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## Project ASSIST: A Structure for Decision Making Process

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# THE IOWA SCIENCE TEACHERS' JOURNAL

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## PROJECT ASSIST: A STRUCTURE FOR DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The united effort of educators in the state of Iowa is of primary importance toward the improvement of science education in our schools. To facilitate the efforts a systematic approach in the decision making process is essential. The interest of the local communities, the school districts, and the regional centers are brought to the attention of the administrative staff through the executive committee and the advisory committees.

The executive committee is responsible for the major decisions which will affect the directions of Project ASSIST. The membership at the present time consists of the Project Director, the Department of Public Instruction Science Curriculum Coordinator, a Regional Coordinator Representative, two at-large members, and two *ex officio* non-voting members, the Project Coordinator and the President of the Iowa Science Teachers Section. The present structure of the committee allows for the establishment of standing committees for the purpose of reporting the current projects operating or being developed within regional areas, within the various advisory committees and/or other cooperating agencies.

The Project Director serves as representative for the Project to federal agencies, state and industrial agencies not directly related to the work of the project, and as Chairman of the Executive Committee. The Project Director and Coordinator are in direct contact with the Regional Centers in an advisory capacity. The administrative staff of the Regional Centers, knowledgeable of the concerns of the local areas, are the decision making body of the region regarding educational interests and actions in that region.

The Iowa ASSIST Advisory Committee is composed of membership from the Department of Instruction, University of Northern Iowa, Iowa State University, Drake University, and the University of Iowa. The committee is concerned with the services of the universities in response to the needs of local teachers and school districts. Adequate professional preparation, pre-service, and in-service programs result in response to the needs of the individual regions. This IAAS body, therefore, advises the Executive Committee of the concerns for science education as perceived by the membership.

The Advisory Committees, consisting of a variety of individual groups, bring to the attention of the Executive Committee a spectrum of educational concerns. The present Advisory Committees are composed of persons from the Iowa Council for the Social Studies, Iowa Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Iowa Science Teachers Section, the Teacher Education Committee (representatives from the Iowa Colleges and Universities with teacher-education programs), Government and Professional Committee, and a committee consisting of the CCSS-NSF Institute Directors from the Colleges and Universities in the state.

The Department of Public Instruction, responsible to the people of Iowa for the total educational process within the state, has a vital role in the project. The DPI through school evaluations and curriculum assessment within the state, provides an assessment of needs vital to the decision-making process. The DPI communicates in a two-fold direction as do the advisory committees, one to the Executive Committee and secondly to the Chairman of Assessment at the Project center and the membership of the Regional Centers.

The offices of the ASSIST center include the chairman for the on-going programs currently in operation, namely, Student Programs, Pre-Service



Programs, In-Service Programs, Community Awareness Programs, and Assessment and Evaluation Efforts. Each Regional Center has a parallel membership whose responsibility deals directly with local area concerns. Specifically the concerns of the various programs are as follows:

**Student Programs:**

- SSTP
- Iowa Junior Academy Symposium
- Environmental Action Projects
- Regional Field Excursions

**Pre-Service Programs:**

- Iowa-UPSTEP
- Internship in Regional Centers
- Staff Exchanges
- Professional Education Sequences
- Certification and Standards

**In-Service Programs:**

- CCSS Projects
- Curriculum Implementation
- Interdisciplinary Environmental Programs
- National Elementary Projects Institutes

**Community Awareness:**

- Involvement of the local community in their educational interests. (The local taxpayer needs to be aware of their valuable investments. The American mind is the country's greatest natural resource).
- Symposia, Demonstrations, and Fairs for the Public
- Adult Education Programs

**Assessment of Needs:**

- National Assessment
- DPI Assessment
- School District Assessment
- Assessment for ASSIST Programs
- Evaluation of Programs established to meet Needs
- New Program Planning

**ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDELINES  
IOWA JUNIOR ACADEMY OF SCIENCE**

The Iowa Junior Academy of Science is a state-wide organization which sponsors programs for students and coordinates other activities for science motivated students within the state of Iowa. The IJAS programs emphasize scientific research as the most appropriate activity for Academy sponsorship. At the same time IJAS sponsors a variety of field and travel experiences that are also designed to motivate students in the sciences as broadly conceived. Regional conferences are held during September to stimulate interest among students within the high schools in Iowa. One major goal of these conferences for students with talent and interest is to identify one or more research projects for personal involvement. The conferences provide opportunities for assistance in defining problems, designing studies, collecting and analyzing data. These conferences are generally planned to coincide with the fall meetings of the Iowa Science Teaching Section in sixteen regions of the state.

In October, the first two annual symposia were held on the campus of UNI. Students who were selected as the six finalists from the preceding spring will present their exemplary work once again as a motivation for new students to get involved in a similar way. A major effort will be to publicize and explain IJAS activities available in the sixteen regions. The fall symposium will also serve as an introduction to the ISU Teacher-Student Short Course Program and as a stimulation for preparing research thrusts for competition in the U of I spring symposium. Evaluation of the twelve papers presented at the spring symposium in Iowa City will result in a selection of six papers to represent Iowa in the National Symposium and conceivably the World Symposium. In addition to the competition for the National Symposium, students will visit research laboratories, participate in personal career conferences, and discuss topics formally and informally with science educators and research scientists.

A special activity of the IJAS at the state level is the Annual Field Excursion. Within each region of the state, a field program provides students with the opportunity of learning more about the environment in their own region and other activities, programs, and facilities which exemplify scientific endeavors. Each year in June, one of the field programs will be selected as the Annual Field Excursion of-the-year. Members of the IJAS will be able