



All In the Family

Father, Mother and Son All Teach in the Des Moines Public Schools

It's not very common for a son to follow the same career path as both of his parents, but that is exactly what Brian Koch did. He is a first-year teacher at East High School, teaching ninth grade social studies, while his parents have been teaching for several years in the Des Moines school system.

Steve and Jan Koch have taught in the Des Moines Public Schools for 42 and 22 years respectively. Both received their education degrees from the University of Northern Iowa. Steve was hired to teach at Des Moines Technical High School in 1967.

"I started teaching in Des Moines because I wanted to teach in a larger school district, especially with an excellent academic reputation," Steve says. "I also experienced the great diversity that Des Moines offered. There are so many positive things for everyone in our school district."

Steve teaches high school government and economics at Hoover High School and Jan teaches Pre-K at Hanawalt Elementary School. They agree that it is easy to find similarities between their jobs, even if the students are of different ages.

"I have learned that the age of the students in the classroom doesn't really

matter – kids are kids," Jan says. "Steve, Brian and I all enjoy the age we work with and wouldn't want to change levels or trade places with each other."

Throughout his childhood, Brian says he did not want to be a teacher because so many of his family members were teachers. His experience as an intern with Walt Disney World's Youth Education Series changed his mind.

"I started seeing the energy that teenagers had every day when I was leading field trips. They asked great questions and had a zest for life that many of my peers lacked," he says.

Steve taught at Des Moines Technical High School for 16 years and has been teaching at Hoover High School for the past 26 years. Jan taught self-reliance courses in kindergarten classes throughout the district before teaching in the Metro Kids kindergarten program and the fee-based preschool program.

The Koch's have seen many changes over the years in Des Moines Public Schools.

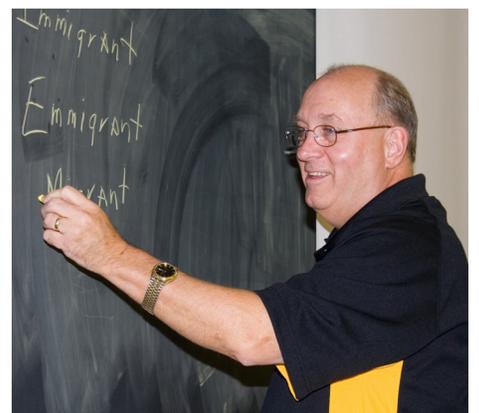
"The past twenty years have brought so many children from different cultures and races into our schools," says Steve. "It has been a challenge, but a rewarding one."

Brian agrees with his father about the unique experience one gets from teaching in Des Moines.

"The most important thing I've learned is that there will be excellent days and challenging days," he says. "Students aren't perfect – their lives aren't perfect, but the reward from helping a student is always far greater than the challenges along the way."

Steve will retire at the end of this school year and may do some substitute teaching.

"Education will always be in my blood," he says, adding that the Koch's daughter and son-in-law are also educators in Tallahassee, Fl.





Meredith Middle School eighth grader, Viera Nguyen, checks her grades on the Campus Portal with her dad, Vinh Nguyen.

Campus Portal Up and Running

The Des Moines Public Schools technology department worked diligently to activate the Infinite Campus Portal by the time the first parent conferences of the 2008-2009 school year rolled around. The Campus Portal is one of several means available through the Infinite Campus Student Information System to communicate with students and guardians.

A training plan using a “train the trainer” approach was developed to help teach school staff how to use the system. Selected staff in each building were identified and provided training to become the Campus Portal coach in their building. These Campus Portal coaches trained teachers in their buildings on how to place student information into the portal. Information about assignments, scores on assignments, attendance information, schedules, and announcements are accessible through the Campus Portal.

The process for informing guardians on how to access the portal includes the use of several different communication channels in order to reach as many guardians as possible. The first notification

effort was to contact guardians that provided e-mail addresses to the district. These guardians were sent an e-mail message that provided Campus Portal instructions and login information. For guardians that have not provided the district an e-mail address, dissemination of information about the Campus Portal will be accomplished using newsletters, school announcements, and the district web site. Guardians not on the district e-mail list will be asked to communicate with the school after they have one.

