

MINUTES

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON DYSLEXIA

January 10, 2019
Room 112-N—Statehouse

Members Present

Jim Porter, Chairperson
Representative Brenda Dietrich, Vice-chairperson
Senator Bruce Givens
Jennifer Bettles
Sarah Brinkley
Mike Burgess (ex officio)
Jaime Callaghan
Tally Fleming
David Hurford
Laura Jurgensen (ex officio)
Jennifer Knight
Alisa Matteoni
Lori McMillan (ex officio)
Christina Middleton
Jeanine Phillips
Jeri Powers
Angie Schreiber
Sonja Watkins

Members Absent

Senator Ty Masterson – Excused

Staff Present

Edward Penner, Kansas Legislative Research Department
John Hess, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Eileen Ma, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Zach Fridell, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Deborah Bremer, Committee Assistant

Conferees

Heath Peine, Assistant Superintendent, USD 353 Wellington Public Schools
Dr. Joan Robbins, retired director of Special Education
Deb Farr, School Psychologist, representing Kansas National Education Association
Dr. Barbara Bradley, Professor of Reading Education, University of Kansas

Others Attending

See [Attached List](#).

Morning Session

Call to Order, Welcome, Approval of Minutes, Explanation of Procedure for the Day

Chairperson Porter called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. He reminded the Task Force the focus of this group must be what is best for the kids and not stray into discussions about unfunded mandates and other topics.

The Chairperson asked for the approval of the minutes. *Senator Givens moved, Representative Dietrich seconded, the minutes for November 28, 2018, be approved as presented. The motion carried.*

Chairperson Porter explained the week before this Task Force meeting the subcommittee chairpersons met and finalized their recommendations. He asked each chairperson to introduce the items related to the area of work of their subcommittee. The goal is to have the Task Force come to a consensus on the recommendations by the end of today and then present them to the Kansas State Board of Education, the Senate Committee on Education, the House Committee on Education, and the Office of the Governor as soon as possible ([Attachment 1](#)).

Overview of Chairperson and Subcommittee Chairpersons Draft Recommendations, Discussion and Recommendations

Pre-service and In-service Professional Development Recommendations

Dr. David Hurford, Chairperson of the Pre-service and In-service Professional Development Subcommittee, presented an overview of the three recommendations for pre-service professional development:

- Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) should modify the Educator Preparation Program Standards to include the International Dyslexia Association's (IDA) Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading;
- KSBE should require candidates for K-6 teaching licenses, English Language Arts endorsements, reading specialist teaching licenses, and special education teaching licenses to pass an examination of their knowledge of the science of reading. KSBE should study and approve a test or multiple tests to satisfy this requirement; and
- The Legislature should provide funding to train college of education professors who teach reading to become cognizant in the science of reading. Training could include conference participation, educational experiences, webinars, and relevant education materials.

He continued by sharing the three recommendations for in-service professional development, noting a more appropriate term for this subject is “professional learning”:

- KSBE should require school systems to provide evidence-based and consistent professional development opportunities consisting of training regarding the nature of dyslexia, an introduction in procedures to identify students who are struggling in reading, and an introduction to intervention strategies and procedures. The content of the professional development should include those areas listed in Appendix A of the draft recommendations;
- KSBE should encourage colleges of education in Kansas to develop a course of study with a specialization in dyslexia and dyslexia-like characteristics. This course should be geared towards a Science of Reading endorsement; English for Speakers of Other Languages endorsement could be used as a model for the structure of this endorsement. This course of study should align with the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards. This course of study should include practical experiences working with students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia with appropriate supervision and leadership development skills such that the person who graduates with this endorsement can train other classroom teachers and reading specialists within their school district. The training for classroom teachers should be consistent with the IDA document “Dyslexia in the Classroom: What Every Teacher Needs to Know,” which is attached to the draft recommendations as Appendix B; and
- The Legislature should provide funding for school districts to train appropriate staff on dyslexia and recognizing dyslexia.

Screening and Evaluation Process Recommendations

Senator Givens shared the Screening and Evaluation Process recommendations, as well as noted the revised Subcommittee report that was distributed to the Committee ([Attachment 2](#)):

- KSBE should require every accredited school district to screen and identify students at risk of dyslexia or demonstrating the characteristics of dyslexia;
- KSBE should amend the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation model to require districts to implement a rigorous tiered system of supports subject to external review;
- KSBE should develop and provide to school districts criteria for vetting and approving tools and materials for screening and assessing students for characteristics of dyslexia. Examples of resources are the Indiana materials in Appendix C of the draft recommendations; and
- The Legislature should provide Level II screening tools to school districts or sufficient additional funding for the purpose of acquiring Level II screening tools to school districts. For examples of screening tools, please see the Indiana materials in Appendix C.

Senator Givens stated every district should have a screening and evaluation system in place. The Subcommittee believes there needs to be a strong connection to the accreditation system to assure this screening process for dyslexia is operational throughout Kansas schools. The screening and evaluation tools need to be readily available to all schools.

There was a discussion about the need for funding for both the universal screening, which would be a lesser cost, and the more complex and costly assessment and evaluations. There was a question about screening versus assessment. Jaime Callaghan, Task Force member, suggested that “Level II evaluation tools” might be a better phrase instead of “Level II screening tools” (point four under this area). There was a conversation about using the Indiana materials and how it would affect cost and time.

