

# **Key Legislative Reading Issues 2007**

January, 2007

**Governmental Relations Committee  
International Reading Association  
Key Legislative Reading Issues  
2007**

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## Executive Summary

The International Reading Association Government Relations Committee sent a Zoomerang Survey to state council presidents, state council coordinators, state legislative chairs, and other state leaders in November 2006. A copy of the survey is included in the Appendix.

Two types of data analysis were utilized in preparing this report. Quantitative results involved the priority ranking of 10 issues: 1) Availability of reading instructional materials, 2) Federal legislation, 3) Initial preparation, 4) Reading certification/licenses, 5) Reading needs of specialized populations, 6) State governmental affairs, 7) State reading issues, 8) State reading standards and tests, 9) Sufficient funding for current books and other print materials, and 10) Support for students reading well below their grade placement. Qualitative results included comments in all the above areas, most important state issues, and how the International Reading Association could be of help.

## Results, Conclusions, and Legislative Implications

Respondents marked 54 percent of their responses as high priority, 35 percent as average priority, and 10 percent low priority. State reading standards and tests and federal legislation were ranked as the highest priority areas as was the case in 2006. The largest change from 2006 to 2007 was initial preparation that dropped from third in 2006 to eighth in 2007. Three of the areas, availability of reading instructional materials, initial preparation, and sufficient funding for current books and other print materials received more average priority than high priority marks. The areas are listed below in priority rank for all respondents with the most frequent comments concerning each area.

- 1. State Reading Standards and Tests.** State standards are excellent, but less testing and more teaching are needed. Tests should provide meaningful results that can impact reading instruction.
- 2. Federal Legislation.** There are not sufficient funds to support federal initiatives. Too much time is needed to meet the demands of federal programs.
- 3. Reading Needs of Specialized Populations.** Adolescent reading needs attention. Preschool and all day kindergarten programs should be expanded. More programs are needed for bilingual education. College reading courses should emphasize specialized populations. Reading teachers and reading materials are needed for schools with high poverty.
- 4. Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement.** States should develop plans for supporting struggling readers and fund the plans. Teachers who provide intervention for struggling readers should have reading certification/licenses. Reading instruction using licensed reading teachers should be provided for middle school students and high school struggling readers.

5. **State Governmental Affairs.** State councils should make state governmental affairs a high priority. State councils should ensure that members are involved in working with their state legislatures and state departments of education.

6. **State Reading Issues.** Some states have identified and addressed reading issues, others have not. Many issues are unresolved. The most important state issues are funding, closing the achievement gap for struggling readers, NCLB, professional development, licensing, and mandated programs and materials.

7. **Reading Certification/Licenses.** Maintain high quality and stringent rules for reading teachers and reading specialists. States and the federal government should provide encouragement and incentives for schools to hire reading specialists.

8. **Initial Preparation.** College training in reading is inadequate for new teachers.

9. **Availability of Reading Instructional Materials.** Reading instructional materials are available in most states, but there is inequality in funding both in states and among states. Inappropriately mandated materials are a concern.

10. **Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials.** School libraries receive inadequate support. There is not enough funding for classroom collections.

A total of 26 states with respondents that listed the most important reading issues in their states. In some states a group worked together for their state response. In most states individuals responded on their own. All responses are listed in Table 9. While there are many different issues provided by respondents, the most frequently mentioned were funding, closing the achievement gap for struggling readers, NCLB, scripted programs, adolescent reading, language issues, and professional development.

## **How the IRA Can Help State Councils**

The most frequently mentioned suggestions of ways that the IRA can be of help to states councils are by:

- providing position statements and research on best practices to school administrators, members of Congress, and state governments;
- continuing to respond to requests for specific information and guidance in handling situations;.
- continuing to seek revision of NCLB;
- continuing to provide quality periodicals and books, position statements, and information concerning new mandates by the federal government to state councils;
- providing articles of successful programs and contacts in Reading Today;
- promoting the position of reading specialist;
- putting more attention on reading as a discipline; and
- continuing to provide excellent professional development opportunities.

## Legislative Implications

**Availability of Reading Instructional Materials.** State councils should support legislation to make appropriate reading instructional materials available to all schools.

**Federal Legislation.** The IRA should continue to seek changes in NCLB and other federal programs that involve reading. State councils should work with the IRA concerning federal programs and respond to IRA requests for assistance. State councils should work with their state governments to provide best practices for federal programs.

**Initial Preparation.** IRA should provide information to state councils about best practices in preparing teachers to teach reading. State councils should work within their states to develop state reading license/certification programs that measure up to IRA recommendations.

