

FORUM ON THIRD GRADE LITERACY

2013

# Ensuring World Class Readers



Friday, February 8, 2013

Des Moines, Iowa

# ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THIRD GRADE LITERACY IN IOWA

In October 2011, Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds presented a blueprint for education reform and excellence in Iowa – *One Unshakeable Vision: World-Class Schools for Iowa*. Included in the blueprint were a number of provisions to “ensure third-grade literacy.”

In December 2011, the Child and Family Policy Center, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance, United Way of Central Iowa, and the Business-Education Alliance sponsored a policy and research forum on third grade literacy, *Ensuring World Class Readers*, which fostered further dialogue on effective practices and policies to support struggling readers and improve third grade literacy in Iowa.

The 2012 Iowa General Assembly drew upon the Governor and Lieutenant Governor’s blueprint and the information from the forum to enact legislation to serve as the first phase of a broad education reform agenda – including a very detailed division devoted to third grade literacy. While the debate over provisions related to third grade retention drew much of the media attention, the division included new expectations for schools to respond early to struggling readers to dramatically increase the proportion of students reading proficiently by the end of third grade and required additional summer instruction to those not yet proficient. In addition, the General Assembly provided \$2 million in funding for a Reading Research Center to diffuse best practices and promote evidenced-based early elementary educational actions to improve student literacy, with a particular focus upon struggling readers.

In January 2013, Governor Branstad and Lieutenant Governor Reynolds provided a legislative brief for the second phase of education reform – *Building World Class Schools*. The key component, a new teacher leadership and compensation system, promotes teaching excellence and expanded in-classroom mentoring and guidance to teachers, particularly new teachers, from designated mentor and lead teachers selected for their teaching excellence. While the teacher leadership and compensation system is not specific to early elementary education and the development of literacy, it offers additional resources and leadership to improve early literacy. The Governor’s budget also includes continued funding for the Reading Research Center.

In the fall of 2012, six Iowa communities were designated as charter members of the Grade-Level Reading Campaign network, with four receiving All-America City status for this work. Each has been pursuing actions to expand the community’s role in ensuring children are healthy and prepared for success when they enter kindergarten, receive appropriate after school and summer learning programs to ensure their progress, and are regularly in school and do not suffer from chronic elementary absenteeism.

This year’s *Third Grade Literacy Forum* builds upon the first forum. In particular, the forum explores further roles communities can play in supporting school initiatives to improve third grade literacy and how additional state educational reforms can best promote third grade literacy.

# SPEAKERS

## Barbara O'Brien

President, Get Smart Schools

National Policy Director, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading



Barbara O'Brien is the President of Get Smart Schools. She also serves as the National Policy Director for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

O'Brien served as Lt. Governor of Colorado from 2007 to 2011. Prior to that, she served for 16 years as President of the Colorado Children's Campaign, a statewide public policy and advocacy organization. Most recently, she was a Senior Policy Fellow at The Piton Foundation from 2011 to 2012 working on early childhood education and third grade reading proficiency. Her leadership has led to the creation of the Colorado Preschool Program, the establishment of Colorado's first statewide full-day kindergarten program, the Early Childhood Leadership Commission, new standards and assessments for preschool through high school, a framework for educator evaluation that became a model for other states, options for dual enrollment in high school and community college, health care for uninsured children

and mental health services for adolescents. O'Brien also played a lead role in two successful statewide ballot initiatives, Amendment 23 that increased funding for public education and Amendment 35 that increased tobacco taxes with the revenue earmarked for health care.

## Linda Fandel

Special Assistant for Education

Branstad-Reynolds Administration



Linda Fandel has been special assistant for education in the Branstad-Reynolds Administration since January 2011. Previously, she was editorial-page editor at The Des Moines Register, where she won national awards for her multi-year project looking at how Iowa – and the nation – could have world-class schools. The project took her to high-performing schools in Finland, Alberta, Canada, and the United States. Before that, she covered education issues at the Register for more than two decades for the news and opinion sections.

Fandel earned a B.A. in political science with honors from Scripps College in Claremont, Calif. She did graduate work in Russian studies at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

She is married to Gary Fandel, a photographer and writer for the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation. They have two children in college.

