

# Voter's Guide

## Iowa's Gubernatorial Candidates' Views on Children and Families



Secretary of State  
**Chet Culver**  
Democratic Candidate



U.S. Congressman  
**Jim Nussle**  
Republican Candidate

Developed as a public service by:  
Every Child Counts



## About the Guide

This 2006 Voter's Guide presents the views of Secretary of State Chet Culver and U.S. Congressman Jim Nussle on twelve important child and family policy issues. The candidates submitted written responses to each issue. Directions to the candidates were to keep their responses to individual questions to 150 words or less; but both candidates exceeded that limit on some questions. As we committed to them, their responses are provided here, without editing or comment.

The Voter's Guide has been used successfully in the three previous Gubernatorial elections to inform voters on where Iowa's Gubernatorial candidates stand on important child and family policy issues. The endorsing organizations listed below thank the candidates for their responses to these questions and their commitment to the state and its children and families.

## Endorsing Organizations

Child & Family Policy Center  
Child Care Resource & Referral  
Early Childhood Alliance  
Early Childhood Iowa  
Every Child Counts  
Every Child Matters  
Iowa Association of School Boards  
Iowa Coalition for Housing & the Homeless  
Iowa Community Action Association  
Iowa Conference of The United Methodist Church  
Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association

Iowa Head Start Association  
Iowa Human Needs Advocates  
Iowa League of Women Voters  
NASW, Iowa Chapter  
Orchard Place  
Polk County Empowerment  
Prevent Child Abuse Iowa  
The Coalition for Family and Children's Services in Iowa  
The Middleton Center for Children's Rights at Drake University Law School  
Visiting Nurse Services  
Women for Change



## Voluntary, Universal Preschool

Research is clear that 3- and 4-year-olds who have participated in high quality pre-school programs start school better prepared and equipped to succeed. This is true for all children, but particularly benefits low-income children, with returns-on-investment as much as \$7 for every dollar invested. Over the last two years, Iowa has invested substantial new funding for pre-school programs for children up to 200% of poverty through Community Empowerment, but there are still a large number of Iowa children who would benefit but will not be served by these programs. Currently, there are no state quality guidelines for pre-school programs.

*As Governor, what is your position regarding further expansion of publicly-funded pre-school programs and ensuring quality for existing and any new publicly-funded programs?*

**CULVER:** I am a teacher and coach. I know the impact that early educational opportunity has on children. It helps form their learning habits, boost their self-esteem, and equip them for the rigors of K-12 education. It is critically important that every Iowa student have a strong start.

I believe many of the problems kids experience could be reduced, eliminated or at least earlier identified if there were more available preschool and child care opportunities that are state accredited. Iowa has laid the groundwork for a statewide network of accredited early childhood development programs, but there is much more to be done.

I believe we can offer at least one accredited preschool in each of the state's school districts when I am Governor. We need to have the same commitment to early childhood education that we do for other levels of education, and the standard for each should be excellence.

I have proposed a commitment of \$7.5 million from the state to be matched by private resources toward the growth of our early childhood programs.

**NUSSLE:** Right now across Iowa there are hundreds of private, public and church based pre-schools that are doing a good job. We shouldn't force these schools out of business, but look at how we can enable parents, regardless of need, to be able to access preschool for their children. That's why I've called for increasing the per-student tuition tax credit from \$250 to \$1,500 and expanding it to include pre-school education. This will allow parents to use the tax credit at the pre-school of their choice, whether it is private, public or parochial. We need to create a competitive environment that will encourage both our private and public pre-schools to perform at higher quality levels. The best way to do that is by maximizing the investment of our parents, children and teachers in our school systems. We know that the sooner our children are put on a path to learning, the better outcomes and successes they'll enjoy throughout the rest of their lives.

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There are other barriers to the use of accredited facilities that include transportation issues, work schedule conflicts, etc. We need to direct resources into training for child care centers and in-home providers serving the same function as preschools for those children who are not able, for whatever reason, to access an accredited program.

An early start is the key to later success for kids. I also will promote ongoing training and technical assistance for pre-school educators.

