

January 1, 2024

# Legislative Report

## Iowa Reading Research Center



Department of Education

State of Iowa  
Department of Education  
Grimes State Office Building  
400 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

## **Administration**

McKenzie Snow, Director and Executive Officer  
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## **Iowa Reading Research Center**

Ben Walizer, Interim Director, Operations and Project Management

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## Introduction

### Legislative Authority

(IRRC) in 2013. The legislative purposes of the IRRC include developing and disseminating:

- Instructional strategies for pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 to achieve literacy proficiency for all students that include reading, reading comprehension, and writing
- Strategies for identifying and providing evidence-based interventions for students, beginning in kindergarten, who are at risk of not achieving literacy proficiency
- Models for effective school, parent, and community partnerships to improve student literacy
- Reading assessments
- Professional development strategies and materials to support teacher effectiveness in student literacy development
- Data reports on attendance center, school district, and statewide progress toward literacy proficiency in the context of student, attendance center, and school district demographic characteristics
- An intensive summer literacy program

### The University of Iowa

The University of Iowa (UI) is the host for the IRRC because it is one of the nation's top public research universities, thus providing an academic base for the center director as well as resources to support the continued growth of the center. UI is the fiscal agent and provides office space for the center's staff.

### Communication Methods

The IRRC disseminates research findings and research-based resources via the IRRC [website](#) as well as through study-specific reports (e.g., [evaluation studies](#)). Additionally, communication occurs through the [IRRC's blog](#) and social media such as [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

## Reading Research Stakeholders

The IRRC conducts research in support of literacy education efforts across Iowa. Activities address the needs and concerns of the major stakeholders in the state such as:

- Local education agencies (LEAs)
- Nonpublic schools
- Iowa Area Education Agencies (AEAs)
- Iowa's institutes of higher education (IHEs), both private and public
- Community organizations
- Iowa Department of Education
- Professional organizations
- Educators
- Families

In addition, the IRRC is required to have an advisory council that meets three times per year. The director of the Iowa Department of Education or the director's designee appoints the members. The IRRC Advisory Council met on the following dates during the 2023 calendar year: October 25 and November 30.

There was not a third meeting in the 2023 calendar year as the center was transitioning leadership.

Members serve 4-year terms. Current members represent a cross-section of organizations and institutions involved in supporting reading practices in the state. Members for fiscal year 2023 are:

Category	First Name	Last Name	Organization
Institutes of Higher Education	Sherry	Petty	University of Northern Iowa
Department of Education	McKenzie	Snow	Iowa Department of Education
	Kim	Buryanek	Iowa Department of Education
Area Education Agency	John	Speer	Grant Wood AEA
LEAs (public and nonpublic)	Beth	Happe	Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District
	Kathleen	Konrardy	Holy Family Catholic Schools
Professional Organization	Beth	Ades-Hanson	Iowa State Education Association
Community-Based Nonprofit	Mindy	VanZuiden	Decoding Dyslexia Iowa
Parent	Cori	Stanley	Indianola Community School District

## IRRC Implementation of Reading Practices

The IRRC conducts the following types of applied research in collaboration with stakeholders:

1. Research to guide the development of literacy policy and practice
2. Research to inform the effective implementation of literacy policy and practice
3. Research to evaluate the impact of literacy policy and practice

The IRRC works in partnership with the Iowa Department of Education, and its priorities are guided by legislative action and the recommendations of the IRRC Advisory Council. The following table provides a description of the 2023 activities of the IRRC listed by Iowa Administrative Code citations.

IA Code Citations	In the Last Calendar Year, the IRRC Has...
<p>Evidence-Based Interventions and Strategies IAC § 284.32 1(b)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched new eLearning modules focused on tools for teachers to implement strong reading instruction in their classroom:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher Tools for Universally Implementing Structured Literacy Content</li> <li>○ FastBridge in Iowa Schools: Assessment &amp; Data-Based Decision Making</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Developed and posted 21 blog posts on reading instruction. A few notable blog posts include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What is the Science of Reading?</li> <li>○ Scope and Sequence: What Is It, and How Do Educators Use It to Guide Instruction?</li> <li>○ Where Have All the Spelling Lists Gone?</li> <li>○ IRRC Resources to Support Teachers Using FastBridge</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>School and Community Partnerships IAC § 284.32</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched a suite of consulting services for districts focused on identifying and implementing a strong reading curriculum:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Executing a district-wide curriculum review</li> <li>○ Evaluating and selecting new reading instructional materials</li> <li>○ Fidelity monitoring for implementing reading instructional materials</li> <li>○ Aligning multiple reading programs across grade levels and MTSS tiers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Developed a new caregiver resource hub that includes resources and eLearning content specifically for parents and caregivers. Since launching in August 2023, the site has seen over 3,000 visitors. Modules on the caregiver hub include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Core Literacy Skills</li> <li>○ The Science of Reading</li> <li>○ Advocating for Your Student</li> <li>○ Assistive Technology</li> <li>○ Understanding the FastBridge Screener</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Structured Literacy</li> <li>● Continued offering free assistive technology (AT) consultation appointments for families of children with dyslexia and other reading disabilities. Families can meet one-on-one with our assistive technology coordinators (in-person in Iowa City or virtually). In addition, families can rent equipment for a brief period of time to try out AT in the home. In 2023, we met with over 50 students and families.</li> <li>● Attended, presented, and exhibited at the School Administrators of Iowa Conference, the Iowa Association of School Boards Annual Convention, the Decoding Dyslexia Iowa Educator Conference, the Iowa Reading Conference, the Homeschool Iowa Conference, and the Boston University Conference on Language Development.</li> <li>● Presented on dyslexia to staff and community members at Great Prairie AEA, Central Rivers AEA, and Mississippi Bend AEA.</li> </ul>
<p>Reading Assessments IAC § 284.32 1(d) IAC § 279.68 1(a)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developed training materials for teachers that recommend additional diagnostics and instructional strategies based on a student's FastBridge screening scores.</li> <li>● Continued to teach EDTL:6171 Advanced Reading Clinic Techniques in the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement Program, which focuses on standardized assessments for diagnosing reading disorders.</li> </ul>
<p>Data Reports IAC § 284.32 1(f)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Developed two statewide surveys on educator knowledge and training around dyslexia and other reading disabilities.</li> <li>● Developed a partnership with Ankeny Community School District to evaluate the effectiveness of a structured literacy training program and curriculum change.</li> </ul>
<p>Intensive Summer Reading Program IAC § 279.68 4(c)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identified and evaluated technology options for summer school reading instruction for the Iowa Department of Education.</li> </ul>
<p>Professional Development IAC § 284.32 1(e)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offered the first Iowa Science of Reading Summit for 350 Iowa educators to learn about the science of reading, structured literacy, and evidence-based reading instruction.</li> <li>● Developed a 15- and 30-hour CEU course for teachers focused on implementing structured literacy.</li> <li>● Offered five workshops focused on dyslexia and reading instruction for pre-service teachers at UI.</li> <li>● Offered professional development to in-state school district teachers and administrators focused on implementing new reading curricula, aligning reading curriculum across tiers of MTSS, implementing reading</li> </ul>

	<p>curriculum with fidelity, and implementing structured literacy in the classroom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated and expanded eLearning options. The IRRC's online professional development, or eLearning, is available to all Iowa educators at no cost from any laptop or desktop device (no travel required for attendees). eLearning modules feature: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fully accessible content</li> <li>○ Engaging animated representations of real-life scenarios</li> <li>○ Videos showing a featured instructional method being used in real Iowa classrooms, as well as discussion with families and experts in literacy education, developmental pediatrics, and other specialty areas</li> <li>○ Interactive text, visual, and audio content</li> <li>○ Quizzes and a posttest to assess knowledge gained</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Dyslexia Senate File 2319 Chapter 1077</p> <p>and</p> <p>Senate File 2356</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second cohort of six educators throughout Iowa completed the required coursework to earn the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement.</li> <li>• The third cohort of Iowa educators began the 18-month Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement program coordinated by the IRRC.</li> <li>• The IRRC approved Grandview University as an IHE in the state of Iowa to offer the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement program.</li> <li>• Over 20,000 pre-service and in-service educators in the state of Iowa have completed the required Dyslexia Overview eLearning module offered by the IRRC.</li> <li>• The IRRC developed and presented an undergraduate certificate track on dyslexia for Teacher Education Program students at UI.</li> <li>• The IRRC participated in the Iowa Dyslexia Board, which was established by Senate File 2356.</li> </ul>

## Future

The future of the Iowa Reading Research Center is promising. Most notably, in spring 2024, the IRRC will hire a full-time, permanent center director. Additionally, the statewide movement towards the science of reading will allow the IRRC to continue expanding the support offered across the state. The center's goal is to partner with any district in the state to facilitate the implementation of an evidence-based reading curriculum. With support from the Iowa Department of Education, teachers, and administrators can gain free training, and the IRRC looks to be an active partner with districts seeking teacher and administrator training.

In addition to our statewide consulting services for districts, we are also looking to expand our research and data evaluation programs. The new director will bring a strong research background, allowing the center to conduct research and quantitatively evaluate reading programs. This has not been a priority of the center for the last year as we have

expanded our consulting services. Still, as districts continue to make significant changes, it is crucial to ensure the changes are working.

We also hope to continue to be recognized as the organization that is advancing reading and dyslexia expertise in the state. In the summer of 2024, we will expand our Iowa Science of Reading summit to include 1,000 Iowa educators. We will add a literacy consultant in January, allowing us to serve a more significant number of districts. We also intend to expand partnerships between our dyslexia specialist endorsement program and other programs at UI to attract other educators in the state. We plan to offer new content in writing instruction, grouping techniques for teachers, and utilizing diagnostic assessments.

The reputation of the IRRC is strong. Demand for services outpaces the capacity of the center. This indicates the positive changes many districts are making toward evidence-based reading programs. In 2024, we look forward to the next phase and future of the IRRC with new leadership and a commitment across the state to evidence-based reading instruction.