**Reading Certification/Licenses.** IRA should promote the use of trained reading teachers for work in federal reading programs. State councils should be aware of reading certification/License programs in other states and advocate what is best for their states.

**Reading Needs of Specialized Populations.** State councils should focus on the reading needs of all specialized populations using IRA materials for professional development. State councils should seek funding for programs from their state legislatures.

**State Governmental Affairs.** State councils should continue to provide advocacy awards and used IRA recommendations for working with state governments including lobbying legislators, working with other organizations, and keeping members informed through meetings, newsletters, and Web pages.

**State Reading Issues.** The IRA should continue to provide position papers and other information about state reading issues in various states. State councils should provide a way for members to study reading issues and to determine those that should be pursued by the state legislative committee and members.

**State Reading Standards and Tests.** State councils should seek to have input as standards and tests are revised. State councils should work with members to determine what is best for the reading programs in the state and present the results to the state.

**Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials.** State councils should work with state school library organizations to promote the need for current books and other print materials for school libraries. IRA and the American Library Association should provide current information to state councils about the funding of library print materials in various states.

**Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement.** IRA and state councils should promote the need for skilled reading teachers to provide reading instruction to struggling readers. IRA should seek federal funding for reading teachers to provide instruction for struggling readers beyond elementary schools. State councils should seek funding for struggling readers within their states.

# **Key Legislative Reading Issues 2007**

The charges for the 2006-2007 Government Relations Committee are as follows:

1. Collaborate with the Title I Committee in advocacy efforts for the reauthorization of Title I, Reading First, IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act), and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.
2. Develop a system to collect information about emerging needs in the literacy community that can be turned into legislative action.
3. Working with staff, provide a support system for state-level grassroots advocacy which includes:
  - a. the development of advocacy models for use at the state level: and
  - b. the development of brief talking point papers for influencing legislative action.
4. Work with staff to implement and expand the participation of new attendees, at legislative workshops.
5. Work with staff to continue the Advocacy Awards program.
6. Work with the Washington office of IRA and a select group of IRA Board members to identify legislative issues and set priorities annually.

Based on these charges, the Government Relations Committee developed this report of key legislative reading issues.

## **Results of Previous Surveys**

In 2003 the key state issues were funding/budget, Reading First and No Child Left Behind, and high stakes assessment.

In 2004 the top five key issues were No Child Left Behind, high stakes and other testing, accountability, adequate funding, and highly qualified teachers.

In 2005 the top five key issues were No Child Left Behind, testing, accountability, highly qualified teachers, and standards/benchmarks.

In 2006 the top five key issues were federal legislation, state reading standards and tests, initial preparation of teachers, support for students reading well below their grade placements, and reading needs of specialized populations.

## Methodology

State council presidents and vice presidents, state IRA coordinators, and state legislative chairs were sent a Zoomerang Survey from the International Reading Association in November 2006. The survey requested information from respondents concerning their state positions, professional positions, availability of reading instructional materials, federal legislation, initial preparation, reading certification/licenses, reading needs of specialized populations, state governmental affairs, state reading issues, state reading standards and tests, sufficient funding for current books and other print materials, support for students reading well below their grade placement, other issues, the most important reading issue in states, and how the International Reading Association could be of help. A total of 41 surveys representing 27 states were returned

## Quantitative Results

### Priority Ranking

Respondents ranked the following areas: a) availability of reading instructional materials, b) federal legislation, c) initial preparation, d) reading certification/licenses, e) reading needs of specialized populations, f) state governmental affairs, g) state reading issues, h) state reading standards and tests, i) sufficient funding for current books and other print materials, and j) support for students reading well below their grade placement. Each area was rated high priority, average priority, or low priority marks.

Table 1 shows the priority ranking by all respondents. Respondents marked 54 percent of their responses as high priority, 35 percent as average priority, and 10 percent low priority. State reading standards and tests and federal legislation were ranked as the highest priority areas as was the case in 2006. The largest change from 2006 to 2007 was initial preparation that dropped from third in 2006 to eighth in 2007. Three of the areas, availability of reading instructional materials, initial preparation, and sufficient funding for current books and other print materials received more average priority than high priority marks.