## Child Care Quality, Affordability, and Availability

Iowa leads the nation in the proportion of families with children where both parents (or the only parent) are in the workforce (over three-quarters of all families). While over 40% of these families could qualify for child care subsidies under federal guidelines, only 8% receive subsidies in Iowa, well below the national average of 12%. Iowa's eligibility cut-off of 145% of poverty ranks Iowa 47<sup>th</sup> among states. Further, according to a recent study, only one-fifth of Iowa's child care is considered to be of good quality, and over one-fifth is considered to be of poor quality.

*As Governor, what do you believe state government's role should be to ensure the quality, affordability, and availability of child care for working families?*

**NUSSLE:** For too long, Iowa's working families have played by the rules and still struggled to get ahead. Young families today continually toil to meet the demands and challenges of child care and daycare. While there are no easy answers, all of us should agree we must make it easier for working folks to pay the bills and meet their household responsibilities. This is one area where lower taxes and a more vibrant Iowa economy can help alleviate some of the pressures on parents and their child rearing needs.

**CULVER:** Quality child care makes parents who work more productive and creates a positive, nurturing environment for children. The state government should work hard to ensure quality, affordable child care for every child who needs it. I support the existing quality initiative and I support the efforts of child care providers to be organized and compete for a decent wage.

These are the goals that I will work toward in my administration when it comes to quality, affordable child care: expanding existing professional training opportunities for providers; providing additional funds to reach all eligible kids so that the waiting list for quality child care can be eliminated; and focusing our efforts on child safety which will include criminal records checks and background checks for providers and their employees.

Funding for full implementation of the Child Care Quality Rating System will help identify quality programs and give providers access to resources to improve their programs.

In this way we can ensure a health and safe environment that promotes learning and development for all of Iowa's kids who are in child care.



## Child Health Care

Currently one in four Iowa children is covered under the state Medicaid or *hawk-i* program, but employer-based health coverage of children has declined and 7% of Iowa children remain uninsured and a greater percentage of their parents are uninsured. Much more than adult coverage, child health requires comprehensive and preventive health coverage (including mental, social, oral and emotional health), which can have lifelong impacts upon healthy development. At the same time, the rise in health care costs has focused attention on cost containment in public health programs such as Medicaid, potentially limiting coverage for primary and preventive services.

***As Governor, what would you do to create a health delivery system in Iowa – building on or changing Iowa’s current Medicaid and hawk-i programs – that ensures children receive the primary, preventive, and comprehensive health services they need?***

**CULVER:** I believe health care should be a right, not a luxury – particularly for the most vulnerable among us, such as children, the working poor, and seniors. And we have work to make health care more affordable for hard-working Iowans and small businesses who provide health care for their employees but are constantly struggling to keep up with outrageous costs.

Covering the 58,000 kids who do not now have health insurance will be a priority in my administration. The proposal is a part of my Healthy Opportunities Plan for Everyone, which is available in its entirety at [www.chetculver.com](http://www.chetculver.com).

- My Insure Iowa initiative allows Iowans to buy into the same type of health plan our elected officials enjoy, starting with small businesses and independent workers.
- We will work to insure more of Iowa's children by making sure all those eligible for Medicaid and Hawk-I are enrolled, and by allowing all Iowa parents to buy Hawk-I coverage for their kids. Community outreach to schools, churches and

**NUSSLE:** My first priority is to improve access to affordable health care and wellness across Iowa. Our focus must be on providing comprehensive solutions for long-term health care, not just applying a band-aid and practicing “sick care.” As Governor, I will work to ensure our kids are put on the right road to health and wellness from the start. Studies show that children develop lifelong habits at an early age and that’s why it’s so important to encourage proper diet and exercise from birth through grade school. Overall, a balanced approach to health and wellness will instill good behaviors that studies show are critical to preventative care and an improved quality of life. In addition to teaching children the importance of health and wellness at an early age, we must work to ensure we have quality doctors and specialists practicing in the state. It’s unacceptable that 40 of 99 Iowa counties don’t have an OB/GYN and 28 of 99 Iowa counties don’t have birthing centers because liability insurance has forced our health care providers to stop practicing medicine in Iowa. Our state needs Medical Liability Reform to help hold down costs for patients and providers as well as open new doors so more Iowans have access to affordable health care.

