Legislative Report

Iowa Dyslexia Board 2026

IOWA | Department of Education



State of Iowa
Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

Administration

McKenzie Snow, Director and Executive Officer
of the State Board of Education

Tina Wahlert, Chief of Staff/Deputy Director

Division of PK-12 Learning

Tina Wahlert, Interim Division Administrator

Bureau of Academics & Learner Supports

Tom Wood, Bureau Chief

Wanda Steuri, Education Program Consultant

It is the policy of the Iowa Department of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, color, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, disability, religion, age, political party affiliation, or actual or potential parental, family or marital status in its programs, activities, or employment practices as required by the Iowa Code sections 216.9 and 256.10(2), Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d2000e), the Equal Pay Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 206, et seq.), Title IX (Educational Amendments, 20 U.S.C.§§ 1681 – 1688), Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.). If you have questions or complaints related to compliance with this policy by the Iowa Department of Education, please contact the legal counsel for the Iowa Department of Education, Grimes State Office Building, 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319-0146, telephone number: 515-281-5295, or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building, 1244 Speer Boulevard, Suite 310, Denver, CO 80204-3582, telephone number: 303-844-5695, TDD number: 800-877-8339, email: OCR.Denver@ed.gov

Iowa Dyslexia Board 2026 Legislative Report

Executive Summary

The Iowa Dyslexia Board (Board) continues to support statewide efforts to strengthen literacy instruction and improve educational opportunities for students with dyslexia. During the 2025-26 academic year, the Board provided guidance and feedback on dyslexia-related initiatives, supported the expansion of specialized educator preparation and promoted evidence-based approaches to literacy instruction and intervention.

Significant accomplishments and developments during the reporting period included:

- Expanding dyslexia expertise: Grand View University and the University of Iowa reported a combined 76 Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement program graduates over the course of this reporting period.
- Supporting regional access to expertise: Six of Iowa's nine area education agencies (AEAs) employed at least one individual with the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement on their educator license. Collaboration among AEA dyslexia specialists continued to support schools across the state.
- Increasing educator knowledge: The Iowa Reading Research Center's Dyslexia Overview Module recorded more than 49,000 enrollments and 45,000 completions from October 2018 to the close of this reporting period.
- Strengthening educator preparation: The Iowa Department of Education (Department) continued working with Iowa's educator preparation programs (EPPs) to strengthen literacy instruction, review Foundations of Reading Test (FoRT) results and support the integration of evidence-based literacy competencies.
- Expanding statewide literacy supports: The Department implemented professional learning initiatives, including the enrollment of more than 6,300 Iowa educators in LETRS training and disseminating the Iowa Dyslexia Handbook.

The Board also reviewed the implementation of the Dyslexia Professional Learning Plan, provided feedback on literacy initiatives and strengthened communication with stakeholders.

These activities reflect continued efforts to improve educator knowledge, increase access to specialized expertise and strengthen evidence-based literacy instruction for Iowa students.

Legislative Authority & Board Responsibilities

The Iowa Dyslexia Board was established under Iowa Code section 256.32A to guide, facilitate, and oversee the implementation of dyslexia instruction in Iowa and make recommendations for continued improvement.

1. An Iowa Dyslexia Board is established to guide, facilitate, and oversee the implementation of dyslexia instruction in Iowa and make recommendations for continued improvement of such instruction.

   The Iowa Dyslexia Board shall also submit recommendations as follows:

   a. To the Department regarding the required and preferred qualifications for a dyslexia consultant position required in accordance with section 256.9, subsection 60.

   b. To the area education agencies regarding the required and preferred qualifications for dyslexia specialists required in accordance with section 273.2, subsection 11.

2. The Iowa Dyslexia Board shall consist of the following members: [listed in Appendix A of this report].

3. The term of membership is three years. The terms shall be staggered so that at least four of the terms end each year, but no member serving on the initial board shall serve less than one year. The governor shall determine the length of the initial terms of office.

4. The Iowa Dyslexia Board shall submit its findings and recommendations in a report to the General Assembly by November 15 annually.

5. This section will be repealed on July 1, 2032.

Board Activities & Accomplishments

During the 2025-26 academic year, the Board focused on three priorities:

1. Provide input and feedback on the Dyslexia Professional Development Plan.
2. Communicate the Board's work across Iowa.
3. Provide input and feedback regarding evidence-based, explicit and systematic literacy instruction and assessment among stakeholder groups.

To advance these priorities, the Board:

- Supported continued dissemination of the Dyslexia Handbook through presentations across Iowa.
- Updated its bylaws and operating procedures.
- Reviewed and assisted with developing slides for the Iowa Dyslexia Professional Learning Plan.
- Provided feedback and guidance on the results of the FoRT assessment and its future use.
- Received several presentations and provided feedback on various literacy initiatives across Iowa.

Through these activities, the Board continued to provide stakeholder perspectives and guidance for implementing dyslexia-related initiatives throughout Iowa.

Expanding Access to Dyslexia Specialists

This section provides updates on the availability of the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement at Iowa's institutes of higher education, as required under Iowa Code section 256.7(3c).

