

Education in Iowa

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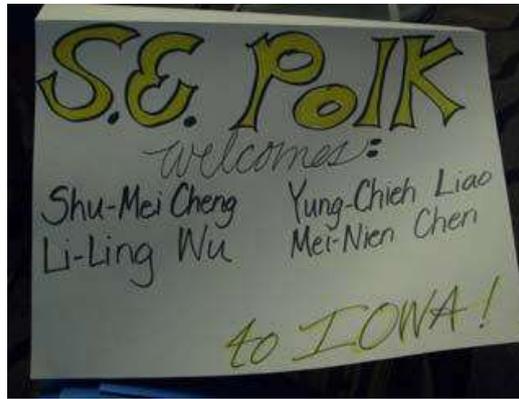
Before I dive into the discussion of education, I would like to express my appreciation to Taipei County Government for the generosity of sponsoring this educational event for elementary English teachers of the county. I am very grateful for the Iowa Department of Education for putting together the schedule and putting in resources for making the visit possible.



Also I am thankful for staffs in Taipei Economics and Culture Office in Chicago, for their efforts in making the visit as smooth and as pleasant as possible. Of course, I would like to thank all the school districts, schools and host families for taking us in. Last but not the least my thanks to all the facilities that present information on education in Iowa for us.

After a little glitch in L.A. Airport, we arrived in Des Moines, Iowa safe and sound. It was a pity we missed the big welcome assembly, but we were more than made up for by the warm welcome of our hosts.

Meeting the hosts and knowing places



My group was hosted

by Southeast Polk Community School District and two principals, Sharon and Robin. It's truly a great honor and pleasure.

The first place we went was JA BizTown. It is a facility sponsored by different enterprises, such as bank, power company, City Hall, publishing company. The staffs are from Junior Achievement Worldwide, an international organization hosting different learning facilities and activities for young people.

BizTown is a place for kids to learn about how society works. They have designed curriculum to be integrated with social study in school. Before the kids can actually go to BizTown, teachers have to teach them the content.

JA BizTown in Southeast Polk School District (www.ja.org)

Program Overview	Goals	Curriculum
<p>JA BizTown encompasses financial literacy, work readiness, and entrepreneurship curriculum, providing students in grades four</p>	<p>JA BizTown will meet the needs of a diverse group of students by providing engaging, academically enriching</p>	<p>The JA BizTown Curriculum is designed to minimize lesson preparation time through an efficient lesson organization. The lessons are designed as a framework and can be adapted to meet the special needs</p>

through six with a solid foundation of business, economics, and free enterprise education. Furthermore, the program content augments students' core curriculum in social studies (e.g. citizenship, government), reading, writing, and mathematics. The JA BizTown experience augments students' classroom curriculum. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking skills to learn about key economic concepts as they explore and enhance their understanding of free enterprise.

Through daily lessons, hands-on activities, and active participation in a simulated community designed to support differentiated learning styles, students develop a

experiential lessons.

Following participation in the JA BizTown experience, students will be able to:

- Discuss the roles they, as citizens, play in their community as workers and consumers, and relate these personal roles to the free enterprise system.
- Discuss the importance of citizen rights and responsibilities in a community.
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the free enterprise system.

and interests of students in the classroom. However, students should complete each required lesson to ensure that they have the background knowledge necessary to fully participate in the JA BizTown experience.

In addition, extended Learning Opportunities, which will allow teachers to provide optional activities that complement the core curriculum, are available.

Teachers can choose, at their discretion, to have students participate in some, all, or none of these activities.

Following the participation in the JA BizTown simulation, students participate in debriefing lessons provides to ensure a well-rounded learning experience. These lessons allow students to reflect on their experience and further identify the relevance of classroom learning to their future plans and goals. In an effort to address multiple learning

strong understanding of the relationship between what they learn in school and their successful participation in a local economy. JA BizTown helps prepare students for a lifetime of learning and academic achievement.

- Build money management skills through a practical knowledge of economic concepts and banking practices.
- Develop an understanding of basic business practices and responsibilities.
- Demonstrate the soft skills necessary for their successful participation in the world of work.

styles, various teaching strategies are included throughout the curriculum to actively engage students in the learning process.