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community center will be a strategy to reach families with eligible children who are not yet enrolled.

- We will extend Hawk-I to cover parents as well as children up to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, for those without employer-provided coverage.

We can reduce our health care costs by keeping Iowa healthy so that less frequent medical care is needed by Iowans in the first place. Other benefits for families who are working in or near poverty will be better attendance at school, less tension in the home, and fewer long-term health care needs for the children who are covered.

## Child Mental Health

National studies show that 8-12% of children have mental health concerns and 3-6% have serious emotional problems. Parental depression also can contribute to child mental health. Studies have shown that addressing children's mental health requires different approaches than addressing adult mental health; and that there is a particular need to develop systems that help and support parents in responding to those needs. Iowa is one of few states that relies substantially upon property taxes for mental health services, and there is wide variability in the availability of services across the state.

*As Governor, what would you do to improve access to address the mental health needs of children, both young children and adolescents, across the state?*

**NUSSLE:** All Iowans deserve access to quality health care, especially children. Iowa currently offers acute psychiatric stabilization services for children and adolescents at two of its four mental health institutes. I will work to increase patient options for mental health services and put important health care decisions back into the hands of patients and their health care providers. When looking at a child's overall health composite, we must make sure to not overlook their mental wellness.

**CULVER:** The State of Iowa contracts with Psychological and Mental Institutions for Children (PMIC) around the state, but Iowa does not have a children's mental health director, division administrator or bureau chief. Our PMIC facilities are subject to 6-month-or-more waiting lists and the child welfare system including foster care operates as the mental health system for those kids who can't get into a placement to get their needs met.

This takes place even after the Department of Human Services and/or the courts have identified a mental health need and arranged placement in PMIC. Mental health treatment for kids will be a priority in the CULVER administration.

We should carefully monitor the ABCD II program through the Iowa Department of Public Health that has clinicians partnering with pediatricians to help identify early risk factors in young children's social and emotional development, as well as assist in identifying maternal depression, which experts tell us has a correlation to children's mental illness. If it is determined this partnership shows promise, it should be expanded.

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The goal is statewide access for children, developing a system of care that includes effective community based options for children who needs do not require out-of-home care.

Every Iowan deserves the chance to access quality mental health care, and that includes children. A strong commitment to the services already provided in the child and adolescent mental health area is important for Iowa's future. Better access to diagnostic and treatment services is needed in many areas of the state, especially in rural Iowa. Too often, children who exhibit behavior difficulties are treated for the behavior and not for the underlying mental health component of the behavior. The building of a strong safety net for children with mental health needs begins with the recognition of those needs.

## Poverty, Welfare Reform, Working Families, and Children

Iowa's welfare reform efforts have helped reduce welfare caseloads by more than one-half, with many families entering the workforce. At the same time, many of these families have moved from being on welfare to being among the "working poor," still struggling to make ends meet and not able to invest in their children's future. Children continue to be the age group in Iowa that is most likely to be poor, with one in eight children living below the poverty level (i.e. a two-parent family with two children whose income is \$19,806), and one in five below 185% of the poverty level (a more realistic measure for family financial stability).

*As Governor, what would you do to address poverty and its effect on children, including further changes to Iowa's welfare system and supports for working low-income families?*

**CULVER:** The first need working families have is for a decent job at a decent wage that will help them support their families. That is why I support raising the minimum wage in Iowa. This will give 257,000 hard-working Iowans the raise they have not had in fifteen years. The minimum wage is at its lowest buying power in 50 years, since the Eisenhower administration. Working at minimum wage does not produce the kind of wage that will support the individual worker, much less a family. The failure to raise the minimum wage is one of the reasons Iowa is among the national leaders when it comes to both parents working. It takes two minimum wage incomes just to survive.

My long-term goal is to create quality jobs, which we will strive to bring to Iowa around our amazing opportunities in renewable fuels and alternative energy.

