

**Legislative Testimony in Support of SB 169
Senate Education Committee**

BY

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My name is Tammy Kofford, Director of Teacher Training for Fundamental Learning Center (FLC), a 501 (c) (3) educational not-for-profit organization located in Wichita, Kansas. I have been training teachers in Academic Language Therapy since 1998. I first learned about children who struggled with dyslexia when I taught 1st Grade in Hale Center, Texas in 1990. That was my first year of teaching and the district provided a general training about dyslexia so we could watch for red flags in our students. I learned that those students would have to be taught to read using different methods than that of the regular classroom. It was then that I became interested in finding out more about dyslexia. I eventually received training from the Scottish Rite Learning Center of West Texas to become a Certified Academic Language Therapist. Through training I learned to teach an Orton-Gillingham Based multisensory curriculum that gave me the confidence and skills I needed to teach any child that was struggling in reading, writing and spelling. I became the Title I Migrant Teacher for 1st – 4th grade and was able to help children who struggled to read. Little did I know that I would soon have children of my own who would struggle to read. Since my time in Texas my husband and I moved to Wichita, Kansas and had 3 children. All three of our children have dyslexia and dysgraphia. We quickly found out that Kansas Schools did not provide sufficient training for their teachers about dyslexia and that it was going to be up to us as the parents to provide the help that our children needed. I have been in the trenches trying to help struggling readers since 1994 and have experienced what it is like from the stand point of a teacher, parent, and an advocate for others. I know how to teach students to read and I know how to teach teachers how to teach students to read. We now have scientific-based research on how reading should be taught provided to us by the National Institutes of Child Health & Development. Teaching reading should no longer be based on theories but scientific-based methods.

Sec. 3 (a) of SB 169

Needs to be revised to include Children with Dyslexia.

Sec. 3(a) – a pupil who is an exceptional child receiving special education services and whose individual education plan indicates participation by the pupil in the statewide assessment program in not appropriate;

Children with dyslexia traditionally don't qualify for IDEA or have an IEP but they do have a Specific Learning Disability under 504. Unless we identify and put dyslexic children into

Senate Education Committee

Date 2-25-13

Attachment 6

**appropriate intervention between 2013 and 2016 (SB44,2013)
these children will not have an exception and WILL be retained.**

**Dyslexic Children are EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN!
SB 44 MUST BE PASSED!**

We need everyone to see what we see every day as we work with dyslexic children. "Dyslexics think differently. They are intuitive and excel at problem solving, seeing the big picture, and simplifying. They feast on visualizing and abstract thinking, and thinking out of the box. They are poor rote reciters but inspired visionaries. Adult dyslexics are tough: having struggled, they are used to adversity; hard work and perseverance now come naturally. Having experienced failure, they are fearless, undaunted by setbacks. Repetition and practice are a way of life." Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

"Much harm is being done because of lack of understanding of dyslexia, that the same person who reads slowly and effortfully, who struggles anxiously to retrieve words, can make extraordinary discoveries, develop the logic and concepts to brilliantly and persuasively argue complex cases in court, or be the caring psychiatrist who changes people's lives." Sally Shaywitz, M.D.

I support Sec. 3(a) For School Year 2016 – 2017prohibiting the Promotion of a Pupil From Grade Three to Grade Four because it extends retention until 2016 - otherwise it will begin next school year - 2013/14 which will be devastating to our state.

Research regarding retention at any level, for any reason shows that it is a significant predictor of high school drop out.

Retention and drop out. Students who were retained are much more likely to drop out of school. A recent systematic review of research exploring dropping out of high school indicates that grade retention is one of the single most powerful predictors of high school drop out, with retained students being 5–11 times more likely to drop out. The probability increases for students who are retained more than once.

By Shane R. Jimerson, PhD, NCSP, Sarah M. Woehr, Amber M. Kaufman, MA, & Gabrielle E. Anderson, MA University of California, Santa Barbara National Association of School Psychologists

In the Wichita and the surrounding area, 3,031 students dropped out of the class of 2010. If these children had remained in school, they would account for:

- Nearly \$38 million additional wages annually
- \$6.5 million in additional tax revenue annually
- Reduced tax burden on Kansans. A year of incarceration in Kansas costs three times as much as the average of education in public school (\$26,430 vs. \$8,640). The average amount of money it takes to incarcerate a youth for one year is \$43,000.
- Reduced costs for crime. For each year a child remains in school, the odds that they will commit a crime are reduced by almost 1/3.