**Table 1.** Priority Ranking by All Respondents

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	15	23	3
Federal Legislation	32	8	1
Initial Preparation	18	19	4
Reading Certification/Licenses	22	16	3
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	26	12	3
State Governmental Affairs	20	13	7
State Reading Issues	20	13	7
State Reading Standards and Tests	34	6	1
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	12	18	11
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement	23	15	3
Total* No response 2	222 (54%)	143 (35%)	43 (11%)

Table 2 shows the priority ranking by state council presidents. The areas with the highest priority are state reading standards and tests, federal legislation, and state governmental affairs. The areas with the lowest priority are availability of reading instructional materials, reading certification/licenses, and sufficient funding for current books and other print materials.

**Table 2.** Priority Ranking by State Council Presidents.

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	3	7	1
Federal Legislation	8	3	
Initial Preparation	4	7	
Reading Certification/Licenses	3	7	1
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	5	5	1
State Governmental Affairs	8	1	2
State Reading Issues	4	6	
State Reading Standards and Tests	9	2	
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	3	4	4
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement	5	5	1
Total*	52 (48%)	47 (43%)	10 (9%)
* No response 1			

Table 3 shows the priority ranking by state IRA coordinators. The areas with the highest priority are state reading standards and tests and federal legislation. The area with the lowest priority is sufficient funding for current books and other print materials.

**Table 3.** Priority Ranking by State IRA Coordinators

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	7	6	1
Federal Legislation	12	2	
Initial Preparation	5	7	2
Reading Certification/Licenses	9	4	1
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	9	5	
State Governmental Affairs	4	8	1
State Reading Issues	7	5	1
State Reading Standards and Tests	13	1	
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	3	6	5
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement	9	4	1
Total*	78 (56%)	48 (35%)	12 (9%)
*No Response 2			

Table 4 shows the priority ranking by state legislative chairs. The areas with the highest priority are federal legislation, reading needs of specialized populations, and state reading standards and tests. The area with the lowest priority is the availability of reading instructional materials.

**Table 4.** Priority Ranking by State Legislative Chairs.

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	3	8	1
Federal Legislation	10	2	
Initial Preparation	6	4	2
Reading Certification/Licenses	7	4	1
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	9	1	2
State Governmental Affairs	6	1	4
State Reading Issues	6	4	1
State Reading Standards and Tests	9	2	1
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	4	6	2
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement	6	5	1
Total*	66 (56%)	37 (31%)	15 (13%)
No response 2			

Table 5 shows the priority ranking by other state leaders. More areas were rated as high priority.

**Table 5.** Priority Ranking by Other State Leaders

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	2	2	
Federal Legislation	2	1	1
Initial Preparation	3	1	
Reading Certification/Licenses	3	1	
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	3	1	
State Governmental Affairs	2	2	
State Reading Issues	3	1	
State Reading Standards and Tests	3	1	
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	2	2	
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement	3	1	
Total	26 (65%)	12 (33%)	1 (3%)

Table 6 shows the priority ranking by those respondents identified as P-12 educators. The areas with the highest priority are federal legislation and state reading standards and tests. The area with the lowest priority was sufficient funding for current books and other print materials.

**Table 6.** Priority Ranking by P-12 Educators

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	9	18	3
Federal Legislation	24	6	
Initial Preparation	9	17	4
Reading Certification/Licenses	11	15	4
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	17	10	3
State Governmental Affairs	13	9	7
State Reading Issues	11	14	1
State Reading Standards and Tests	24	5	1
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	5	14	11
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement	15	12	3
Total*	138 (47%)	120 (41%)	37 (12%)
*No response 5			

Table 7 shows the priority ranking by college professors. The areas with the highest priority are reading certification/licenses, reading needs of specialized populations, and state reading standards and tests. The areas with the lowest priority are availability of reading instructional materials and sufficient funding for current books and other print materials.

**Table 7.** Priority Ranking by College Professors

Area	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
Availability of Reading Instructional Materials	6	5	
Federal Legislation	8	2	1
Initial Preparation	8	3	
Reading Certification/Licenses	10	1	
Reading Needs of Specialized Populations	10	1	
State Governmental Affairs	7	4	
State Reading Issues	8	3	
State Reading Standards and Tests	10	1	
Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials	7	4	
Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade	9	2	
Total	83 (75%)	26 (24%)	1 (1%)

## Qualitative Results

The 41 respondents to the survey provided 246 comments concerning the reading priorities in their states. Responses to the survey were categorized into 11 themes: a) availability of reading instructional materials, b) federal legislation, c) initial preparation, d) reading certification/licenses, e) reading needs of specialized populations, f) state governmental affairs, g) state reading issues, h) state reading standards and tests, i) sufficient funding for current books and other print materials, j) support for students reading well below their grade placement, and k) other reading issues. The responses were additionally categorized into sub themes for each major theme. Those sub themes are listed in Table 8 below.

