



PEI

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF IOWA

March 30, 2015

Editorial

There are multitudes of educators who go "above and beyond". These are the ones who know the value of treating students special and what happens when you do so. The motivation for students to learn varies considerably. It can come from the family that has read to their children, talked about the importance of education, and taught respect for others. Or it can come from outside sources such as friends, pastors, or teachers.

The job of the instructor is to meet the needs of all students regardless of their background. Many times that requires creativity, extra money, and extra time. PEI believes that the professionals in education know this either by experience or intuition. We also believe that the teachers who understand motivation are the ones who will bring the best out of their students.

The state can mandate good scores, mandate curriculum, construct rules and regulations that appear theoretically sound; **these will only succeed if we create an environment that allows teachers to use their ingenuity and their passion to serve their students**. The theories many times take away planning time, add restrictions, create more documentation, and require time-robbing reports that could be spent on our students. Teachers who are given the mandates usually are not a part of the process of determining what will help our schools.

When Iowa was considered one of the best in the nation in education, there was a different set of standards for excellence and delivery with almost unlimited local options for creativity. Conditions were different throughout our society for sure, but the flexibility for teachers to work was exceptional. Today, the number of issues and topics that have been added to the educational agenda is three-fold what it was in the sixties. The documentation, reports, and tasks have grown with them. ([See Vollmer analysis](#))

In spite of the gloomy scenario, we still have teachers who understand and practice techniques and engage in topics, activities, rewards, and other ways to be the special teacher who the students will long remember as doing those exceptional deeds that made education fun, exciting, challenging, and worthwhile.

Let me tell you about just a few:

1. A kindergarten teacher bought hats and mittens for the children in her class who arrived without these items in the sub zero Iowa temperatures of winter.
2. A coach and his wife opened up their home for 11 years for every football player, manager, cheerleader and whomever else desired to come after games to feed them, bond with them, review the game, but most importantly keep them off the streets and away from the temptations teenagers are typically met with. Many times their home was filled with 25-40 kids!
3. One district whose students were struggling to get assignments completed and succeed in their classes devised a tutoring session during the school day as well as a once a month Saturday school. (1/2 day) Teachers take turns coming to school to help students. None of the teachers are paid to do the extra hours.
4. A 5th Grade teacher knew one of her students had to go home to an empty house after school so she created "work" for him to do at school. He cleaned the boards, sorted papers, refilled and organized her supply room. She also knew this young man did not get fed much at home, so we always brought in nutritious snacks to feed him before he left for home.

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5. An alternative high school teacher working with struggling students keeps her cell phone with her at all times. She has picked up kids in the middle of the night if they got stranded by friends or kicked out by parents. She has found food for kids if they aren't getting food at home. She has bought articles of clothing and coats for these students and has even helped when a washer or dryer wasn't available at home for the student! She has needed to talk some students through crisis situations.

6. A middle school teacher has developed a "film club" during lunch for students who are uncomfortable eating in the lunchroom with other students. The teacher shows classic movies.

7. One teacher had two students whose families were not going to have much for Christmas. She spent her about \$150 to buy gifts for the 6 children of the two families. She also arranged for Santa to deliver the gifts on Christmas Eve.

8. A teacher noticed the zipper on one of her students' winter coat was broken and discovered the students' brothers coat was in the same shape. She took both coats to have them repaired which ended up costing her \$50.

After beginning this article it became quite clear to us what a remarkable membership we have. We have decided to run "Teacher Features" of the "above and beyond" stories that we have received regularly in our newsletters. We hope this has stimulated you to send in what you are doing and how you have reached out to your students. It has truly motivated us!

The View From The Hill

by Mark Felderman

This is the second funnel week at the General Assembly and things might get a little wild this week as we head into Easter. Much of the talk on the Hill is about education. That isn't surprising since education is to the General Assembly what defense is to the Congress. In education, PK-12 is the single largest part of the Iowa budget and when you include higher education, education makes up 55% of the budget. 55%! It is no wonder it is center stage.

The two dominant issues facing us right now are funding and start date. Unless you've been totally immersed in the NCAA tournament, you are probably aware that there are two main proposals in the mix concerning school financing. The House of Representatives passed House File 80 which proposed an increase in funding by 1.25%. The Senate has passed a 4% increase in Senate File 174. Before we go further, I need to comment on two revelations:

The first is that the new revenue estimates came out last week and it appears that tax revenues are going to be **considerably less** than expected. After the gas tax increase of 10 cents per gallon, it appears that lowans will not have the stomach for additional tax increases. This means the Senate's 4% increase is not likely at all.

The second is that after a lengthy and patiently delivered explanation by John Parker of the LSA (Legislative Service Agency) I, now am thinking that only someone who understands Common Core math can understand how school appropriations increases actually work. The bottom line is, that because of automatic funding of minimum salaries and other fixed costs, the 1.25% increase actually translates to an increase of 3.5% or \$99,800,000 raise in funding. The Senate's 4% increase actually becomes a raise of 7.4% or \$212,400,000. [\(click here to see the chart\)](#)

Since neither the House nor the Senate has accepted the other one's proposal a conference committee has been formed to work out a compromise. After the first one hour meeting a vote was taken concerning the 1.25% proposal. It failed by a vote of 5-5. In the next meeting, which hasn't been scheduled yet, they



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will probably vote down the 4% proposed increase as well by the same vote. Then, hopefully, they will get down to business, but don't expect that action in the next week.

Unlike the funding issues, the school start date debate is not a partisan issue. The House sent a school start date bill (SF 227) back to the Senate after amending some provisions in it. The Senate's bill originally allowed each school to set its own start date. The amended version set the start date no earlier than August 23 and sets up a process by which individual prekindergarten through 8th grade buildings can request waivers for the year-round schools. When the bill made it to the Senate, opponents were sure they had enough votes to defeat it and voted. OOPS, they did not have the needed votes and the bill, surprisingly, passed 28-22. The next step would normally be to send the act to the Governor to be signed into law or vetoed. HOWEVER, Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstall, immediately filed a motion to reconsider, which in playground vernacular would be "DO OVER!" The maneuver means that he doesn't actually need to schedule it for reconsideration until the end of the session, so **don't set those calendars yet!** By the way, if, at the end of the session, they do decide to allow an earlier start date, there is still a good chance that Governor Branstad will veto it and school won't be allowed to begin until the week of September 1st.

In my next report, I'll be tackling the world of Smarter Balance versus the Next Generation of the Iowa Assessments. In boxing terms, Floyd Mayweather Jr. vs. Manny Pacquiao has nothing on Iowa! In cook terms, who is the best, Julia Child or Rachel Ray?

ONLY TWO DAYS LEFT!

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY APRIL 1



Professional Educators of Iowa is pleased to announce the Association and Foundation scholarship program for 2015 with over \$5,000 available. Established to create an ongoing network of educational awareness for Iowans, the PEI Foundation supports worthwhile academic endeavors by awarding student and teacher scholarships. All applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2015.

Make sure that you attach the [cover page](http://bit.ly/scholarship-cover-page) (http://bit.ly/scholarship-cover-page) when applying for the scholarships as listed here!

Download the scholarship brochure [here](http://bit.ly/scholarship-brochure). (http://bit.ly/scholarship-brochure).



OFFICE NOTICE

THE PEI OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY!

In observance of Good Friday, we will not be open on April 3. We likewise hope that you can enjoy the observance of this holiday with family and friends.

Happy Easter from us all at the PEI office!

Jodie, Joel, Mark, Lynne, Evan, Kelsey, Jim and your Board of Directors

STAY CONNECTED!

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