



# I.A.A.E. NEWSLETTER

[www.iaae.net](http://www.iaae.net)

## A Brief Message from the President

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I hope that everyone is progressing through the transition toward winter successfully. As our weather cools, almost every educator I speak with talks about the educational climate heating up at a remarkable pace. The pace of demands and advocacy that our Association must address collaboratively are best served by your attendance at, and input toward, the activities of the IAAE. I sincerely hope that all of Iowa's alternative educators will use the IAAE as a springboard for ideas and resources that can further their educational goals and better serve the needs of our at-risk students.



Doug Harrold, IAAE President

- Doug Harrold, IAAE President

## You Make a Difference: An Important Message for Alternative Educators

*A message adopted for Iowa from an editorial in the Summer 2008 issue of **Education Revolution** by Ron Miller, editor*

If you are looking for, or working to provide, person-centered, democratically-oriented ways of learning, you will find that you are not alone. You are part of a global movement to challenge industrial-age schooling with genuine, organic learning that respects human needs, child development, cultural diversity and high ideals such as universal love and peace. Dedicated visionaries in many parts of the world are striving day after day to establish such places

of learning for a new millennium. Their stories can be found in a magazine published by the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO), *Education Revolution: The Magazine of Alternative Education*, 417 Roslyn Heights, NY 11577-2620.

Your daily work is probably consuming and exhausting. You are struggling to keep a small independent school afloat with limited resources, or contending with the politics of public schooling to keep an unconventional program going, or opening your heart to young people healing from the abuse they've suffered in our competitive and bullying culture; or maybe you're devoting hours of your life every day to nourishing your own children's learning. You probably don't feel that you have much energy left to build an international movement. But in reality, that's exactly what you are doing as you engage in your daily struggles. You are part of something larger. So, be inspired by the stories gathered from the far corners of the world—Nepal, Japan, Thailand, Norway, across the United States and Iowa, etc. These experiments in humane and democratic learning reflect different facets of emerging education change. They're addressing diverse local needs and cultural situations. They may not look quite like your school or home learning situation, but at their heart, they share similar principles and a similar determination to overcome the sometimes oppressive system of standardized schooling. There are several theories about how cultures change. A major factor in change is believing in an established idea. Recent writings on the "tipping point," "spiral dynamics," and cultural "framing" confirm what grassroots activists have been saying for decades: change happens when people spontaneously abandon the established order and adopt a new narrative to explain reality, an alternative set of values. That is precisely what the educational alternatives movement is doing. Yet few people realize that this culture is actively growing in so many parts of the world. Besides AERO, there is no center, no nexus, where the widely scattered experiments in genuine education meet, where it becomes evident that together they add up to something much larger than any of them alone. The mainstream media aren't covering this story. Political leaders aren't aware of it. It's up to us to get the word out.

Many of us in this network of building alternatives for maximizing student potential have explored ways to create stronger means of advocating for alternatives. It's been difficult to build a focused, adequately funded organization with enough credibility or impact to reach the public's consciousness. Maybe, in an age of empire and standardization, the time has not yet been right. But just maybe, this age is coming to an end and our time is now at hand. All education organizations can help. They need your story.

The world needs you. This country needs you. Iowa needs you: The Iowa Association of Alternative Schools [www.iaae.net](http://www.iaae.net).

For more information about AERO and how to join, see [page 3](#) of this publication.

## Strong Schools: The Need for Alternatives

The following message invites everyone to provide ideas to help increase student success in schooling. The message opens the door for input from alternative school teachers and administrators. Consider responding to the message encouraging local communities to personalize education and to change the time-line we operate under expecting all students to graduate in four years (a time-line not supported by research). Alternative education changes the paradigm of education from "curriculum-first: student second" to "student-first: curriculum-second". This paradigm shift increases the number of successful high school graduates and student performance indicators.

We are only as strong as our schools, and our schools are failing our children. Consider:

- Almost 70% of America's eighth-graders do not read at grade level.
- Our 15-year-olds rank 25th in math and 21st in science.
- America showed no improvement in its post-secondary graduation rate between 2000 and 2005.



We know that the nations with the best schools attract the best jobs. If those jobs move to other countries, our economy, our lives and our children will suffer. For that reason, Strong American Schools launched a new campaign this week to combat the crisis in our public schools.

Please join us. Tell your governors, your state and national representatives and senators that you want a change for stronger schools. Make your voice heard.

Visit <http://www.greatschools.net/content/actionForEducation.page> or <http://www.edin08.com/Participate.aspx>.

**Note:** Strong American Schools is a nonpartisan public awareness and advocacy effort aimed at elevating discussion amongst America's leaders about the need for education reform. The campaign, a project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, is supported by The Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting sound education policies for all Americans. Strong American Schools does not support or oppose any candidate for public office and does not take positions on legislation.