**Table 8.** Themes in Survey Comments

Theme	Frequency	Sub Themes	
<b>Availability of Reading Instructional Materials</b>	6	Materials are available	
	4	Inequality of funding	
	4	Limited funds	
	3	Middle and high school materials are needed	
	3	Supplementary reading materials not available	
	2	Districts make own choices	
	2	Inappropriately mandated materials	
	1	Struggle to find the right mix for students	
	Total 25		
	<b>Federal Legislation</b>	4	Federal legislation has helped put emphasis on reading
3		Funding is not adequate for federal programs	
3		Too much testing	
2		NCLB law puts too much pressure on teachers	
2		Schools are making bad decisions in response to federal legislation	
		Almost no Title I help available beyond elementary schools	
1		Developing collaboration with others to influence the reauthorization of NCLB	
		Federal legislation has increased accountability of teachers	
1		Federal programs too restrictive	
		Focus is only on elementary grades	
1		Greater attention is needed on teacher preparation	
		Lack of Spanish programs	
1		Reading First is making a positive difference	
1		Schools more concerned about meeting individual student's needs than before	
1		AYP	
1		State education office is more constrained than the national Reading First guidance requires	
1		State reading policy and curriculum decided by non-reading certified individuals	
	There is a need for a more balanced approach to implementation of NCLB		
1	Too much emphasis on scripted programs		
1			
1			
1			
Total 27			
<b>Initial Preparation</b>	9	Inadequate college training in reading for new teachers	
		Ongoing professional development and mentoring are needed	
	3	The state is moving to mandate more reading courses	
		Colleges are preparing good reading teachers	
	3	Most colleges are not offering programs leading to state reading licenses	
	Elementary and middle school teachers need reading licenses		
2	Middle school reading needs to be taught across the content areas		
1	Not much action taking place with key policymakers		

<b>Initial Preparation Continued</b>	1 1 1 1 1 1 Total 24	Reading requirements for initial preparation have been improved National Certification of Teachers is high priority for state Teacher candidates benefit from participating in a professional development school field experience
<b>Reading Certification/ Licenses</b>	3 2 2 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 Total 22	Certification of literacy coaches without reading certification Mandate that all reading positions must have reading licenses State requirements are appropriate States should require more credits for reading certification Difficulty in working with certification board Many opportunities for teachers More high quality reading specialists needed NCLB should require reading certification Reading educators need comprehensive and balanced perspective of reading Reading licenses now available for primary, intermediate, middle and high school teachers Reading specialists become administrators instead of helping teachers State actions are that anyone can teach students to read State has high professional standards for reading certification State has high quality and stringent rules for reading certification State has new licenses for Reading First reading coaches State may merge reading specialist and consultant certifications State offers reading specialist endorsement
<b>Reading Needs of Specialized Populations</b>	7 4 2 2 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 Total 28	State is focusing on adolescent reading Pre-kindergarten classes needed Boys need special reading attention Need to help second language learners State needs to focus on adolescent reading All secondary teachers need to participate in reading courses ECE certification is mandated for 2009 Funding is needed for adolescent reading Increasing number of students that need English instruction Many districts have funding from Reading First More diversity in staffing Native American subgroups are a high need category Need reading courses that focus on specialized populations Research needed to find appropriate programs and placement of ELL students The specialized populations are increasing in our schools Under funded initiatives
<b>State Governmental Affairs</b>	8 2 2 2 2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 Total 28	State council is becoming more active in state legislative issues Little is being done State and state council totally disconnected State and state council work closely together Teachers too busy to advocate to legislative decision makers Early literacy has high priority in state Exploring joint ventures for addressing reading issues IRA liaison keeps members informed about state issues Outside groups not receptive to state council issues State council should provide more information to members



<b>Other Issues</b>	4	State council and state government not working together
	2	Inadequate funding
	2	Professional development
	2	State tests inappropriate
	1	Border issues for ELL
	1	Changes in NCLB
	1	Class size too large
	1	Difficulty finding highly qualified teachers
	1	Disparity among districts regarding federal mandates
	1	ELL reading staff development
	1	Need literacy coaching research and support
	1	Professional development to help struggling readers
	1	State council needs to work with other professional organizations to formulate sound policy
	1	Teacher preparation of content area at secondary level
Total 20		

Survey comments indicated the following:

**Availability of Reading Instructional Materials:** Materials are available in many states, but others have limited funds. There is inequality of funding among districts. Supplementary reading materials are not available, especially at the middle and high school levels.

