

January 1, 2017



Legislative Report

Iowa Reading Research Center

IOWA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

State of Iowa
Department of Education
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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 includes 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 three.

The University of Iowa

The University of Iowa is the host for the IRRC because of its strength as one of the nation's top public research universities, with a great deal of faculty expertise in literacy 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 Center disseminates research findings and research-based resources via the IRRC website as well as through study-specific reports (e.g., findings of the 2016 Intensive Summer Reading Program [ISRP] study). Additionally, communication occurs through social media such as [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and the [IRRC's blog](#).

New IRRC Staff

In January of 2016, **Dr. Sandy Schmitz** was hired as the new assistant director. Dr. Schmitz earned her Ph.D. in Education Administration at Iowa State University. She spent the first 8 years of her career as a teacher for students who are deaf and hard of hearing and as a transition specialist serving students with disabilities transitioning from high school to post-school life. Dr. Schmitz has held leadership positions at the national, state, and local level ensuring compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as well as data analytics and systems improvement initiatives designed to improve outcomes for students with

disabilities. During her tenure at national and regional centers, she has worked with state and local data teams to determine root causes of poor performance in outcome areas including reading and graduation. Her work also has included facilitating and coordinating internal and external stakeholder groups to ensure optimal collaboration and support toward improving systems. Dr. Schmitz has served on national boards and advisory committees created to improve results for persons with disabilities. She has also been a keynote speaker and presenter at national and state conferences over the last 10 years.

Dr. Jessica Sidler Folsom joined the IRRC as an assistant research scientist in March of 2016. Dr. Folsom earned her Ph.D. in Special Education and graduate certificate in Education Measurement and Statistics from Florida State University. Prior to her postgraduate studies, she was a special educator for adolescents with significant cognitive disabilities and was twice awarded teacher of the year. Most recently, Dr. Folsom served as an associate in research at the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University where she conducted large-scale educational research for 7 years. Dr. Folsom was named the American Educational Research Association 2014 Outstanding Reviewer for *Educational Researcher*. She has written over 25 peer-reviewed journal articles, and has given numerous presentations at local, national, and international conferences. She also has provided several professional development workshops related to literacy and research for teachers as well as school, district, and state educational administrators.

Sean Thompson joined the IRRC as a communication specialist in August 2016. He earned a B.A. in Journalism and English from the University of Iowa. He has worked as a journalist, presidential campaign staffer and most recently as Public Relations Coordinator for the University of Iowa Huntington's Disease Society of America (HDSA) Center of Excellence. In 2014, he received the Excellence in Family Service Award from the HDSA Iowa Chapter. He has given presentations about social media, communications and ongoing Huntington's disease studies at state and national conferences.

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 (DE)
- Professional organizations
- Educators
- Families

In addition, the IRRC is required to have an advisory council that meets four times per year. The director of the DE or the director's designee appoints the members. The IRRC Advisory

Council met on the following dates during the 2016 calendar year: February 17, May 17, September 23, and December 1.

Members serve 3-year terms. Current members represent a cross section of organizations and institutions involved in supporting reading practices in the state. Members for fiscal year 2017 are:

Category	First Name	Last Name	Organization
Institutes of Higher Education	Sarah	Vander Zanden	University of Northern Iowa
	Emily	Hayden	Iowa State University
	Lindsay	Woodward	Drake University
	Renita	Schmidt	University of Iowa
	Cathy	Wilt	Morningside College
Department of Education	Ryan	Wise	Iowa Department of Education
	David	Tilly	Iowa Department of Education
AEAs	Lonna	Anderson	Great Prairie AEA
	Mark	Draper	Green Hills AEA
	Jaci	Jarmes	Great Prairie AEA
LEAs (public and non-public)	Kimberly	Buryanek	Sioux City School District
	Pat	Hogan	St. Augustin Catholic School
Teachers	Mike	Beranek	Iowa State Education Association
	Kara	Dietrich	Ballard Community School District
Educational Associations and Organizations	Clark	Goltz	Iowa Reading Association
	Claudia	Reyes-Fry	Iowa Branch of International Dyslexia Association
	Kate	Bennett	United Way of Central Iowa
Community Partners	Michael	Bunde	Early Childhood Iowa
	Angelica	Cardenas-Chaisson	Child & Family Policy Center
	Becky	Miles-Polka	Campaign for Grade Level Reading
Parents			
	Shelly	Hanson	Parent Representative

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 DE and its priorities are guided by legislative action and the recommendations of its Advisory Council. The following table provides a description of the 2016 activities of the IRRC listed by Iowa Administrative Code citations.

