

Legislative Report Iowa Dyslexia Board

November 2022

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

[Senate File 2356](#) was signed into law on June 17, 2020. This legislation established the Iowa Dyslexia Board to guide, facilitate, and oversee implementation of dyslexia instruction in Iowa and make recommendations for continued improvement of such instruction. Additionally, the Iowa Dyslexia Board is legislated to submit:

- Recommendations to the Iowa Department of Education (Department) regarding the required and preferred qualifications for a dyslexia consultant position required in accordance with section 256.9, subsection 60;
- Recommendations to the area education agencies (AEAs) regarding the required and preferred qualifications for dyslexia specialists required in accordance with section 273.2, subsection 11; and
- Submit its findings and recommendations in a report to the general assembly annually.

The Iowa Dyslexia Board is legislated through July 1, 2025.

BOARD REPORT SUMMARY

In 2019, the Iowa Dyslexia Task Force submitted its findings and recommendations relating to dyslexia to the Legislature. The Iowa Dyslexia Board is positioned to guide, facilitate and oversee implementation of these recommendations and shares the vision laid out by the task force that:

Every student in Iowa will attend a school where educators understand what dyslexia is and provide explicit, systematic reading instruction as both a part of universal instruction and in specialized interventions, and where every student has access to appropriate accommodations and assistive technology to support learning.

During the 2021-2022 school year (the board's first active year) the board met a total of four (4) times. The board developed priorities and goals and had discussions on the following topics: administrative rules for the dyslexia specialist endorsement; use of the term dyslexia in Iowa; consistent identification and response to dyslexia; adequacy of teacher preparation and professional development; communication of dyslexia requirements and recommendations; and promoting high quality dyslexia related preservice and in-service learning.

The board provided guidance and feedback to the Department on:

- the position description, qualifications and title for the Department's dyslexia consultant position; and
- the Department's drafted dyslexia guidance to the field.

The Iowa Dyslexia Board recognizes the work accomplished to lay the groundwork for children with dyslexia/characteristics of dyslexia. Of particular note is the Iowa Reading Research Center's work in developing the dyslexia specialist endorsement program at the University of Iowa. It is anticipated that the first cohort of dyslexia specialists will receive their endorsements after completing a practicum this fall.

While this is the case, the board is cognizant that more priority is needed by Iowa educational entities to have a consistent response to dyslexia in Iowa. This report lays out specific priorities and actions for the Iowa Dyslexia Board and recommendations for Iowa Stakeholders.

PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BOARD & STAKEHOLDERS

PRIORITIES AND GOALS FOR THE BOARD

During the 2021-2022 school year the board developed the following priorities and goals for the board through 2025.

ENSURING DYSLEXIA REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE COMMUNICATED

- **Goal:** The board will collaborate with and support the Department to facilitate issuance of guidance regarding a consistent response to dyslexia and effective instruction as outlined in the Dyslexia Task Force report.
- **Goal:** The board will promote the legislated dyslexia requirements to increase the percentage of educators who engage in the legislated requirements.

ENSURING A CONSISTENT IDENTIFICATION OF AND RESPONSE TO DYSLEXIA

- **Goal:** Promote effective methods of identifying students at risk for dyslexia to ensure explicit and systematic instruction and early intervention is made available in an increasing number of districts in the state.
- **Goal:** Promote effective instruction of foundational literacy skills at both universal and intervention levels to improve literacy outcomes for K-3 students with and at-risk for dyslexia.
- **Goal:** Promote materials aligned to effective literacy instruction for students with dyslexia to increase the percentage of evidence-based programs and interventions used in Iowa schools.
- **Goal:** Create an action plan to provide differentiated training to institutes of higher education (IHEs) on the knowledge, skills and dispositions of dyslexia.

Promoting High Quality Dyslexia Related Preservice and Inservice Learning for EDUCATORS

- **Goal:** The board will promote preservice and Inservice training opportunities to increase the percentage of educators who know the definition of dyslexia, understand how the term “dyslexia” should be used in schools, and can accurately identify the characteristics of dyslexia.
- **Goal:** The board will increase the percentage of individuals with a reading endorsement, reading specialist certificate and/or dyslexia endorsement who are knowledgeable of the characteristics of dyslexia and practices of explicit, systematic literacy instruction (i.e., instructional strategies most effective at preventing severe reading problems and responding to students with dyslexia).

COLLABORATING TO IMPACT SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA [THIS PRIORITY IS INTEGRATED ACROSS THE ABOVE PRIORITIES.]