**Federal Legislation:** Federal legislation has helped put emphasis on reading, especially at the elementary school level, but funding is not adequate for programs, including those for secondary schools. The amount of required testing is a concern.

**Initial Preparation:** The initial preparation of teachers in reading is inadequate. Schools should provide ongoing professional development and mentoring.

**Reading Certification/Licenses:** Literacy coaches should have reading certification. Some state requirements are appropriate while others should require more reading courses.

**Reading Needs of Specialized Populations:** States should focus on adolescent reading. Pre-kindergarten classes are needed. More help is needed for boys and for second language learners.

**State Governmental Affairs:** State councils are more active in state legislative issues, but some state councils are finding it difficult to work with state governments

**State Reading Issues:** Some state councils are effective in getting reading legislation passed while others have not resolved issues including funding, professional development, and narrowing of curriculum.

**State Reading Standards and Tests:** State testing is driving the reading programs. There are high standards but inadequate funding.

**Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials:** More funding is needed for school libraries.

**Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement:** Programs that are available are effective, but more funding is needed to provide support for more students, especially for middle and high school struggling readers.

**Other Issues:** State councils and state government are not working together. There is concern about state testing, funding, and professional development.

## Most Important State Issues

A total of 26 states with respondents that listed the most important reading issues in their states. In some states a group worked together for their state response. In most states individuals responded on their own. All responses are listed in Table 9. While there are many different issues provided by respondents, the most frequently mentioned were funding, closing the achievement gap for struggling readers, NCLB, scripted programs, adolescent reading, language issues, and professional development.

**Table 9.** Most Important Reading Issue by State

WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT READING ISSUE IN YOUR STATE?	
<b>ARIZONA</b>	1. Language issues-not being able to teach in native languages.
<b>ARKANSAS</b>	1. The pressure of districts having to adopt scripted programs. 2. Time. For most teachers it is the time issue of getting all the required lessons in for each day.
<b>COLORADO</b>	1. State is currently being driven by an extremely conservative Commissioner of Education. He does not value the input of teachers or reading professionals. He has a reading directorate composed primarily of special ed folks. He is pushing to have Open Court
<b>CONNECTICUT</b>	1. For some districts, it is the push by administrators to use scripted programs. We also have an alternate route for certification (Reading Specialist) being given by a school that doesn't seem to be equipped to deliver such a program
<b>GEORGIA</b>	1. Funding and teacher training are equally important.
<b>ILLINOIS</b>	1. Regulating NCLB so that it measures student growth in a more wholistic way.
<b>INDIANA</b>	1. Books for School Libraries 2. We need a requirement that all elementary and middle school teachers must have a reading teacher license. Maybe then teachers would be better prepared to teach reading and their own subject areas.
<b>IOWA</b>	1. ELL Reading assistance in rural classrooms
<b>KANSAS</b>	1. Bringing up the low readers and finding ways to help students master the state assessments.
<b>KENTUCKY</b>	1. Intervention for all students, continued funding for professional development in reading/literacy at all levels, effective uses of assessment and how it should inform instruction
<b>LOUISIANA</b>	1. We have a very high drop-out rate, and high levels of illiteracy; Therefore, we need to be more successful while we have students in school. New teachers need to

	be adequately prepared to teach reading strategies. For seasoned teachers, we need up-dated effective Professional Development that will provide teachers with a VARIETY of intervention strategies to use with students. We need more support personnel in schools in terms of specialized reading professionals for those students who just do not seem to be making progress. Then if students make it through the primary grades and are still struggling, we need professionals trained in working with adolescents with reading difficulties.
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>	1. Funding for adequate literacy programs, mismanagement of reading initiatives 2. The K-3 Reading First initiative that is affecting beginning readers from receiving a balanced literacy education.
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	1. The most immediate issue is assisting teacher in understanding and teaching the new High School Curriculum, which places a focus on rigorous reading expectations. 2. Narrowing the achievement gap for students who are "behind" in reading; adolescent literacy - we're losing these kids!!!!
<b>MISSISSIPPI</b>	1. Funding for pre-School
<b>MONTANA</b>	1. Meeting NCLB demands
<b>NEBRASKA</b>	1. Having all languages and levels of ability reach their highest potential 2. As with all states, the NCLB and Reading First initiatives are restrictive in the fact that federal funds are tied to the program we use. We are not free to use what would be best for our children.
<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b>	1. Educational funding; in the middle and upper grades I believe content area reading
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	1. In each district's view it is to have all students be Proficient on the NJASK test. How to get students there is the question.
<b>NEW YORK</b>	1. Reading Intervention by trained specialists 2. Students with reading concerns need to be serviced by professionals with exceptional knowledge in reading. 3. Restoring knowledge of reading to our State Education offices.
<b>NORTH DAKOTA</b>	1. Helping teachers with the adjustments needed for AYP, high stakes testing and quality instruction.
<b>OREGON</b>	1. Money for education, and for broadly trained classroom and reading teachers.
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>	1. The accountability requirements of NCLB.
<b>TEXAS</b>	1. To keep the funding of instructional materials under the State Board of Education and not the legislature. 2. NCLB and its implementation
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	1. More teachers need to learn how to be advocates for children, reading, and books.
<b>WISCONSIN</b>	1. NCLB