The Campus Portal is accessible from any computer connected to the Internet, including those found at public libraries and community centers. Additional information about the Campus Portal, including a Frequently Asked Questions list, can be found at <http://www.dmps.k12.ia.us/campusportal/>.

What information is provided by the Campus Portal?

The Campus Portal allows parents to view assignments, scores on assignments, attendance information, daily schedules and announcements.

How do I log in?

To log in to the Campus Portal, go to <http://www.dmps.k12.ia.us/campusportal/>. Enter your User Name and Password and click “Sign In.” You will be asked to change your password to something you will remember.

Who do I contact if I have a problem accessing the Campus Portal?

Contact the Technology Department Customer Support Desk at portal@dmps.k12.ia.us.



U.S. Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings visited Carver Community School and presented a check to Des Moines Public Schools for the Early Reading First Grant.

Spellings Visits Des Moines

Margaret Spellings, U.S. Education Secretary, visited George Washington Carver Community School on September 10 to announce that the Des Moines Public Schools is the recipient of a \$4.3 million Early Reading First grant. The grant will help more than 400 pre-schoolers learn the critical foundations of reading.

While presenting the grant to the Des Moines Public Schools, Secretary Spellings pointed out that the school district is a leader in the country in teaching students to read. She took time to read to a class of kindergartners and also held a roundtable discussion with parents and educators about Early Reading First and its counterpart, Reading First.

“Early Reading First and Reading First have helped to crack the code and prove what strategies are most effective in helping kids learn to read well,” said Secretary Spellings. “These programs are lifelines for many of our nation’s most vulnerable children and families, and one thing we know for certain is that these students do not need less time and fewer proven strategies. Congress must restore the full \$1 billion appropriation for Reading First,

so that more children can benefit from programs like those in the Des Moines schools.”

The Des Moines Public Schools is one out of 31 school districts in the nation to receive the Early Reading First grant. Early Reading First is currently assisting more than 300 students in five early learning centers in Des Moines, and over 700 students in Iowa as a whole. Reading First served 3,000 K-3 students in Des Moines during the 2005-2006 school year and 22,127 students statewide in 100 schools in 49 districts. In those Iowa schools that have participated since 2006, reading proficiency has increased by an average of 25 percentage points.

Early Reading First supports the development of early childhood centers of excellence that ensure low-income children have the early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills that prepare them for continued school success. Reading First funds professional development, scientifically based instructional programs, materials, and strategies, valid and reliable screening, diagnostic and ongoing classroom assessments, and statewide accountability and leadership structures.

Surgeon General Honors Hubbell Elementary

Hubbell Elementary School was honored on September 5 by the Surgeon General of the United States for promoting physical fitness at their school. Rear Admiral Steven K. Galson was at the Iowa State Capitol to promote the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Childhood Overweight and Obesity prevention initiative – “Healthy Youth for a Healthy Future.” The initiative focuses on recognizing communities throughout the nation that are addressing childhood obesity prevention by helping kids stay active, encouraging healthy eating habits and promoting healthy choices.

U.S. House Speaker Visits North High

U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was in Iowa to tour flood and tornado damage this summer. She held a conference at North High School on September 8 to talk about the damage and to assure the people of Iowa that they will get the financial help needed to repair the damage. North High School was severely impacted by the floods in June.



Deb Vanvelzen, Central Campus School Resource Officer, and Chad Street, Central Campus Dean of Students, look at a computer screen showing them the view from new security cameras installed in the school parking lot. The cameras were purchased through the COPS Secure Our Schools grant.

DMPS Receives Grants to Aid Programs and Operations

FAME Grant Helps Expand Fine Arts At Low-Income Schools

Des Moines Public Schools – along with Drake University, Grand View College, the Iowa Arts Council, Iowa Public Television, Heartland Area Education Agency, and the Des Moines Art Center – will use a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to support *FAME*: Fine Arts Model for Education.

FAME will provide high-quality professional development to art and music teachers to implement a rigorous arts curriculum as well as work with classroom teachers to integrate the arts into other core curricular areas.

The federal grant will provide \$874,710 in support to the program over the course of three years.

Grant Boosts Physical Education Programs

A grant from the U.S. Department of Education, made possible through the Carol M. White Physical Education Program, will help improve physical education for K-12 students.

