

January 1, 2020



Legislative Report

Iowa Reading Research Center

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 includes 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., evaluation study of small-group, skills-based literacy instruction implementation). 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 2019 calendar year: May 16, September 5, and December 19.

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 2020 are:

Category	First Name	Last Name	Organization
Institutes of Higher Education	Sarah	Vander Zanden	University of Northern Iowa
Institutes of Higher Education	Emily	Hayden	Iowa State University
Institutes of Higher Education	Deanna	Stoube	St. Ambrose University
Department of Education	Ryan	Wise	Iowa Department of Education
Department of Education	W. David	Tilly	Iowa Department of Education
AEAs	Shane	Williams	Mississippi Bend AEA
AEAs	Lolli	Haws	Green Hills AEA
LEAs (public and nonpublic)	Kate	Connealy	Bishop Heelan Catholic Schools
LEAs (public and nonpublic) Teachers	Corey	Vorthmann	Council Bluffs Community School District
LEAs (public and nonpublic) Teachers	Erin	Sale	Waterloo Community School District
Educational Organizations	Gabriel	Twedt	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 2019 activities of the IRRC listed by Iowa Administrative Code citations.

2019 PROGRESS

Iowa 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"> • Created the following eLearning modules featuring evidence-based reading instructional strategies, which are available on the IRRC website (https://iowareadingresearch.org/elearning) at no cost to Iowa teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Effective Literacy Instruction: This was one of our most popular modules from the face-to-face sessions offered during the Early Literacy Blueprint initiative, so we prioritized updating this module for our eLearning system. The information provides the foundation for understanding the instructional principles around which all other eLearning modules are built. ○ Varied Practice Reading (VPR): In just a little over a year, the results of the IRRC’s Effective Fluency Instruction for Fourth Graders Study conducted in Iowa classrooms led to the development of this instructional approach for reading fluency. Included with this module is the creation of VPR passage sets for students to practice reading fluency. Teachers can access free digital versions upon completing the module. ○ Interactive Reading: At the requests of schools and AEAs, we developed this module specifically to support pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers in developing the emergent literacy skills of their students. The module presents two strategies: one for discussing stories during reading and one for teaching narrative elements. • 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 18 blog posts on reading instruction. • Presented at 4 state and regional conferences to share evidence-based literacy strategies with teachers.

Iowa Code Citations	In the Last Calendar Year, the IRRC Has...
<p>School and Community Partnerships IAC § 284.32</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created four blog posts, including two supplemental resources, related to families supporting their children’s literacy development. • Continued our research partnership with the Cedar Rapids Community School District on middle school reading instruction. Assisted the district with a data-driven cycle to improve core instruction, build the capacity of instructional coaches to support teachers, and evaluate students’ literacy growth. • Continued our partnership with the Grant Wood Area Education Agency for implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports for literacy at the middle school level. This involves 3 middle schools and 1 high school who will be working over the next year on systemic improvement to their literacy instruction and intervention. • Continued our research partnership with the Green Hills Area Education Agency for a literacy training evaluation study. This involves monitoring fidelity of teacher implementation and measuring student literacy outcomes following professional development in Grades K-3 in four rural schools. • Began assisting the Sioux City Community School District with the planning phase of implementing small-group, skills-based literacy instruction at the middle school level. • Partnered with educators in the Clarke Community School District and Pleasant Valley Community School District for filming of eLearning videos showing the instructional techniques being used in real Iowa classrooms. • Launched new free assistive technology consultation 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, and can rent equipment for a short period of time to try out in the home.
<p>Reading Assessments IAC § 284.32 1(d) IAC § 279.68 1(a)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began the Marshalltown Community School District Literacy Curricula Evaluation study. This 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. • Advised the following education agencies on reading assessments, per their requests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cedar Rapids Community School District ○ Council Bluffs Community School District ○ Marshalltown Community School District ○ Sioux City Community School District ○ Green Hills AEA

Iowa Code Citations	In the Last Calendar Year, the IRRC Has...
<p>Data Reports IAC § 284.32 1(f)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrote and posted the following reports on the IRRC website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Early Literacy Survey of Iowa Elementary Schools: Statewide Results ○ Evaluation of the Sioux City Community School District's Implementation of Small-Group, Skills-Based Literacy Instruction ○ Evaluation of the Council Bluffs Community School District's 2019 Summer Program
<p>Intensive Summer Reading Program IAC § 279.68 4(c)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began the Intensive Summer Reading Programs in Iowa's Early Literacy Initiative Study. This evaluation of summer reading programs for Grades K-6 involves school districts in Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Marshalltown, and Sioux City. • Conducted an evaluation of Council Bluffs' 2019 summer reading program.
<p>Professional Development IAC § 284.32 1(e)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched eLearning, the IRRC's online professional development. 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"> ○ Engaging animated representations of real-life scenarios. ○ 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. ○ Interactive text, visual, and audio content featuring quizzes. ○ A posttest to assess for knowledge gained. • Delivered 28 presentations and direct technical assistance to educators in the Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown, Bettendorf, Council Bluffs, and Sioux City school districts as well as the Grant Wood and Northwest Area Education Agencies.
<p>Dyslexia Senate File 2319 Chapter 1077</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a new eLearning Dyslexia Overview module to replace the previous web-based training we had hosted from a third party. The new module continues to support undergraduate and graduate students in teacher certification, reading endorsement, or reading specialist certification programs. It is also available at no cost to Iowa in-service teachers, Iowa families, and the general public.

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 2020. In the next year, we plan to continue creating new eLearning modules on other literacy instructional topics. We are in the process of writing Varied Practice Reading passage sets for middle school and initiating a pilot study of their effectiveness at supporting fluency and comprehension development.

Pending legislative support and funding, we hope to develop a test of teachers' knowledge of literacy skills and how to teach those skills. Our intent is to create this assessment to guide the delivery of eLearning modules and measure how participating in the professional development changes teachers' knowledge. We also hope to begin developing a dyslexia endorsement program as recommended by the Iowa Dyslexia Task Force.