<b>WYOMING</b>	1. I feel our biggest issue is that the state government agencies do not understand what teaching and learning is all about. Many of them have never worked with kids and don't "get it" when we tell them that their tests are horrible and don't measure growth correctly.
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Table 10 provides the most important reading issues by IRA regions. The states in the various regions are **East:** Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont; **Great Lakes:** Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin; **Plains:** Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota; **Rocky Mountain:** Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming; **Southeast:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia; **Southwest:** Arizona, Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas; and **West:** Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Washington.

**Table 10.** Most Important Reading Issues by IRA Regions

<b>IRA Region</b>	<b>Reading Issues</b>
<b>East</b>	Alternate route for certification Balanced literacy education Content area reading Funding Knowledge of reading needed for state education office Making all students proficient on state test Mismanagement of reading initiatives Trained specialists for reading intervention Use of scripted programs
<b>Great Lakes</b>	Adolescent literacy Books for school libraries NCLB Professional development Reading licenses for teachers Regulating NCLB for better student measures Struggling readers

<b>Plains</b>	ELL reading assistance in rural classrooms Ensure that students reach highest potential NCLB and Reading First restrict options Professional development Struggling readers
<b>Rocky Mountain</b>	Inappropriate direction from state NCLB Problem with state government agencies
<b>Southeast</b>	Funding Funding for preschool Intervention for all students Low dropout rate Professional development Professional development Teacher training
<b>Southwest</b>	Funding of instructional materials Language issues NCLB Scripted programs Time for required lessons
<b>West</b>	Funding for education Professional development Teacher training

Table 11 lists ways in which the International Reading Association can continue to be of help. Comments suggests that the IRA should:

- provide position statements and research on best practices to school administrators, members of Congress, and state governments;
- continue to respond to requests for specific information and guidance in handling situations;.
- continue to seek revision of NCLB;
- continue to provide quality periodicals and books, position statements, and information concerning new mandates by the federal government to state councils;
- provide articles of successful programs and contacts in Reading Today;
- promote the position of reading specialist;
- put more attention on reading as a discipline; and
- continue to provide excellent professional development opportunities.

**Table 11.** State Suggestions for How the International Reading Association Can Be of Help

<b>ARIZONA</b>	1. Do not "rubber stamp" reauthorization of NCLB.
<b>ARKANSAS</b>	1. Work on educating folks in the House and Senate that it isn't the programs that teacher children, it is the teachers.
<b>CONNECTICUT</b>	1. Get the research on best practices out to administrators. They all seem to be listening to special education lately not the Reading Specialists/Consultants

<b>GEORGIA</b>	1. Continue to provide quality periodicals and books. Continue to support the state reading council with board members who are willing to come to our state conferences.
<b>ILLINOIS</b>	1. Ideas given by people in IRA can give alternatives to many of the NCLB issues
<b>INDIANA</b>	1. Provide information from states where they have found ways to provide school libraries with current, appealing, high-interest, and useful books. 2. Push, push, push the important issues and publicize
<b>IOWA</b>	1. Provide articles of successful programs and contacts in Reading Today publication
<b>KANSAS</b>	1. The IRA provides a wealth of materials and resources that benefit a teacher who is searching for ways to enhance what is happening in the classroom. It takes commitment from teachers to want to make a difference (not all teachers share that desire). Being a member of IRA and using the publications they provide is important.
<b>KENTUCKY</b>	1. Publish materials, like your position statements for state affiliates to share. Come to our conferences to speak out on some of these issues Attend special events in states that are active Continue to host the IRA Governmental Relations Workshop
<b>LOUISIANA</b>	1. Please provide information concerning new mandates by the federal government, and new information about effective practices concerning the teaching of reading. Please contact state legislators and inform them of the benefits of IRA and state reading associations. It seems that we could be so much more successful if we were all on the same page. Also, we need effective professional development on a variety of reading strategies that improve reading achievement.
<b>MASSACHUSETTS</b>	1. Continue to provide us with current information on issues and legislation, position papers. Continue to respond to our request for specific information, an guidance in handling situations. 2. Continue the initiative that will keep the federal and state lawmakers abreast of NCLB/RF issues, especially the need to monitor the USDE and state departments of education.
<b>MICHIGAN</b>	1. Continued guidance for the teaching of adolescent literacy. 2. Continue to be a strong voice for our children!!!
<b>MONTANA</b>	1. Continue to keep pressure on Congress to revise NCLB and to base academics on student growth rather than student age.
<b>NEBRASKA</b>	1. Speak up for the teachers and promote the family as being the first teachers and the most important early influence in a child's life.
<b>NEW JERSEY</b>	1. Keep emphasize in your publications: Parent responsibility to send the child ready to learn. If not schools are behind from day one. Boys and Literacy especially minority and English language needs students.

