



**@Newbo: 415 12th Ave SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

**@Boyson: 600 Boyson Avenue NE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

## THE IOWA BIG COMPACT

Your high schooler has added the Iowa BIG program (BIG) option to their educational experience. This Compact exists to create an agreement regarding the expectations while your high schooler is enrolled at BIG.

### GOALS

We see as our primary responsibility to help today's learners understand who they are as people and learners and to develop their skills, knowledge and dispositions not only in the subject areas they are taking through BIG but also the key 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. Our goal is for our learners to exit BIG ready to move forward confidently and successfully not just in their next 4 years but their next 40.

1. To engage BIG students in authentic projects and experiences they can use to differentiate themselves as college, job, and scholarship applicants. We call this “resume building.”
2. To develop competence in both the academic standards of the “class” they are enrolled in AND develop and assess students on their ability to demonstrate the key employability and life skills. We call this “competence building.”
3. To help learners deepen and expand their ability to become self-actualized. By self-actualized we mean a person who understands they have the power to create the life they want and have a sense of their purpose or mission. We call this “building self.”

### PHILOSOPHY

1. **Your high schooler is a co-designer of the course.** We take what interests your teenager and help them mold it into a powerful learning experience connected to the required course standards and expectations.
2. **You must be able to do something with what you are learning.** Students will manage rigorous projects and learn within the context of solving real problems. We have high expectations for rigor and content standard coverage.

3. **Competence, not clock.** BIG students receive credit when they demonstrate the core learning targets for their projects and courses. This may or may not happen on a trimester schedule, but both the student and you will know where they are on the continuum of learning and standard attainment.
4. **Community is critical.** Your young adult will engage in real community problems/issues and/or spend time with experts in our community. They will develop “soft” skills while nurturing professional connections and relationships. Knowing their work will be in the public eye -- assessed by professionals -- raises the bar on their performance.

## HOW BIG WORKS

It is important to understand how BIG operates, because it's quite different than a traditional high school environment. Students choose initiatives and projects from our project pool they find interesting and engaging and which will provide them opportunities to learn and demonstrate that learning.

Rather than attending class 40-90 minutes each day, your child's week will resemble that of many working professionals. Over the course of each week they will:

- Meet 1:1 and in small groups with BIG faculty on a varying schedule, but no less than once a week. In that time they will: explore content, problem solve, plan next steps, design, collaborate, and be challenged in a way tailored to the student's needs.
- Regularly meet in larger groups of BIG students and the community to share their projects, learning, and work to receive feedback and to find others who may share their interest.
- Attend weekly seminars covering a variety of important topics – either pertinent to their project, connected to the academic class they are enrolled in, and/or to help them continue to develop their capacity as learners in charge of their own learning.
- Be expected to spend roughly the equivalent of their enrolled class time working on their projects and learning. This may happen in various locations, including their current high school during the scheduled “BIG” hours, in the BIG space, in the “field” relevant to their project, or at home. WHEN they work is not important – THAT they work is critical.

BIG's curriculum is pulled from and embedded in the community. Our staff work with businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies to help design projects that are both do-able and interesting to high school students. As BIG students work on these initiatives, they become an ad-hoc part of the organizations they interact with, while those organizations form a natural audience and feedback mechanism for what the student is learning.

BIG awards traditional high school credit for completing meaningful and rigorous projects. Students may select from a variety of core courses or take an honors-level elective. When the student demonstrates competency on the priority standards of the course, they will receive the appropriate branded and weighted credits.

Students who complete the learning expectations early may move on to other work and projects. Students not quite ready at the end of the term may continue working on their project(s) until they are competent and can receive full credit for the appropriate class(es).

## TYPICAL STUDENT CHALLENGES AT BIG

Students often find the increased responsibility, rigor, time management, and creativity at BIG to be foreign. They may take what seems to be a significant amount of time to adjust to the

environment. This is normal and part of the BIG learning process.

The adjustment to BIG can take several weeks. The transition to this different approach to learning – where the learner carries the primary responsibility for learning - can be marked by mild frustration, sloth, talk of “quitting”, and confusion. This transition period is natural and is necessary for students to learn how they will interface with college and work-like environments. As parents, we ask you to be supportive of our efforts during this time and allow your teenager to work through this transition naturally.

You can expect a 2-6 week lead-in that begins with excitement, bottoms out -- with all of the standard teenage adjectives applied (“stupid,” “hard,” “not clear”) -- and then a recovery to a state of self-directed vigor and rapid and deep learning.

## STIPULATIONS & EXPECTATIONS

- The products of student work will be made public in various ways, including promotion on social media.
- You and the public are welcome to attend BIG team meetings and seminars at any time and without prior notice.
- Students will not automatically “pass” or “be done” when the term ends. Students are evaluated based upon their ability to demonstrate competency on the course standards.
- Students are expected to be self-directed – they can move as quickly or slowly as they wish and must accept the consequences of their choices.
- Students who engage in a project sponsored by a business or organization understand that the final work product is the property of the said business or organization. Students who design their own projects will have a property right to their project.
- BIG may meet at times outside the school day but will never *require* more than the time asked of students in a regular class – about 5-15 hours a week.
- BIG will provide you with contact and log-in information so you can follow your child’s progress on our system we call BBQ.
- Instructors, teachers, community mentors, and administrators may communicate with your teenager primarily via Slack. We utilize Slack as a tool because it is a tool used by a large number of organizations nationwide. We will also periodically communicate via email, text message, telephone, and social media concerning BIG projects and logistics. We request all communication between students and mentors be open and include teachers on the emails, texts and no private messaging on social media. Students are responsible for checking the various communication tools provided them, including Slack and email.
- The Cedar Rapids, College, and/or Linn Mar Community School District shall be held responsible for students only in the case when the student is present with BIG personnel in a scheduled event (see master calendar). Students may be engaged in their projects throughout the community and inside businesses and other organizations and not directly supervised by BIG staff. Students are expected to check-in daily to let staff know where they will be working and on what.
- As such, you are consenting to agree that your child does not need to be supervised during 100% of the time they are participating in BIG related activities.
- It is at the discretion of BIG staff whether a student may continue for subsequent enrollment in BIG on a term-by-term basis. You will be engaged in conversations along the way if this is a possibility as we work to correct any issues or concerns in concert with you.
- Students are expected to follow dress code when they are out representing BIG. If clothing is not appropriate (see your school’s handbook for appropriate attire) then they will be asked to change or sent home by our sponsoring businesses. Students must dress in accordance with the organizations they are working in/with.

- Transportation to and from BIG related meetings and events is the responsibility of the family. If your child does not have transportation BIG can work with you and your child to explore options and provide transportation for him/her. BIG provides taxi services to students who don't currently have the option of transporting themselves.
- A student may be dropped from BIG for: two consecutive weeks of unexcused absences from weekly planning sessions, seminars, and/or other BIG related events; negligent lack of progress, or; violation of BIG and/or district conduct protocols. In this event, the student will be enrolled in another course or study hall at the home-base school.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as the parent or legal guardian of

\_\_\_\_\_ understand how the Iowa BIG program operates, and both my child and I agree to the above stipulations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Iowa BIG Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

(To learn more about the BIG experience, visit [www.iowabig.org](http://www.iowabig.org))