

Early Literacy Initiative

In 2012, the General Assembly enacted [SF 2284](#) (Education Reform). Part of the reform focuses on early literacy and promoting effective evidence-based programming, instruction, and assessment practices across schools to support all students to become proficient readers by the end of the third grade. General requirements of the early literacy initiative are as follows and are currently in effect unless otherwise noted:

- Provision of universal screening in reading for students in kindergarten through third grade;
- Progress monitoring for students that exhibit a substantial deficiency in reading;
- Provision of intensive instruction for students that exhibit a substantial deficiency in reading, including 90 minutes daily of scientific, research-based reading instruction;
- Notice to parents that a student exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading, including strategies the parents may use at home to help the student succeed;
- Notice to parents of such a student's subsequent progress;
- Provision of an evidence-based summer reading program for students that exhibit a substantial deficiency in reading (effective May 1, 2017);
- Retention of any student that is not proficient in reading by the end of the third grade, did not attend the summer reading program, and does not qualify for a good cause exemption from the retention requirement (effective May 1, 2017).

State funding for the early literacy initiative is provided through three budget units: the Early Warning System for Literacy, Successful Progression for Early Readers, and the Iowa Reading Research Center.

Iowa Reading Research Center

The purpose of the Center is to apply current research on literacy to provide for the development and dissemination 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, at risk of not achieving literacy proficiency;
- Models for effective school and community partnerships to improve student literacy;
- Reading assessments;
- Professional development strategies and material to support teacher effectiveness in student literacy development;
- Data reports on attendance center, school district, and statewide progress toward literacy proficiency;
- Program criteria and guidelines for implementation of an intensive summer literacy program by school districts.

The initial efforts of the Center are on improving reading performance and instruction in kindergarten through third grade. The operation of the Center is required to conduct its work according to the following:

- Use of expertise – The Center is required to draw upon national and state expertise in the field of literacy proficiency, including experts from Iowa institutions of higher education and area education agencies (AEAs) with backgrounds in literacy development;
- Data and report development – The Center and its director must seek support from the Iowa research community in methodologies for the collection of student literacy data and in data report development, the analysis of available information from Iowa education data sources, and the analysis of progress toward literacy proficiency;
- Coordination with the Department of Education (DE) – The Center and its director must work with the Department of Education to identify additional needs for tools and technical assistance for Iowa schools to help schools achieve literacy proficiency goals and seek public and private partnerships in developing and accessing necessary tools and technical assistance.

For more information on the Iowa Reading Research Center, including funding, refer to the [Budget Unit Fiscal Topic](#).

More Information

Iowa Department of Education: <http://educateiowa.gov/>

Iowa Reading Research Center: <http://www.iowareadingresearch.org/>

Iowa's Early Warning System for Literacy: <http://www.iowareadingresearch.org/reading-in-iowa/literacy-warning-system/>

Iowa General Assembly: <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>

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Early Warning System for Literacy

The Early Warning System for Literacy provides reading assessments for Prekindergarten through sixth grade to detect students deficient in reading. Local school districts use universal screening and progress monitoring assessments, and store student performance data on a statewide database. The DE provides the assessments at no cost to schools. The Early Warning System consists of three parts:

- Universal screening identifies students at risk for reading difficulties. These assessments are administered to all students three times a year, in the fall, winter, and spring. Universal screening measures are brief assessments that focus on a variety of targeted skills.
- Progress monitoring assessments are administered to students receiving additional instruction or intervention to determine if students are improving in reading.
- Iowa TIER (Tools for Innovation and Educational Results) is a data system with the capability to store universal screening, intervention, and progress monitoring data for every student in the state.

For more information on the Early Warning System, including funding, refer to the [Budget Unit Fiscal Topic](#).

Successful Progression for Early Readers

Successful Progression for Early Readers requires school districts to provide students identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading with intensive instructional services and supports free of charge. To remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency, school districts must do the following:

- Provide a minimum of 90 minutes of daily scientific, research-based reading instruction and other strategies prescribed by the school district;
- Apprise the parent or guardian of academic and other progress being made by the student and give the parent or guardian other useful information at regular intervals;
- Provide parents of students identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading with a plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in regular parent-guided home reading;
- Establish a reading enhancement and acceleration development initiative designed to offer intensive accelerated reading instruction to each kindergarten through third grade student assessed as exhibiting a substantial deficiency in reading;
- Offer each summer, beginning in the summer of 2017, unless the school district receives a waiver from this requirement from the DE, an intensive summer literacy program for students assessed as exhibiting a substantial deficiency in reading. The Iowa Reading Research Center is required to establish program criteria and guidelines for implementation of an intensive summer literacy program by school districts;
- Report to the DE the specific intensive reading interventions and supports implemented by the school district. The DE will annually prescribe the components of required or requested reports.

For more information on Successful Progression for Early Readers, including funding, refer to the [Budget Unit Fiscal Topic](#).

Parental Notification

The parent or guardian of a student that exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading must receive:

- Notice that the student has been identified as having a substantial deficiency (annually);
- Information on services currently provided to the student (annually);
- Notice of proposed supplemental services the district will provide (annually);
- Information on the student's academic progress and any other useful information (quarterly);
- A plan for remediating the reading deficiency in a parent contract (one time);
- Notice that the student may enroll in an intensive summer reading program if not proficient at the end of third grade (one time).

Summer Reading Program

Beginning May 1, 2017, each district must provide an intensive summer reading program for any student that exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading:

- A one-time waiver from this provision will be available, and
- The standards for an intensive summer reading program are being developed and reviewed by the Iowa Reading Research Center.

Retention

Beginning May 1, 2017, a student must be retained in third grade if the student:

- Is not proficient by the end of third grade, and
- Does not enroll in and complete the intensive summer reading program, and
- Does not qualify for a good cause exemption.

A student qualifies for a good cause exemption if he/she:

- Is a Limited English Proficient student with less than two years of instruction in an ESL (English as a Second Language) program;
- Has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that indicates that participation in the assessments required by Iowa Code section [279.68](#) is not appropriate;
- Has demonstrated an acceptable level of performance on an alternative assessment based on scientifically-based research;
- Has demonstrated mastery through a portfolio review that meets Department-required criteria;
- Was previously retained and has received intensive remediation for at least two years.