<b>NEW YORK</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Through Advocacy</li> <li>2. Further promote the position of reading specialists.</li> <li>3. Put more attention on reading as a discipline and less on forming alliances with other organizations. It is important to work together with other professional groups, but let's not lose sight of the uniqueness of what we do and the knowledge we need to have to do it well.</li> </ol>
<b>NORTH DAKOTA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue with excellent professional development opportunities.</li> </ol>
<b>OREGON</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue your good work of advocating for excellent reading instruction, and holding the line on unethical commerce among book salespeople and government programs.</li> </ol>
<b>PENNSYLVANIA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IRA regularly provides PA with support through its conference speakers and other services.</li> </ol>
<b>TEXAS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide any kind of information that might help us convince legislators that this move would not be wise.</li> <li>2. Continue to collect information and use it to develop position statements and to prepare individuals to use it in Congress and in their respective state governmental offices.</li> </ol>
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. IRA offers wonderful training Washington DC and at Leadership Development meetings but that training does not reach the general membership.</li> </ol>
<b>WISCONSIN</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborate with other professional organizations like NCTE to significantly influence a complete revision of NCLB or its elimination.</li> </ol>
<b>WYOMING</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Help be involved in the politics of getting rid of the federal mandated testing, NCLB etc.</li> </ol>

## **Results, Conclusions, and Legislative Implications**

Respondents marked 54 percent of their responses as high priority, 35 percent as average priority, and 10 percent low priority. State reading standards and tests and federal legislation were ranked as the highest priority areas as was the case in 2006. The largest change from 2006 to 2007 was initial preparation that dropped from third in 2006 to eighth in 2007. Three of the areas, availability of reading instructional materials, initial preparation, and sufficient funding for current books and other print materials received more average priority than high priority marks. The areas are listed below in priority rank for all respondents with the most frequent comments concerning each area.

- 1. State Reading Standards and Tests.** State standards are excellent, but less testing and more teaching are needed. Tests should provide meaningful results that can impact reading instruction.
- 2. Federal Legislation.** There are not sufficient funds to support federal initiatives. Too much time is needed to meet the demands of federal programs.
- 3. Reading Needs of Specialized Populations.** Adolescent reading needs attention. Preschool and all day kindergarten programs should be expanded. More programs are needed for bilingual

education. College reading courses should emphasize specialized populations. Reading teachers and reading materials are needed for schools with high poverty.

4. **Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement.** States should develop plans for supporting struggling readers and fund the plans. Teachers who provide intervention for struggling readers should have reading certification/licenses. Reading instruction using licensed reading teachers should be provided for middle school students and high school struggling readers.

5. **State Governmental Affairs.** State councils should make state governmental affairs a high priority. State councils should ensure that members are involved in working with their state legislatures and state departments of education.

5. **State Reading Issues.** Some states have identified and addressed reading issues, others have not. Many issues are unresolved. The most important state issues are funding, closing the achievement gap for struggling readers, NCLB, professional development, licensing, and mandated programs and materials.

7. **Reading Certification/Licenses.** Maintain high quality and stringent rules for reading teachers and reading specialists. States and the federal government should provide encouragement and incentives for schools to hire reading specialists.

8. **Initial Preparation.** College training in reading is inadequate for new teachers.

9. **Availability of Reading Instructional Materials.** Reading instructional materials are available in most states, but there is inequality in funding both in states and among states. Inappropriately mandated materials are a concern.

10. **Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials.** School libraries receive inadequate support. There is not enough funding for classroom collections.