Check writing is an integral part of the JA BizTown experience. Both the curriculum and simulation require students to practice and apply this valuable skill.

Check writing is one aspect of money management that contributes to the overall goal of preparing financially literate students.





Des Moines is located in Madison County, Iowa. It is famous for bridges. The reason is there was a New York Times bestseller for 164 weeks, *The Bridges of Madison County*. The book was written based on a true story happened in Madison County. The story was made into a film. The bridges are famous because of the story and the film. The café in the film is still in the city. There are total of 6 bridges in Des Moines. We visited 5 of them. Interesting bridges, don't you think so?





Guess who was born in Des Moines, Iowa? John Wayne! We visited his house, too.

The house has been turned into a museum in memory of John Wayne. For lunch, we had a picnic lunch at a real American cabin. This is truly living in the culture.



We got settled in our host family. During the first week, our hosts took us visiting different places and eating different cuisines. I enjoyed the days with them. We also got to meet their families and had meals with them. The houses are so nice, with big yard and rooms for different functions. My host mother likes quilting. I got hooked with it and even got some books and fabric for experiment. My host father likes to work in the yard. He has this mowing tracker. It is really cool! He let me ride it. Don't I look like a tomboy!



School visits

Every school district has its own mission and goals. The mission of the Southeast Polk Community School District is to be an innovative, educational organization committed to providing learning experiences of superior quality which enable ALL students to be successful now and in the future. The goal is to achievement student outcomes as self-directed learners, collaborative workers, complex thinkers, community contributors, quality producers, wellness practitioners, global participants, and effective communicators.

There is a school board for each school district. The members of the board are elected by the residents of the community school district. The function of the board is to work with the school district office to improve education. They have monthly meetings. All the principals are meetings periodically to share experience and discuss issues. We had the opportunity to visit the school district office and discussed curriculum with them. The lady in the picture below is Lori, a reading specialist.



First Grade
Language Arts - Reading 6/1/17

First Grade
Language Arts - Writing

	4	3	2	1
Decodes phonetic patterns	Consistently decodes phonetic patterns	Usually decodes most phonetic patterns	Sometimes decodes phonetic patterns	Rarely or inconsistently decodes phonetic patterns
Reads grade level sight words	Has extensive sight word vocabulary and independently applies introduced words to new reading	Usually applies basic sight words in a variety of contexts	Inconsistently remembers introduced words and rarely applies to new reading	Rarely remembers introduced words, unable to apply to new reading
Reads at grade level with fluency and accuracy	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases. Fluent, phrased reading with a few word-by-word slow downs for problem solving. Expressive interpretation is evident throughout the reading. Attention to punctuation	A mixture of word-by-word reading and fluent, phrased reading. Evidence of attention to punctuation. Rereading for problem solving may be present. Some expressive interpretation is attempted.	Mostly word-by-word reading, but some two-word phrasing and even a couple of three or four-word phrases. Evidence of attention to punctuation although not consistent. Rereading for problem solving may be present. Little expressive interpretation.	All word-by-word reading with some long pauses between words. Almost no recognition of phrasing. Very little evidence of awareness of punctuation. Almost no expressive interpretation.
Responds to reading	Identifies important details, makes insightful predictions using background knowledge, and relates reading to own experiences. Uses content of text to problem solve.	Usually identifies details, makes meaningful predictions using background knowledge, and relates reading to own life experiences.	Identifies details occasionally. Makes predictions inconsistently, rarely connecting them to personal background knowledge.	Unable to identify details, makes vague or nonsense predictions. Unable to connect to personal background knowledge.
Retells	Refers to all story elements by specific names or tells important information learned. Retells in sequence.	Refers to most story elements by name in text or tells information learned. Usually retells in sequence.	Refers to 1 or 2 story elements by generic name or label (boy, girl, dog) or tells some information learned. Sometimes retells in sequence.	Refers to 1 or 2 characters or topics using pronouns or tells little or no information learned. Does not retell in sequence.
Expands vocabulary	Learns and uses new vocabulary in speaking and writing and demonstrates word learning strategies.	Usually learns and uses new vocabulary in speaking and writing.	Sometimes learns and uses new vocabulary in speaking and writing.	Rarely learns and uses new vocabulary in speaking and writing.