## Resources for Alternative Educators

### Online tools—Essential Skills and Work Habits



The Ontario Skills Passport (OSP) provides clear descriptions of the Essential Skills and work habits important for work, learning and life. Essential Skills are used in virtually all occupations and are transferable from school to work, job-to-job and sector to sector. The OSP offers high school students, adult learners, job seekers, workers, employers, teachers, trainers, practitioners, job developers and counselors a common language, resources and tools that help build competence, confidence and connections.

The OSP was developed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ontario, Canada. The Ministries continue to sponsor OSP enhancements and the development of OSP resources to support its use in a wide range of educational and training contexts. The OSP offers a common language, tools and resources that help build competence, confidence and connections.

**Learners\* and job seekers** can use the OSP to identify the skills they already have and to plan further skills development so that they can more easily make the transition to the workplace and/or to further education and/or training.

**Workers** can use the OSP to continue developing and gathering evidence of their skills to progress in their careers.

**Employers** can use the OSP for assessing the performance of individuals in the workplace with regard to Essential Skills and work habits, for assessing and recording demonstration of these skills and work habits, and for hiring and training employees.

**Teachers, trainers, job developers, practitioners and counselors** can use the OSP to introduce relevant information on skills and occupation-related tasks in the classroom and in training programs, to identify expanded workplace-based opportunities, and to match learners and job seekers with available work placements. Visit: <http://skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSPWeb/jsp/en/introduction.jsp>.

## Visit [www.curriki.org](http://www.curriki.org) for Curriculum



Curriki is more than your average website; it's a community of educators, learners and committed education experts who are working together to create quality materials that will benefit teachers and students around the world.

Curriki is an online environment created to support the development and free distribution of world-class educational materials to anyone who needs them. The name is a play on the combination of 'curriculum' and 'wiki' which is the technology used to make education universally accessible.

It's now possible to create wiki resources using a very simple form. To see some examples of lessons created using this new template, visit curriki, and then start to contribute your own!

### PUTTING THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK IN CONTEXT

This easy-to-follow constructivist lesson and WebQuest guides students through an online tour of New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, examining artifacts of Jewish life, culture, and history. Students will think and write about how these artifacts connect to what they already know and what they will be learning about the Holocaust and Jewish life while reading the Diary of Anne Frank.

[http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Coll\\_paxetaurora/AnneFrank](http://www.curriki.org/xwiki/bin/view/Coll_paxetaurora/AnneFrank)

### LET US KNOW ABOUT YOUR SPECIAL PROJECTS!

Are you putting together a curriculum you'd like input on, starting a group you'd like to find members for, or do you have content you are proud to contribute to Curriki? If you have a project you'd like to let us know about, e-mail: [pro-](mailto:pro-)

## Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning

CASEL is a collaborative that works to advance the science and evidence-based practice of social and emotional learning (SEL). They write books, articles, and briefs that synthesize scientific advances in SEL and explain their implications for practice. Their priorities focus on the benefits of preschool through high school SEL programming; how SEL coordinates with other educational movements; research and training in implementation; assessment; school and district leadership development; educational policies; and communications. Visit: [www.CASEL.org](http://www.CASEL.org)

## Bulk Membership Offer to AERO Schools and Programs

AERO is offering an excellent opportunity for families of your school to understand alternative education more thoroughly. As you might already know, an AERO membership gives you a subscription to *Education Revolution*, discounts on books and DVDs through the AERO website, access to our listserve, and free job postings. Now, why should only schools take advantage of these opportunities? The families of your community would love to have the chance to be more involved in the alternative education movement, but we need YOU to show them the way! For as little as \$10.00 per family, or \$5.00 per family for a PDF membership, the families of your school can each have their very own yearlong AERO membership. At Brooklyn Free School, for example, an AERO membership is included in their tuition, but at such a bargain price, why shouldn't it be?! The families of Brooklyn Free School have been extremely happy with their AERO memberships.

Consider adding an AERO bulk membership as part of next year's budget/tuition. This is truly an extraordinary offer! If you are interested in this program, e-mail Jerry Mintz ([JerryAERO@aol.com](mailto:JerryAERO@aol.com)) or call the AERO office at 800- 769-4171 to make arrangements.

THE **EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

*The Website of AERO - The Alternative Education Resource Organization*

## Organizational News

### IAAE State Conference 2009

The Iowa Association of Alternative Education will hold the annual State Alternative Education Spring Conference on Thursday, March 26, and Friday morning, March 27, 2009. The conference will be held at the Airport Holiday Inn Conference Center in Des Moines. The conference will feature two outstanding keynote presentations with Harvey Allston scheduled for the Thursday opening keynote and Dr. Richard Kay scheduled for the Friday morning address. In addition to the keynote presentations, there will be concurrent sessions on both Thursday and Friday. More information will be available on the IAAE website at [www.iaae.net](http://www.iaae.net) as the conference date approaches. A conference registration and information brochure will be mailed in January. If you are interested in presenting at the State Conference, please contact one of your regional IAAE board members.