The Carol M. White Physical Education Program provides funds to

local schools and community based organizations to initiate, expand or improve physical education programs for K-12 students in order to help students make progress toward meeting state standards for physical education.

The grant amount allocated to the Des Moines Public Schools from the U.S. Department of Education is \$485,680.

COPS Secure Our Schools

The Des Moines school district is the recipient of its third COPS Secure Our Schools grant through the Des Moines Police Department. The grant allows schools to be equipped with state of the art security mechanisms. The technology installed in the schools from the \$437,500 grant will increase effectiveness in monitoring of school areas, improve ability to control access to buildings, improve crime-solving capacity, and increase peace of mind for students, parents, and staff.

Emergency Response Grant

The Des Moines Public Schools received a \$471,428 grant to



strengthen its emergency response plan. These funds were made available through the U.S. Department of Education. The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) discretionary grant program will enable school districts to develop improved emergency response plans that address all four phases of crisis response: Prevention / Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.



The FAME grant will provide professional development to Des Moines art and music teachers.

DMPS Recognized for Excellence in Financial Reporting

Two Financial Organizations Honor the Des Moines Public Schools This Summer

The Des Moines Public Schools was honored by two national business organizations over the summer for excellence in financial reporting and accounting.

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), which represents more than 6,000 school business professionals, awarded their Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting to Des Moines Public Schools in June.

The award recognized the high quality and standards of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report prepared by Des Moines Public Schools for the 2007 fiscal year. This was the first time the school district had received this recognition.

The Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting is the highest recognition for school district financial operations presented by ASBO. According to ASBO: “Des Moines Independent Community School District validated the credibility of their school system’s operations, measured the integrity and technical competence of the business staff, assisted in

strengthening their presentation for bond issuance statements, and provided professional recognition.”

“The most valuable thing about this recognition is that it confirms the strength and reliability of our financial operations, and assures the community and taxpayers that our public resources are being managed and accounted for properly,” said Patricia Schroeder, Chief Financial Officer for Des Moines Public Schools.

In July, the Government Finance Officers Association, which represents nearly 17,000 public sector financial officials awarded the Des Moines Public Schools with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in

Financial Reporting. The award was in recognition of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report prepared the Des Moines Public Schools for the 2007 fiscal year.

According to GFOA, the award “is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.”



School Board Election 2008

Three Incumbents Re-elected to the Board

Des Moines School Board Members Dick Murphy, Ginny Strong and Jeanette Woods were re-elected to the school board in September and will each serve another three-year term. Murphy, Strong and Woods were first elected to the board in 2005.

Ginny Strong was elected chair of the Des Moines School Board and Jeanette Woods was elected vice-chair for the 2008-2009 school year.



Get On The Bus With Us

During two weeks in July, Des Moines school board members, district administrators and school principals visited six grocery stores and four libraries throughout the city. The tour of the city was coined "Get on the Bus with Us" by school board members. At each location, board members and district personnel spent 2-3 hours passing out school registration information for the new school year and visiting with parents and students.



Q&A with Ginny Strong, Board Chair

What are the School Board's top priorities this year?

Improving student learning is the top priority. Just a little over a year and a half ago the School Board challenged itself, challenged the school district, and challenged the community to take a serious look at the skills, abilities and knowledge today's young people must attain to prepare themselves for successful futures. Bold new expectations, known as graduate ends, were the outcome of this intensive work.

We know from our work together that the learning landscape must change. Our teaching professionals are telling us that classrooms must be places where students actively apply their knowledge in real world, authentic ways. Students are telling us that they are engaged when they can see the direct connection between their school work and their daily lives and aspirations. Our community tells us that today's young people must be good communicators, problem solvers, be able to work collaboratively, and have the ability to work and learn from individuals representing diverse cultures and religions.

Over the next year, in addition to continuing our collaborative work with the community and our educators, we will broaden the scope by bringing more students into the conversation. While we have included student representation on each of our panel discussions to date, they represent a vital perspective that remains largely untapped. We will look to current students and graduates alike to also advise us.

Our school board and our teachers are undertaking ground breaking work and it will tax our collective abilities. Our "graduate ends" call for us to "exhibit creative and innovative

thinking," to "anticipate future trends," and to "demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving abilities." We will be among the first to model the high expectations we have set for our young people!