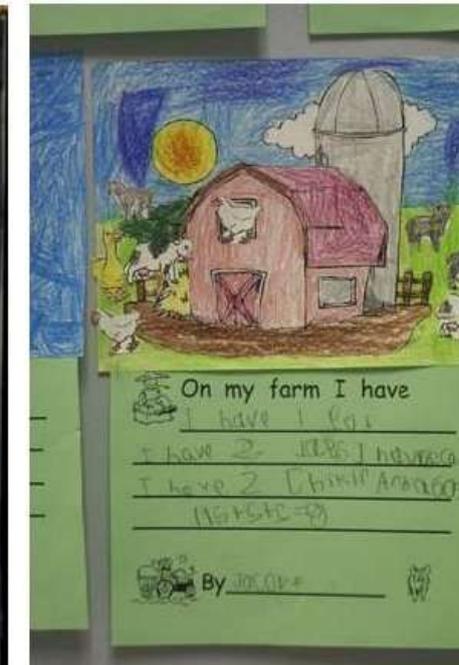
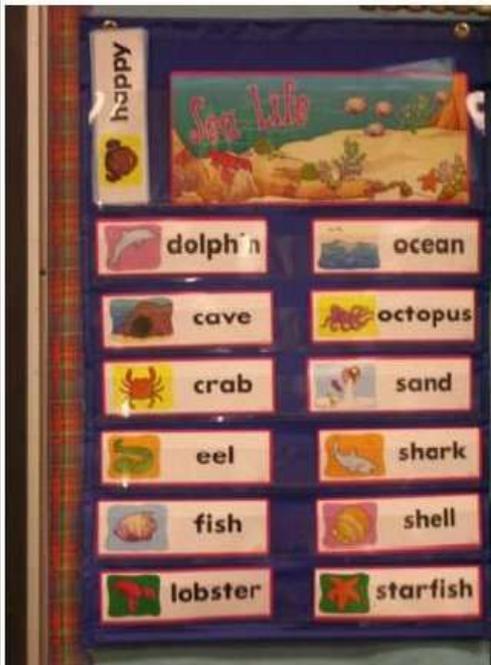
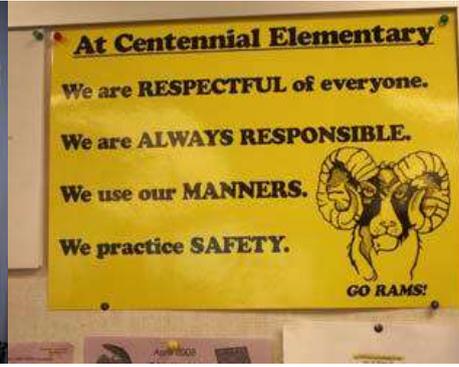
	4	3	2	1
Expresses ideas in writing	Writing tells a story or makes a point.	Attempts writing a story using words.	Uses random words and some strings of words for story writing.	Uses scribbles, mixed with random letters for writing.
	Illustration (if present) enhances the writing.	Illustration supports writing. General meaning of writing and illustration is recognizable.	Illustration that shows detail usually supports the writing and is recognizable.	Pictures are supported by some words and contain some detail.
	Idea is generally on topic. Details are present but not developed.	Some ideastopic, clear but others are still fuzzy.	May see some ideastopic in writing.	Ideastopic are fuzzy or unable to be identified.
Uses writing conventions	Transitional spelling on less frequent words. Spelling of high frequency (grade level) words usually correct. Consistently spaces between words.	Uses phonetic spelling on some words and can spell some high frequency (grade level) words. Spaces between words.	Beginning to use phonetic spelling on some words and can spell a few high frequency (grade level) words. Words or letter strings are written left to right and topdown with some standard spacing.	Uses phonetic spelling to record beginning and/or ending letters in words. Creates mostly standard letters. Sometimes spaces words, letters, symbols or pictures. Beginning to write left to right and topdown.
	Capitals at the beginning of sentences and variable use on proper nouns and pronoun I. End punctuation is correct (?) and other punctuation is attempted such as commas in dates.	Uses capitals at the beginning of sentences. Beginning to capitalize proper nouns and pronoun I. Usually uses end punctuation correctly (?). Experiments with other punctuation such as commas in dates.	Inconsistent use of capital letters and punctuation.	Punctuation and capitalization is very random, if present.
	Paragraphing variable but present.	Long paper may be written as one paragraph.	Words or letter strings may be written as one paragraph.	No paragraphing is evident.
	You/your pronoun agreement, verb/verbs, subject/verb agreement.	Attempts use of standard grammar.	Developing awareness of standard grammar.	Use of nonstandard grammar is common.
Organizes writing	An appropriate title is present (if requested).	A title is present (if requested).	Unclear that title (if requested) is really a title.	No title (if requested).

