

Urbandale Schools Receive State Award And Increase Student Achievement

The Urbandale Community School District receives the prestigious Bronze Leadership Award at the Governor's Celebration of Excellence Conference and boosts student achievement rates

URBANDALE, Iowa – April 15, 2015 – On April 2, 2015, Governor Terry Branstad, Iowa Recognition for Performance Excellence (IRPE) Executive Council and the Iowa Quality Center honored the [Urbandale Community School District](#) with the notable Bronze Leadership Award at the [Governor's Celebration of Excellence Conference](#) at the Meadows Conference Center in Altoona. The IRPE is Iowa's National Baldrige-based process designed to recognize role-model organizations in education, manufacturing, nonprofit, healthcare and business that complete a rigorous organizational assessment leading to sustainability and maintaining a future focus on performance excellence. Since 2000, 96 applications have been received from Iowa school districts, organizations and businesses with only four school districts being recognized at any level and none higher than the Bronze Leadership Award. Other award recipients include Mary Greely Medical Center in Ames, Genesis Health System in Davenport, Firestone Farm Tires in Des Moines and Iowa Donor Network in North Liberty and Johnston.



Front Row: Mark Lane, Ethan Larsen, Hanna Chambers, Governor Terry Branstad, Dr. Doug Stilwell, Denise Wood
Back Row: Steve Mefford, Meredith Mauro, Ginny Strong, Carrie Bagley, Esther Burgett, Kannon Zeller, Julie Koch, Chris Gunnare. Photo courtesy of [Draeger Photography](#).

Receiving the Bronze Leadership Award is a reflection of the district's five-year journey toward transforming education through the use of [Quality and Continual Improvement \(Q/CI\)](#). Q/CI is about the continual improvement of all learners in the system by redesigning learning environments in order to re-engage learners, help them to feel a greater sense of purpose in their learning and provide them the tools they need to be successful.

"The IRPE process has been instrumental in our implementation of Quality and Continual Improvement practices across the district," said Denise Wood, Coordinator of Quality/Continual Improvement,

Urbandale Community School District. “The feedback we receive through the process helps us make improvements through all levels of our system. These improvements ultimately provide graduates of our system with an array of opportunities for the future. I am proud of UCSD's commitment to the use of the Baldrige Framework to bring learning to life for everyone.”

Organizational improvement—be it education, business, healthcare or any sector—is often fraught with random acts of improvement that may deliver short-term results but do little to impact the sustainable improvement of the system. When considering the daunting task of improving an education system with core components that date as far back as the Industrial Revolution, random acts of improvement will not suffice. By adhering to the rigorous standards established by the Baldrige process—Leadership; Strategic Planning; Customer and Market Focus; Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management; Human Resource Focus; Process Management; and Business/Organizational Performance Results—Urbandale is able to more fully align all goals throughout the entire district in order to achieve systemic improvement. This constancy of purpose is woven throughout every facet of the district—from the classroom level, to the building level, to the district level, to the Board level—which results in not only a common language for how the district will improve but clarity as to what’s needed for improvement and most importantly, a profound understanding for why this improvement is critical for student achievement and success.

Creating a systems approach for improvement in Urbandale means there is greater continuity between all grade levels. Beginning in kindergarten, teachers are having conversations with students about all aspects of their learning and guiding students with the use of Quality tools to better understand their learning and growth. Students have greater input, ownership, feedback and voice in their learning which continues throughout high school. More involved and inspired students, results in greater student achievement and success as the district is closely tracking a two-year trend in improved Iowa Assessment scores. Several examples from the 2015 Iowa Assessment results include: the highest percentage of advanced readers (28.2%) than at any point in the last seventeen years; the highest percentage of advanced mathematicians (30.8%) than at any point in the last seventeen years; the lowest percentage of less than proficient scientists (13.8%) than at any point in the last seventeen years.

“Earning recognition from the IRPE is a great honor for us,” said Dr. Doug Stilwell, Superintendent, Urbandale Community School District. “It is a testament to the diligence of everyone in the district to transform our district as well as the power of the Baldrige Framework to guide and support our efforts. Most important, however, are the improvements we have seen in student learning as a result of this work.”

In addition to receiving the Bronze Leadership Award, the district was invited to present at the IRPE conference. The district led two presentations entitled, “Trust as a Systematic Structure for Innovation” and “A Systems Approach to Continual Improvement.” Urbandale is committed to living in the cycle of continual improvement by regularly examining data and practices to ensure progress is being made in better preparing students for a future that is yet to unfold. To learn more about how Urbandale is transforming education, visit: Showcase.UrbandaleSchools.com

About Iowa Quality Center

Formed in 1993, the Woods Quality Center began as a shared vision of a total quality environment for the entire community, including business and industry, schools, government, nonprofit organizations, labor unions, and the service and retail industries. In 2001 the name was changed to the Iowa Quality Center (IQC) as a result of a new state-wide focus. Today, IQC has over 180 member organizations with more than 48,000 individual members representing government, manufacturing, business, education, labor, retail, service, and healthcare organizations. While the IQC staff is based in Marion, its networking groups, consultation, and membership activities take place throughout the state. For more information, visit: iowaqc.org

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About Urbandale Community School District

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The district serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale district supports an increasingly diverse student population where 50 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the district. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com

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