Another important need working families have is access to quality health insurance. Parents of eligible children, up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, should be allowed to buy in to the HAWK-I children's health insurance program on a sliding scale. This may require changes in the program, but it is a goal worth pursuing. When the parent is healthy, a child's school attendance, nutrition

**NUSSLE:** The well-being of low-income and at-risk children and youth should be the focus of Iowa's welfare program. As Governor, I will review all of our state programs to ensure that programs and services are targeted at specific groups of high risk recipients and services are being delivered accordingly. When I made my announcement that I wanted to lead Iowa and run for Governor, I called for a Statewide Top-to-Bottom Review of all departments and agencies. Not only will this review root out waste, fraud and abuse, it also will focus on making sure clients are being served effectively and efficiently and that Iowa taxpayers are getting the most out of their hard-earned dollars.

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and behavior all improve. Health coverage is a must for all of Iowa's kids.

Working families also need educational opportunities, which is why I have proposed 5,000 All-Iowa Opportunity Scholarships for students who show merit but also financial need. This will extend opportunity to students who have been priced out of the market for higher education in recent years by skyrocketing tuition costs at our public universities. We can provide the resources for students who need them so that every Iowa student can reach his or her God-given potential.

## Substance Use and High Risk Behaviors

Iowa has experienced a dramatic upswing in methamphetamine and other illegal drug use that threatens children, both through its impact upon their parents' ability to care and protect them and on their own use. While Iowa youth rank low among youth in the country on the reported use of illegal drugs, Iowa youth rank high on reported binge drinking and alcohol use.

*As Governor, what would you do to address substance abuse issues that affect Iowa children and youth?*

**NUSSLE:** Illegal drugs are scourge on our small towns and urban centers. We must educate parents and get them more involved so they know what their kids are doing in all places at all hours. The best way to attack substance abuse is by preventing our children from experimenting with narcotics and other addictive substances in the first place. Iowa has made great strides in our War against Methamphetamine. But our job is far from over. For any innocent life caught in a substance abuse trap, we must work to ensure there are avenues for help and recovery.

**CULVER:** One of the keys to elimination of substance abuse and other high risk behaviors among Iowa's kids is prevention efforts at the local level and within the family itself. This has a strong deterrent effect on kids who face peer pressure to use.

I saw the impact of some of these poor choices on students I worked with at Hoover High School in Des Moines prior to being elected Secretary of State. I also mentored young people in a YMCA-sponsored program. Kids need hope and opportunity in their lives. They need positive role models. They need to learn the power of character and the success that follows a disciplined approach to reaching one's individual goals.

We need to continue Iowa's substantial efforts to discourage teen smoking that are funded by our tobacco settlement dollars. The Just Eliminate Lies (JEL) model is one that appears to be effective and have potential for application in other areas. I will continue the programs aimed at keeping young people from starting to smoke. Some of the funds from an increase in the cigarette tax will be targeted to this purpose.

We need coordinated efforts at the state and local level to discourage underage drinking in Iowa. We also need strong coordinated efforts to combat the methamphetamine epidemic, especially in rural Iowa. We need to prevention education at the earliest

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possible time in children's lives to discourage them from ever trying alcohol, methamphetamine or other substances.

Cooperation among state agencies, nonprofits and private community organizations is the key to meeting the variety of needs young people have as they make their formative choices. I understand both the needs and the choices our young people face and as Governor will be diligent about getting resources into the community to address those needs.

## Iowa Tax Policies

While there has been much debate on Iowa's tax system and significant income tax cuts for seniors were enacted last session, there has been little discussion of how Iowa's income tax system should reflect the costs to families of raising children. While the federal income tax provides both a child credit and a personal exemption to recognize these costs, Iowa's income tax does not have such provisions, which often results in higher taxes on families with children than families with the same income but no children. Approximately 70,000 working families with children in Iowa have state income tax liability while having no federal income tax liability.

*As Governor, what, if any, changes do you believe should be made in Iowa's tax system to recognize the costs of raising children?*

**CULVER:** I balanced eight budgets as Secretary of State. I know what it means as an executive to live within one's means. This is something the federal government has been unable to do in recent years. The result has been deficits in annual spending, and debt that will burden our children. Balanced budgets are an Iowa value.

