



A New Vision for Literacy Research in Iowa

**Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC)
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
September 23, 2016
9:00 – 11:30 a.m.
Video and teleconference**

Members present: Lonna Anderson, Kimberly Buryanek, Kate Bennett, Kara Dietrich, Mark Draper, Emily Hayden, Pat Hogan, Jaci Jarmes, Becky Miles-Polka, Claudia Reyes-Fry, Nita Schmidt, David Tilly, Sarah Vander Zanden, Cathy Wilt, Ryan Wise, Lindsay Woodward.

Additional attendees: Deborah K. Reed, IRRC Director; Sandy Schmitz, IRRC Assistant Director; Sean Thompson, IRRC Communications Specialist.

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order by IRRC Advisory Council (AC) Chair Kimberly Buryanek and new AC members were introduced.

New members: Lonna Anderson, Great Prairie Area Education Agency, area education agency representative; Kate Bennett, United Way of Central Iowa, community organization representative; Emily Hayden, Iowa State University, higher education representative; Pat Hogan, St. Augustin Catholic School, private school representative; Sarah Vander Zanden, University of Northern Iowa, higher education representative.

2. Approval of agenda

On a motion by Nita Schmidt and seconded by Mark Draper, the agenda for the meeting was approved, with zero “no” votes.

3. Approval of May meeting minutes

A typo on the third page of the minutes was noted. On a motion by Kara Dietrich seconded by Cathy Wilt, the May meeting minutes with correction of the aforementioned typo were approved, with zero “no” votes.

4. Public comment

Chairperson Buryanek allowed time for public comment. No comments were made by members of the public.

5. Evolution of the Advisory Council (IRRC/Iowa Department of Education)



A New Vision for Literacy Research in Iowa

IRRC Assistant Director Sandy Schmitz said the IRRC is committed to ensuring the council is effective at meeting its mandated duties. The council may focus its efforts on recruiting constituents for IRRC initiatives, sharing IRRC updates with their constituencies using consistent messaging, provide direction and feedback on literacy issues, and serve as ambassadors of the IRRC within their constituency groups. When asked if there were concerns about the duties and roles of the AC, no concerns were expressed.

Schmitz posited rather than forming a separate council of individuals invested in literacy to advise the Iowa Department of Education (DE), there will be times when the AC will advise the IRRC, and times when it will advise the DE. The agenda will note to whom members are advising. Based on questions from the council, the IRRC and DE will further discuss the dual role, including a review of the legislative code.

6. Director's report (IRRC)

IRRC Director Deborah Reed introduced new IRRC Communications Specialist Sean Thompson to the AC. Thompson will be managing the IRRC's communications, including managing the IRRC blog, website, Twitter, and Facebook accounts. Thompson expressed his excitement to be spreading the word about the IRRC.

During the IRRC's Intensive Summer Reading Program study, Reed said there was nice coverage of the state representing different demographics. There were 120 classrooms participating from end of May through Aug. 15. Currently, IRRC staff are preparing the most complete and accurate study dataset possible for analysis. The goal is to have a report by the end of the calendar year to present to Iowa legislators beginning in January of 2017. After the initial overview report, more details will be released in 2017.

Feedback was gathered on the professional development (PD) that was part of the study, and the PD modules that will be shared with educators are being refined based on that feedback. IRRC is contracting with Iowa Public Television to produce video clips of these strategies to demonstrate their implementation in the classroom. Cathy Wilt suggested these modules also may be good for students involved in teacher preparation programs in Iowa's colleges and universities.

David Tilly commented on the benefits of releasing information about the logistics (recruitment, materials, etc.) of running an intensive summer reading program so that districts and schools can learn best practices. Reed agreed and said that type of anecdotal information is being catalogued.

The AC discussed various methods to inform constituents of ISRP results (e.g. working with constituencies, blog posts, social media, news media). Several AC members discussed their experiences or reflections on the ISRP. Reed said a majority of the AC meeting in December will be devoted to ISRP big-picture results and how to get the information out to various constituencies.