There are four main subjects: science, language arts, social, and math. The school district follow the core curriculum set by the Department of Education and establish own curriculum content and rubric. Example: part of rubric for grade 1 language arts.

We visited 4 schools: Fourmile Elementary, Willowbrook Elementary, Centennial

Elementary, and Delaware Elementary. After visiting the schools and talking to teachers, I summarize some thoughts.

items \ Schools in	Iowa	Taipei County
Classroom	Fixed classrooms and teachers can have own arrangement of the classroom.	Change classrooms every year and teachers have difficulties decorating the classroom.
Teaching hours	No breaks in between classes. Total teaching time per day is about 6 hours, grade 1 to 6. Children don't have to do cleaning around campus.	Total actual teaching time per day is 280 minutes, but teachers have to assist in supervising children do cleaning and some administrative work.
Teaching	As there are no set breaks, teachers have more flexibility in teaching arrangement.	The lesson is more structured as there is time limit for each period.
Teaching resources	Extra books and most teaching aids are provided by the school district. There are teaching assistants for special need students.	Certain quantity of extra books is provided by Education Bureau. Teaching aids come with text books.
Professional Development	Workshops and seminars on Wednesday afternoons. Teachers are required to obtained credits from college of education in university in order to renew teacher credentials.	Workshops and seminars on Wednesday afternoons. Other credits are voluntary.
Special need students	Assisted by specialists. All the specialists have to acquire master's degree in specialized field.	Assisted by regular/retired teachers or college students.
Curriculum	Core curriculum is set by the Department of Education. Schools districts set indicators/rubric for schools.	Based on Competence Index set by Ministry of Education, there is Taipei County version.
Morning assembly	Every morning.	Once a week.



When we visited Centennial, it was on Wednesday. Lori, the reading specialist mentioned earlier, was holding a presentation on reading. We sat in with the teachers. The topic she presented was "Small-group Differentiated Reading Instruction". The main concept is how to teach independent behavior in reading through small group teaching. As English is their mother tongue, maybe the similar concept can be applied to Mandarin teaching. She provided a mini-lesson format for teaching independent behavior.

Step 1: A focus: State the purpose of the lesson.

Step 2: An explanation: Provide students with information related to the stated purpose. This may include modeling the behavior you expect.

Step 3: Role playing: Give students an opportunity for guided practice. This may take the form of a student demonstration, a fish bowl practice session, or a whole class rehearsal of the behavior.

Step 4: Direct application: Provide students with time to use the behavior as they work independently that day.

Step 5: Reflection and feedback: Have students assess their own behavior. Share your observations of what went well and what aspects of the behavior need more work.

This five-step process can be used to teach students the skills they need in order to function independently while you are in small group instruction. At first glance, I thought, "When do we get time to do this?" As is remedial teaching, we had hard time juggling with it. Then the talk with one of the teachers came to my mind. She showed us one way of teaching small groups -- folder center. Usually, centers are for bigger projects and long activities. But with folder center, the activities are more flexible.

I decided to give it a try. I designed and adapted 6 activities. The instructions of the activities were put in 6 folders and in 6 places. The class was in 6 heterogeneous groups. The students each has a worksheet with 6 items to complete. The students rotated from center to center. The more proficient students helped out the others. It turned out pretty good. This also gave me another idea. Next time, I'll design 5 activities, but students are in 6 groups except one group will be the least proficient students. While 5 groups of students are doing the activities, I will lead the special group and do remedial teaching for the group.