The compounding factor in the federal government's budget is reckless and ill-advised tax cuts for the very wealthiest Americans. It is my great hope Iowans do not desire those Washington policies to be implemented in Iowa, to the same devastating effect.

Many of the programs that serve children, from nutrition to reading to health care, have been hit hard by federal funding cuts that followed the tax cuts. Iowa should not make the same mistake.

Iowa has a good foundation for our kids. A national study that ranks states on the well-being of their children placed Iowa eighth in 2005, down from 2004's fourth-place ranking. Kids Count ranks states on factors such as child poverty, high school dropout rates and the number of children living in single-parent homes. Iowa's best score was for secure parental employment.

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**NUSSLE:** Iowa's tax system is a burden on families, muzzling investment and forcing Iowans to leave the state in hopes of better opportunities. I know people make better decisions in their daily lives than government ever could, which is why I will work to give back Iowans' hard-earned tax dollars. I have proposed a Taxpayer Refund Account which sets aside nearly a third of unanticipated surplus tax revenues to 'invest in Iowa's future' by giving it to those who earned it – Iowa Taxpayers – in order to create new jobs, grow our economy and provide new, exciting opportunities for generations to come. As Governor, I look forward to taking the politics out of returning tax dollars to those who earned them.

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We have a hard-working state that values the well being of children and puts resources behind those values. We should not risk our Iowa values on reckless tax cuts.

## Child Protection

Parents have the primary responsibility for raising their children, but society also has a responsibility to ensure children are safe and receive necessary care. The Iowa child protective service system (including investigations of child abuse and neglect, provision of family-centered services, and provision of foster care and adoption services) has been under increasing financial pressure, as confirmed child abuse cases have risen but state funding has not kept pace. A variety of reports and studies have recommended major changes to the system – including improvements in reporting, training and staffing, funding for services, and support for prevention programs and community partnerships that can develop localized responses that prevent abuse and compromised child safety in the first place.

*As Governor, what changes would you recommend to the child protective service system to better achieve its goals of safety, permanence, and child well-being?*

**NUSSLE:** All of us have been shocked and dismayed by a child dying under the care of our Department of Human Services. That agency and many others have been neglected and/or mismanaged for too long. All across Iowa, I hear stories from folks that our DHS system needs a full review and renewed focus through better leadership at the top. As Governor, I will provide that leadership and a commitment to positive outcomes in our government agencies and their services.

**CULVER:** Iowa has much work to do when it comes to protecting our most at-risk children and keeping them safe from harm. We can, and must, do better. Private agencies providing care for abused and delinquent children have not had rate increases that have kept pace with inflation over the last five years.

We are still emerging from a very difficult funding period for Iowa's human service providers. Iowa was one of only 14 states that cut funding for children's services from 2000 to 2002. About 30 states increased spending for abused and troubled children during that time period. In order to provide adequate service to children, rates should keep pace with inflation.

Children are placed in youth shelters for short periods of time when violence, physical or sexual abuse or illegal drug usage is present in their home. Children's shelters have been at crisis level in Iowa for many years due to lack of funding. Shelter funding has been cut by almost \$2.6 million and 132 children are being refused shelter services every day. We should bring shelter funding to adequate levels so that all children who need a safe haven can find shelter.



## Responding to Diversity

Iowa is becoming more diverse as a state, and children are leading the way. According to the 2000 census, children of color represent 11.2% of all Iowa children. These numbers continue to rise with the growth in immigrant children coming into Iowa. At the same time, children of color fare significantly worse on many measures of child well-being—poverty, low birth weight, child abuse and neglect, school dropout, and juvenile delinquency. Educators and service providers in Iowa do not fully reflect this new diversity, which makes issues of developing culturally competent services (as well as producing a more diverse workforce) additional important issues.

