



SPIRIT LAKE

From the desk of Angela Olsen - Summer 2026

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1. Teacher Leadership and Development

The district continued utilizing Individual Professional Development Plans to tailor professional development towards teacher needs, with their goal work tied to building and/or district goals. One of the major things we embarked on this year was the development of a scope and sequence of standards for K-4 math, and 5-12 math, literacy and science. The goal was to create a document, by grade level or course in high school, which documented the standards taught and the evidence used to assess level of understanding. K-4 math completed this task and created proficiency scales for each unit. Grades 5-12 math unpacked the standards and began the process but will finalize the document upon the purchase of a new curriculum in the upcoming year. Literacy and Science in grades 5-12 have made significant gains in the creation of their document and will complete the process next year. The time spent collaboratively in content teams was welcome and appreciated by the staff. The discussions were rich and dove deep into understanding the standard, discussing common vocabulary and what proficient work looks like at that grade level.

Similar to past years, teachers had the opportunity to use Teacher Quality funds to further their individual learning and growth by attending conferences or taking professional development classes to earn renewal credits toward their licensure. The Teacher Quality committee also approved hourly funding for teacher development tasks, pre-approved by building administration, that were completed outside of the contracted day and tailored at professional development sought by the teacher. This year the number of hours teachers could earn payment for was 20 instead of 10. This is a great way for teachers to implement new ideas, utilize new instructional strategies and continue to learn and develop their craft.

The district utilized their in house mentoring program for a total of 17 staff, with 9 in the two year program for new staff (4 in year one and 5 in year two) and 8 in the veteran teacher, but new to us, program. We utilized 11 different staff members to provide mentor connections, support and guide new or new to us staff, and hopefully aid in retaining the teachers new to the profession or new to us by building a strong relationship/connection from the start. New and "new to us" teachers are provided reflection meetings with their mentors to help develop relationships, build their instructional tool box, problem solve classroom or educational issues, celebrate successes, as well as participate in structured observations across multiple grade levels.

2. Assessment

The Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) was administered April 13-24. Following the high school lead from last year and took the ISASP assessment online in all grades and subjects. The results have come back and the administration has had a chance to review them. However, the assessment reporting is all new, with very little information available at this time. We know that the reporting will be in four categories now: Below, Approaching, Meeting and Exceeding Benchmark instead of the three utilized previously: Not Proficient, Proficient and Advanced. Therefore, Iowa will no longer use "Proficiency" terminology. The new reporting format is to better reflect expectations for demonstrating grade-level performance and provide clearer information about what a student knows and is able to do. However, the cut scores are not available yet - will be coming in June or July. So while we have student scores, we do not know what those scores mean, where

they fall within our student population or how they compare with their peers in the state. Parents will likely not get a report until August.

In addition, ISASP informed school districts that due to this new format districts will be unable to compare 2026 results to prior years. This will impact our building goals from last year and lead us to using something new for building goals for next year.

Teachers in grades K-6 are required to use the universal FAST screener three times during the year as the state assessment. This student data from those screeners is used to progress monitor and provide interventions to students who are persistently at-risk in reading and math. Teachers use a multi-tiered system of support to accomplish and monitor these interventions, called WIN (What I Need) at the elementary and Elevate at the Middle School. It is individualized and grouped according to student needs and provided by a grade level or content specific teacher. Teachers continued to utilize the Panorama, MTSS data warehouse for Iowa, in their progress monitoring and recording of data. In accordance with state requirements, a math and literacy plan are created for those students who are persistently at risk. (The math plan was new this year.)

3. Project Based Learning and Authentic Learning Experiences

Project based learning opportunities were provided through High School's J-Term, Middle School's School of the Wild and Spring Academy, the Elementary's Fall and Winter Blast, Internships, Junior Career Shadows, Career Fairs and other Career Awareness days, as well as through classroom connections with business partners. These experiences continue to be a priority for our district. The district works diligently to give students as many opportunities as possible for real world learning and problem solving opportunities. We are blessed to have the community support to help provide these experiences!