### Legislative Day 2009

February in Iowa has traditionally been recognized as Alternative Education month. To highlight that recognition, the IAAE will be sponsoring the Alternative Education Legislative Day on Tuesday, February 24, 2009. The entire rotunda area and adjoining wings of the State Capitol Building in Des Moines have been reserved from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM for the day's events. Staff and students from Iowa's alternative schools and programs are encouraged to take part. Those attending will be asked to create table displays showcasing students' work, their school, or program. The IAAE will furnish the tables and will hold a pizza feed at Noon for all students and staff present that day. In addition to promoting alternative education, the day also serves as a great learning experience for staff and students alike. School and program sponsors are encouraged to contact their state legislators ahead of time to set up meetings and Capitol tours for the day of the event. If you are interested in attending the 2009 Alternative Education Legislative Day at the State Capitol, please contact IAAE board member and event organizer Greg McCullough at 515.965.7003 or by e-mail: [gmmccullough@dmacc.edu](mailto:gmmccullough@dmacc.edu).



### Alternative School/Program Administrators' Networking Meetings

To compliment the fall Risky Business conference and the spring State Alternative Education conference, the IAAE and the Des Moines Area Community College Youth Consortium will together co-sponsor three Alternative School/Program Administrators' Networking meetings during the 2008–2009 school year. These are great opportunities for administrators of alternative schools and programs from across Iowa to receive the latest updates from the Iowa Association of Alternative Education, the Department of Education and other educational leaders as they pertain to serving at risk students and diverse learners in alternative schools and programs. The meetings also serve as a networking time for those in attendance with similar job backgrounds and responsibilities. All meetings will be held on the DMACC Ankeny Campus and will run from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The first two networking meeting are scheduled for Monday, November 3, 2008, and Monday, January 12, 2009. A third meeting will be scheduled for late February or early March. For more specific information on meeting locations and agenda contact IAAE board member Greg McCullough at 515.965.7003 or by e-mail: [gmmccullough@dmacc.edu](mailto:gmmccullough@dmacc.edu). Information is also posted on the IAAE website at [www.iaae.net](http://www.iaae.net).

### Mark Your Calendars

- **January 12, 2009** Alternative School/Program Networking Meeting, DMACC Campus, Ankeny
- **February 2009** Alternative Education Month
- **February 24, 2009** Alternative Education Legislative Day, Capitol Rotunda, Des Moines
- **March 23, 2009** Nomination Deadline for 2009 IAAE Awards
- **March 26-27, 2009** IAAE State Conference
- **March 31, 2009** Application Deadline for Scavo Grants





## Need Your HELP: Success Stories of Alternative Schools and Students in Iowa

Several years ago, the IAAE published a document identifying success stories of students in alternative schools in Iowa and those who graduated from alternative schools. The publication was published again in 2007 and distributed at the IAAE conference last April. A new version is being developed now. The authors, Dr. Spike Hall and Ray Morley, need your help. If you have a success story of a student or students, please send the story to Spike or Ray for publication. Full names should not be used to establish confidentiality. However, if someone wishes to tell their story and is okay with a full name, please feel free to share. E-mail addresses to send stories: [raymondmorl@gmail.com](mailto:raymondmorl@gmail.com) or [spike.hall@drake.edu](mailto:spike.hall@drake.edu)

A copy of the current publication can be accessed at <http://iaae.net/site/files/SuccessStories2007Final.pdf>. Note that some full names are used in telling the success story.

## 2009 Iowa STARS Celebration Scheduled



The 2009 Iowa STARS Celebration is scheduled for Friday, February 6, 2009. The event will be held in Waterloo.

The Iowa STARS Celebration was established in 2002 to showcase the creativity, talents and scholastic accomplishments of Iowa's alternative high school students in a setting that is non-judgmental and non-threatening. Professional and constructive feedback will be provided; however, student work is never judged. All students will receive recognition in a non-competitive environment. The goal is to share and appreciate.

If you need more information or are interested in attending, please contact Don Betts at Carrie Lane High School, 502 N Jackson Street, Charles City (641-426-5975 / [dbetts@charlescitieschools.org](mailto:dbetts@charlescitieschools.org)) More detailed information will be posted on the Iowa Association of Alternative Education website - [www.iaae.net](http://www.iaae.net) - as details are finalized.

## Alternative School High School Basketball League

Your school/program is invited to join the Alternative School Basketball League of Eastern Iowa. The league offers an opportunity to participate in coed competitive basketball. Teams play one another a minimum of two times during the season, once at home and once away. The season is scheduled to begin mid-December and end in February. A post-season tournament is in the planning stages.