BOARD ACTIONS FOR 2022-2023

In working toward the goals during the 2022-2023 school year, the board will be focusing on initiating the following actions through its members and subcommittees as well as in cooperation with stakeholder groups including but not limited to, Iowa's AEAs and professionals, the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Reading Research Center and individual districts within Iowa's public education system.

INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS BASED ON COMMUNICATING TO AND WITH STAKEHOLDER GROUPS:

- Communicate what dyslexia is and how the term “dyslexia” should be used in schools in the state of Iowa;
- Communicate information to help educators understand dyslexia and support educators in talking to families and other educators about concerns around dyslexia;
- Communicate and collaborate with other education organizations (e.g., Early Childhood Iowa, AEAs, Decoding Dyslexia Iowa, International Dyslexia Association, the Department of Education, ASK Resource Center etc.) to promote tools and resources to help educators understand dyslexia and support educators in talking to families and other educators about concerns around dyslexia;
- Outline the similarities between actions taken to support students with characteristics of dyslexia and the elements of instruction outlining the Early Literacy Implementation Requirements (IAC 62.6(3));
- Recommend a process for informal diagnostic assessment following universal screening for further identifying students' needs; and
- Report progress on legislated dyslexia requirements to legislators in the annual report.

INITIATIVES THAT INCLUDE COORDINATED WORK WITH IOWA'S INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHES)

- Provide reading and dyslexia endorsement programs with information about the characteristics of dyslexia;
- Coordinate training opportunities for the IHES and communicate the need for them to participate in the training; and
- Communicate the base of the content and the values of the dyslexia endorsement to the IHES.

DATA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS TO INFORM ONGOING WORK:

- Find and report to the legislature the percentage of educators reporting use of evidence-based intervention programs in the Board's annual report to the legislature, identifying any increase or decrease in reported usage levels;
- Engage educators (including recent graduates) with a reading and/or dyslexia endorsement in an annual survey to determine: Knowledge of characteristics of dyslexia, knowledge of explicit, systematic literacy instruction, extent of implementation of explicit and systematic literacy practices within their building/district, extent to which Inservice learning aligns to effective literacy instruction for students with dyslexia/characteristics of dyslexia; and
- Engage educators in an annual dyslexia survey and report progress on foundational dyslexia understanding in its annual report to the legislation.

ASSESSMENT DISCOVERY:

- Develop a resource outlining the process for informal diagnostic assessment of dyslexia used to inform instruction for students at-risk for reading difficulties (see Arkansas or Alabama dyslexia resources guides <https://www.choctawal.org/theme/files/DRG%2010-16-2020.pdf>).

INSTRUCTION DISCOVERY:

- Provide recommendations and feedback to the Department detailing the elements of, and need for, effective instruction and appropriate interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia.
 - Promote and define evidence-based instructional practices and identify materials aligned with effective instructional practices for students with characteristics of dyslexia;
 - Define the applicable data which can be effectively used to directly inform core instruction; and
 - Provide guidance on how to effectively interpret and utilize the data to make instructional and curricular decisions.
- Establish a rating process for programs.
- Update the Department's reviewed effective intervention list around evidence-based practices and programs for intervention and instruction.

OTHER ITEMS DETERMINED TO BE PRIORITIES:

- Monitor ongoing legislation and rules for impact to students with characteristics of dyslexia.

DYSLEXIA SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE BOARD & STAKEHOLDERS DURING 2021-2022

DEDICATED DYSLEXIA POSITIONS AT THE IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

By July 1, 2024, the Department is to dedicate a full-time position to serve as a dyslexia consultant. Pending an appropriation by the general assembly, Iowa AEAs are to dedicate at least one full-time equivalent position to maintain a dyslexia specialist. The Iowa Dyslexia Board is to make recommendations regarding the required and preferred qualifications for these positions.

The Department began a search to fill the Department dyslexia consultant position during winter of 2020 and continued that search during spring of 2021.

During winter of 2022, the Iowa Dyslexia Board provided feedback to the Department on the position title and description and the position was reformulated to more explicitly address dyslexia. The position is now titled education program consultant (EPC), Science of Reading and Dyslexia, and requires three years of experience working with students with dyslexia or related disorders. The new position was posted during spring of 2022 and the Department is currently in another search cycle for qualified candidates.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DYSLEXIA SPECIALIST ENDORSEMENT

The rules for the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement were approved by the Board of Educational Examiners (BoEE) on March 17, 2021. The Iowa Reading Center at the University of Iowa received approval from the Iowa Department of Education to add the endorsement to the university's educator preparation program and subsequently opened applications for students to enroll in the pilot cohort. Of an initial 20 students who enrolled in the pilot cohort, 18 are slated to complete the endorsement requirements in December of 2022.