The district continues to offer 21st Century Skills as part of the rotation in the middle school, students are immersed in different skill development at the middle school and morning meeting time at the elementary, which both include social emotional learning as needs continue to rise and be of critical importance. The elementary continued their initiative on The Culture Playbook this year with intentional focus on promotion of positive culture through various activities strategically scheduled through the year, which included programming, activities, and assemblies.

Life Skills Programming continued at the high school this year, further offering students additional opportunities to their classroom experiences in four distinct and intentional areas: Financial Foundations, Personal Health and Wellness, Leadership and Character, and 21st Century Skills. Personal Finance returned as a classroom course for all students to take upon graduation. Financial Foundations is intended to supplement that course and continue building students' knowledge of financial concepts throughout all four years. The schedule this year was again two blocks of time within the calendar where students had Life Skill Programming for 4 or 5 back to back days: October and March. This schedule has offered us the best results and the most opportune and engaged time frame as we continue to be intentional about activities that prepare students for life, on skills that we continue to hear are critical from employers.

A new opportunity this year occurred through the Iowa Great Lakes Corridor with a large event, Build My Future on April 23 at the Clay County Regional Events Center. This event offered students a hands-on learning experience in a wide variety of skilled trades and other careers. There were vendors/exhibits/opportunities from businesses across the state. All of our sophomores took part in this event and it was an incredible learning experience for our students. It was a two hour block of time where our students, along with other area schools, had the opportunity to walk around, similar to a career fair, but the exhibits were hands-on activities or simulations that allowed students to experience the career. The Corridor put on a great event, took feedback from both staff and students, and is already working on next year's event!

4. Teacher Leadership Compensation Grant

The 2025-26 school year was the tenth year of implementation of the Teacher Leadership and Compensation Grant. This grant created leadership positions within the district in order to:

- Improve student achievement
- Promote collaboration among staff to advance instructional practices for 21st Century teaching and learning
- Provide a plan for teachers to experience career growth and leadership opportunities at multiple levels
- Attract/Retain effective teachers by continuing to offer competitive salaries and providing enhanced career opportunities.

Included in the grant for the 2026-26 school year were:

- Two full time Instructional Coaches (one at the Elementary and one at the Middle School)
- Limited time Instructional Coach (High School)
- Business Partnerships/STEAM Coordinator
- Technology Integrationist
- Behavior Coach
- Mentor Teachers (for in house mentoring program described above)
- Members of Building and District Leadership Teams

We continue to look at the teacher leadership positions and the use of these grant funds. While we did not make any grant changes this year, we anticipate making some adjustments to positions and requirements in the future. We are always striving to build leadership capacity in our staff and are working on some new, creative ways to build leaders through innovation and exploration.

5. Reports, Grants & Communication

Learning and Development was responsible for writing the following state and federal reports, publications, and communications:

- Annual Yearly Progress Report
- CASA (Consolidated Accountability and Support Application)
- CSIP (Consolidated School Improvement Plan)
- Universal K-12 Desk Audit
- CRDCR (Civil Right Data Collection Report)
- TLC Planning, Modification and End of Year Report
- District Brochure
- District Communications to Board, Families & Media

Learning and Development also was instrumental in submitting and receiving a second COPS grant for school safety, as well as changing online telehealth providers to save district funding. We also formed a partnership with another local mental health provider to be able to offer in-house services, particularly to the elementary students. Learning and Development also worked closely with the Elementary Principal and Special Education team to pilot a Support Center, in accordance with our strategic plan. Documents and processes were put into place, including identification and transition procedures. We opened the center on April 13 for the last 5 weeks of school with two elementary students participating in the extra services. The pilot was successful and we will be moving forward with the Success Center this fall, beginning the year with two students and likely adding 2-3 students in the early fall. Learning and Development also secured the Therapeutic Classroom Grant through the Department of Education so we will be working to create that aspect and environment for additional support in the Success Center. Learning & Development continually looks for additional grant opportunities to support our work.