Contact Chuck Tonelli, Metro High School. Phone: 319.558.1545.



## Risky Business XXI Recap



Dr. Harry K. Wong

The 21st annual fall Risky Business conference was held on Monday, September 24, 2008. Dr. Harry K. Wong, one of the country's leading educational speakers and author of the highly acclaimed *The First Days of School* presented a morning workshop to an overflow audience of over 500 educators from across the state of Iowa. Conference organizers noted that this year's conference turnout broke all previous attendance records for the popular one-day event. Following Dr. Wong's morning workshop, conference attendees were able to select from nearly 30 breakout presentations during the two afternoon concurrent sessions. At the conclusion of the day's events, a networking/social hour was held giving conference participants the opportunity to process the day's events as well as network with colleagues who serve at risk youth in Iowa's alternative schools and programs. Risky Business XXI was sponsored by the Iowa Association of Alternative Education, the Des Moines Area Community College Youth Consortium and Des Moines Public Schools Scavo Campus. Plans are currently underway for Risky Business XXII, which will be held on Monday, September 28, 2009 at the Airport Holiday Inn Conference Center in Des Moines.

## News from the Schools

### Community-Based Learning at Scavo High School in Des Moines

Scavo's Social Science Community-Based Learning class has been busy this past six weeks. Over all, these students have spent over 70 hours out in the Des Moines community studying history, government, and contemporary world issues.

Students conducted primary source interviews with former shipmates who served on the USS Iowa. These former sailors were visiting Des Moines as part of their annual convention and were touring a USS Iowa exhibit at the State Historical Museum. Students got a firsthand account of each crewmember's stay on the ship and were able to interview them for five to ten minutes. Each had a unique story and students commented on their bravery and pride in serving during the Iowa's commission. A few of the students participating were Courtney Nichol, Kris Erichsen, Ashley Busick, Dustin Barnhill and Sander Johnson. The interviews are being put into a visual display and will be sent to the men upon completion.

Students in the class also served as guides for Des Moines area principals during their retreat at the Historical building. These students took principals to workshops and made sure they stayed on time. These students were Stevi Janssen, Heather Churchill and Brittany Bailey.

Several of the students volunteered during the George Washington Carver Day on September 20, 2008, assisting visitors with crafts and games. Ashley Loose, Brittany Perkins, Courtney Nichol and Ashley Busick had a great learning experience during this special day.

The students also toured and presented on the State Capitol. Students became familiar with the history of the Capitol, studied the Legislature, and discussed the curriculum they had used for the Iowa Caucus Exhibit at the State Historical Building. Some students even met Secretary of State Michael Mauro.

This first class of students concluded this community experience by documenting, through a tour they led, one of the exhibits at the Historical building. Included in this tour group were four Scavo staff members, Events Coordinator Maureen Korte, and Education Director Sarah Macht.



Former USS Iowa crewmember relates his memories to a Scavo student.

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### WHAT'S COOKIN' AT OASIS?



Students from OASIS cook up culinary delights.

Thanks in part to a \$200.00 Scavo Grant, some of the students at OASIS in Oskaloosa are participating in cooking classes. Earlier in the year, students did a little cooking and a lot of research into other countries for a *Foods Around the World* course. Their final project was preparing a dinner for the Oskaloosa Board of Education. After that, students moved on to a *Grilling & Smoking* class. Next year, we plan to offer several more cooking classes such as *Breads*, *Cake Decorating*, and *Holiday Recipes*. I'm sure as the year goes on, we will come up with more ideas—maybe even an Iron Chef style competition.

With our grant, we bought a food processor, blender, pans, and a few small items. Those items have been put to good use and will continue to be used for many years to come. We send the IAAE a big OASIS thanks for our Scavo Grant.

- Cheryl Benson, Oskaloosa

## Letter From the Editor

As the articles trickled in for this month's IAAE newsletter, I couldn't help but reflect on the fact that we are all too busy. Way too busy. How is it that we are supposed to take care of paperwork, assist students in social ways, encourage them to set goals for themselves, schedule parent/teacher conferences, track statistics for state and federal guidelines, attend meetings, and oh, by the way, teach? Is anyone else getting tired? I sometimes feel like a pinball.

It's easy to get worn out and lose focus during the winter months. Students get testy. Administrators get cranky. Teachers feel bogged down. Alternative programs lose students for the (seemingly) craziest reasons. Of course we know what's best for our students, but the district won't permit it. And don't even start with the Iowa weather...

