

Education and Student Affairs Committee Memorandum
Board of Regents, State of Iowa

Subject: Report on the Iowa Learns Council
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Date Submitted: June 7, 2004

Recommended Action:

Receive the report.

Executive Summary:

The Iowa Learns Council is charged by the governor to review and make recommendations concerning the state's education system. The Council's time line calls for public input on initial draft recommendations and for follow-up work by the Council in summer and fall 2004.

The Council has developed draft recommendations, many of which require further specification. Among other matters, recommendations will likely address linkages between business and education; professional development for educators; articulation of learning expectations; early childhood learning experiences; and shared accountability for achieving education objectives.

Background:

Governor Thomas J. Vilsack appointed the Iowa Learns Council in October 2003 to conduct a holistic appraisal of the state's entire education system, from early childhood through post-secondary education and into the workforce; and to recommend strategies leading to a seamless and coordinated system. The Council is made up of three teams. Its membership includes leaders in Iowa government, business, and education. Members of the Board office staff share support duties for the Council. Each of the Council's three teams has developed a set of draft recommendations.

During his most recent meeting with Council leaders, Governor Vilsack helped to lay out the Council's next steps. These include:

- coordinating the work products of the three teams into a single set of Council-level recommendations;
- developing more definite projections of costs associated with implementation of recommendations;
- developing projected time lines and more detailed work plans for implementation of recommendations.

The Council plans to issue a fully developed set of recommendations in fall 2004. Subsequent phases of Council work may ensue thereafter and may result in further recommendations.

Potential recommendations under consideration relate to:

- 1) linkages between business and education and ways for business and education to become better engaged;
 - 2) professional development for educators;
 - 3) articulation of statewide learning expectations for students at various levels, e.g., for young children and for high school graduates;
 - 4) a comprehensive early care, health, and education system for young children which would include high quality early childhood learning experiences;
 - 5) creating shared accountability for achieving education objectives;
 - 6) facilitating communication among educators at various levels, e.g., between high school and college faculty;
 - 7) support mechanisms for educational and career decision-making for students and parents.
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