, the inability to get along with teachers and/or students, frequent suspensions, not feeling safe at or connected to school or peers, falling behind with school work, and failing grades. Pull effects come from the external environment and include things like needing to work, having a child, influence of peers who have dropped out, and needing to care for family members.

Data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 found that school-related push effects were the most frequently reported reasons for dropping out. The High School and Beyond longitudinal study included interviews with nearly 2,000 students who had dropped out of school. When asked for their reasons for leaving school, 10% or more of those interviewed identified these reasons:

- Did not like school (33%)
- Poor grades (33%)
- Were offered a job and chose to work (19%)
- Getting married (18%)
- Could not get along with teachers (15%)
- Had to help support family (11%)
- Pregnancy (11%)
- Expelled or suspended (10%)

The Silent Epidemic report further supports the above findings:

- Nearly 70 percent of dropouts said they were not motivated to work hard, and two-thirds would have worked harder if more had been demanded of them.
- Approximately one-third left for personal reasons and one-third cited "failing in school as a major factor.

By looking beyond these "symptoms" of dropping out and by identifying the root causes, a comprehensive system of integrated quality supports can be developed that will keep students in school until they graduate and prepare them for success after high school. Through the work of this Council and the singular focus of increasing the graduation rate, the agency members will make their respective contributions go further toward developing a healthy, competent workforce for Iowa's future.

III. Accomplishments in 2010 – Addressing the Prioritized Issue

The ICYD Council utilized the “Recommended Actions” from the 2010 ICYD Annual Report as a guide to action. Below is a description of the activities and accomplishments of the ICYD Council in 2010, listed by the Recommended Action.

1) Focus on underperforming schools and communities.

During the Spring of 2010, the ICYD Council conducted focus groups in 10 communities that included representatives from schools, businesses, community agencies, school boards, mayors, and local government agencies. The 10 communities are:

Burlington	Cedar Rapids
Council Bluffs	Davenport
Des Moines	Dubuque
Marshalltown	Perry
Sioux City	Waterloo

As a result, a report entitled the *ICYD Statewide School and Community Focus Groups* was completed in June 2010 by Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE). The report identified common themes across the communities’ discussions on the barriers, achievements, and recommendations reported from the communities.

In addition to this report, the ICYD Council has researched and reviewed a number of reports, articles, and studies, including:

- *ICYD Community Forums on High School Graduation Follow-Up Survey Results*, September 2010.
- *Compulsory Age Attendance Report – Senate File 478 Section 160*, January 2010, RISE.
- *Ten Ways to Promote Educational Achievement and Attainment Beyond the Classroom*, July 2010, Child Trends.
- *Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems*, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Peter Leone and Lois Weinberg, May 2010.
- *Underperforming Schools and the Education of Vulnerable Children and Youth*, Chapin Hall Issue Brief, Lisa Walker and Cheryl Smithgall, November 2009.

Based on this information, the ICYD Council believes that for youth to be successful in school and be prepared for life, engagement in **all** of the following areas must occur:

- Students Need to Attend School and be Engaged
- Families Need to be Engaged with Schools
- Schools and Communities Need to Support Youth

By visiting and discussing the issues in these 10 communities, analyzing the data, and reviewing the research, it is clear that to assure that youth are successful **all** three of the above areas of a youth’s life need to be engaged.

2) Assess current state initiatives and maximize existing resources.

The ICYD Council is assisting in the implementation of two federal grants received by the Department of Education in 2010. The grants have overlapping goals and will assist selected schools to assess the needs and develop interventions to prevent substance use and improve conditions for learning.

The Iowa State Agencies Supporting Safe Schools (ISAS³) grant is a one-year grant with a goal to build the statewide infrastructure to prevent youth substance use and violence in schools. The ICYD Council will serve as the multi-agency team and partner with the Department of Education and the Learning Supports Advisory Team to develop a statewide plan to create safe, healthy and caring learning environments. The Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools (IS³) grant is for four years. The first year a student survey must be developed and administered that will measure school safety, engagement, and environment. Critical indicators for school safety, engagement, and environment will be identified as well as threshold levels that schools can use to determine whether additional supports are indicated. In the final three years of the grant, 80% of the funds will be used for direct support of the schools demonstrating the highest need to implement a programmatic intervention system to improve conditions for learning.

In addition to the respective communities' intervention planning and implementation, the following products will be created:

- Surveys for high school students, school staff, and parents that will measure school safety, engagement, and environment.
- Statewide Resource Directory that identifies appropriate supports, services and resources to assist communities in sustaining safe learning environments.
- Implementation Manual for school to implement a continuous improvement process for drug and violence prevention.
- Training and Communication Plan that will enhance communication across state agencies and develop a process to train key state agency staff to support schools in using the Implementation Manual.
- School safety scores for Iowa high schools that are a combination of the survey scores and other school incident data.

The development of these tools and the implementation of local strategies and interventions will be shared with other communities.