Examples:

English challenge

臺北縣竹圍國小敬啟

臺北縣竹圍國小敬啟

Task 1 (任務一):

Please write down the phonetic symbols for the words.
請寫出每個單字的音標。

Group: _____
Group members: _____

1.	2.	3.
4.	5.	6.

Task 2 (任務二):

Please arrange the words in correct sentences and write down the correct sentences.
請將單字依正確順序排成句子，並寫下來。

1. _____

2. _____

Task 3 (任務三): The Da Vinci Code 達文西密碼

Please find 6 words from the code and write down Chinese meanings.
請找出 6 個單字，並寫出中文意思。

1.	2.	3.
中文:	中文:	中文:
4.	5.	6.
中文:	中文:	中文:

Task 4 (任務四): Letter sudoku 字母數獨

字母 d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l。每一列每一行都有以上 9 個字母，請寫出正確答案。

			e	k	l		g	
j		g	f	d	i		l	h
	k	l	h		g	f	d	e
h	l		g	f	d	i	e	
k	i	d	j	e	h	g	f	l
		e			k		j	d
l	d	i	k		j	e	h	f
g		f	l			d	k	j
e	j	k		h	f	l		g

Task 5 (任務五):

1.	2.	3.
中文:	中文:	中文:
4.	5.	6.
中文:	中文:	中文:

Task 6 (任務六):

Task 1 (任務一):
Please write down the phonetic symbols for the words.
請寫出每個單字的音標。

bin net cup

fax hop dog

Task 2 (任務二):
Please arrange the words in correct sentences and write down the correct sentences.
請將單字依正確順序排成句子，並寫下來。

Task 3 (任務三): The Da Vinci Code 達文西密碼
Please find 6 words from the code and write down Chinese meanings.
請找出 6 個單字，並寫出中文意思。

sdffdfgtwobbdslseheavydamhfacc
iawjpahlksdlkkappdqkkgfngnsahakj
ghgfamouthkkdkreadagllpsakoneagh
qwrepsjlsadjghpwpfglkipapsokhh
writedgdfgshartllkkdkthinoekdance
sdgohrtqwehtrtjjgsdetrhjsjreesry

Task 4 (任務四): Letter sudoku 字母數獨
字母 d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l。
每一列每一行都有以上 9 個字母，請寫出正確答案。

			e	k	l		g	
j		g	f	d	i		l	h
	k	l	h		g	f	d	e
h	l		g	f	d	i	e	
k	i	d	j	e	h	g	f	l
		e			k		j	d
l	d	i	k		j	e	h	f
g		f	l			d	k	j
e	j	k		h	f	l		g

Task 5 (任務五):
Please use the letters to make at least 6 words.
請利用這些字母造字，至少 6 個。
所造的字寫在表格第一，並寫出中文意思。

Task 6 (任務六):
Please read the following sentences to the teacher.
請讀下列句子給老師聽，並檢查發音正確。

She is tall. She is thin.
She has big eyes and short hair.
She can sing and she can dance.
She is a nurse.
She is my mother.



Major education themes

Major themes	Description
Textbooks	<p>Evaluate every 5-7 years. The school district office (there will be review board) reviews the textbooks periodically. If the textbooks are used well, they may continue to use, but will purchase newer version. If not, they will buy new text books. All the students in every school in the district use the same textbooks the school district office purchases. They recycle textbooks.</p>
Reading	<p>They use new reading text book this year. The school district office arranges specialists and speakers to teach teachers how to use the textbook and how to teach reading. They encourage 1.5 hours of uninterrupted. They are also promoting small group instruction as mentioned above.</p>

