**Background**

The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA) included a $650 million allocation in ESEA Title II, Part D, commonly referred to as the *Enhancing Education Through Technology* program(EETT). This case study was prepared by the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) – the principal association representing the technology leadership of state and territorial departments of education – to provide an example of ARRA funds working at the district and classroom level that creates effective, viable, and robust reform in education, and improves the way teachers teach and students learn.

**Iowa’s EETT Competitive Grants**

Iowa’s ARRA EETT competitive grant focused on online learning for both teachers and students with the goal to positively affect student achievement in Iowa. The project included the purchase of online content for all Iowa students, creation of a repository for online content and professional development for teachers to help them create lessons, units and online courses.

**Iowa Ed Tech ARRA**

**Des Moines Public Schools, Iowa**

**June 2010-September 2011**

In Iowa, rural students did not have access to the same depth of curriculum as urban students, and urban students needed support for credit recovery. This grant focused on acquiring and developing online courses and content, as well as training teachers to develop and facilitate courses so that all Iowa students would have access to online content through a common, statewide content management system. Therefore, it was also the goal of the grant to increase student achievement, increase access to technology, and better prepare students for the 21st century. Two projects were funded by ARRA EETT funds, including the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) initiative, which focused on increasing access for secondary students to online coursework and content.

# Demographics

Located in the center of Iowa, DMPS is the largest district with 30,000 kindergarten through 12th grade students. On average, 58.5% of DMPS high school students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, 45.9% are minority, 7.2% are English Language Learners, and 20.6% receive special education services.

# Project Description

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| **ARRA EETT Grant Details** |
| Grant Focus | Professional Development, Online Learning |
| Beginning/End Date of Grant | June 2010-September 2011 |
| Locale | Urban |
| Funding | $402,987 |
| Grade Level (s) | 9-12 |
| Number of Teachers Impacted  | 100 |
| Number of Administrators Impacted | 6 |
| Number of Students Impacted | 1,000 |

The grant targeted secondary students to address achievement gaps and to provide equity to resources. The program sought to reach a large, high-need student population with limited access to technology. At the core of the program was a rigorous professional development program for teachers, including a course sequence built around best practices in online teaching known as OLLIE (Online Learning for Iowa Educators). In addition to OLLIE courses, Iowa teachers have been using Communities of Practice and Innovation with content-specific focus groups to sustain the work and apply it into content areas. In this program, teachers met to analyze, evaluate, develop, and implement online courses in four content areas (mathematics, science, social studies, and English/language arts) from across Iowa with 93 districts out of 359 represented. In a statewide effort, Iowa provided hundreds of hours of professional development for teachers on how to use online tools, develop online content, and integrate media into existing content areas. Des Moines teachers benefitted and expanded on these efforts in this grant program.

# Project Implementation

During the summer of 2010, Des Moines Public Schools purchased 300 netbooks for students and provided 100 teachers with 2 of the 5 OLLIE courses in professional development. Teachers returned to the classroom and immediately implemented the Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) with 1,000 students. Students had access to course materials, homework, assignments, and projects both in school and at home. Learning to use online resources like Moodle in the classroom was transformational for teachers.

Using Moodle and the various links to many tools, a teacher can focus on the needs of students as learners and be very creative with their assessments of learning.

-DMPS Teacher

# Classroom Example

* Des Moines teachers use a blended learning model to implement the use of Moodle in their classroom. One assignment at a time is delivered online along with inquiry and discussion activities for students. Teachers discovered that using online tools provides support for differentiated instruction in the classroom.

# Evaluating Effectiveness

Enrollment in the Iowa Learning Online Virtual School is 700 students. In addition, 5,000 students in Des Moines and 9,000 students statewide were learning in a blended learning environment. As well, the grant program laid a foundation for the training and tools teachers needed to effectively use technology in the classroom. For the first time, all Iowa Area Education Agencies and Urban Education Network districts worked together to provide economy of scale solutions on a statewide basis for all teachers and all students in Iowa.

**District Data**

* In 2010-2011, 1,000 high school students enrolled in an online course in Des Moines.
* 80% of students completed an online course with a Grade-to-Date of 60% or higher.

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# Moving Forward

Despite the end of the funding in Des Moines Public Schools, 26 teachers volunteered to act as building leaders to continue coaching and mentoring teachers in how to use the online content and Moodle. At the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year, 7,000 teachers and students were using Moodle in Des Moines.

While the grant funded the initial startup of this long-term project, the work completed during the grant cycle was critical to the long-term viability of education in Iowa. With declining rural enrollment and increasing urban enrollment, online learning provides equity of educational content for students and allows teachers to have classes composed of students from multiple districts, which can minimize the impact of changing demographics. Online learning also offers educational opportunities to students who would, in other educational models, have restrictions on course offerings. With the establishment of this program, all students can have access to courses offered through this project which will, in turn, allow those students to access courses required by institutions of higher learning.

# Resources

Des Moines Public Schools

<http://www.dmschools.org/>

Iowa Department of Education

<http://educateiowa.gov/>

SETDA ARRA Information and Resources

<http://setda.org/web/guest/ARRAresources>