This is not intended to be a whiner's article, by the way. These are the sentiments I am hearing from educators. What I am reminded of this month is that, although we are all seemingly stretched to our limits, we still do have a lot to be thankful for. Our lives could be easier; there is no doubt about it. On the flipside, most of us have a roof over our heads, clothing to wear during the harsh months ahead, food on the table, a means of transportation, and an education. I can't imagine how life would be without any one of these, can you? I am pretty sure, though, that most of our students have had to do without many of these things that we take for granted. We have much to be thankful for.

Being thankful doesn't always come so easily, however. It is easy to get overwhelmed by the ever-increasing demands placed on us by local, state, and federal entities. The condition of our economy isn't exactly encouraging right now, either. Knowing the harsh realities that exist in the lives of the at-risk students we serve can also wear on a person's soul. It is so easy to lose focus as we try to be everything to everyone...

Personally, I think alternative educators are a tough bunch of nuts. We can take an awful lot. While we are busy being the "alternative advocates" of the state, though, we sometimes forget to take time to sit back, exhale, and refocus. Do it. Sit down long enough to enjoy a hot cup of tea or coffee (without doing school work!). Eat an extra cookie. Have a hot tub party. Call a friend you haven't spoken to in a while. Defy Mother Nature and go outside in the midst of her fury. Be thankful for every day. Love your family members while they are here on this earth. Live! It all helps to clear the mind so as to refocus on what is really important.

Remember, that above all, we are providing a very valuable service to our students. They rely on us to be their sources of stability and their advocates. No matter how many new mandates come our way, it is our attitude, determination, and focus on what our students really need that will pull us through yet another school year. It is our clear focus and activism on behalf of our students that will ultimately help them reach their goals. If we do not take some time for ourselves, we cannot give our students the best of what we've got. So as the Nike Corporation would say, "Just do it!"

By the way, have a safe, happy, **thankful** holiday season!



Pat Johansen, IAAE Board Member and Newsletter Editor

### Notice: Newsletter Changes

If you are a member of the IAAE and would like to receive a hard copy of this newsletter in the mail, please contact Pat Johansen at [pjohansen@jefferson-scranton.k12.ia.us](mailto:pjohansen@jefferson-scranton.k12.ia.us)

In order to save postage costs and eliminate unnecessary paper waste, this newsletter will now be distributed solely online unless we receive an e-mail with your name and mailing address.



## Grant and Award Opportunities 2009 Vincent C. Scavo Grants

In 1995, the Board of Directors voted to re-name the grants offered to members to honor the memory of Vince Scavo, one of the founders and a Past-President of IAAE.

Each year IAAE offers grants to members who wish to provide innovative programs for the students with whom they work. The IAAE Awards Committee will determine the number of grants awarded and the amount per award. No more than \$750 will be awarded to any one school or program. Grants have a project period of one calendar year. Recipients are required to document expenses and evaluate the project's success, **including submission of an article suitable for publication.** The article must be submitted within one year of the award date.

Grant applications are to include a narrative about the proposal, and a **budget breakdown is required.** In the narrative submitted, please include the details listed below. Grants are judged using the following criteria:

- \*Involvement of students
- \*Experientially-based
- \*Innovative
- \*Interdisciplinary
- \*Potential of expanding students' horizons
- \*Use of community

Grant applications should be mailed to:

Lisa Demuth, Walnut Creek Campus  
815 8<sup>th</sup> Street, West Des Moines, Iowa 50265

**Applications are due March 23, 2009**

## 2009 IAAE Awards: Nominations Being Accepted

### Newcomer of the Year

The Newcomer of the Year Award is presented annually at the state conference to an alternative educator who has less than five years of alternative education experience. The purpose of the award is to recognize Iowa's outstanding teachers who are new to the field of alternative education. The award may be presented to a teacher, supervisor, administrator or counselor who is currently employed in an alternative education setting. This award will honor a person who is enthusiastic about alternative education, promotes a positive atmosphere in the school setting, and is an advocate for students. A selection committee will review all nominations and select the Newcomer of the Year award recipient. Each nominee will receive a certificate, and the finalist will receive a framed certificate.

Process: Submit no more than 5 letters detailing the individual's contribution to alternative education. More than one nomination is required for an individual to be considered. Nominations can come from supervisors, coworkers, students, or community members in support of the nominee. All nominations considered must be received in one complete packet of letters. Be as specific as possible about the contributions and efforts that should be recognized as an educator worthy of being awarded this recognition. Please include the number of years the nominee has been in alternative education. Detail activities beyond his/or her designated responsibilities with which this person has been involved.

### Educator of the Year

The **Educator of the Year Award** is presented annually at the state conference to an alternative educator who is making a significant contribution to alternative education in Iowa. The purpose of the award is to recognize Iowa's outstanding alternative educators. Any alternative education teacher, supervisor, administrator, or counselor may be nominated. It will be at the discretion of the Committee to interview nominees and the finalist will receive a certificate and a trophy. The school/program of the winner will receive \$50.00 "bagel bucks" for a celebration for the staff.

