

# IOSS

## Reader's Corner

Iowa Organization for Student Success Newsletter, May 2025

### Past President's Letter: NOSS 2025 Recap



Reflecting the current trends and challenges confronting educators, this year's NOSS conference in New Orleans provided an opportunity engage with colleagues from across the country as they grapple with recent challenges.

Multiple presentations offered a variety of innovative approaches to the new technology of artificial intelligence and the continuing need to build a culture of belonging for students.

As those who attended our state conference may remember, the increasing presence of artificial intelligence tools creates multiple concerns in terms of authentic student work while also offering expansive creative opportunities. Most presenters teaching in writing courses recognized the reality of student access to artificial intelligence, and they are working to integrate the tools into their course work. Most presenters include a discussion of ethical use and the problems with AI usage as part of the course, and the instructors reserve the right to question the authenticity of work, often including personal conferences with students as part of the review process. A common approach involves students critiquing AI-produced material, building both analytical skills as well as knowledge of this new technology. For instance, one assignment involved conducting an interview with AI as if it were an author or scientist the course was studying. Students needed to build a relevant set of interview questions and then critique the responses for accuracy. Another presenter asked students to

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have an AI tool remake a popular song into another format, such as a work email, and students would then analyze the AI choices for accuracy and bias. While these examples begin with an AI element, another group returned to handwriting first drafts. In class, students engaged in the creation and writing of their work as part of a group workshopping experience, composing their drafts in designated notebooks. Later, when the drafts are typed, students use AI for feedback on the work and reflect on the value of the AI assistance. Along with maintaining certainty regarding the student work, the approach offers engaged interaction and support along with the opportunities for using a new technology. While the technology represents serious challenges, many of our colleagues are finding creative ways to maintain academic goals and engage students.

Another theme present at the national conference addressed the continued levels of absenteeism and

disconnection among students. Many presentations, including the keynote speaker, advocated a greater awareness related to creating belonging among students. Several presentations highlighted building personal connections within the classroom and creating opportunities for student interaction. In one presentation, a math instructor described how she emailed requests to students to be called on in class. The instructor provided the day, time, and topic, promising support, and allowed students to decline. Not only did the process help students prepare for class, but helped build a sense of connection within the class and improved student confidence.

One of the rewarding aspects of the national conference includes making connections with our colleagues in neighboring states. This year we were able to meet many colleagues from Minnesota, Illinois, and Wisconsin. A Midwest chapter is also attempting to become active again for members in Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. These members deal with the same issues as we do, including some extra legislative challenges, and we hope to potentially provide support and continue to build a network throughout our region.

*Dan Nelson, DMACC*

## **The Overlooked Factors in Critiques Directed at Developmental Education and Remediation**

The National Organization for Student Success (NOSS) conference provided an opportunity for me to present on mathematics remediation based on the work I am doing for my dissertation in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (EdD). I presented on changes to math remediation from 2014 to the present at the college where I work. For my dissertation, I am doing a deeper dive into the

numbers as well. By this time in 2026, I anticipate having the EdD completed, potentially with material worthy of publication in the *Journal of the National Organization for Student Success* (JNOSS). For now, my doctoral work that informed the presentation has focused on the institutional and sociocultural context in which changes to remediation are occurring.

From 2014 to 2019, Western Iowa Tech Community College (WITCC) blended technology into its math remediation courses through ALEKS PPL. In 2019, WITCC eliminated all developmental education courses in response to federal and state calls for reforms. From the spring of 2019 until the spring of 2024, WITCC switched to ALEKS PPL only. Now, WITCC has resumed some courses in math remediation, but these do not qualify as traditional developmental education classes. These courses were designed by the Department of Mathematics at WITCC, and students can earn elective credit hours through these courses for transfer to some institutions. Therefore, the courses do not represent the kinds of courses the Iowa Department of Education has generally classified as developmental education.

These new changes were precipitated due to dramatic increases in the percentages of our students exiting the college without earning college-level math credits. From academic year (AY) 2013-2014 through AY 2020-2021, we hovered at 60% of our students leaving WITCC without college-level math credits. However, in AY 2021-2022, we increased to 66%. In AY 2022-2023, the percentage climbed to 69%. The trend continued with 76% and 85%, respectively, for AY 2023-2024 and AY 2024-2025. These numbers need to be unpacked a bit more.