Reading Recovery	Reading specialists are recruited to help students who have reading difficulties. A special program called Reading Recovery is implemented to help grade 1 students to conquer reading difficulties.
Character Education	CHARACTER COUNTS! is a trademark now in many states of America. All the schools are decorated with posters, slogans, and rules of six pillars – Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Citizenship.
Iowa Test	A standardized achievement test. To be exact, it is ITBS – Iowa Test of Basic Skills. There are 13 of them: vocabulary, reading comprehension, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage and expression, math concepts and estimation, math problem solving and data interpretation, math computation, social studies, science, maps and diagrams, reference materials, word analysis (L9 only), listening (L9 only).
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress—has surveyed the achievement of students at ages 9, 13 and 17 since 1969 and grades 4, 8, 12 since 1980s.
DIBELS	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills – a system developed by University of Oregon. It's a kind of benchmark assessment. Schools in Iowa use this system to monitor students' reading skills.
School Visits	Every five years.

Curriculum (<http://www.iowa.gov/educate/>)

There are three levels for Iowa curriculum. The core is based on *rigor, relevance and relationship*.

Standards	Benchmarks	Grade Level Indicators
In Iowa school districts and	Iowa has statewide mandated	The statewide mandated

Iowa has statewide The statewide mandated teachers must meet many standards of quality. We have standards for district accreditation, for programs, for teaching, and for student performance.

However, conversations about standards in education that occur across the state and nation today are most often about **content standards**. In other words, what knowledge and skills our students should acquire in the classroom.

Iowa has statewide mandated **core content standards** in reading, math, and science. They were enacted when the Iowa legislature passed Senate File 588 in 2007.

These **content standards** are broad statements that

core content standards in reading, math, and science. While these standards are broad definitions, the supporting **benchmarks** provide detail in identifying the knowledge and skills that students should acquire in the classroom.

In general, **benchmarks** *provide a learning target for a span of grades, such as grades 3-5*. The **Iowa Core Content Benchmarks** are aligned with the **Iowa Core Content Standards**.

Iowa Core Content Standards provide broad definitions that identify the knowledge and skills that students should acquire and **Iowa Core Content Benchmarks** support those standards with learning targets for a span of grades, such as grade 3-5. **Grade Level Indicators** *provide even further detail by showing us what those learning targets look like for each grade*.

identify the knowledge and skills that students should acquire and they remain constant throughout K-12.

What changes is the difficulty of the content and the complexity of student work.

In Iowa, our goal is to continue to build on our heritage of outstanding education and enhance student achievement.

Content standards can not do this alone. They require a system of supports, which include benchmarks, grade level expectations, curriculum, teacher professional development, and assessments.

Each component is an essential piece to ensure rigor and to challenge current student performance.

Iowa Department of Education sets the standards and develops **Iowa Core Content**

Standards:

Reading Content Standard

A. Students can comprehend what they read in a variety of literary and informational texts.

Math Content Standards

A. Students can understand and apply a variety of math concepts.

B. Students can understand and apply methods of estimation.

C. Students can solve a variety of math problems.

D. Students can interpret data presented in a variety of ways.

Science Content Standards

A. Students can understand and apply skills used in scientific inquiry.

B. Students can understand concepts and relationships in life science.

C. Students can understand concepts and relationships in Earth/space sciences.

D. Students can understand concepts and relationships in physical science.

Educational affiliates to Department of Education

Facility	Function
Iowa Public TV	Make educational programs for children, parents, adults and new Iowans. They also hold reading workshops for parents to teach them how to read to or with children. Long distance education is an important segment, too. Children can interact with teachers in the TV studio directly from their classroom.

AEA

Area Education Agency – Provide schools and teachers resources, including specialists (special education, consultants,...), printing shop, media, books, teaching aids and props, There are vans to drive from school to school dropping off materials teachers borrow and pick up returned materials. There are 10 AEAs in Iowa. They also work with Iowa Public TV transfer TV programs to media teaching materials for teachers to borrow or teachers pay for the cost and CD or Tape making a copy.

All in all, it has been a wonderful visit. I have learned a lot and know a lot of people.

There is one thing I have to mention. On the second week, we were chauffeured around in two vans. The people who drove us around are consultants from the Department of Education. What a privilege! There is also one particular person I like to thank, Mr. Kevin Fangman. He worked extremely hard to put everything together to make the visit possible.

Again, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation of all the people that make the visit possible and pleasant.