> By July 1, 2022, the board, in collaboration with the Iowa reading research center, shall adopt rules under chapter 17A prescribing standards and procedures for the approval of practitioner preparation programs that are affiliated with the Iowa reading research center and that offer practitioner preparation for the advanced dyslexia specialist endorsement issued by the board of educational examiners pursuant to section 256.146, subsection 21. The department shall not approve programs that prepare practitioners for such an endorsement if the programs are not approved by the Iowa reading research center.

University Program Engagement

The Board received the following updates about Iowa Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement programs during the 2025-26 academic year:

Grand View University

- Graduated 42 dyslexia endorsees through the close of this reporting period.
- Enrolled 20 students in the fourth cohort, which began in May 2026.
- Announced a new scholarship opportunity geared toward dyslexia endorsees as well as reading endorsees.

University of Iowa

- Graduated 34 dyslexia endorsees through the close of this reporting period.
- Updated, enhanced and shifted the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement program from the Department of Teaching and Learning to the Iowa Reading Research Center during this reporting period.

Together, these programs reported 76 graduates as of September 2026, contributing to the availability of educators with specialized preparation in dyslexia and structured literacy.

Collaborative & Statewide Efforts

The Board worked on a Dyslexia Specialist endorsee public directory to support the Board's broader goal of increasing communication and access to information related to dyslexia expertise and services across Iowa.

Legislative & Policy Developments

The Board also participated in the rollout and implementation of the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement stipend, including the following actions:

- Received updates regarding the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement stipend as the Department developed the stipend structure using the Iowa Grants system.
- Opened Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement stipend applications from May 1- June 30, 2026.
- Continued to monitor the availability of endorsement opportunities and supports for educators pursuing advanced preparation in dyslexia and structured literacy.

Dyslexia Specialists in Area Education Agencies

This section includes updates on the employment of dyslexia specialists at every area education agency (AEA) per Iowa Code section 273.2(11), which applies to area education agencies' established services and programs.

> Subject to an appropriation by the General Assembly for such purpose, the area education agency board shall, by July 1, 2024, dedicate at least one full-time equivalent position to maintain a dyslexia specialist. The area education agency board may hire such a specialist or may provide appropriate training to qualify an existing employee as a specialist on dyslexia. The specialist shall provide technical guidance and assistance, including but not limited to professional development, strategies, and materials to school districts and accredited nonpublic schools relating to the identification of and instruction for students with characteristics of dyslexia. The specialist shall be highly trained in dyslexia and have a minimum of three years of field experience in screening, identifying, and treating dyslexia and related disorders. In the absence of an appropriation, each area education agency board is encouraged to employ a highly qualified dyslexia specialist.

During the 2025-26 academic year, the Board was notified of the following:

- Six of the nine AEAs employed at least one staff member who had completed the dyslexia specialist endorsement.
- Through regional collaboration among AEA dyslexia specialists, all nine AEAs had access to dyslexia specialist expertise to support the schools they serve.

Strengthening Educator Preparation

The Board also monitored and participated in a variety of activities aimed at strengthening and enhancing educator preparation and professional development opportunities.

Higher Education Literacy Summit

The Iowa Higher Education Literacy Summit was held June 5-6, 2025. The summit included:

- A keynote presentation by literacy expert Denise Eide
- Resources related to the Science of Reading
- Opportunities to strengthen understanding of evidence-based literacy instruction within EPPs

Educator Preparation Program Review

- The Department continued to provide information to the Board regarding the comprehensive review process for Iowa's EPPs, including the seven-year review cycle and expectations related to literacy instruction.
- The Department also introduced the Iowa Literacy Educator Preparation Workbook, a tool designed to support institutions as they review and revise coursework to incorporate evidence-based literacy competencies.
- The workbook was integrated into educator preparation site visits to support continuous program improvement.

Foundations of Reading Test

The Board received updates on FoRT, including assessment results, institutional performance and Department follow-up activities, with the Department reporting 46% of educator preparation students having passed the assessment. These results provide information that can support institutions and the Department in identifying opportunities to strengthen educator preparation in foundational literacy knowledge and instructional practices.

Dyslexia Awareness & Professional Learning

This section of the report updates the Dyslexia Overview Module training for AEAs and school districts. This is in response to Iowa Code section 273.3(25) and Iowa Code section 279.72.

> 273.3(25) Require, by July 1, 2024, any person employed by the area education agency who holds a license, certificate, statement of recognition, or authorization other than a coaching authorization, issued by the board of educational examiners under chapter 272, to complete the Iowa reading research center dyslexia overview module. Such persons employed after July 1, 2024, shall complete the module within one year of the employee's initial date of hire.
>
> 279.72 By July 1, 2024, the board of directors of a school district shall require all persons employed by the school district who hold a teaching license with an endorsement for prekindergarten, prekindergarten or elementary special education, or prekindergarten through grade three levels issued under chapter 272, all practitioners and paraprofessionals assigned as Title I teachers and Title I paraprofessionals under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, Pub. L. No. 114-95, and all practitioners endorsed to teach English as a second language to complete the Iowa reading research center dyslexia overview module. Such persons employed by the school district after July 1, 2024, shall complete the module within one year of the employee's initial date of hire.