# AGENDA

**9:00 a.m.**      **Welcome and Overview of the Forum**  
(Oak/Willow)    Charlie Bruner, Child and Family Policy Center  
Indira Blazevic, Iowa Afterschool Alliance  
Elisabeth Buck, United Way of Central Iowa

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**9:15 a.m.**      **Keynote Address**  
Hon. Barbara O'Brien, National Policy Director, Campaign for Grade-Level Reading  
"Campaign for Grade-Level Reading: Opportunities for Iowa"

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**10:00 a.m.**      **Community Leadership and Action: Iowa's Campaign  
for Grade-Level Reading Network**

Charter Member Highlights

*The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is a collaborative effort by dozens of funders and nonprofit partners across the nation to ensure that more of our low-income children succeed in school and graduate prepared for college, a career, and active citizenship. The Campaign focuses on the most important predictor of school success and high-school graduation: grade level reading by the end of third grade. In 2012, 124 communities across the nation submitted "Community Solution Action Plans" to address third grade reading proficiency. The plans were submitted as part of the All America Cities award competition. Six communities in Iowa submitted plans. Four were named finalists for the All-America Cities award for grade level reading and three communities won the award. In addition, two communities in Iowa received Pacesetter awards from the Campaign for their leadership in addressing school readiness and summer learning loss. These six communities present an impressive body of work underway to address grade level reading and continue as part of a national network of Grade-Level Reading Campaign charter communities.*

**Ames:** Jill Alexander and Carolyn Jons

**Council Bluffs:** Martha Bruckner

**Des Moines:** Kate Bennett and Bergetta Beardsley

**Dubuque:** Eric Dregne

**Marshalltown:** Arlene McAtee and Sue Martin

**Quad Cities:** Alex Kolker

**11:30**  
(hall pickup)

**Lunch**

**12:00**      **Break-Out Sessions:** These workshops provide the opportunity for more in-depth discussions in key areas related to third grade literacy. Resource panels, made up of community and state leaders, will describe cutting-edge work and lessons learned focused on afterschool and summer programming; data and information systems; dual language learners; and family engagement.

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*Swartz Room*    **When school is out: Afterschool and summer programming for struggling readers.**

**Resource Panel:**

Kate Bennett, United Way of Central Iowa  
Martha Bruckner, Council Bluffs Schools  
Shirley Horstman, Dubuque Schools

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*Walsh Room*    **A focus on impact and continuous improvement: Data and information systems which inform and improve results.**

**Resource Panel:**

Ananda Subramanian, United Way of Central Iowa  
Alex Kolker, United Way of the Quad Cities Area

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*Oak Room*    **'Aprender a Leer': School and community roles in supporting dual language learners.**

**Resource Panel:**

Arlene McAtee, Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc.  
Cindy Wissler, Monroe Elementary, Des Moines  
Peter Jones, Promethean

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*Willow Room*    **Parents as first teachers: Family engagement from birth and into the early elementary years.**

**Resource Panel:**

Eric Dregne, Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque  
Carolyn Jons, Raising Readers in Story County, Ames  
Carrie Soddors, Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc., Marshalltown

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**1:10 p.m.**    **Third Grade Literacy and the 2013 Legislative Session**

*Oak/Willow*

Amy Williamson and Michelle Hosp, Iowa Department of Education  
"Update: Iowa's Reading Research Center"

Introduction: Elliott Smith, Iowa Business Council  
Linda Fandel, Special Assistant for Education, Office of the Governor  
"Literacy and the Next Steps in Education Reform"

**Response Panel:**

Senator Herman Quirnbach, Chair, Senate Education Committee  
Representative Kevin Koester, Member, House Education Committee

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**2:30 p.m.**    **Forum and Participant Questions and Remarks**

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**3:00 p.m.**    **Final Thoughts: Barbara O'Brien and Charlie Bruner**

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Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden  
909 Robert D. Ray Drive  
Des Moines, Iowa

## Forum Sponsors



Child and Family Policy Center – Des Moines, Iowa – [www.cfpciowa.org](http://www.cfpciowa.org)

Iowa Afterschool Alliance – [www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org](http://www.iowaafterschoolalliance.org)

United Way of Central Iowa – [www.unitedwaydm.org](http://www.unitedwaydm.org)

In cooperation with State Public Policy Group – Des Moines – [www.sppg.com](http://www.sppg.com)