*As Governor, what actions would you take to address current disparities in outcomes for children of color, ensure culturally competent services, and support Iowa's growing diverse population?*

**CULVER:** I worked one-on-one with kids from diverse backgrounds in a Des Moines public high school before being elected Secretary of State so I have experience with this set of challenges. In fact, I spent a portion of my classroom hours teaching students for whom English was a second language.

Perhaps the most concerning of the trends related to people of color in Iowa is the achievement gap among elementary students. Measures of reading comprehension and other basic skills show African-American students at a disadvantage in Iowa. I support the pilot programs now underway in Waterloo and Sioux City to address this issue and am pleased to see some progress is being made in reduction of the gap. This is a priority for my administration.

People of color are making strides in Iowa, but we must support existing resources which include the Iowa Commission on Human Rights and the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, as well as the Commission on the Status of African-Americans and the Commission on Latino Affairs. I will make appointments that reflect the need for

**NUSSLE:** My priority is for Iowa to be the safest, cleanest, and healthiest place for all people to live, learn, raise a family, start a business and retire in dignity. I want Iowa to be the "Education Destination" and capitalize on our great universities and strong community college system. We also must improve our K-12 system so Iowa sets the standard for world-class education. The last thing any of us wants is to lose our reputation as a great education state by ensuring all our children are learning what they need to know to compete on life's road. Besides lifelong learning opportunities, we must open Iowa for business from within and the ground up. I have called for lowering taxes, cutting red-tape, making insurance more affordable and providing a well-trained, highly educated workforce to create jobs, build new opportunities, and grow Iowa's economy. The more vibrant Iowa is with our education system and economic development, the more attractive Iowa will be no matter one's creed or color.

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diversity in government. I will work for better minority recruitment and retention in state government and our public universities so the professionals who work with Iowa's children reflect the state's emerging diversity.

## Preventing Child Abuse and Sexual Predation

High profile crimes have drawn attention to extreme cases of child abuse and sex abuse. Actions have been taken to strengthen criminal penalties against abusers and predators. At the same time, both more education and more diligence in identifying and acting on warning signs can prevent some abuse from occurring.

*As Governor, what would you propose to help prevent child abuse and child sexual abuse in Iowa?*

**NUSSLE:** Strengthening public safety is the number one priority of government. That's why law enforcement and correction agencies are responsible for some of the most important activities performed by our state. Iowa should be a national leader in implementing preventative measures against sexual predators so that the security of our children is not jeopardized. Our neighborhoods should be welcoming and secure, where Iowa families don't have to live, work, or go to school in fear. I've called for Iowa to implement a real-time monitoring GPS system that allows the state to monitor whether sexual offenders are in violation of the 2,000 foot rule. The GPS system also will give law enforcement the additional ability of tracking whether or not sexual predators are targeting children in areas such as schools, child care centers or public playgrounds.

**CULVER:** We must fully support and provide funding to our child protection services within the Department of Human Services, work to bring caseloads down from among the highest in the nation to a reasonable level, and provide the professional training and technical assistance our frontline caseworkers need.

The issues involved in casework are growing increasingly complex. They include dealing with the effects of methamphetamine and other substances on families. We should provide additional training opportunities to allow caseworkers to remain informed about trends they may face in the homes they serve. The goal remains the same: immediate and effective intervention in a home in which an abusive situation exists, so that harm to the child can be stopped and the cycle of violence broken.

We should continue and build on models that involve collaboration among service providers including the family team meeting concept that is coming into wider use in Iowa.

In the 2006 legislative session there was some debate about expanding child sexual abuse prevention (SAP) funding. I support an additional \$250,000 in funding for child sexual abuse prevention efforts. Our local officials need appropriate funding for child abuse protection services. Those services need to include instruction for kids on

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recognition and response to sexual abuse threats. We will work with mandatory reporters to heighten awareness and make certain threats are identified and reported.

We also make available adequate funding for law enforcement efforts to target sexual predators including online predators and respond to reports made within the human services system or the school system. We will pursue tough penalties for sex offenders.

## Community Schools

In addition to providing high quality education, schools can play an important role in the education and development of children by partnering with other community services, including referring children and families for other needed services. They also often can serve as hubs within their neighborhoods for parent and community activities, including recreational and social programs. At the same time, funding and other constraints may limit their ability to conduct these activities.