Process: Submit no more than 5 letters detailing the individual's contribution to alternative education. More than one nomination is required for an individual to be considered. Nominations can come from supervisors, coworkers, students, or community members in support of the nominee. All nominations considered must be received in one complete packet of letters. Be as specific as possible about the contributions and efforts that should be recognized as an educator worthy of being awarded this recognition. Please include the number of years the nominee has been in alternative education. Detail activities beyond his/or her designated responsibilities with which this person has been involved. Describe the creative curriculum or other programs this person has developed.

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### **Lifetime Achievement**

In 2005, the Board of Directors voted to re-name the Lifetime Achievement award to honor the memory of Jim Fenton, a pioneer in alternative education and a past President of IAAE. The **Jim Fenton Lifetime Achievement Award** is presented annually at the state conference to alternative educators who have made a major contribution to the area of alternative education during their professional career. The purpose of the award is to honor individuals who have spent a minimum of 15 years in education as an alternative education professional. A teacher, counselor, supervisor, administrator or any alternative educator that has met the above criteria may be nominated. The nominated individual's contribution could include, but is not limited to any of the following: improved services for students through innovative and creative thinking, advising and counseling methods, administrative leadership and consistent work that has demonstrated improvements in alternative programming. A selection committee will review all nominations and select the recipients of this award. Each award nominee will receive a copy of the letters submitted and recipients will receive a framed certificate and a trophy.

Process: Submit no more than 5 letters detailing the individual's contribution to alternative education. More than one nomination is required for an individual to be considered. Nominations can come from supervisors, coworkers, students, or community members in support of the nominee. All nominations considered must be received in one complete packet of letters. Be as specific as possible about the contributions and efforts that should be recognized as an educator worthy of being awarded this recognition. Please include the number of years the nominee has been in alternative education. Detail the achievements this person has made in regard to improved services for students through innovative and creative thinking, advising and counseling methods, administrative leadership and consistent work that has demonstrated improvements in alternative programming.

### **Hall of Fame Award**

The **Hall of Fame Award** is presented annually at the state conference to alternative educators who have made a major contribution to the area of alternative education during their professional career. The purpose of the award is to induct alternative educators to the Iowa Alternative Education Hall of Fame. Inductees must have made a major contribution to the area of alternative education during their professional career, provided leadership, vision and momentum toward excellence in the field of alternative education. A teacher, counselor, supervisor, administrator or any alternative educator that has met the above criteria may be nominated. The nominated individual's contribution could include, but is not limited to any of the following: improved services for students through innovation, consistent work that has demonstrated improvements in alternative programs, contributing to the body of knowledge through research and/or publication of books, articles, and/or journals that raises the level of professionalism within the field, refining, existing programs to a higher level, or an engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues, and the community. A selection committee will review all nominations and select the recipients of this award. Each award nominee will receive a copy of the letters submitted and recipients will receive a framed certificate and a trophy.

Process: Submit no more than 5 letters detailing the individual's contribution to alternative education. More than one nomination is required for an individual to be considered. Nominations can come from supervisors, coworkers, students, or community members in support of the nominee. All nominations considered must be received in one complete packet of letters. Be as specific as possible about the contributions and efforts that should be recognized as an educator worthy of being awarded this recognition. Please include the number of years the nominee has been in alternative education. Detail the achievements this person has made including; improved services for students through innovation, consistent work that has demonstrated improvements in alternative programs, contributing to the body of knowledge through research and/or publication of books, articles, and/or journals that raises the level of professionalism within the field, refining, existing programs to a higher level, or an engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues, and the community.

**All nominations are due by March 12, 2009.**



## What's Alternative About Your Alternative?



Dr. Ray Morley

Just over one year ago, your director of education, while speaking at an alternative education administrators meeting, said, "All kids deserve a diploma and there are no excuses for not having one. I look to your group to find ways to educate all." She also said, "We cannot move quietly with the legislature. Let the legislature know that we need to create learning environments to help all kids do better." She also said, "Schools are a reflection of our communities. Parents are thinking all schooling is the same without thought that schools need to be an organization of innovation and change and not the same."

So you have been asked to lead the way to helping all kids find a pathway to the education goals of the community. By the way, these are the words that are printed on the IAAE membership brochure. IAAE seeks to find a pathway for all students.

Alternative schools and programs remain one of the very few education innovations that have continued over the last forty years. While other innovations have come and gone, alternative schools have remained. Success story after success story continues to be the legacy of alternative schools. NCES stated that in the nineties graduation rates rose, but when alternative school data is taken out of the picture, graduation rates went down. In Iowa, as alternative schools have expanded, graduation rates have risen and dropout rates have declined. Alternative schools have helped increase graduation rates. Why?

