



Student Reading Success Through Research and Collaboration

**Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC)
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
December 3, 2021
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Department of Education – Des Moines**

Members present: Beth Ades-Hanson, Autumn Den Boer, Nandita Gurjar, Kathleen Konrardy, Ann Lebo, Erin Sale, Michael Scott, Shane Williams

Additional attendees: Deborah K. Reed, IRRC Director; Trish Sodahl, IRRC Administrative Services Coordinator

Guests: Shanlyn Seivert, Chief of Staff/Deputy Director, Iowa Department of Education

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by IRRC Advisory Council (Council) Vice Chair Shane Williams at 10:01 a.m.

2. Review of meeting outcomes

Shane Williams highlighted meeting agenda items, including receiving input from the Council members, discussing ongoing work of the IRRC, receiving Department of Education updates, and learning about an interim writing assessment study. Williams introduced new Council member Autumn Den Boer from Sioux Center Christian School, who was appointed to represent accredited nonpublic schools.

3. Approval of agenda

On a motion by Michael Scott, seconded by Nandita Gurjar, the agenda for the meeting was approved with zero “no” votes.

4. Approval of September 2021 meeting minutes

On a motion by Beth Ades-Hanson, seconded by Kathleen Konrardy, the September 2021 meeting minutes were approved with zero “no” votes.

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5. Public comment

Vice chair Shane Williams allowed time for public comment. No members of the public were in attendance.

6. Review of homework

Council members were asked to share resources and information about the IRRC with stakeholders and report back. Council members reported sharing information in several ways including discussing the benefit of eLearning modules with colleagues and students, putting out a blast to the State Educational Association, inviting the IRRC to present at the Decoding Dyslexia Iowa conference, sharing relevant information with team members and educators, and asking Dr. Reed to attend meetings such as the Education Services Director's meeting. IRRC information was well received, and feedback was positive. Council members specifically noted positive comments from colleagues previously unaware of the resources IRRC provides.

7. Iowa Department of Education update

Iowa Department of Education (Department) Director Ann Lebo presented an overview of the Department's priorities and literacy goals. The Department has restructured its organization with the leading priority to prepare learners for their future. Lebo shared information about Future Ready Iowa and the creation of "The Network" to provide expertise and leadership for the work related to Future Ready Iowa from preschool to twelfth grade. The Department plans to take a lead role in funding, building the network, coordinating meetings and professional learning opportunities, determining the evidence-based tools and strategies, developing tools for The Network use, and coordinating the evaluation of the work. One set of evidence-based practices and tools will be developed that will be supported by The Network statewide. Lebo informed the Council that planning grants are available for pilot projects that could scale up to the state level and encouraged schools to apply. Shane Williams asked if the IRRC will be part of The Network. Lebo agreed that the IRRC would have a role. Williams followed up that the IRRC's expertise and resources would benefit The Network.

Shanlyn Seivert shared information about the Department's legislative agenda. The legislature will be reviewing budgets January 10 through April 15, 2022. It is anticipated that most meetings will take place in person. Reed added that the annual IRRC legislative reception is pending legislative rules allowing receptions and meetings with external groups. Typically, the chair or vice chair of the Council is invited to attend.

8. Director's report (IRRC)

Deborah Reed reviewed updates since last meeting. First, Reed reviewed eLearning usage, detailing the enrollment numbers per module and completion rate of participants. Reed noted enrollments continue to grow with more Iowa districts and schools participating. Technical issues

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are addressed through user-submitted help tickets, but the IRRC is continuing to improve the Learning Management System capabilities. Feedback gathered from participants is excellent overall. Reed noted the eLearning module titled “Teaching Students to Map Phonemes to Graphemes,” has received comments indicating curriculum inconsistencies across school districts.

Next, Reed updated the Council on the IRRC assistive technology (AT) consultation service, noting families from all AEA regions have taken advantage of the service. In addition to family consultations, upon request, IRRC staff have given presentations demonstrating available services at schools and conferences. Reed added AT staff keep the software and devices updated as new tools become available for students with reading disabilities.

The Grades 1–5 digital version of Varied Practice Reading (VPR) successfully launched in October 2021. Reed explained the components and the costs of the resources. The Council discussed the benefits of having an online version and asked questions about the content and future plans for Reed’s research on VPR.

Reed continued with an update on the dyslexia specialist endorsement. Cohort 1 has finished the first two courses, and all 20 students are placed for spring practicums. Applications for Cohort 2 close February 1, 2022, with acceptances emailed in March. Reed provided time for questions. In response to questions, the cap will be 25 students for the next cohort, and applicant qualifications require 3 years of certified teaching experience. The Council continued discussion on the benefits of the endorsement especially as it was developed to be a pathway to the reading specialist certification. Reed provided data on reading specialist graduate program offerings around the state and the total number of certificates awarded in the past year.

9. Annual Report review

Deborah Reed distributed copies of the IRRC’s Annual Legislative Report for Council review. The report provides 2021 highlights in accordance with Iowa Code Citations. The Council commented on the quantity of work produced and offered feedback on the report. The Council further recognized that IRRC does much more than listed on the report and encouraged Council members and AEA collaborators to communicate the importance of the center’s work to stakeholders, including legislators.

9. Professional Learning: Interim writing assessment

Deborah Reed reviewed the results of her studies on students’ writing performance done in partnership with the Marshalltown and Council Bluffs school districts. The Council discussed the potential implications of the findings. Reed explained the next phase of this research, which includes a partnership with the Pleasant Valley Community School district.

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12. Assignment of homework (IRRC)

Council members are asked to share information from the IRRC Annual Report with their stakeholders and discuss what they shared at the next Council meeting.

13. Adjourn

Vice Chair Shane thanked the Council for their input and suggestions. The next meeting is scheduled for May 4, 2022. On a motion by Michael Scott, seconded by Beth Ades-Hanson, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m. with zero “no” votes.