~Calculated from Alliance for Excellent Education figures

If SB169 passes we will have between 2013 and 2016 to teach the 64% of the 3rd graders whose reading proficiency is at basic or below, to read. BEST PRACTICES from scientific – based, research methods as identified in the National Reading Panel Report should be used. The National Reading Panel Report contains over 35 years of research conducted by the National Institutes of Child Health & Development. The retention of these 3rd grade students could cost the State of Kansas millions of dollars, negatively impact employment, lower productivity, increase dependence upon welfare, and increase the risk of incarceration. Our schools have to start paying attention to research in the area of reading and get their teachers trained in appropriate methods.

The cost of low literacy and dyslexia to the state of Kansas?

“...as many as 30% of unskilled and semi-skilled industrial workers were below even fourth grade level of reading ad writing. This would make it almost impossible to read required safety manuals, product labels, and even written warning signs.” (U.S. Department of Education)

LITERACY'S IMPACT ON KANSAS WORKFORCE STATISTICS

- Illiteracy costs Kansas more than \$5.4 billion each year in lost productivity and Health and Safety issues.
- The **Kansas Education Department** determined that as many as 30% of unskilled and semiskilled industrial workers were below even a fourth grade level of reading

and writing. This would make it almost impossible to read required safety manuals, product labels, and even written warning signs.

- 50% of the chronically unemployed are not functionally literate. (**Literacy Skills**)
- 20% of the average freshman class will drop out of high school. (Children's Defense Fund: Children in Kansas)

LITERACY'S IMPACT ON THE NATION

- 90 million Americans have inadequate health literacy skills. (National Adult Literacy Survey)
- "In the U.S., one out of seven adults has below-basic literacy skills," said David C. Harvey, president and CEO of ProLiteracy.
- By 2010, there are as many as 7 million skills jobs that are unfilled and by 2020, three times that many. (U.S. Department of Education, Community Partnerships for Adult Literacy)
- "Over 60% of front-line workers in goods-producing industries have difficulty applying information from a text to a required task." (National Institute for Literacy)
- 50% of **Fortune 500** companies underwrite remedial training for employees. The cost: \$300 million a year.

Financial burden on the State of Kansas if schools fail to use scientific-based, research methods to teach reading and the retention of approximately 64% of our 3rd Graders is necessary.

Statewide Average Spending Per-Pupil

Spending for the 2012 school year averaged \$12,656 per-pupil, as reported by

6-4

the Kansas Department of Education (KSDE).

<http://www.kansasopengov.org/SchoolDistricts/SpendingPerPupil/tabid/1271/Default.aspx>

Public School Enrollment in Kansas

Total for 2012-13 for 3rd Grade Students 36,032

Total Students Across the State 485,147

Source: Kansas State Department of Education, School Finance Publications, Headcount Enrollment (Public Schools), <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1870> (accessed January 15 3, 2013). Enrollment represents the head count annually as of September 20.

The 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores reveal that 64% of Kansas' 4th graders are reading at basic or below.

White students: 58% reading basic or below

Black students: 82% reading basic or below

Hispanic students: 81% reading basic or below

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/stt2011/2012454KS4.pdf>

If Kansas does not see a significant improvement in 3rd grade reading scores we could have 64% of the 36,032 students enrolled in 3rd grade Kansas schools retained in 3rd grade. That calculates to 23,604 students retained. If the average cost per student is \$12,656 per student; if the students are retained one year it will cost the schools across the state approximately \$291,853,344 extra dollars. If the students are retained 2 years it will cost the schools across the state approximately \$583,706,688 extra dollars. That does not include children who may have already been retained in first or second grade or the cost of additional teachers and extra buildings that will need to be built to hold them. This seems like a huge waste of money especially in light of all the recent budgetary challenges for the state. Wouldn't it be a wiser path to spend the money up front to train our teachers in scientific- based, research methods so all of the children across the state are provided with the opportunity to read, write and spell.

Respectfully Submitted,

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6-5

