

January 1, 2022



# **Legislative Report**

## **Iowa Reading Research Center**

## IOWA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

State of Iowa  
Department of Education  
Grimes State Office Building  
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Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

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## INTRODUCTION

### ***Legislative Authority***

The Iowa Administrative Code 281, Chapter 61, established the Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC) in 2013. The legislative purposes of the IRRC include developing and disseminating:

- instructional strategies for prekindergarten through Grade 12 to achieve literacy proficiency for all students that includes 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 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. The University of Iowa 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 social media such as [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and the [IRRC's blog](#).

## 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 (Department)
- 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 Department or the director's designee appoints the members. The IRRC Advisory Council met on the following dates during the 2021 calendar year: May 18, September 17, and December 3.

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 2021 are:

Category	First Name	Last Name	Organization
Institutes of Higher Education	Nandita	Gurjar	University of Northern Iowa
	Deanna	Stoube	St. Ambrose University
Department of Education	Ann	Lebo	Iowa Department of Education
	Amy	Williamson	Iowa Department of Education
AEAs	Shane	Williams	Mississippi Bend AEA
	Jon	Sheldahl	Heartland AEA
LEAs (public and nonpublic)	Autumn	Den Boer	Sioux Center Christian School
	Kathleen	Konrardy	Holy Family Catholic Schools
LEAs (public and nonpublic) Teachers	Corey	Vorthmann	Council Bluffs Community School District
	Erin	Sale	Waterloo Community School District
Educational Organizations	Beth	Ades-Hanson	Iowa State Education Association
Community Partners	Michael	Scott	State Library of Iowa
Parents	Katie	Greving	Parent and Decoding Dyslexia Iowa

## 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 Department, and its priorities are guided by legislative action and the recommendations of the IRRC Advisory Council. The following table provides a description of the 2021 activities of the IRRC listed by Iowa Administrative Code citations.

Calendar Year 2021 Progress	
IA Code Citations	In the Last Calendar Year, the IRRC Has...
Evidence-based Interventions and Strategies IAC § 284.32 1(b)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created the following eLearning modules featuring evidence-based reading instructional strategies, which are available on the IRRC website (<a href="https://iowareadingresearch.org/elearning">https://iowareadingresearch.org/elearning</a>) at no cost to Iowa teachers:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Teaching Students to Map Phonemes to Graphemes:</b> This module presents a strategy for directly teaching students to map sounds (phonemes) to symbols (graphemes) as they learn to decode words in English. The demonstration videos were filmed in a real Iowa classroom and show how to use the strategy with kindergarten students in whole groups, small groups, and during peer collaboration and independent practice.</li> <li>○ <b>Using Text Structures to Understand and Summarize Text:</b> This module reviews common text structures and the appropriate graphic organizers students can use with each to summarize what they read. The module also explains how to teach students to recognize text structures by using a seven-step instructional approach aligned to explicit instruction. Demonstration videos were filmed in a real Iowa classroom with third-grade students learning in whole groups and practicing with peers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In addition to the two new modules described above, we updated the Varied Practice Reading (VPR) module to account for the new Digital VPR format made available for use in Grades 1–5 classrooms.</li> <li>• Developed and released 5 blog posts on reading instruction.</li> <li>• Presented at 11 state, regional, and local conferences to share evidence-based literacy strategies and information on assistive technology with teachers.</li> </ul>
School and Community Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared with caregivers via our Facebook and Twitter accounts a variety of literacy learning resources from around the web.</li> </ul>