*As Governor, what do you see as the role of schools in serving as community schools as well as providing high quality education?*

**CULVER:** As a teacher I saw firsthand the contributions made by educators to the lives of the children they served. Teachers have a broader role now than at any time in our state's history. They serve as an ad hoc mentor, counselor, advisor, nutritionist, and behavioral expert in addition to the traditional classroom role. This is one of the reasons I have proposed teacher pay in Iowa be raised from 41<sup>st</sup> in the nation to at least the national average. It is time we value the contribution of our teachers to the community.

Beyond that, though, the school is an entry point for children and a great place to promote their well being, whether through health screenings and wellness information or registering eligible high school seniors to vote and encouraging them to participate. Schools can be catalysts for a better life for Iowa's young people. We need to provide resources accordingly.

**NUSSLE:** We must begin preparing Iowa's students today for the job opportunities of tomorrow. My ABC's to Achieve World-Class Education plan focuses on preparing high school students for the job and career fields of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by giving them a jump start on their future. The creation of "**Iowa Achievement Academies**" in all Iowa high schools ensures students have access to **Advanced Placement & Dual Credit Courses** for core subjects. This gives high school students an early advantage before graduation by earning transferable college credits as well as making college more affordable. The program also draws on Iowa's strengths by boosting collaboration between the state's high schools and higher education institutions. My plan targets non-college-bound high school students through the creation of "**Iowa Job Skills Centers**" in all Iowa high schools. This provides students who are not pursuing a college education access to career development, job training and internships, while they earn high school graduation credit for hands-on experience.



## Inclusion

Both state and federal policy promote inclusion of children with disabilities and special needs into activities, services, and settings designed for children generally, while recognizing the need for additional accommodations to enable children with disabilities to participate. At the same time, parents of children with disabilities often face considerable challenges in securing these rights to inclusion, requiring them to expend extra effort and resources to ensure that practice follows policies that promote inclusion.

*As Governor, what will you do to promote policies and practices that incorporate the principle of inclusion so that children with disabilities can live with their families, be educated with their peers and have meaningful employment in their community when they reach adulthood?*

**NUSSLE:** I have worked tirelessly to ensure that special education dollars get to the classrooms. Not only has funding been increased substantially, but I've fought to make sure these critical dollars don't get caught up in the government bureaucracy, but are directed to the teachers, students and classrooms. The future success of Iowa's students dealing with disabilities is dependent on making sure they receive the attention, resources and tools they need from the beginning. We must give school districts greater flexibility to determine how their funding will most effectively serve individual student needs.

**CULVER:** My personal experiences have prepared me well to, as Governor, be sensitive to the needs of Iowa's children with disabilities. My background in teaching children with special needs in the classroom along with volunteer coaching in the Special Olympics.

I believe actions speak louder than words. I have a strong commitment to promoting the participation of young people with disabilities, in the classroom and in the community. My office partners with ID Action and the Governor's Developmental Disability Council annually to promote an "Advocating Change" day at the Capitol that targets young people with disabilities and encourages them to participate in the civic process. This commitment will continue when I am Governor.

When the federal government through the Help America Voting Act required accessible voting machines in every precinct, my office undertook a project to make sure every building in which a polling place was located was also accessible. We used HAVA funds for micro-grants to build ramps, pave parking areas and widen entrances so that voters  
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with disabilities would have the option, in some cases for the very first time, to vote at the polls. Iowa has done more on polling place accessibility than any other state.

My commitment to Iowans with disabilities has been reflected in my hiring practices as Secretary of State. I set aside a full-time position for a staff member who had a significant background in disability advocacy to oversee the transition to accessible polling places. It will be reflected in the appointments I make and the funding levels I support when it comes to our state programs that serve people with disabilities. I will see that schools promote inclusion and that community services are strengthened.

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A limited number of copies are available through Every Child Counts. This Guide is also available for download in PDF format at: [www.everychildcountsiowa.org](http://www.everychildcountsiowa.org)

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