



Iowa Department of Education

Iowa Reading Research Center Report

Iowa Department of Education

Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

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State of Iowa
Department of Education
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Introduction

Through Senate File 2284, the 2012 Iowa Legislature established the Iowa Reading Research Center to apply current research on literacy to provide for the development and dissemination of all of the following:

- 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 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 Center's first focus should be kindergarten through grade 3.

Reading Research Committee

To gather input from a variety of stakeholders, the Iowa Department of Education convened a Reading Research Committee. The committee was charged with creating a detailed description and recommendations, based on SF 2284, of the specific functions and structures necessary to establish the Iowa Reading Research Center. Sharon Kurns, regional director for Heartland Area Education Agency (AEA), was selected to serve as the chair of the committee. The committee met for two days in August to develop the overview of the work of the center. The next meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2013. Members were selected to represent a cross-section of organizations and institutions involved in supporting reading practices in the state.

Membership includes the following:

- Iowa Department of Education representatives: David Tilly, Ph.D., Deputy Director; Michelle Hosp, Ph.D., Rtl State Transformation Team Representative; Barbara Ohlund, Ph.D., Rtl State Transformation Team Representative; Rita Martens, Lead Consultant, Iowa Core; Christine Rauscher, Ph.D., Reading Consultant; Deb Hindman, Literacy Consultant; Mike Cormack and Phil Wise, Policy Liaisons; Sandy Nelson, Special Education Innovation and Improvement Consultant; Lea Davidson, Bureau Chief, Standards and Curriculum
- Iowa ASCD representatives: Susan Pecinovsky, Ed.D., and Lou Howell
- AEA representatives: Kris Donnelly, Programs and Services Administrator, AEA 10; and Barb Shafer, Consultant, AEA 267

- Regents universities representatives: John Hosp, Ph.D., University of Iowa; Salli Forbes, Ph.D., Deborah Tidwell, Ph.D., and Rick Traw, Ed.D., University of Northern Iowa; Ralph Reynolds, Ph.D., Iowa State University
- Non-Regent higher education representative: Lindsay Grow, Ph.D., Grand View University
- Iowa State Education Association representatives: Mike Beranek and Tania Johnson
- At-large reading experts from Iowa: Wendy Robinson, Heartland AEA; Shari Kuehl, Davenport Community School District
- Charlie Bruner, Ph.D., Director, Iowa Child and Family Policy Center
- Clark Goltz, Executive Director, Iowa Reading Association

Statewide Collaborative Structure for Implementation

Much of the work of the Iowa Reading Research Center will be done through a partnership between the Iowa Department of Education and the Iowa Area Education Agencies called Collaborating for Iowa's Kids (C4K). The intent of the collaborative is to effectively and efficiently work as a comprehensive educational system to accomplish agreed-upon high-impact priorities: the literacy component of the Iowa Core, Response to Intervention, educator quality, and school improvement. The initial work for the group's collaborative efforts will be preK-6 reading with a focus on early literacy.

- C4K has developed a governance structure that will provide oversight and direction for the work, as well as develop a systemic plan for implementation across the state.
- The group has expanded its membership to include representatives from local school districts. C4K plans to include higher education and community partners in the future.
- Work teams are currently being formed to address the initial goal: that all Iowa students will be proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade.
- The Iowa Reading Research Center will work with C4K to engage in the development and dissemination of tools and resources to turn scientifically based reading research into tools and practices for Iowa schools and community programs.

Progress on the Work

1. Establish an Iowa Reading Research Center director. Hiring a director during the academic year may be difficult due to availability. Thus, the decision was made to hire an interim director. The Iowa Department of Education asked Sharon Kurns to work as an interim director until the spring. Unfortunately, soon thereafter, she discovered she had cancer. Despite hope that Sharon would be able to return to the work, she passed away shortly before Christmas. Then the decision was made to hire Sara McInerney to assume the role. Also, Grant Wood AEA 10 was determined as the fiscal agent for the Center.
2. Conduct a needs assessment to determine the current state of literacy instructional practices in Iowa schools. This includes teacher knowledge of the curriculum, instructional practice, and content knowledge about reading instruction. This needs

assessment will involve classroom observations, interviews with teachers, parents, and students. C4K is determining strategies and tools for this purpose.

3. Determine instructional strategies and interventions for prekindergarten through grade 12 to achieve literacy proficiency that includes reading, reading comprehension, and writing for all students. C4K has identified work teams and is developing action plans for this work.
4. Determine valid and reliable reading assessments. This work was done during the past year through an internal Iowa Department of Education work team. This team reviewed a number of universal screener and progress monitoring assessments and selected one of each that would be made available to every elementary school in Iowa. Cost proposals have been received, and assessment tools will be selected by the spring.
5. Establish professional development strategies and materials to support teacher effectiveness in student literacy development and collaborate with others who provide professional learning for teachers, principals, and literacy coaches to increase their knowledge and skills to implement effective literacy programs. C4K has identified work teams and is developing action plans for this work.
6. Establish processes for determining 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. The Iowa Department of Education is nearing the end of the process to identify the data system it will purchase for this purpose.
7. Determine models of an evidence-based intensive summer literacy program and afterschool programs for community partners. A request for proposals is being developed by the Iowa Reading Research Center.