<p>IAC § 284.32</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created new video content for educators and caregivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Literacy Explainer series that defines and provides examples of a literacy term or concept in cartoon format</li> <li>○ Lesson demonstrations showing a literacy instructional approach as an example for teachers planning their own lessons</li> <li>○ Home literacy learning activity demonstrations as examples for caregivers implementing reading and writing activities at home with their children</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Developed and released 4 blog posts on supporting literacy learning at home, with a particular focus on supporting English learners. The posts and associated resources were translated into 14 languages.</li> <li>• Partnered with the Grant Wood Area Education Agency on identifying best practices for literacy instruction. This involved presenting to all GWAEA literacy consultants and developing a common understanding of the science of reading, interpreting effectiveness, and the design of literacy classes.</li> <li>• Continued our research partnership with the Marshalltown Community School District to monitor students' development of written expression skills in Grades 1–6.</li> <li>• Partnered with the Council Bluffs Community School District on evaluating students' written expression skills in Grades 7–11.</li> <li>• Continued offering free assistive technology (AT) consultation appointments for families of children with dyslexia and other reading disabilities. Families can request a one-on-one assistive technology consultation appointment with our assistive technology coordinators in Iowa City or virtually. In addition, families can rent equipment for a short period of time to try out AT in the home. Appointments in 2021 increased by 195% over the previous year.</li> </ul>
<p>Reading Assessments IAC § 284.32 1(d) IAC § 279.68 1(a)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued the Marshalltown Community School District Literacy Curricula Evaluation study. This project involved developing writing prompts and rubrics aligned to the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress for measuring the impact of new literacy curricula and materials adopted by the district on writing outcomes of students in Grades 1–6.</li> <li>• Partnered with the Council Bluffs Community School District to evaluate students' writing performance in Grades 7–12.</li> <li>• Began a partnership with Pleasant Valley Community School District to evaluate students' writing performance in Grades 3–11.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advised the Ottumwa Community School District on screening students for dyslexia.</li> </ul>
Data Reports IAC § 284.32 1(f)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prepared the following reports for partnering school districts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluation of the Varied Practice Reading Intervention in Evans Middle School (Ottumwa Community School District)</li> <li>○ Evaluation of Student Writing Performance in Grades 1–6 in the Marshalltown Community School District</li> <li>○ Evaluation of Student Writing Performance in Grades 7–11 in the Council Bluffs Community School District</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Developed and posted a blog post on interpreting causal relationships in educational research.</li> </ul>
Intensive Summer Reading Program IAC § 279.68 4(c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the Council Bluffs Community School District Summer Reading Program by evaluating its 2021 offering for students intended to address some of the learning gaps from the pandemic.</li> </ul>
Professional Development IAC § 284.32 1(e)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded our eLearning offerings. The IRRRC’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>○ Engaging animated representations of real-life scenarios.</li> <li>○ Videos showing the featured instructional method being used in real Iowa classrooms. Other videos include discussion from experts in literacy education, developmental pediatrics, and other specialty areas, as well as families.</li> <li>○ Interactive text, visual, and audio content featuring quizzes.</li> <li>○ A posttest to assess for knowledge gained.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Delivered 3 presentations and provided direct technical assistance to Area Education Agencies.</li> </ul>
Dyslexia Senate File 2319 Chapter 1077  and  Senate File 2356	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moved the eLearning Dyslexia Overview module to a new platform to better support the increased usage among undergraduate and graduate students as well as Iowa in-service teachers who will be required to complete the module by June 30, 2024.</li> <li>• Received approval from the Department of Education and the Board of Educational Examiners for offering the dyslexia specialist endorsement program.</li> <li>• Launched the pilot cohort of teachers enrolled in the new dyslexia specialist endorsement program.</li> <li>• Participated on the Dyslexia Board, which was established by Senate File 2356.</li> </ul>

## FUTURE

Given the ongoing challenges associated with COVID-19 pandemic and the need for literacy resources that can be used in a variety of learning environments, much of our work is focused on creating digital resources. This includes expanding our professional development modules for teachers and launching our Varied Practice Reading passages for Grades 1–5 in the new digital format for students and teachers to use online. If we are unable to access classrooms again this year to do some additional filming, then we may be limited in our continued development of new eLearning modules. However, we will be creating enticing digital content for teachers and families such as our Literacy Explainer videos and our videos of sample lessons.

In addition, we are doing more to support writing instruction. Districts have requested this help due to the elevation of the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) writing performance in the English language arts accountability formula under the Every Student Succeeds Act. We have learned more about how to evaluate interim writing with ISASP-aligned rubrics and hope to prepare resources for districts around the state to support this aspect of literacy.

Finally, pending legislative support and funding, we will continue our coordination role in completing the pilot of the dyslexia specialist endorsement program for the state and preparing to assist the Board of Educational Examiners and Department of Education with approving the dyslexia specialist endorsement program at other institutes of higher education.