Community college students often get off to rough starts. They take time off from pursuing their educations. They have a lot of stopping and restarting after taking the initial plunge. Thus, the

most recent AYs are not good metrics to use. I would not be surprised if those numbers eventually settled around 70% by the AY 2026-2027. In other words, many students, who started in the AY 2023-2024 or AY 2024-2025 and who left WITCC already, will likely return and complete college-credit mathematics courses. The return of these students will eventually lower the percentages to something close to 70%. This still is not necessarily related to the remediation program at WITCC. The residue of secondary school curriculum disruptions during COVID also complicates the data.

These are the base data that I have used for my deeper dive into remediation at WITCC. I will further disaggregate the data to separate high school students from adult students over those years. If COVID really is a factor, then by AY 2021-2022, we will see a pronounced difference in the high school population when they attend WITCC compared to prior years. Moreover, my deeper dive will compare outcomes of students in the new courses at WITCC to students in ALEKS PPL. My current hypothesis is that there will be no difference based on the method of remediation. Instead, there will be a differences based on technology literacy, digital divide demographics, and traditional socioeconomic variables.

Thus, my EdD is really focused on the factors that critics of developmental education have overlooked. Technology has rapidly transformed education, and even classrooms now rely heavily on technology. Students have to be skilled with technology to succeed in education, no matter the kind of education. I expect my deeper dive will help map out some of these overlooked effects, while further pointing out the ways that other social factors like COVID can having long-term effects that must be considered.

*Mike Cagley, WITCC*

Note: A PDF of Mike's NOSS presentation is available under Resources on the IOSS website at <https://www.dmacc.edu/ioess>

## IOSS Special Topic for September: Technology Literacy

IOSS has begun to offer special topic virtual sessions for its members. The exact form of these special topics remains fluid, with the special topics open to traditional presentation formats, interactive workshop designs, and nearly any other format one might like to utilize. In September of 2025, we are excited to present the first special topic on technology literacy.

In this special topic, we will look at ways that researchers have conceptualized of technology literacy, including ways it has been operationalized for research. A particular distinction within technology literacy is digital literacy versus information literacy. These two broad classifications have a wide array of more nuanced conceptualizations, but the two broad classifications will be part the special topic focus.

Digital literacy has a direct relationship to the digital divide. In short, digital literacy is the ability of students to use technology effectively. If one imagines digital literacy as a hard skill with technology, it may be easier to understand its breadth. The technical aspects of technology (e.g., accessing accounts, using bookmarks in browsers, installing apps, accessing apps, etc.) fit within digital literacy, which again has strong correlation with socioeconomic digital divide demographics.

Information literacy, thus, is more like a soft skill category with some hard skill elements. It still has

technical skills involved, such as knowing how to use a learning management system (LMS) effectively to be successful in higher education. Digital literacy can facilitate access to the LMS, but discussion boards in most classes in an LMS are not the same thing as social media sites. Therefore, information literacy is an attempt to tap into how well students can learn and follow academic and course norms.

This summary is meant to give IOSS members an idea of the September special topic. The special topic will go beyond the summary provided here, with contribution and interaction from the attendees welcome. The date and time will be sent out later in May, with reminders to follow as the date draws closer.

*Mike Cagley, WITCC*

## Soundtrack of Our Lives

Noise blends into the tunes of our creativity, inspiration becomes innovation, the rhythm of days lay down the beats of our steps on the journey of our lives.

I just returned from doing an outreach delivery to a library patron turning 100 years old this weekend. Think of all the amazing changes experienced throughout her life. I returned to work with thoughts of advancements in technology dancing in my head. I rushed back to my desk to join the Library Journal's Spring Book Event.

Our career in education is steeped in words, concepts, and formulas. Over the years we have embraced Ed Tech into our curriculum. AI is our current elevation. I had to laugh out loud when the images of advancements over the last century still swirling in my mind collided with my Library world. Today Library Journal

debuted ***Soundtrack*** by Jason Reynolds. This cutting-edge audiobook has a unique format with immersive storytelling sure to captivate listeners. Reynolds never disappoints readers, especially connecting to our grown-agers. His words resonate with our college students because they ring true, elicit deep emotion, and help readers face this ever-changing world. Reynolds' readers and future fans will only be able to access this title as an audiobook. Wow, the times they sure are a-changin'! Makes me wonder what is in store for readers in the next centenary.

Find out more about these memorable musicians from New York City at <https://shorturl.at/w2Rny>

*Kathy Rogers, ILCC*

## Exploring Mental Health Issues

Did you know Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States every year since 1949? I find myself inspired to share a topic that an amazing group of college students discussed with me throughout this semester. I find student engagement increases significantly with the freedom of exploring topics of choice as we learn about a variety of academic databases. Several students investigated mental health issues college students face. Thoughtful discussions exposed their unanimous concerns for peers on campus, online, and nationwide.