Courses have begun for the second cohort of candidates, of which there are 8 out of an initial 15 applicants. The second cohort of applicants is a mix of AEA personnel and classroom teachers. Fifteen individuals applied to the endorsement program's second cohort. Of those applicants, eight accepted and are currently enrolled and actively participating. Five were accepted into the program but subsequently withdrew their applications for personal reasons. Two applicants were deemed ineligible for the program based on program requirements.

The Board finds it a priority to continue to ensure that those educators who receive the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement can demonstrate the level of knowledge and skills outlined in the endorsement program. Maintaining the integrity of the program is of utmost importance.

To continue to have growth and interest in the program at the University of Iowa, the Iowa Reading Research Center has worked to add depth to the program for educators who complete the endorsement. Endorseees who complete the program through the University of Iowa, will have the opportunity to continue on to a Masters in Teaching, Learning, and Cultural Competence. In this program, almost all of their endorsement credit hours will be counted towards their masters. This gives students the opportunity to earn multiple credentials, continue to gain professional knowledge, and advance their career in just a few additional courses. In addition, interest in the program likely only grows if the IRRC, Iowa Dyslexia Board, or legislature provides funding for students. Without outside funding, either through tuition grants or private funding, enrollment in the program is likely to remain stagnant as it is geared toward educators who are, and have been, working in the education field and may have limited financial resources.

Following the rule change requiring applications for the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement to be approved by the Iowa Reading Research Center, inquiries have been submitted to the IRRC, and there are currently three potential candidates intending to move forward with the application process. These candidates will be asked to complete documentation demonstrating they have completed training that is commensurate with the rigor of the pilot Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement program.

The Iowa Reading Research Center is currently working to ensure the highest integrity in the process to approve new programs in the state of Iowa as additional IHEs begin to bring their own endorsement programs online.

AEA DYSLEXIA SPECIALISTS

One of the Iowa Dyslexia Board priorities is to work with the Department and AEAs to fill the dyslexia consultant positions. One step toward doing so is ensuring each AEA has staff that are knowledgeable and skilled in assessing and instructing students with dyslexia. To support this effort, the Department has provided funding for one staff member from each AEA to participate in the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement cohorts. As of September 2022, all nine of the AEAs have designated staff participating in the cohorts. Staff from the first cohort are expected to receive their endorsement by December 2022. The second cohort will receive their endorsement in December 2023. There are 13 AEA consultants representing all nine AEAs

enrolled in the two cohorts. AEAs are able to carry these funds over and extend them for participation in the dyslexia specialist endorsement program during the 2022-2023 school year.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED DYSLEXIA TRAININGS

By July 1, 2024 (or within one year of hire after July 1, 2024) district school boards shall require all persons employed by the school district who hold a teaching license with any of the following endorsements to complete the Iowa Reading Research Center *Dyslexia Overview* module.

- Prekindergarten or elementary special education,
- Prekindergarten through grade three levels issued under chapter 272,
- Title I teachers and Title I paraprofessionals under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, and
- English as a second language.

While not required, it is recommended by the Board that all school administrators and higher education literacy instructors also complete the Dyslexia Overview.

By the same date, AEA personnel who are issued a license, certificate, statement of recognition, or authorization (other than a coaching authorization) under Chapter 272 from the BoEE shall complete the Iowa Reading Research Center *Dyslexia Overview* module.

The Iowa Reading Research Center *Dyslexia Overview* module was introduced to the field in April 2019. The 60-minute module includes videos, interactive content and quizzes to support persons in an overall understanding of dyslexia. The module is available free to all Iowa residents and can be found on the Iowa Reading Research Center [eLearning page](#).

Participation in the *Dyslexia Overview* module was highest during the 2019-2020 academic year, partly due to the school closures in spring of 2020, and continued to grow from 2020-2021 to the 2021-2022 school year. There is a distinction between those who enroll in professional development and those who complete the training. Completion requires finishing all sections of the module and passing the posttest with a score of 80% or better. The following table reports the voluntary participation in the module as well as the participation of preservice educators who are encouraged to complete the module pursuant to ([Iowa Code 279.72](#)).