A New Vision for Literacy Research in Iowa

The IRRC has purchased 1,200 licenses for an online training program from Nessy Learning to support Iowa institutes of higher education (IHE) in meeting new legislative requirements (SF 2196) requiring training about reading disabilities, including dyslexia. The training is available at no cost for undergraduate and graduate students in teacher certification, reading endorsement, or reading specialist programs. If all 1,200 licenses are not used by mid-spring, the training also will be opened to in-service teachers at that time. Reed said the IRRC will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the training based on trainee pre- and post-training testing, and would be open to providing the training on an ongoing basis if it is deemed useful and cost-effective.

Reed reported that the IRRC was given seed money from the University of Iowa Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost to start a new two-year program called Practitioners and Researchers Overcoming Problems of Literacy (PROPeL). For the inaugural program beginning in May 2017, the focus involves alternative schools and juvenile justice facilities. Applications are due on Dec. 1, 2016. Five applicants will be selected to participate. A conference will be held in May of 2017 to develop specific plans to address a practitioner-identified literacy issue. Plans will be implemented during the 2017–2018 school year. Progress will be monitored and an evaluation of outcomes will occur. The hope is for PROPeL to be recurring and a different focus area will be selected in subsequent cycles.

7. Iowa Department of Education update (Iowa Department of Education)

Iowa DE Director Ryan Wise welcomed the group and new AC members. He then introduced DE Deputy Director David Tilly, who provided an update on the state Early Literacy Implementation (ELI) (Iowa Code section 279.68). Results from the kindergarten–third grade screening early literacy screening shows in the fall of 2015, 64 percent of students had scores that were on track. In Spring of 2016, 68 percent were in the on-track range, a 4 percent growth translating into 6,000 students across the state that improved from being at risk to on track. This is a positive indicator that schools are taking this seriously and making progress, Tilly said.

Tilly reported that during the last legislative session, a bill was signed to replace verbiage from the code that referred to students being “substantially deficient” with “persistently at risk.”

Tilly said the Iowa code regarding State Standards for Progression in Reading (Iowa code 281.62) has received a lot of comments, specifically related to a piece of the statute that says students not meeting proficiency standards at the end of third grade would be subject to potential retention. The DE has been working on guidelines related to this component of the statute. Tilly said the decisions will be made at a local level with guidance from the DE, with an emphasis on using multiple sources of evidence to determine how students are identified for potential retention. Tilly said these DE guidelines are expected sometime this semester.



A New Vision for Literacy Research in Iowa

Tilly provided an update on the TIER data management system. He said the system was not able to keep up with demand and became unusable at times. He said the DE is taking this very seriously and working with the TIER vendor to put fixes in place to make sure this does not happen again.

Tilly said the state has been piloting a new way of doing school accreditation visits, and the focus of this has been on early literacy. Personnel will continue to be certified and meet certain compliances each year, but beyond that, data from schools and various aspects of growth will be examined by the schools. He said the DE hopes this emphasis on supporting schools in improving their processes will become business as usual in supporting literacy education.

8. Announcement from council members

Director of Special Education at Green Hills AEA Mark Draper talked about organizing a meeting to bring IRRC and DE representatives together to discuss general education problem solving for students prior to referral to special education. Access to rich data should allow for general education strategies to prevent special education.

Claudia Reyes-Fry gave an update on work being done to support teachers in understanding what dyslexia is and methodologies for students with dyslexia and other difficulties in learning to read. She touched on expanded training, which she hopes will reach beyond those who already receive the most training on this subject.

Chairperson Buryanek said the next meeting will be December 1 at the Iowa Center for Higher Education in Des Moines. She asked AC members to consider how they will describe the work of the IRRC to their constituents.

9. Adjourn

On a motion by Sarah Vander Zanden and seconded by Dave Tilly, the meeting was adjourned, with zero “no” votes.