

January 1, 2019



# **Legislative Report**

## **Iowa Reading Research Center**

## IOWA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

State of Iowa  
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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 that include reading, reading comprehension, and writing for all students.
- 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 legislation also identified that the IRRC's first focus should be on improving reading performance and instruction in kindergarten through Grade 3.

### ***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 (<https://iowareadingresearch.org/>) as well as through study-specific reports (e.g., study of two approaches to fluency instruction). 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 2018 calendar year: May 16, September 21, and December 12.

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 2019 are:

<b>Category</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Institutes of Higher Education	Sarah	Vander Zanden	University of Northern Iowa
	Emily	Hayden	Iowa State University
	Lindsay	Woodward	Drake University
Department of Education	Ryan	Wise	Iowa Department of Education
	W. David	Tilly	Iowa Department of Education
AEAs	Lonna	Anderson	Great Prairie AEA
	Lolli	Haws	Green Hills AEA
	Jaci	Jarmes	Great Prairie AEA
LEAs (public and nonpublic)	Kate	Connealy	Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools
	Corey	Vorthmann	Council Bluffs Community School District
Teachers	Kara	Dietrich	Ballard Community School District
Educational Organizations	Gabriel	Twedt	Iowa State Education Association
Community Partners	Becky	Miles-Polka	Campaign for Grade Level Reading
Parents	Katie	Greving	Parent and President of 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 2018 activities of the IRRC listed by Iowa Administrative Code citations.

<b>2018 Progress</b>	
<b>IA Code Citations</b>	<b>In the Last Calendar Year, the IRRC Has...</b>
<p>Evidence-based Interventions and Strategies IAC § 284.32 1(b)</p>	<p>Posted research publications on the IRRC website by center staff. These articles appearing in internationally recognized, refereed journals highlight the literacy work being done in Iowa. Developed and posted 21 blog posts on reading instruction. Staff presented at 11 state and regional conferences to share evidence-based literacy strategies with teachers.</p> <p>Completed a professional development module on small-group, skills-based instruction that includes videos made in Iowa classrooms. This was the product of a two-year project with the Sioux City Community School District in which the IRRC assisted in its redesign of the 90-minute literacy block. The module is now incorporated into the Early Literacy Blueprint initiative and has been the most frequently-offered Blueprint professional development session in the state.</p> <p>Conducted research on fluency instruction that directly compared Repeated Reading (the most commonly used strategy in the state) with a newly developed strategy we called Varied Practice. Our strategy was designed to improve upon the shortcomings of Repeated Reading that we observed in Iowa classrooms. The results of the study indicated that all students improved their fluency scores on the state's early warning system by rates considered to be in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of growth. Students in Varied Practice outperformed students in Repeated Reading.</p>
<p>School and Community Partnerships IAC § 284.32</p>	<p>Created the following family and educator resources for posting on the IRRC website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six blog posts, including five supplemental resources, related to families supporting their children's literacy development.</li> <li>• High Priority Milestones for K-3 Reading Development in a searchable form to assist families and school or community partners in supporting children's literacy development.</li> <li>• Varied Practice Passages for Improving Reading Fluency</li> </ul> <p>Provided guidance and feedback to the Iowa City Community School District as district leaders and instructional coaches developed a kindergarten-Grade 6 English Language Arts framework.</p>

	<p>Began two partnerships with Area Education Agencies to address the needs of schools in their regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant Wood AEA: Implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for literacy at the middle school level. This involves 10 middle schools and 65 teachers who will be working over the next 1-2 years on systemic improvement to their literacy instruction and intervention.</li> <li>• Green Hills AEA: Evaluation of LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) implementation in kindergarten-Grade 3. This is a two year project involving training by AEA consultants of staff at four rural schools on principles for phonological awareness and phonics instruction. The IRRC is helping Green Hills monitor the fidelity of teachers' implementation and the subsequent impact on students' reading achievement.</li> </ul> <p>Began a partnership with Cedar Rapids Community School District to replicate the work the IRRC is doing with GWAEA on implementing MTSS for literacy in middle school. All of the district's middle schools are involved in this work.</p>
<p>Reading Assessments IAC § 284.32 1(d) IAC § 279.68 1(a)</p>	<p>Supported the training system that allowed IHEs to teach their future educators to use FastBridge, which serves as the state's early warning system.</p> <p>Advised several parents and educators from the following education agencies on reading assessments, per their requests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ames Community School District</li> <li>• Cedar Rapids Community School District</li> <li>• Council Bluffs Community School District</li> <li>• Dallas Center-Grimes Community School District</li> <li>• Sioux City Community School District</li> <li>• Green Hills Area Education Agency</li> <li>• Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency</li> </ul>
<p>Data Reports IAC § 284.32 1(f)</p>	<p>Posted the following reports on the IRRC website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">An Investigation of Two Approaches to Fluency Instruction in the General Education Classroom: Repeated Reading Versus Varied Practice Reading</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Evaluation of the Council Bluffs Community School District's 2018 Summer Reading Program.</a></li> </ul>
<p>Intensive Summer Reading Program IAC § 279.68 4(c)</p>	<p>Given the change in Iowa Code, intensive summer reading programs are no longer required. However, the IRRC continues to engage in research and support of summer reading programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted an evaluation of Council Bluffs' 2018 summer reading program.</li> <li>• Presented results of IRRC research on summer reading programs at national conferences.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Published a blog post on designing summer reading programs.</li> </ul>
Professional Development IAC § 284.32 1(e)	<p>Conducted a two-and-a-half day training workshop to certify as Certified Blueprint Trainers (CBTs) 34 literacy leaders from Area Education Agencies and school districts around the state. CBTs are prepared and are delivering professional development sessions to teachers around the state on the 6 literacy modules we created.</p> <p>Delivered 20 presentations and direct technical assistance to teachers in the Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, and Iowa City school districts as well as schools served by Central Rivers AEA and Grant Wood AEA.</p>
Dyslexia Senate File 2319 Chapter 1077	Hosted a 2-hour, web-based, on-demand dyslexia training to support undergraduate and graduate students in teacher certification, reading endorsement, or reading specialist certification programs.

## FUTURE

The IRRC is proud to have addressed all of its mandates as described by the Iowa Administrative Code. We look forward to continuing our research and technical assistance to Iowa schools in 2019. In the next year, we plan to continue our work on the Early Literacy Blueprint Initiative by moving the content to a web-based, interactive format. Pending appropriate funding for the center, the web-based system will allow for greater statewide access to all products being created as well as a means to standardize the delivery of the professional development without unduly burdening AEA consultants or school-based literacy leaders. In addition, we plan to report on the current landscape of literacy instruction in Iowa's elementary schools. It has been over six years since the passage of Iowa's early literacy legislation, and schools have made substantial changes to the curriculum and instructional plans they use. We are surveying elementary schools across the state to better understand their current approaches and plan the next steps for improving students' literacy outcomes.