2016 Progress	
IA Code Citations	Description: In the last calendar year, the IRRC has...
Evidence-based Interventions and Strategies IAC § 284.32 1(b)	<p>Posted research publications on the IRRC website by Dr. Deborah K. Reed, IRRC director, and Dr. Jessica Folsom, IRRC assistant research scientist, in the areas of families, educators, and researchers. Developed and posted 16 blog posts on reading instruction. Staff presented at numerous state conferences to share evidence-based literacy strategies with teachers.</p> <p>Began supporting the Ames Community School District with a study of phonics materials for core reading instruction in kindergarten through grade 2.</p>
School and Community Partnerships IAC § 284.32	<p>Created family and educator resources for posting on the IRRC website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirty-three blogs, including four graphic organizers, related to families supporting their child’s literacy development. • Five facilitation guides for educators working with families of English Language Learners. Seven blog posts on how school and public librarians can engage children in reading or support families in engaging young readers. • Two bookmarks for parents providing the following literacy strategies when reading with their child: CROWD (completion, recall, open-ended, wh-prompts, distancing) and PEER (prompt, evaluate, expand, repeat).
Reading Assessments IAC § 284.32 1(d) IAC § 279.68 1(a)	<p>Financially supported a data system parallel to Iowa TIER that allows IHEs to train future educators on FAST (Formative Assessment System for Teachers), IGDIs (Individual Growth & Development), and Iowa TIER in practicum and pre-service settings.</p> <p>Developed four blog posts related to appropriate uses of universal screening. These posts have been shared repeatedly by the DE and AEAs, and they were the basis of a webinar hosted by the DE on March 10, 2016.</p>
Data Reports IAC § 284.32 1(f)	<p>Analyzed the literacy data for the Council Bluffs Community School District and provided a report of the results. Created data reports displaying results of the Intensive Summer Reading Program (ISRP) study.</p>
Intensive Summer Reading Program IAC § 279.68 4(c)	<p>Conducted the 2016 ISRP study in accordance with the rules adopted by the State Board and approved by the Administrative Rules Committee. The study answered the following questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kinds of reading programs are effective in summer settings?

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Are different kinds of reading programs effective for students of different demographic backgrounds (e.g., English learners, students with disabilities, students on free/reduced-price lunch, etc.)? 3. What are the average rates of student participation and attendance in ISRPs with student outcomes? 4. What are the costs associated with providing ISRPs? <p>Completed the following steps to obtain answers to the questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruited 120 groups with a maximum of 15 eligible students to participate in the study. • Provided professional development to all teachers and literacy coaches in the study. • Collected pretest and posttest literacy performance data on each student in the study. • Collected reading and behavior progress monitoring data every 10 hours for each student in the study. • Analyzed data to determine state and local findings. • Created state and local study reports.
<p>National and State Experts IAC § 284.32 2</p>	<p>Hosted three webinars highlighting literacy experts from Iowa IHEs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Integrating Technology” • “Strong Girls Read Strong Books” • “Dialogic Reading” <p>Featured white papers developed by literacy experts from Iowa on the IRRC website, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How to Make Handwriting a Part of Early Literacy Instruction” • “Strong Girls Read Strong Books” • “The Power of Interactive Read Alouds • “Dialogic Reading Planning Form”
<p>Professional Development IAC § 284.32 1(e)</p>	<p>Two-day professional development for all ISRP groups randomly assigned the Reading Mastery condition.</p> <p>One-day professional development for all ISRP groups randomly assigned the Lexia Core 5 condition.</p> <p>One-day professional development for all ISRP groups randomly assigned the business-as-usual (BAU) condition. Created the training materials for this session based on effective literacy strategies.</p> <p>Continued development of the BAU training to be delivered outside of the context of ISRP. The final product will include videos demonstrating evidenced-based practices being used by Iowa teachers.</p>

	Provided professional development to the Sioux City Community School District on implementing small group, skills-based instruction in six of its elementary schools. This has included several on-site trainings as well as web conferencing between site visits.
Dyslexia Senate File 2319 Chapter 1077	Hosted a 2-hour online, on-demand training about dyslexia 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 2017. Notably, the IRRC will be selecting and working with schools on an initiative it began in September 2016 titled Practitioners and Researchers Overcoming Problems of Literacy (PROPeL).

PROPeL is a unique and customized recurring two-year program of the IRRC that is funded by the University of Iowa College of Education. For the first cycle, five LEAs and/or juvenile justice facilities (representing different regions and demographics in Iowa) will be selected to participate in the PROPeL program by presenting a data-supported, practitioner-identified literacy problem that they wish to address over the 2017-18 school year.

PROPeL includes a May 2017 conference where practitioners will be taught various strategies tailored to their literacy problem. This will not be just a “sit and get” conference but a way to make research findings work for each selected LEA. Following the conference, schools will carry out a literacy improvement plan during the 2017–2018 school year. Student- and teacher-outcomes will be measured at the end of the program.

In future years, the focus of PROPeL may change to other types of schools, different grade levels, or different literacy challenges. However, our ability to continue this program will be contingent upon funding.