

March 12, 2018

Dear Senators:

For the last nine years, I have served on the Buhler USD 313 school board. As a school board member, I receive many concerns from parents and staff. The most frequent concern over the years has been the dyslexia supports we offer. Until about three years ago I did not know much about dyslexia. I just it meant the person saw letters backward. When I began to research the topic more thoroughly, I learned it was much more complicated. Children with dyslexia aren't dumb, they just learn differently. They have a reading and writing problem which makes proving their knowledge a challenge with standard education techniques. Children with dyslexia process printed language at a different rate than their peers. Standard methods used in the classroom often make it difficult for a dyslexic child to be successful.

As I discovered more knowledge on dyslexia, I realized the struggles sounded like my daughter. Jennifer always had to work much harder than her sisters. She often felt she was "stupid." Jennifer always had A's and B's with a 3.5 GPA going into her senior year. Due to my research, I began to become suspicious. I had her tested at the Fundamental Learning Center, by Dr. Brian Stone. She has dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. No one had ever mentioned this might be a possibility. As an education advocate and an involved parent, this came as a complete shock because at no point in her education was it ever mentioned as a possibility. I have since learned teachers receive little to no formal training in dyslexia throughout their educational process.

One percent of the population has autism spectrum disorder. Thankfully, we accommodate the learning needs of these children. Twenty percent of Kansas students have dyslexia, and yet we do not have the appropriate curriculum in place for the students to adequately accommodate their disability. Kansas teachers deserve to be trained to meet the needs of one-fifth of their students. To quote a leading dyslexia researcher, Dr. Sally Shaywitz, "There is an epidemic of reading failure that we have the scientific evidence to treat effectively and we do not acknowledge it or implement it." All kids have the right to reach their full potential. Kansas needs to be sure we are doing everything in our power to see to this. The legislature is concerned about schools operating efficiently. Think how costs could be reduced if funds were reallocated to test and accommodate dyslexics properly. Many of these students are in the special education system now. If we had the proper tools and resources to address dyslexia, we could drastically reduce the strain the special education system. More importantly, think how these children's lives would be changed by not feeling they are inadequate but rather understanding they just learn differently. As we know, children today are subject to more stress than prior generations. What a difference it would make if we could take this burden off their minds and reshape their future.

To quote a leading dyslexia researcher, Sally Shaywitz, "Dyslexia: Is not a knowledge gap, it has an action gap." The time has come for us to action!

I strongly support HB2602 and would ask for your support on this bill. Thank you for your time.



Laura Meyer Dick
USD 313 Buhler School Board