

Iowa Dyslexia Board

Meeting Minutes – January 11, 2023

Meeting minutes taken by Kathy Bertsch.

CALL TO ORDER

Nina Lorimor-Easley, board chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Present: Barb Anderson, Matt Cretsinger, Kristen Craig, Katie Greving, Nina Lorimor-Easley, Kay Stork, Ben Walizer, Shane Williams, Kara Wishman.

Absent: Mark Hennigar, James Northwick, Tammy Wilgenbusch, Stephanie Edgren

Departed Early: Matt Cretsinger, Katie Greving, Kara Wishman

1. Welcome

- a. **Public Comment:** The board hear/reviewed public comment from:
 - i. Patty Beyer, Learning Disability Association of Iowa;
 - ii. Shelly Skuster, parent of a child/children with dyslexia or the characteristics of dyslexia.
- b. **Approve Agenda:** Matt Cretsinger moved to approve the meeting agenda and Kara Wishman seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- c. **Approve Meeting Minutes from October:** Shane Williams moved to approve the October 2022 meeting minutes and Kristen Craig seconded the motion. The motion carried.
- d. **Board Member Announcements/updates**
 - i. Katie Greving shared that Thursday, February 2nd is [Dyslexia Day at the Capital](#) organized by Decoding Dyslexia Iowa (DDIA). They will be sharing information about dyslexia. She noted that some legislators have listened to the [“Sold a Story” podcast](#). DDIA will be holding an event for children with dyslexia in April.
 - ii. Shane Williams shared that Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency’s (MBAEA) dyslexia facilitator, Lisa Hawker, will be holding a dyslexia night for educators, families and the community. Additionally MBAEA is engaging all agency early literacy staff in professional learning on dyslexia.
 - iii. Shane Williams also shared that he and Kathy Bertsch, Department of Education Administrative Consultant, presented information about dyslexia and the Iowa Department of Education’s (IDOE) [dyslexia web page](#) to the statewide curriculum director network. Kathy Bertsch noted that she has received several inquiries from districts about the required dyslexia overview for select educators.

- iv. Shane Williams shared the podcast [“Sold a Story”](#) and suggested that all listen as it is very informational.
- v. On January 23, 2023 Stephanie Edgren and Nina Lorimor-Easley will present to the Iowa Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (IACTE) Literacy Leadership Team. They will present the dyslexia requirements for higher education institutions.
- vi. Matt Cretsinger suggested sharing the Iowa Department dyslexia web page with the statewide special education network. Kathy Bertsch indicated she will reach out to Barb Guy and Kristi Upah who set the agenda for the network.
- vii. Ben Walizer shared updates on the Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC). He noted:
 - The IRRC’s College of Education review has been completed. Highlights include a strong reputation and expanding relationships with AEAs and the College of Education and a focus on ensuring they have a structure that allows them to support the mission and adapt to turnover.
 - The College of Education will start a nationwide search for the IRRC director position with the hope that they can start in the spring.
 - Nina Lorimor-Easley has been promoted to Assistant Director for Education and Outreach. Nina’s team will lead work that interfaces with the public.
 - The IRRC is adding employees to ramp up services.
- viii. Barb Anderson shared that the IDOE has posted the Science of Reading and Dyslexia position. Contracts get renewed around April so this is good timing for a search.

2. Iowa Reading Research Center

- a. The IRRC outlined priorities in collaboration with the IDOE including:
 - i. ELearning course for parents on universal language around literacy and special education. Katie Greving suggested this could be work of the ASK Resource Center, Iowa’s Parent Training and Information center. Kathy Bertsch noted that the course would be developed in collaboration with the department including ensuring collaborations are part of this as needed. The suggestion of ASK being a collaborator/review is a good suggestion.
 - ii. ELearning course and tools to support educators in understanding results of FastBridge assessments to better identify the focus areas for curricular decisions.
 - iii. ELearning course for universal implementation of structured literacy in the classroom.
 - iv. A 15-30 hour license renewal course focused on science of reading and able to be delivered through Area Education Agencies.
- b. The IRRC outlined additional ongoing work including:

- i. Collaboration with the College of Education to provide a Science of Reading emphasis area for teacher education students.
 - ii. Two new online learning communities. One focused for graduates of endorsement programs and one that is an online learning community that will be focused on dyslexia and semi-moderated.
 - iii. Surveys to measure impact and educator knowledge of dyslexia.
 - iv. Work with Lexia to offer LETRS training across the state. They are also considering Lexia's new Aspire Professional Learning series for grades 4-8.
 - The board entered into discussion about LETRS including their new Bridge to Practice course intended to help teachers connect LETRS to practice. Shane Williams noted that this is all inservice learning and if preservice was doing better we would be much further ahead. Matt Cretsinger concurred indicating they have great teachers but have to work hard to get them where they need to be.
 - Ben Walizer noted that legislation could change this and Nina Lorimor-Easley noted that there are many models from other states that are leading the way.
 - v. Varied Practice Reading is offered through eLearning. IRRC is building a stand alone application so that it is more engaging to younger students with a more game-based platform.
 - vi. Commitment to higher quality scientific based blog posts and social and news content.
 - vii. An 8 episodes podcast series focused on the history of literacy education in the US with a vein of scientifically based reading.
- c. Dyslexia Endorsement Program Approvals. Nina Lormior-Easley and Ben Walizer presented.
- i. The IRRC is seeing applications come in for program approval which takes 4-6 months from initial application.
 - ii. The IRRC is currently working with Grand View University on their program approval. The IRRC has made suggestions for revision. The program will be hybrid but largely online.
 - iii. Dordt University has submitted their program and the IRRC is just beginning the review.
 - iv. The board entered discussion about the approval process. Barb Anderson inquired about the rubrics/artifacts for program approval. Nina Lorimor-Easley noted that the content requirements are driven off of the International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading. The program has to submit their courses, syllabi and instructor curriculum vitas. They have to agree to allow the IRRC to review every 2 years and when there is either turnover in faculty or change in final completion requirements.

- v. The IRRC is working to ensure the dyslexia endorsement approval requirements are rigorous enough to meet the IDA's University Programs Accreditation criteria.
- vi. The board entered discussion about out of state dyslexia endorsement programs. The IRRC cannot approve out of state programs to offer the endorsement. However a university may choose to admit students from out of state who have coursework remaining for the endorsement. For persons who obtain their endorsement out of state, they may also obtain the Iowa dyslexia endorsement if they meet endorsement requirements. The IRRC makes recommendations to the Board of Educational Examiners for approval of such endorsements. The BOEE makes the final decision.
- vii. The University of Iowa's dyslexia endorsement program graduated 17 endorsees this winter. They have seven students continuing into the spring. Applications are currently open for the next cohort.

3. Dyslexia Webpage and 504 Language

- a. Nina Lorimor-Easley opened a discussion regarding the IDOE web page section on 504. The board discussed qualification requirements for 504 and concerns that students have been denied a 504 if they have not been diagnosed with dyslexia. The board discussed that a dyslexia/medical diagnosis is not required and discussed what else they may do to help provide more consistency in 504 decision making.
- b. Thomas Mayes, IDOE legal counsel provided the following context for the discussion:
 - i. The Biden administration is intending to revise the 504 regulations as they are quite old. This revision would be at the national level.
 - ii. There are some myths that are persistent but the IDOE does not have regulatory authority over 504. The educational institutions that received federal assistance have to follow 504. The IDOE is not the intermediary.
 - iii. The US Department of Education (ED) provides a Frequently Asked Questions regarding 504 that addresses some myths including:
 - A medical diagnosis is not required.
 - If the team determines a diagnosis is needed for the 504 evaluation, it is the school's responsibility.
 - There is no condition that automatically qualifies a child for a for 504. There must be a substantial limit to a major life activity.
 - Any single data point (i.e., grades, doctor's note etc.) cannot be used as a reason for/against a 504 determination.
 - Eligibility for 504 must be considered without supports that might prop up a person (e.g., extra supports/medication/ etc.)
 - The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requires schools to follow 504 or not receive federal funds. Not doing 504 is not an option.
 - Kara Wishman inquired what the current training is for 504 determination. Thomas noted that the special education directors and AEA's do a good

job around IDEA. We could do better around 504. Nina Lorimor-Easley noted that this could also be addressed in higher education.