In response to these Iowa Code sections, the following data was collected.

Table 1. Dyslexia Overview Module Enrollment & Completion

Year (October-October)	Enrollment Count	Completion Count
2018-19	847	594
2019-20	3,947	3,570
2020-21	3,311	3,024
2021-22	3,550	3,332
2022-23	6,798	6,416
2023-24	18,326	17,316
2024-25	7,693	6,983
2025-26	5,026	4,343

From October 2018 through the close of this reporting period, the module recorded 49,498 enrollments and 45,578 completions, representing an overall completion-to-enrollment ratio of approximately 92%. The significant increase in participation beginning in 2023 reflects the date of completion requirement enacted in legislation. Continued access to the module supports the development of foundational knowledge about dyslexia among Iowa educators.

Department Initiatives Supporting Dyslexia & Literacy Instruction

In addition to the Board's work, the Department implemented statewide initiatives intended to strengthen evidence-based literacy instruction and improve supports for students with reading difficulties. The Department addressed many of the recommendations of the dyslexia task force, as well as additional recommendations made by the Board. These items are listed below.

- Reading Assistant tool (Amira)
  - Registered 164 school districts and 26 nonpublic schools to use the Reading Assistant tool, Amira, by February 2026, with increased participation through April, including a waiting list of approximately 200 schools.
  - Approved EPS Learning's Reading Assistant for all tiers of instruction.
- Dyslexia Professional Learning Plan
  - Developed the Reading Acquisition learning series for the Iowa Dyslexia Professional Learning Plan by the close of this reporting period; finalized and voted for distribution to Department leadership in February 2026.
- Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement and Stipend
  - Continued to expand the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement with university cohorts.
  - Supported House File 890 to develop a system and distribute a one-time Dyslexia Specialist endorsee stipend to Iowans holding the Dyslexia Specialist Endorsement.
- Dyslexia Handbook
  - Presented the newly developed and approved Iowa Dyslexia Handbook across Iowa to multiple stakeholder groups.

Areas for Continued Attention

Information presented to the Board during the 2025-26 academic year highlights progress in several areas, as well as opportunities for continued improvement.

The Board's four established priorities will continue to guide its work during the 2026-27 academic year:

1. Ensure dyslexia requirements and recommendations are communicated.
2. Ensure a consistent identification of, and response to, dyslexia.
3. Promote high-quality, dyslexia-related preservice and in-service learning for educators.
4. Collaborate to impact supports for students with dyslexia.

Conclusion

The Board continued its work during the 2025-26 academic year to support improved literacy instruction and educational opportunities for students with dyslexia.

Progress in educator preparation, statewide professional learning, dyslexia resources and collaboration among educational partners reflects Iowa's continued commitment to evidence-based literacy instruction.

As the Board moves into the 2026-27 academic year, its work will focus on promoting consistent practices, strengthening educator knowledge, improving communication and supporting collaboration to help ensure students with dyslexia receive appropriate instruction and support.

The Board remains committed to providing guidance and recommendations that advance these efforts and improve literacy outcomes for Iowa students.

Appendix A: 2026-27 Iowa Dyslexia Board Members

Note: “CSD” stands for “Community School District.”

Member Name	Legislated Representation
Dr. Kody Asmus Nevada CSD	School administrator
Bambi Boggs Des Moines Christian School	Decoding Dyslexia Iowa, individual with dyslexia
Kristen Craig Waukee CSD	Elementary literacy teacher
Katryn Dougherty Elk Horn CSD (EEHK CSD)	Reading specialist
Michelle Geistkemper Northeast Iowa Community College	Iowa institution of higher education
Tina Hadden Decoding Dyslexia Iowa	Decoding Dyslexia Iowa, parent of a child with dyslexia
Megan Hunemuller Decoding Dyslexia Iowa	Decoding Dyslexia Iowa, parent of a child with dyslexia
Nina Lorimor-Easley Consultant	Dyslexia interventionist, structured literacy practitioner
Bradley Niebling Iowa Reading Research Center	Iowa Reading Research Center
James Northwick Atlantic CSD	School administrator
Katy Severe Grand View University	Iowa institution of higher education
Wanda Steuri Department of Education	Iowa Department of Education dyslexia and Science of Reading consultant
Tina Wahlert Department of Education	Designee of the director of the Iowa Department of Education
Dr. Jill White Cedar Falls CSD	Special education administrator
Dr. Tammy Wilgenbusch University of Iowa Stead Family Department of Pediatrics	Iowa psychologist, speech language pathologist and dyslexia diagnostician

Shane Williams Mississippi Bend AEA	Iowa Area Education Agency
Dr. Leah Zimmermann Iowa Reading Research Center	Iowa Reading Research Center
Tom Wood Department of Education	Iowa Department of Education
Lindsay Harrison Department of Education	Iowa Department of Education