What is alternative about your alternative? If you do not have a ready answer you should, because public education is fast becoming a system of options and not one school. The new recommendations from high school reform research are embracing the concepts born and supported within the growth of alternatives across the world over the past 100 years. Research in many areas supports the whole concept of alternatives/options and not "One size fits all."

I have found that not everyone can readily tell me what is alternative about his or her alternative. The students who succeed within them can always find an answer, and parents who experience the joy of seeing their children succeed can also find an answer. Communities across Iowa need to hear the answers so we can do what the director of education has charged you to do—she said, "We cannot move quietly with our legislators. We cannot let parents think that one school is good for all." Alternatives are a sign of success, not failure. Providing alternatives indicates that your community understands research and the need to provide learning alternatives for all. It is a sign of strong leadership and excellence in education.

So what is alternative about your alternative? What makes alternatives successful when other traditional schools are not successful with a given student? Have you dubbed your school alternative because the term is something you can hang your hat on? If you cannot explain the differences between your school and others in the community with regard to helping students learn, then you may well have dubbed a name. Your success with students will be minimized accordingly.

Quality alternative schools have fundamental assumptions about learning.

Autonomy (a separate setting apart from the traditional environment) is everything. Motivation research teaches us to escape negative environments and experience positive environments to build stamina and change ourselves for the good. Alternative schools must be autonomous to achieve maximum success.

Students who have failed in a school environment do not thrive in the same environment in a different program. They seldom maximize their potential by staying in the same environment. Some will not stay there at all. Would you?

Personal advisory systems are implemented in alternative schools for constant encouragement of learning. Small school size low teacher/pupil ratios guarantee personal attention and encouragement. Staff assumes a counselor role and teaching role.

Traditional schools are large and do not guarantee personal advisory access on a day to day basis with personal attention and encouragement. Counselors are used for scheduling and discipline, and personal planning is minimized VS maximized. Large size prevents day-to-day access to personal attention, which is needed by many.

In order to succeed, we have to deal with the whole child—physical, mental, moral, social, emotional, spiritual, career, intellectual. Accommodations are made in the management of a student's program to allow support services from agencies and organizations outside of school to be exercised as needed. The student comes first...then curriculum. Motivation to learn comes from the individual—once started, it blossoms.

If curriculum comes first, motivation can be lost quickly. Traditional school is about guarantees—a promise of the acquisition of basic skills in reading, math, writing, etc. The student must adopt and conform and learn the curriculum designed for all. Accommodations for outside support services can seldom be made without great difficulty and to the extent necessary to achieve school success.

The timeline to learn is flexible in an alternative school. All learners vary in timeline and readiness to learn. Readiness is strongly influenced by biological factors as well as environmental. Expectations vary in the number of courses a student should take. The students' progress is based on individual commitment.

Traditional schools set a maximum schedule for all kids with course loads established by a timetable for graduation. The practice is that all students come equally prepared, with the **Continued on next page**

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same timetable for learning and same resources for learning. Research identifies the fact that this model will not work for all students.

Choice research is embraced in alternative schools. When given choices, students and parents are more involved and committed to school. Choices include attending the school, timeline for school, course load, adjustments in school for other needed community-based services for accommodating needs, accommodations to pay fees, etc.

Traditional schools restrict choice. You do attend the neighborhood school whether acceptable or not. You follow the same timetable for all. You take a maximum course load. The parents and students do make-ups for missed school for accessing community-based services.

Numerous teaching strategies are practiced constantly in alternative schools to accommodate different learning styles. Variety in practices within any given day are recognized as needed such as field trips, simulation, peer teaching, group study and discussion, demonstration, community service, and many more.

Students in traditional high schools identify the number one concern of traditional programs is that teachers do not teach in the way the students can learn. One technique is commonly used—lecture.

Students assume responsibility for their education in alternative schools. It is recognized that if students are given responsibility they will learn to be responsible. With responsibility comes commitment to learn. Accommodations are made to help students accept responsibility for their education. They can choose to attend or not with personal consequences, they can assume full schedules or not with personal consequences, they can accelerate their education to postsecondary options or not with personal consequences, etc. A basic practice is that students are encouraged to continue learning with them as the decision maker. They control success via exercising or neglecting opportunities.

Traditional schools punish students for not attending, not completing homework, not achieving passing grades, etc. Students learn to work the system, achieve less and get by, and learn to blame others for what happens. Research in Iowa identifies fifty policies and practices in traditional schools that contribute to student failure VS success.

Student governance includes all students in alternative schools. Family meetings are held for decision-making on curriculum, extra-curricular activities, interschool visitations, behavior policy, consequences, etc. The establishment of family and joint decision-making establishes ownership for all and commitment to monitor behavior. Students monitor their own environment to assist staff. Student governance leads to self-control, monitoring, and learning the democratic process.