DYSLEXIA OVERVIEW ENROLLMENT & COMPLETION:

Year	Enrollment Count	Completion Count
Oct '18 – Oct '19	847	594
Oct '19 – Oct '20	3947	3570
Oct '20 – Oct '21	3311	3024
Oct '21 – Oct '22	3550	3332
Dyslexia Overview Grand Total	11655	10520

DYSLEXIA OVERVIEW ENROLLMENT BY ROLE:

By role, most participants in the module have been pre-service educators. However, the number of in-service teachers enrolling in the module has been increasing since the passage of SF 2356 in spring 2020.

Role	Number
Student in a teacher certification, reading endorsement, or reading specialist certification program	5750
In-service teacher	3350
Literacy coach, curriculum coordinator, or reading specialist	423
Principal or superintendent	139
Area Education Agency staff	450
Parent, family, or community member	67
Other	705
Total	10884

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DYSLEXIA GUIDANCE

During spring of 2022 the Department presented draft dyslexia guidance to the Iowa Dyslexia Board. Feedback focused on ensuring the guidance sent a clear message about the importance of talking about dyslexia in Iowa schools, that it was easily consumable for families and educators and that it provided families and educators clear expectations of what they should do when they have a student with dyslexia/characteristics of dyslexia.

The Department revised the draft into a [dyslexia website](#) and sought feedback from the Board during the fall 2022 meeting and subsequently published the website as part of a Dyslexia Awareness Campaign for October 2022. The Department shared the website through a Departmental [headliner story](#), through a series of dyslexia awareness month social media pushes during the month of October, and through the Department's [Fall 2022 School Leader Update newsletter](#).

The Department Dyslexia website lays out required responses to dyslexia as well the Department's priorities around dyslexia.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PRIORITIES FOR 2022-2023

Moving into 2022-2023, the Department has identified priorities focused on areas of policy in which they have authority to provide guidance and technical assistance and that also align to the Iowa Dyslexia Board recommendations. The following are Department priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Develop guidance, tools and resources to help educators understand how the term “dyslexia” can be used in Iowa schools and how to partner with families about concerns around dyslexia.

- **Priority 2:** Develop guidance, tools and resources for informal diagnostic assessment for students at risk for reading difficulties. Such assessments would be used to inform intervention including dyslexia specific interventions for students with dyslexia/characteristics of dyslexia.
- **Priority 3:** Develop guidance, tools and resources that detail the elements of explicit and systematic literacy instruction for students with dyslexia/characteristics of dyslexia.

During 2022-2023, the Department will seek feedback and guidance from the Iowa Dyslexia Board as they develop resources for educators and families focused on these priorities.

APPENDIX A: IOWA DYSLEXIA BOARD MEMBERSHIP LIST

MEMBER	TERM SERVING	REPRESENTS
Barb Anderson	Standing Beginning 8/1/22	Department of Education (Director Designee)
Kristen Craig Waukee CSD	1st Term 6/30/21 to 6/30/23	Elementary core literacy teacher
Matt Cretsinger Marshalltown CSD	1st Term 6/30/21 to 6/30/23	Special education administrator
Stephanie Edgren William Penn University	1st Term 9/7/22 to 6/30/23	Representative of an institution of higher education in Iowa with documented expertise in dyslexia and reading instruction
Katie Greving Decoding Dyslexia Iowa	1st Term 6/30/21 to 6/30/24	Representative of decoding dyslexia who is a parent of child/children with dyslexia
Mark Hennigar Clarion	2nd Term 6/30/21 to 6/30/25	Representative of decoding dyslexia who is an individual with dyslexia
Brad Niebling	6/30/21 to 6/30/22	Department of Education (Director Designee)
Nina Lorimor-Easley	2nd Term 6/30/21 to 6/30/25	Provider certified in structured literacy reading program
James Northwick Atlantic CSD	1st Term 3/30/22 to 6/30/24	School administrator
Deborah Reed	6/30/21 to 6/30/22	Representative of the Iowa Reading Research Center
Kay Stork CAM CSD	1st Term 6/30/22 to 6/30/23	Reading specialist
Corey Vorthmann Council Bluffs CSD	6/30/21 to 2/1/22	School administrator
Ben Walizer	Standing Beginning 9/7/22	Representative of the Iowa Reading Research Center
Tammy Wilgenbusch University of Iowa, Stead Family Dept of Pediatrics	1st Term 9/7/22 to 6/30/25	Psychologist or speech language pathologist licensed in the state of Iowa with experience in diagnosing dyslexia
Shane Williams Mississippi Bend AEA	1st Term 6/30/21 to 6/30/24	Representative of an area education agency

Kara Wishman	2nd Term 6/30/22 to 6/30/25	Representative of decoding dyslexia who is a parent of child/children with dyslexia
Vacant	Standing	The Department dyslexia consultant