IV. Recommended Actions

Achieving a 95 percent graduation rate by 2020 is an ambitious target. The ICYD Council is committed to concentrating its attention on and monitoring progress toward this goal, but reaching it will require concerted, coordinated efforts by policymakers, education systems, and multiple state and community partners. To organize these efforts, the Council will focus on the following five broad areas. The Council has initiated action (see *Accomplishments* Section) and will refine and expand specific action steps to continue these efforts over the next year.

1) Focus on underperforming schools and communities.

In 2007-2008, fifty percent of Iowa school districts had a 95 percent or higher graduation rate; more than 80 percent had a graduation rate of 90 percent or higher. In contrast, 23 school districts (6.6 percent) had a graduation rate of less than 85 percent that year. In 2007-2008, eight school districts accounted for 50 percent of all 9th through 12th grade dropouts in the state. Clearly, if we are to achieve our ultimate graduation rate goal, we must work together to turnaround those schools and communities that have the most to gain. As described in the *Accomplishments of 2010* section of this document, the ICYD Council identified ten schools and invited teams to meet with ICYD Council members to discuss the barriers to youth graduating, successful efforts, and key recommendations to the state that will significantly improve graduation rates. Within these communities, our efforts will now focus on galvanizing resources and expertise across systems to create a range of high quality supportive activities and services that support all young people on a path toward positive, productive adulthood, around each of the identified critical areas needed for youth to be successful:

- Students Need to Attend School and be Engaged
- Families Need to be Engaged with Schools
- Schools and Communities Need to Support Youth

2) Assess current state initiatives and maximize existing resources.

Considerable resources are already targeted to improving school performance and reducing dropout rates. More than \$140 million is levied each year for dropout prevention activities specifically, and millions more are spent to address myriad issues that affect school success. It is critical that these investments be utilized effectively and efficiently. The ICYD Council will complete an inventory and assessment of current spending and initiatives related to improving high school graduation that will help inform decisions about the allocation of existing resources.

As reported in the *Accomplishments* Section of this document, the Department of Education received two grants that total over \$14 million that will assist Iowa to increase the graduation rate.

As additional funding opportunities arise, each of the ICYD Council agencies will pursue them to generate additional resources for the state to address these issues. The state should leverage existing resources by aggressively pursuing these opportunities.

3) Investigate research-based approaches and effective strategies

Across the country and within Iowa, schools and communities facing the challenge of too low graduation rates and too wide achievement gaps among various subpopulations of students have implemented strategies that have been successful. The ICYD Council will research and learn from these places, and will be a venue for communities to access best practices for programming, practice, and policy. In addition, the following research and tools will be utilized to assist communities:

- A. ***Making a Difference – Eight State Legislative Policy Recommendations for Improving America’s High Schools***, developed by *the National Conference of State Legislatures*: Research and examine the policy recommendations by NCSL and determine which of the policy recommendations will benefit Iowa’s schools.
- B. ***Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Graduation Crisis*** was developed by America’s Promise and provides proven strategies to increase graduation rates:
 - Developing a Comprehensive Set of Solutions
 - Creating School Transformation
 - Developing Comprehensive Student Supports
 - Establishing Early Warning Systems
 - Improving College and Career Readiness
 - Developing Dropout Prevention and Recovery Systems
 - Ensuring Effective Policies and Resource Allocations

The ICYD Council will support target communities to match strategies with the unique needs, gaps, and resources that have been identified for each school.

- C. ***Youth Program Quality Assessment***, developed by the *David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality* has been piloted in three Iowa communities, assessing the quality of youth programs and assisting in the development of Quality Improvement Plans for the programs.

4) Coordinate across systems to identify and support vulnerable students.

Many young people with barriers to development and learning are involved in other state run or state supported systems. These students, who may be receiving services from Iowa’s child welfare, juvenile justice, mental health or developmental disability systems, are among the most vulnerable to poor outcomes, including failing to graduate from high school. To effectively meet the needs of these students cross-system coordination and cooperation is required, such as the Department of Human Services Fostering Connections and Children of Color efforts and Workforce Development’s One-Stop Centers and the Workforce Investment Act.

The ICYD Council is committed to finding ways for systems to work more efficiently and effectively together and to ensure that systemic issues are not barriers to student success.

5) Engage additional stakeholders.

As mentioned above, achieving our goal will require active involvement and commitment of multiple players. Over the last year, the ICYD Council reached out to youth, parents, school districts, education organizations, other service systems, and the private sector and received numerous perspectives and ideas to increase the high school graduation rate. The ICYD Council will continue to seek other perspectives from existing groups such as the Department of Education's Learning Supports Advisory Team, the Governor's Youth Race and Detention Task Force Implementation Committee, Iowa Afterschool Alliance (IAA), and the Iowa Children's Justice State Council to find better ways to coordinate efforts and achieve the shared goals of increasing high school graduation and successfully preparing all Iowa youth for a productive adulthood.