In what ways does the Board plan to involve the community in district decisions for the coming year?

A firm commitment to community involvement regarding district decisions represents a longstanding priority of the School Board. The most important decision the DM community makes is electing the members of the School Board. They entrust these elected individuals to make decisions both large and small. Aside from this most obvious community involvement in decision making, the Board will be considering a couple of key issues during the course of the year in which it will directly solicit public input.

First, we will begin planning for the next phase of the Schools First Initiative. A Facilities Committee is now in place to evaluate building needs, the most recent demographic study, and projected revenues. This is where the initial work will take place with a report to the Board in 2009. We will invite the community to weigh in on the committee's recommendations.

Second, we will involve the community in establishing criteria for "within district open enrollment" now that the voluntary desegregation plan is off the books. We held community forums last year as the school district developed a Diversity Plan that outlined the criteria for between district open enrollment. A Diversity Committee will be formed this school year to study the criteria for within district open enrollment, formulate recommendations, and help take a plan to the public for their consideration.

In addition to involving the public on district wide committees, the Board encourages citizens to attend our board meetings and to contact us by email or telephone. Strong community involvement is vital to building and sustaining quality public education for all children.



Community Celebrations Held at Renovated Schools

Hillis Elementary School and Samuelson Elementary School in Des Moines held community open houses in September to celebrate the re-opening of their schools after year-long renovations.

Hillis Elementary School, 2401 56th Street

Hillis Elementary fifth grade students added some excitement to their school's celebration on September 18 by posing as "paparazzi" as people entered the building on a red carpet.

The \$7 million Schools First renovation includes additional classrooms, a new gymnasium, a new library, a new music room, and a new conference room. In addition, an extra parking lot was created for parents, new playground equipment has been installed, and student lockers were added to all classrooms.

"The entire building is outstanding," said Beth Sloan, Hillis Elementary School principal. "The kids love their new lockers and playground and they love the fact that their eating space is separate from the gym space."

463 students in grades K-5 attend Hillis Elementary School this year.

Samuelson Elementary School, 3929 Bel Aire

Samuelson Elementary School celebrated their renovated school on September 28. Special guests included a war veteran who has a child attending Samuelson. He presented an American flag used during a combat mission.



The \$7.2 million Schools First renovation includes a new addition to the school with nine classrooms and a new gymnasium. Classrooms in the original portion of the school have been enlarged and the library is newly renovated.

"Every decision that was made in this renovation focused on what was best for the students," said Cindy Roerig, Samuelson Elementary School principal.

Samuelson Elementary School is home to 490 former Woodlawn Elementary students in grades K-5.

More DMPS News and Information Available Online and On Air

Des Moines Public Schools is the largest provider of public education in Iowa, which means one newsletter alone cannot provide all of the information or share all of the stories about everything taking place in your school district.

More news and information is always available online and on air.

ONLINE

You can find information on schools, news stories, data, contacts, and more at anytime through the DMPS web site: www.dmps.k12.ia.us

While there, be sure to visit our online Flickr photo library to see the faces and places of Des Moines Public Schools:

www.flickr.com/photos/DMPS

ON THE AIR

Tune in to **Mediacom Channel 12** at anytime to see stories about programs and events from throughout the school district. If you do not subscribe to cable television you can still view Channel 12 stories at their web site (www.channel12online.org) or their companion YouTube site (www.youtube.com/user/DMPSChannel12).

And if you're in the mood for interesting talk and music, tune into Des Moines Public Schools' own radio station – **KDPS 88.1** – where your hosts are students from Central Campus and Grandview College.



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Other Celebrations at Renovated Schools:

Lincoln High School and Stowe Elementary held open houses in November. An open is planned at Central Academy for later this year.



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DMPS COMMUNITY REPORT
Fall 2008



Welcome to the Fall 2008 issue of the DMPS Community Report. We are well into the first semester of the 2008 school year and many exciting things are taking place in the Des Moines Public Schools.

Parents and guardians can now access the Campus Portal to check their child's grades and attendance on a daily basis. This new communication tool should prove its usefulness for our staff and families in the years to come.

We hope you enjoy reading about the happenings in our school district, and we look forward to sharing our good news with you throughout the year!

Nancy Sebring

Nancy Sebring
Superintendent
Des Moines Public Schools



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