

March 14, 2018

Dear Kansas Representatives and senators,

I have taught in Kansas public schools for 23 years, first as a third grade teacher, and for the last 20 years as a reading specialist.

I have never been formally trained to assess, diagnose, or provide intervention for dyslexic students. My professional practice has been developed through personal pursuits of reading, researching, and attending various conference sessions. The district in which I am employed has listened to the collective voices of reading specialists, leading to the purchase of an Orton-Gillingham based program for Tier II and III students, as well as funding my attendance later this month for week long training in dyslexia. I give much credit to my district in their proactive decisions to make certain general education intervention practices align with best practice for dyslexic students. However, this commitment, sadly, is not consistent across our state.

This is why I believe strongly that a task force is greatly needed. Kansas has a long way to go in order to ensure that all classroom teachers, as well as Tier and special education staff are better equipped to support our dyslexic population. Many dyslexic students in Kansas are not receiving the phonics intervention support research clearly indicates is necessary. Teachers want to do what is best for their students but a lack of knowledge and appropriate resources are preventing the kind of literacy experiences dyslexic students require.

My experience in working with these children is that they are extremely bright, with such a variety of wonderful talents and abilities. However, tragically they do not reach their full potential because their reading difficulty is never remediated. They view themselves as "dumb" and this mindset, along with inadequate literacy skills, greatly limits their life dreams and goals. This is not acceptable when we clearly know what can help them.

I respectfully encourage you to agree to forming a task force that will begin discussing this important educational issue.

Respectfully submitted,

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