- c. The board entered discussion on revision to the 504 language on the IDOE dyslexia web page. Kathy Bertsch and Barb Anderson, IDOE representatives, suggested a revision to the language on the web page to help reduce myths around diagnosis being required. Katie Greving noted that the revision is unlikely to address the myths and substantially limits is often a reason to deny a child. Grieving would like to see the ED language here to alleviate myths. Thomas Mayes suggested linking directly to the OCR's FAQ and 504 Federal Regulation as opposed to rewriting the ED's definition of substantially limits.
- d. Nina Lorimor-Easley requested that the IDOE do an educational campaign around accuracy on 504 determination. Thomas Mayes indicated that we will do what we can with consideration of our other obligations.
- e. Nina Lorimor-Easley and Katie Greving request that the more we can refer to consistent sources and language on the website the best.

4. Subcommittees

- a. The board discussed subcommittee priorities and actions. The following subcommittees reported out:
 - i. Instruction Discovery. Ben Walizer reported the work of this subcommittee including:
 - Development of a rubric to support educators in selecting effective curriculum. The IRRC is working to hire additional staff this spring to support this priority.
 - Development of digital tools/eLearning to support teachers to make decisions around instruction.
 - The board entered discussion about tools/training to support educators in selecting high quality instructional materials.
 - a. Kathy Bertsch, shared that the IDOE is looking at a process for providing a list of high quality instructional materials to schools but are early in this process. Having educators review curricular materials is a heavy lift so having a leaner approach and considering what other states have done is important.
 - b. The board discussed how some states are passing laws requiring schools select from a single or list of approved curricular materials.
 - c. School districts are asking for more direction. Shane Williams reported that MBAEA provided a curricular material review session recently for curriculum directors who were asking for this. MBAEA provided the rubric.
 - ii. Data Mining. Ben Walizer reported the priority is development and delivery of two

surveys to measure statewide impact that would be delivered on opposite years. This includes:

- A statewide survey on curricular tools that are being used. This survey would replicate in whole/part the [IRRC's 2019 survey](#). The IRRC would provide the questions and a report.
 - A survey of teachers' knowledge and skills related to dyslexia.
- iii. The Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) subcommittee. Nina Lorimor-Easley reported out for the IHE with the following updates:
- Stephanie Edgren connected with Maryam Rod Szabo, IDOE Administrative Consultant for Educator Quality. The department presented briefly the new web page at IACTE and the department is meeting with Stephanie later this month to plan dyslexia content for the upcoming Spring IACTE conference.
 - The National Council on Teacher Quality provides [textbook reviews](#). Textbooks are reviewed on how well they align with the science of reading and topic targeted. The board discussed how the textbook list could be a segue into supporting science of reading.
 - The board discussed possible actionable items for IHE including:
 - a. Promotion of the science of reading conference with Iowa IHEs.
 - b. Advocating for IHE engagement in IACTE literacy leadership team.
 - c. Pursuing efforts to influence requirements for program accreditation and/or endorsements.
 - d. Engaging IHEs in professional learning on the science of reading.
 - e. Engaging IHEs in discussion around faculty selection for early literacy coursework.
- iv. Assessment Discovery. Kay Stork shared notes from the subcommittee including:
- Elementary assessment needs to be more than FastBridge
 - The need for a tool to help teachers understand FastBridge results, follow-up assessments including how this supports grouping for additional instruction.
 - The committee suggested review/consideration of the Alabama state guide as a model.
 - The committee discussed how strong literacy leadership is needed for these efforts.
- v. Communication. This subcommittee was not able to meet.

vi. Next steps:

- Revisit who is on each subcommittee.
- Subcommittee chairs will coordinate with committee members to bring proposed action items to the next board meeting.

5. Adjourn

- a. The board adjourned at 1:50.