

EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF

William L. Lepley, Ed.D., director and executive officer; Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines 50319-0146; 515/281-5294

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The Department of Education was created by the 35th General Assembly in 1913 and was then called the Department of Public Instruction. The current name was adopted 1986. The department's mission is to champion excellence in education through superior leadership and service. The department is committed to ensuring that all Iowans have access to a network of services that allow them to realize their potential. Through education, the department strives to build a quality of life which sets the standard for the nation.

The director of the department is appointed by the governor with confirmation by the Senate. The director is responsible for supervising Iowa's system of public and nonpublic elementary and secondary schools, area education agencies, community colleges and the state and regional libraries. The policy-making body for the department is the State Board of Education. Nine lay people appointed for six-year terms by the governor with confirmation by the Senate constitute the board. The director serves as the board's executive officer.

To accomplish its mission, the department employs approximately 630 staff members in six major divisions: Community Colleges, Financial and Information Services, Elementary and Secondary Education, Library Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Services; and an Office of Education Services for Children, Families and Communities. For organizational purposes, Iowa Public Television is included in the department. Through these divisions, the department conducts a variety of activities to fulfill its major functions of leadership and service, with some regulatory duties as well.

The leadership function includes long-range planning for the education system, coordinating reform efforts, and consulting with educators to solve problems and improve programs. In this function, the department acts as a catalyst for positive change.

In its service functions, the department uses its resources as a statewide base for activities, such as conducting research and disseminating information; providing advisory services on all phases of educational programs and operations; developing innovative programs; distributing state and federal funds to Iowa's schools and community colleges and libraries; and providing vocational rehabilitation services to individual Iowans.

By setting standards and ensuring that public schools and community colleges meet those standards and by monitoring federal education programs, the department is performing its regulatory function.

Although the scope of the department's responsibility is from pre-kindergarten through the two-year community colleges, one of its most important leadership roles is to set priorities for the state's educational system. Current priorities are increasing the learning and achievement of students; increasing the productivity and capacity of human resources in the state's education system; transforming the education system at the building, district, area and state levels to support the teaching and learning process; providing leadership to improve Iowa education through systematic planning and quality assurance.

Educational Examiners, Board of

Dr. Orrin Nearhoof, executive director; Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines 50319; 515/281-5849

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