

# 21st century schools will offer learning for all citizens

By Kent Tempus  
of the Journal

Schools in 21st Century Iowa will be hubs of their community, providing not only broad learning opportunities for all citizens of the community, according to the director of the Iowa Department of Education.

William Lepley says future schools will be centers for family and social services as well.

"Society in the year 2010 has realized that the school is the single societal institution that can truly be an advocate, a resource, and a catalyst for children and families, as well as learners of all ages," Lepley said.

Lepley, speaking in Muscatine last month, called for an "educational barn-raising" to build a system geared for the future. But he noted that many initiatives that will result in the "ideal" school are occurring today.

One major change arriving in two years will be open enrollment, allowing students to attend different schools to take advantage of a particular curriculum or offerings at that institution. Lepley said that concept will expand in the future, with students to move in out of the system without barriers such as district boundaries, grade levels, neighborhood locations or regulatory restrictions.

"The key factor is that parents and students in 2010 have choices, and education takes on a more regional look," he said.

Lepley foresees greater use of technology to supplement personal instruction of students, such as interactive television and videodiscs.

"Each student's desk is an intellectual adventureland," Lepley said. "At his or her workstation, each student has a microcomputer that is linked to other students, the teacher, powerful instructional databases worldwide, as well as other diverse cultural classrooms around the country."

Through video, Iowa students will be able to receive instruction from teachers in other districts, and interact with classes of students around the world, he said.

Students evaluation will improve, Lepley said. Instead of grades, students will be assessed not on the work they complete but on the skills they master, he explained.

Community service will be a graduation requirement, and many students will start college credit for high-level courses they have taken, he added.

Also, educational opportunities are available for all citizens,



Lepley

from preschool to adults. The school year won't be restricted to 180 days of 5½ hours each, because flexible schedules and teacher contracts will permit year-round learning, he said.

"The ideal district provides a continuum of education that ranges from preschool education and child care, to elementary education, to secondary education, to adult education," Lepley said.

The work environment for teachers will be much different in the ideal school, Lepley said.

Teachers in the future will be prepared by not only college, but through a residency program at "a regional clinical school," a partnership between the local school, the Area Education Agency and the college. Once teaching, they will have ample time to prepare for classes, discuss teaching techniques with colleagues and enhance their abilities through continued learning.

"Teachers in ideal schools are managers of the learning environment," Lepley said. "The teacher has been given the tools to be able to diagnose learning needs and to prescribe appropriate learning activities."

Schools themselves will change too, Lepley noted.

The ideal school houses social agencies such as health job and human service agencies, child care and serve as the community's senior citizen volunteer center, he said. And adults come to ideal schools — open round the clock — for educational opportunities ranging from childbirth and parenting classes to pre-retirement planning, he added.

In the ideal community, Lepley said, the superintendent coordinates children and family services, in addition to education. (Tax-supported services: