

# Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC) Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

**November 30, 2023**

**11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

**Grimes State Office Building, Des Moines, and Videoconference**

**Members Present:** Beth Ades-Hanson, Mindy VanZuiden, Cori Stanley, Sherry Petty, Kathleen Konrardy, and McKenzie Snow

**Additional Attendees:** Qian Wang, Associate Director of Research and Evaluation, IRRC; Stephanie Edgren, Education and Outreach Coordinator, IRRC; Ben Walizer, Interim Director of Operations and Project Management, IRRC; Rachel Wallace, Administrative Services Specialist, IRRC; Nina Lorimor-Easley, Assistant Director of Education and Outreach, IRRC; Lindsay Seydel, Education and Outreach Coordinator, IRRC; Kate Will, Communications Specialist, IRRC; and Kim Buryanek, Division Administrator, Iowa Department of Education

**Guests:** None

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## 1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by Ben Walizer at 11:04 a.m.

## 2. Approval of agenda

Walizer proposed to move the election of the chair and vice-chair until later in the meeting—after the IRRC presentations—in order to include some additional attendees who would be arriving late. On a motion by Walizer, seconded by Konrardy, the agenda for the meeting was approved with zero “no” votes.

## 3. Approval of October 2023 meeting minutes

On a motion by Konrardy, seconded by Stanley, the October 2023 meeting minutes were approved with zero “no” votes.

## 4. Public comment

No public comments

## 5. Updates from the Iowa Department of Education

Snow and Buryanek provided updates regarding the state’s roll-out of LETRS training for 5,000 educators and 1,000 school administrators. So far, 1,600 educators and administrators have registered for the

training. The majority of registrants are teachers; approximately 250 administrators have registered as well. Registration is open on a “first come, first served” basis although there is priority given to individuals in schools and districts identified as having a significant need. The first registration window closes on December 15, and the next window opens in mid-February.

A priority at this stage in the rollout is amplifying the message to ensure that more educators and administrators are aware of the opportunity. There have been two webinars to promote the training, and another webinar is scheduled for Friday, December 1. Buryanek plans to share the webinar link with IRRC advisory council members. Additionally, Lexia maintains a LETRS Iowa website which will host a recorded version of the webinar.

Council members discussed whether the DE would consider opening up registration for individuals working in nonpublic schools and institutions of higher education. Snow asserted that K-12 educators and administrators were the priority and that she anticipated that all seats would be filled. However, in the event that some seats remain unfilled, the DE has not eliminated the possibility of opening up registration to other groups.

Snow announced that the DE had appointed Superintendent Stacy Cole of Storm Lake and Superintendent Eric Pruitt of Ankeny to the IRRC advisory council. Both superintendents are prioritizing the science of reading. Cole serves a district with a significant number of multilingual English learners.

## **6. Updates from Iowa Reading Research Center**

Walizer provided updates regarding staffing. The members of the search committee for the new center director will meet on December 1 to review initial candidates. The goal is to have a finalist hired in March for a start date in May or June. In the meantime, there is a position posted for an on-site director of operations and project management to take over the operational responsibilities of the center (i.e., budget, staffing, maintaining relationships with the state and other stakeholders). Additionally, IRRC’s third education and outreach coordinator will join the team in January. Currently an instructional coach in Ottumwa, Ramona Parrish will carry out professional development, curricular consulting, and fidelity support. Parrish will work remotely from Ottumwa so that the IRRC can continue to establish a network of team members across the state.

Walizer updated the council on the dyslexia specialist endorsement program. The second cohort, consisting of seven dyslexia specialists, will graduate this winter. This means that nearly every AEA will have a dyslexia specialist. The third cohort continues to progress through the program. Applications for the next cohort are open. The IRRC is not offering scholarship support this year. The IRRC is in the process of revamping endorsement courses to align with the standards of IDA in preparation for applying for IDA accreditation. If accredited, the University of Iowa program would be the first accredited program in the state. Additionally, the UI master’s in special education program is considering a partnership with IRRC which would allow students in the program to obtain the dyslexia specialist endorsement.

The IRRC education and outreach team has had a presence (either as presenters, exhibitors, or attendees) at several conferences around the state and the country: the Reading League Conference, the

Higher Ed Summit, and the Iowa Association of School Boards. They also have led professional development with several districts: West Branch, Spencer, Martensdale, and Norwalk.

The IRRC just wrapped up the final workshop for the dyslexia track of the BTLC teacher leader certificate, aimed at pre-service teachers in the UI teacher education program. There were five workshops in total, and each workshop had 60-90 attendees. Of the different tracks offered by the BTLC, the dyslexia track received the highest number of registrants.

Over the past two months, the IRRC has published five new blog posts, including two posts for a new series—the “Research Article of the Month.”

The assistive technology team has recorded the first episode of a new podcast entitled *Speaking of Literacy*. In each episode, the two assistive technology coordinators will interview a speech-language pathologist about how their work contributes to children’s development of literacy skills.

The IRRC announced the 2024 Iowa Summit on the Science of Reading. The center is days away from announcing keynote speakers, and a call for proposals will open soon.

Current initiatives at the IRRC include developing training and support for districts that have teachers going through LETRS training.

## 7. IRRC legislative report review

Walizer provided an overview of the IRRC legislative report, summarizing the major accomplishments of the center over the last year:

- The IRRC launched new modules for teachers:
  - Teacher Tools for Universally Implementing Structured Literacy Content
  - FastBridge in Iowa Schools: Assessment & Data-Based Decision Making (in conjunction with the instructional recommendations tool)
- 21 blog posts were released, including:
  - What is the Science of Reading?
  - Scope and Sequence: What Is It, and How Do Educators Use It to Guide Instruction?
  - Where Have All the Spelling Lists Gone?
- The Education and Outreach team launched a suite of consulting services for districts that focuses on implementing a strong reading curriculum. The team has led professional development in 16 school districts since the beginning of 2023.
- The IRRC launched the Caregivers Resource Hub, which hosts modules on core literacy skills, the science of reading, the special education process and how to advocate for your student, assistive technology, and structured literacy. All modules are designed specifically for parents and caregivers.
- The IRRC continues to offer its assistive technology program. Families can attend in-person or virtual appointments to learn about AT options for their child.
- The IRRC continues to partner with the Iowa Dyslexia Board.
- The IRRC established an active partnership with Ankeny School District to collect data on the effects of LETRS training.
- The IRRC held its first-ever Iowa Science of Reading Summit for approximately 350 attendees.

- The education and outreach team drafted two CEU courses (one 15-hour and one 30-hour course).
- The education and outreach team led the first-ever dyslexia track for the Baker Teacher Leader Center teacher leader certificate; the track consisted of five workshops on different topics relating to dyslexia.
- The eLearning team updated existing eLearning modules to improve accessibility.
- The IRRC approved the dyslexia specialist endorsement program at Grandview University.
- The education and outreach team is updating four existing courses (reviewing content, consulting with state-level experts, and adding new content if needed).
- 20,000 teachers have completed the dyslexia module to date. The Dyslexia Overview module will be updated after July 2024.

Next, Walizer demonstrated the FastBridge recommendations tool. Lorimor-Easley discussed future plans for developing a Tier 1 grouping tool that would build on the FastBridge tool. Teachers would input student data, and the tool would divide students into groups based on their needs.

### **8. Elections for Chair and Vice-Chair**

Walizer described the role and duties of the chair and vice-chair (e.g., preside over advisory council meetings, provide an agenda, coordinate meeting logistics, etc.). Walizer called for nominations for the chair. VanZuiden nominated herself, seconded by Stanley. VanZuiden's nomination was approved with zero "no" votes. Walizer then called for nominations for vice-chair. As there were no nominations for this role, the election for vice-chair was postponed until the next meeting.

### **9. IRRC workshop on curriculum selection tools**

Edgren and Wang presented on the process the IRRC is using to assist districts with the ELA review process. This process consists of two parts: 1) evaluating curricula and 2) developing a recommended process for curriculum review (i.e., training materials for the review team, a timeline, "must haves," and aligned practices).

For the first part of the process, the IRRC needs to identify or develop a curriculum evaluation tool. The education and outreach team has considered a variety of existing tools (e.g., Ed Reports, What Works Clearinghouse), and the most promising tool identified is the curriculum evaluation guidelines developed by the Reading League. Edgren continued on to explain what the Reading League is and provide an overview of their tool. The Reading League guidelines align with the components of Scarborough's Reading Rope. In addition, they include a section for writing (handwriting, spelling, composition, and assessment). There are five sections in the guidelines, and each section starts with non-negotiables ("must-haves") and aligned practices ("wish list")—these are all connected to research cited in the references. The non-negotiables in the Reading League tool align with those identified by the IRRC education and outreach team, with the exception that the IRRC would also include scripted curriculum as a non-negotiable component. In contrast to Ed Reports and What Works Clearinghouse, the Reading League guidelines are aligned with the findings of the science of reading. The Reading League guidelines also include a reviewer workbook. Edgren allowed meeting attendees time to review the guidelines and workbook and record their thoughts in an online "note-catcher." The education and outreach team intends to use the Reading League tool to help them evaluate curricula. The education and outreach

coordinators would write narrative evaluations of each curriculum using this tool, and districts would be able to use the narrative evaluations to supplement their own curriculum selection process.

In addition to the Reading League tool, the Knowledge Matters Campaign has a review tool focused on knowledge building which is designed to be used alongside other evaluation tools. The IRRC could supplement the Reading League evaluation tool with this tool.

Wang discussed the reliability of the Reading League's curriculum evaluation guidelines according to two measures of reliability: internal consistency and inter-rater reliability. She then walked through the methods to use in a curriculum evaluation. First, it is necessary to determine what needs to be evaluated (instructional design, content, or pedagogy). These elements are evaluated according to four standards: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. It is also important to consider comprehensiveness and alignment with educational goals, among other factors. The general curriculum evaluation process begins with recruiting a review team. Next, the team identifies evaluation tools (either by selecting an existing tool or by developing a new one). Next, the team completes some pilot testing of the tool (validity and reliability) and makes revisions to the tool if needed. Reviewers need training on how to use the tool with opportunities to ask questions.

Stanley and Buryanek questioned what the IRRC would be evaluating—curricula, programs, or instructional materials. They underscored the importance of defining each of those terms.

## **10. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:04 p.m.