A total of 26 states with respondents that listed the most important reading issues in their states. In some states a group worked together for their state response. In most states individuals responded on their own. All responses are listed in Table 9. While there are many different issues provided by respondents, the most frequently mentioned were funding, closing the achievement gap for struggling readers, NCLB, scripted programs, adolescent reading, language issues, and professional development.

## **How the IRA Can Help State Councils**

The most frequently mentioned suggestions of ways that the IRA can be of help to states councils are by:

- providing position statements and research on best practices to school administrators, members of Congress, and state governments;
- continuing to respond to requests for specific information and guidance in handling situations;
- continuing to seek revision of NCLB;
- continuing to provide quality periodicals and books, position statements, and information concerning new mandates by the federal government to state councils;
- providing articles of successful programs and contacts in Reading Today;

- promoting the position of reading specialist;
- putting more attention on reading as a discipline; and
- continuing to provide excellent professional development opportunities.

## **Legislative Implications**

**Availability of Reading Instructional Materials.** State councils should support legislation to make appropriate reading instructional materials available to all schools.

**Federal Legislation.** The IRA should continue to seek changes in NCLB and other federal programs that involve reading. State councils should work with the IRA concerning federal programs and respond to IRA requests for assistance. State councils should work with their state governments to provide best practices for federal programs.

**Initial Preparation.** IRA should provide information to state councils about best practices in preparing teachers to teach reading. State councils should work within their states to develop state reading license/certification programs that measure up to IRA recommendations.

**Reading Certification/Licenses.** IRA should promote the use of trained reading teachers for work in federal reading programs. State councils should be aware of reading certification/License programs in other states and advocate what is best for their states.

**Reading Needs of Specialized Populations.** State councils should focus on the reading needs of all specialized populations using IRA materials for professional development. State councils should seek funding for programs from their state legislatures.

**State Governmental Affairs.** State councils should continue to provide advocacy awards and used IRA recommendations for working with state governments including lobbying legislators, working with other organizations, and keeping members informed through meetings, newsletters, and Web pages.

**State Reading Issues.** The IRA should continue to provide position papers and other information about state reading issues in various states. State councils should provide a way for members to study reading issues and to determine those that should be pursued by the state legislative committee and members.

**State Reading Standards and Tests.** State councils should seek to have input as standards and tests are revised. State councils should work with members to determine what is best for the reading programs in the state and present the results to the state.

**Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials.** State councils should work with state school library organizations to promote the need for current books and other print materials for school libraries. IRA and the American Library Association should provide current information to state councils about the funding of library print materials in various states.

**Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement.** IRA and state councils should promote the need for skilled reading teachers to provide reading instruction to struggling readers. IRA should seek federal funding for reading teachers to provide instruction for

struggling readers beyond elementary schools. State councils should seek funding for struggling readers within their states.

## Appendix A

### International Reading Association Key Legislative Reading Issues Survey 2006-2007

Please complete and return by **November 19, 2006**.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

State Position	Professional Position
<input type="checkbox"/> State Council President	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher
<input type="checkbox"/> State IRA Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> School Administrator
<input type="checkbox"/> State Legislative Chair	<input type="checkbox"/> College Professor
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Please mark each area high, average, or low priority for your state and write in any comments you wish.

<b>Availability of Reading Instructional Materials</b> (Current textbooks, supplementary materials.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Federal Legislation</b> (Accountability, AYP, IDEA, ELL, No Child Left Behind, Reading First, Title I.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Initial Preparation</b> (New teachers adequately prepared to teach reading.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Reading Certification/Licenses</b> (Reading certification/licenses for primary, intermediate, middle level, and high school; reading specialists certificate/license.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Reading Needs of Specialized Populations</b> (Adolescent reading, bilingual education, preschool/early childhood, special education, urban.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>State Governmental Affairs</b> (Involvement of governmental affairs person or committee, success in getting other organizations to support reading issues, involvement of state and local council members.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>State Reading Issues</b> (Success in identifying and resolving issues, issues that have been successfully addressed.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority

<b>State Reading Standards and Tests</b> <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Sufficient Funding for Current Books and Other Print Materials</b> (School library collection, classroom collections, and constraints in selection.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Support for Students Reading Well Below Their Grade Placement</b> (Remedial reading, Title I, BSI, after school programs, potential high school dropouts, enforcement of reading certification/licenses for those who provide intervention for struggling readers.) <b>Comments:</b>	High Priority	Average Priority	Low Priority
<b>Other Issues:</b> list			
<b>What is the most important reading issue in your state?</b>			
<b>How can the International Reading Association be of help?</b>			