



December 9, 2014

Dear Iowa parents,

Reading is essential to your children's success in school and in life. In Iowa, we are working to make sure all children read well by the end of third grade, which is the pivotal time when students go from learning to read to reading to learn.

Research shows that children's third-grade reading skills can predict their future success, and proficient readers are more likely to graduate from high school and earn a good living. However, nearly 1 in 4 Iowa third graders did not meet reading expectations last year, according to state test results. We must help our students improve their reading skills.

That's why identifying struggling students starting in kindergarten and providing intensive intervention form the centerpiece of a 2012 state law to improve literacy. Iowa's new early warning system for literacy is helping schools across the state screen students, monitor their progress, and provide reading interventions in preschool through third grade.

Making sure parents or guardians are notified when their children need help and providing resources that families can use at home also are part of Iowa's 2012 law. I want to be sure you are aware of a state website where you can find those resources:

<https://iowacore.gov/parents-community>

This website includes a link to great materials provided by the Iowa Reading Research Center that will help you understand and work with your child on specific literacy skills. You can easily find activities based on your child's grade level or reading skill on the center's Family Resources page:

<http://www.iowareadingresearch.org/literacy-resources/teacher-family-resources/>

It is critical for us to work together early – especially in kindergarten, first and second grades – to make sure students develop the skills they need to succeed in reading. Starting in May 2017, children who are identified as substantially deficient in reading by the end of third grade must attend a summer reading program, or they will be retained in third grade unless they qualify for an exception. Prevention, not retention, is what everyone wants.

Giving Iowa students a world-class education is critical in today's knowledge-based economy, but that's not possible unless they can read. I look forward to working with you

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on this historic effort to help Iowa children read by the end of third grade. Thank you for helping us to meet this goal.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Buck". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Brad Buck, Ph.D.  
Director, Iowa Department of Education