

BOARD AGENDA FORM

Subject: Home School Assistance Program Report

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Action Requested: Receive and File as part of Consent Item(s)

Executive Summary: We are often asked why families choose to homeschool. The answers vary from family to family, but the underlying reason for everyone is the parents' devotion to their children and the desire to provide them with what they believe is the best education for each of them.

Homeschooling is fluid. Many of our students enter the public schools on a full- or part-time basis at some point in their education. Keeping track of progress so that students don't fall through the cracks, ending up ill-prepared when they enter public school, is a key focus of our program and a benefit to the District. We feed in and out of all District schools.

The professional guidance and information our teachers offer helps parents keep students on track. Our staff development for last year was an in-depth study of the Iowa Core and Common Core. Our purpose was to be able to evaluate curriculum being used by our families, in order to offer insight and guidance in curriculum choices, especially for those who intend to return to school or dual enroll in the future. This year, we are focusing on dyslexia and reading difficulties to help our struggling readers.

Our students contribute to the excellent reputation of the District. We have had National Merit Scholars almost every year, military academy appointees, speech contest winners, theater, athletics, state spelling bee champions, state geography bee champions, ITECH winners, Octagon award winners...etc. Our enrichment program makes many of these opportunities available. For the last two years, our program has been the source of the state Scripps Spelling Bee champion and the state National Geographic Bee champions. All three students represented Iowa, and Ames, in Washington D.C. We greatly appreciate the support we receive for our program from the Board which allows us to provide these opportunities to some very gifted children. Without your support for our program, these students would not have had the opportunity to compete.

Some of our students are those who, for various reasons, were simply not succeeding in the public school setting. We have been able to provide guidance and extra help to keep students from dropping out altogether. We have also met ongoing needs for kids with special educational and/or physical needs.

With the new homeschooling law passed in April 2013, families were given the option to homeschool without any supervision or reporting to the State on student progress, we expected to lose some of our enrollment. Instead, our enrollment was up almost 10% for the fall of 2013, and is up another 3% this fall, which is a measurable testimony to the value the homeschool community places on this program.

280 students as of October 1, 2014

67 dual-enrolled

71 open-enrolled

Approx. 14 special needs/at-risk students

Sixteen students who were in our program last year have enrolled in the Ames Community Schools full-time for the 2014-2015 school year.

Program set-up:

- Home visits
 - 16 contacts per school year; minimum of 8 face-to-face with student
- Enrichment classes (2-3 hours/week/student)
 - PE in cooperation with ISU PE Department
 - Kindergarten/1st grade
 - Spanish
 - STEM (Governor's Initiative on Science, Technology, Engineering & Math)
 - Science Experiments
 - Institute for Excellence in Writing
 - Drama, Speech Contest, Public Speaking
 - Art
 - Computer
 - Literature
 - History of Ames
- Field Trips
- School Garden
- Spelling & Geographic Bees
- Iowa Assessments
- Parent Training Seminars

Value of our Program:

- help families provide for their students' education
- keep families current with new materials and teaching methods
- keep families accountable for student progress
- provide a link between public school and home
- familiarize students with classroom setting through enrichment classes
- help prepare students for transition into public school
- create an atmosphere of trust and mutual cooperation with the District
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We are presently renting a gymnasium and four classrooms in west Ames for the 2014-2015 school year at a cost of \$10,000. We have a year-to-year lease with the owners, which can be

withdrawn at the end of any school year. We hope to keep this situation long term, but there are extenuating circumstances that may make this impossible. At present, our office and resource library are housed in the administration building, since our new facility cannot provide space for these. These are indeed concerns for us for the future of our program as the present administration building is vacated, and new buildings are being built with no provision for our students.

Our approximately twenty computers are seven years old, and should be replaced this year. We have a sizeable carryover fund that will provide for this expenditure.

Thank you for your service to our District, and your thoughtful consideration of the needs of this program as we seek to serve a large number of District and open-enrolled students.

Financial Information:

Fund: All Funds \$567,001.24

Salaries & Benefits: \$466,348.84

Discretionary Funds: \$100,652.40