Here is the result of my own search motivated when they expressed a feeling of urgency for awareness and support. Academic Video Online (AVON) is a fabulous resource full of videos for many disciplines including Nursing, Vet Tech, Criminal Justice, and Literature courses. AVON has just introduced their newest platform, Video Interactions. I typed in "Mental Health," limiting search results to the last



year. It generated videos with discussions, quizzes, and much more already embedded for instructors to integrate into lessons. Think of the application possibilities this college library resource offers for course content and research! Kanopy is a streaming service with a collection of content related to mental health issues, emotional and psychological trauma, and psychology. Project MUSE, according to their mission statement, promotes the creation and dissemination of essential humanities and social science resources through collaboration with libraries, publishers, and scholars worldwide. A search on "Mental Health" generated 570 impressive options for this year alone.

Our college students recognize the toll mental health issues are taking on society. May we hear their pleas for help, guide them to helpful resources, and encourage discovery of the fascinating worlds found between the pages of a book.

*Kathy Rogers, ILCC*



## Applications Open for 2025 IOSS Student Scholarship

The Iowa Organization for Student Success (IOSS) Executive Board is again accepting applications for a student who has excelled in developmental coursework. Please take time to share this scholarship opportunity with students at your school. Below is the link where students will find the information needed to apply for this \$500 scholarship. Applications are due by June 30, 2025.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfezqfrxKAxf5GHQVvkIZejt83YfLk9nfl1GV4wbzIFPKbSIQ/viewform>

## 2025 Outstanding Service to Students Award Nominations

We are excited to have the opportunity to celebrate and recognize an educator who demonstrates outstanding service and impacts student success!

We encourage each of our members to review the criteria on the form available on the Member Resources page of the IOSS website at <https://www.dmacc.edu/ioss> and nominate a deserving faculty member, staff member, and/or administrator for this honor. You will find the full process and award details, as well as the online application, on the nomination form at

<https://forms.gle/48LMLVxXfBtH11qA9>

Submit nominations by June 1, 2025.

Please note that nominees do not have to be current members of IOSS to be eligible for the award.

## America Reads 2024-2025



IOSS is pleased to share the joy of reading with elementary school students as we continue our participation in the America Reads program. Recipients of our book donations for 2024-2025 are enrolled at McKinley Elementary School in southeast Des Moines.

McKinley serves a multiethnic group of children from pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In 2023-2024, more than 90% of McKinley's 266 students qualified for free and reduced-price lunches, and nearly 30% of the students were English Language Learners.

Check the Fall Conference section of the IOSS website for a link to the McKinley Elementary School Amazon Gift List:

<https://www.dmacc.edu/ioss>

**IMPORTANT:** When checking out, on the *Choose a Shipping Address* page, make sure to have the books sent to the school address:

McKinley Elementary School  
Attn: Ann Mortimer  
1610 SE 6th Street  
Des Moines, IA 50315

**Check the IOSS website at  
<https://www.dmacc.edu/ioss>  
for updates on the  
fall 2025 conference.**

**Reconnect with colleagues  
from around the state.**

**Share your triumphs, projects, and  
concerns in a breakout session or  
roundtable.**

## Join the IOSS Conversation

- Have you recently attended a conference of another professional organization? Summarize a session relevant to our membership for the *Reader's Corner*.
- Has your institution revamped its placement policies, developmental studies offerings, or academic support program? Provide a quick update.
- Have you located a great academic resource for student or faculty to use? Share the wealth.
- Have you transitioned to a new position or received special recognition for your professional accomplishments? Let us celebrate with you!

To submit articles or information for future editions of the *Reader's Corner*, please send to:

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## 2024-2025 IOSS Executive Board

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## Stay in Touch with IOSS and NOSS

### IOSS Website:

Check the IOSS website for 2025 conference updates; student scholarship information; Executive Board contact information; and member resources, including IOSS meeting minutes and materials from conference presentations.

<https://www.dmacc.edu/ioass>

### IOSS Facebook:



Like us on Facebook to receive updates on IOSS and our annual conference!

[https://www.facebook.com/iowaoss/?ref=py\\_c](https://www.facebook.com/iowaoss/?ref=py_c)

### The NOSS website:

<https://thenoss.org/>