Students in traditional schools elect a student council and leave the decision-making up to the staff and student council. Most are never involved with environmental decisions, curriculum decisions, extra-curricular decisions, behavior decisions, etc.

Personal contracts and goal setting are practiced constantly in alternative schools to establish the ability to set goals, develop plans to accomplish the goals, and create the resources necessary to support the plans. This learning is essential for success in all aspects of life.

Schedules are set for students in traditional schools without any necessary link to relevancy in the community. Students follow the schedules without much involvement in looking ahead.

The talents of each child are what are valued in an alternative school. Different learners have different intelligences needing some adjustments in the learning process, what is learned and how learning is demonstrated. The different talents are all valued because it takes different talents to make community work. It also takes different knowledge coming together. Everybody is recognized as having talent and is perceived as being able to learn.

Talents are often overlooked in traditional programs for need to address academics and maintain a schedule for that purpose. Students feel personally neglected because of the lack of recognition for their strengths. The schedule must be met.

Schools initiated and sustained by concerned members of the public are usually more viable and sustainable than those developed by independent educators. Community engagement strengthens both alternative schools and traditional schools.

Be assured that the traditional program does serve most children well in helping them to succeed through education. There are students who fail within the traditional school and do their best to escape the environment of failure just as you and I would try to escape any environment not contributing to our success. An alternative school provides an option for those for whom the traditional school does not work and must be considered as an extension/part of the high school of the community—separate, but equal in importance and mission.

These statements are meant to help you identify what might be alternative about your alternative. Your school board and community needs to know the information to understand why an alternative school is a move toward excellence in education VS a sign of failure. Help them by describing your alternative compared to the traditional high school. As well, the professional staff in the district can benefit by knowing the facts. Your document can help create support through dialogue and collaboration. Be sure to utilize your source of information and direct others to use the same through [www.iaae.net](http://www.iaae.net).

## IAAE Executive Board Meeting Minutes Summary

October 10 2008

The IAAE Executive Board met in Ankeny on October 10, 2008. Members in attendance included Scott McNabb, Don Betts, Doug Harrold, Cheryl Benson, Greg McCullough, Susan Walkup, Dawn Young, Steve Peters, Bret Eubanks, and Lisa De-muth.

Board discussion and action:

The Board worked in committees. Reports were given and discussions were held:

### **Conference:**

The 2009 State Conference will be held at the Airport Holiday Inn in Des Moines and will be hosted by the IAAE Board. Lori Kay, Greg McCullough and Ray Morley are working on the conference and are seeking assistance. Anyone who has a potential presenter is encouraged to do the preliminary contact and then forward information to Lori.

The conference brochure is to be completed, printed and distributed in January. It will also be on-line.

Feedback from the 2008 conference indicated a desire by membership for more "in the field" presenters: presentations of "hands on" topics such as curriculum, program administration, etc.

Harvey Alston and Richard Kay will be keynoters for the 2009 conference.

It was a consensus of the Board to seek a school or schools in Iowa to serve as host of the conference and hold the event at the Embassy Suites in Des Moines.

The Board will develop a conference outline that could be used by schools when planning a state conference.

The Board would like to have a host recruited so that they can be announced at the 2009 conference.

### **Outreach:**

Information relating to the 2009 State Conference will be posted online for access by membership.

The Board felt that the IAAE website is in need of a link to specific areas of the Iowa Department of Education.

Development of a matrix for use by alternative schools as they align curriculum with the Iowa Core Curriculum and the 21st Century Skills was discussed.

### **Internal:**

Reviewed proposed constitutional changes. The Board will seek to clarify some areas of the constitution.

The Board will approve proposed changes 90 days prior to the Annual Meeting at the 2009 state conference.

Legislative Day is scheduled for Feb. 24th, 10-2 pm, in the Rotunda of the Capitol. Pizza will be served for lunch. The Board will work to assemble information packets for distribution.

Networking Meetings will be held from 10-2 pm Nov. 3, Jan. 12, with a 3rd meeting to be announced.

The current newsletter is available on the website.

Susan Walkup of the Iowa Department of Education reported on several items:

She is visiting schools before site visits

Component recovery- getting away from seat time and moving towards components.

Vendors trying to meet needs of components and Iowa Core Curriculum.

Iowa Learning Online- trying to better meet the needs of alternative education.

Electronic Transcripts – being thought out for all schools.

Curriculum delivery from AEA's using curriculum dollars w/CDs.

Modified allowable growth forms – DE trying to track money better.

The Board heard a brief report on Central Alternative School in Dubuque. They are still open this year and have been given this year to make their case for staying open. Susan reported that she has visited.

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**Iowa Association of Alternative Education**  
Supporting learning alternatives in Iowa since 1979