Heath Peine, Assistant Superintendent, USD 353 Wellington Public Schools, suggested the Indiana model would differ substantially than the framework that already exists under Kansas Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and indicated MTSS has tools for a similar assessment. Screening leads to a quick diagnostic and then immediately gets the child appropriate training.

Senator Givens noted the recommendation uses the Indiana materials as an example, but it is not being offered as a replacement. Tally Fleming, Task Force member, explained the system that Kansas presently has. She shared the way the reading level screeners are presently used and how the Subcommittee recommendations would affect student and parent involvement. There was a conversation about the term “screening” or “evaluation.” There is a concern from several members that if a student can be diagnosed early, then the student can be treated immediately, and it is important not to wait to intervene with a student. Several members noted the wording was not as important as the need to have free, easily available evaluation tools for schools through KSBE.

Ms. Callaghan recommended the recommendation be changed to say “evaluation tools” as opposed to Level II “screening tools.” Edward Penner, Kansas Legislative Research Department, explained the Subcommittee acted upon a belief that districts already had Level I screening tools, but the Level II screening and evaluation tools are more expensive and less accessible.

For point four of the recommendations, “screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic monitoring” was recommended as a phrase that is more useful for describing appropriate tools.

Representative Dietrich noted the history of this issue started with a need for universal dyslexia screening. She questioned how that fits into today’s draft recommendations for screeners. Ms. Callaghan explained a universal screener is important, but will not be sensitive enough to screen for dyslexia. Deb Farr, a school psychologist representing the Kansas National Education Association, explained the law requires schools to complete evaluations when student-performance data leads a team to suspect the presence of a disability or the need for specialized instruction. Any well-designed system for evaluation starts with simple screening and then if a child displays certain behavior and learning style, more evaluation is triggered. Ms. Farr indicated that many Kansas schools possess these tools, but they are not used in a universal way. The focus is to look at screening of students and then create a plan to force schools to follow the regulations that are on the books.

There were questions about which definitions in MTSS and what flow charts would be recommended. Senator Givens stated these details need to be made by KSBE. He urged the group not to get too specific, but to allow KSBE to make specific decisions. His Subcommittee

struggled with this issue, as some schools are doing great work while others are not, and that is why they focused on the KSBE accreditation.

There was a recommendation to change the recommendations concerning Level I or II screening tools to screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools that are sensitive to the characteristics of dyslexia should be recommended by the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) to school districts and sufficient funding for the purpose of acquiring such tools should be provided by the Legislature.

Ms. Callaghan recommended modifying the professional training recommendation #4 to say, “The Legislature should provide additional funding to school districts to train appropriate staff on dyslexia and recognizing dyslexia and on the use of screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring tools that are sensitive to the characteristics of dyslexia.”

Mr. Peine recommended changing “Indiana” to “MTSS Basic Structuring Guide Module 2 Reading” in the Appendix C to the draft recommendations. The Task Force determined to eliminate the Indiana materials from its recommendations and not replace them with any other materials.

There was a consensus by the Task Force that these changes should be made.

Evidence-based Reading Practices Recommendations

Representative Dietrich shared the three Evidence-based Reading Practices recommendations. She emphasized early intervention is key, and the Structured Literacy approach is effective. The recommendations are as follows:

- KSBE should require each accredited school district to utilize structured literacy as the evidence-based approach to teaching literacy skills to all students and promote early intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. For further information on structured literacy, please see the “Components of Structured Literacy Checklist” from the *New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook* (Appendix D). For information concerning structured literacy training and information currently available from the Technical Assistance System Network, please see Appendix E;
- KSBE should direct the creation of a dyslexia handbook for use by schools in Kansas; and
- KSBE should identify a dyslexia coordinator within KSDE.

Representative Dietrich shared the focus of her Subcommittee was to give teachers in the classroom easy access to tools to teach literacy skills to all students, including those who are dyslexic. Classroom teachers want to have resources; thus, the Subcommittee chose a checklist, handbook, and a dyslexia coordinator.

Other Discussion

There was an extended conversation regarding the importance of including parents in the entire process of screening and intervening of students with characteristics of dyslexia, including how to educate parents about dyslexia and where the resources for them would be located. *Ages and Stages*, a questionnaire given to parents upon children entering school, might be a place to ask parents about reading difficulties, dyslexia, and speech to provide more information about the child. Christina Middleton, Task Force member, suggested having a smaller task force made up of parents, professionals, and other stakeholders to work with KSBE to help create the handbook that the Subcommittee on Evidence-based Practices recommended.

The Task Force agreed by consensus the phrase “with the use of a stakeholder task force” be added to #2 of the Evidence-based Practices recommendation.

Chairperson Porter shared the final recommendation, noting the current Task Force needed to be provided for in the same way in the future as it was presently:

- The Legislature should reappoint the Task Force to meet once per year for three years to monitor progress of implementation of the recommendations. The reappointed Task Force should include the same members and also include the consulting conferees participating in the November 28, 2018, and January 10, 2019, meetings of the Task Force.

Angie Schreiber, Task Force member, questioned whether there should be a definition for dyslexia in the report to promote a common understanding of what dyslexia means. Representative Dietrich recommended the definition on page three of Appendix A to the draft recommendations be incorporated in the final report of the Task Force as part of the introductory statement in the narrative report. It was noted KSDE already offers many resources, raising the question of why they are not be utilized. This question led to a discussion about the feeling of resistance to the word “dyslexia” and diagnosis of dyslexia in Kansas schools. Ms. Schreiber indicated the tools are there for some schools, but there is a resistance to using them. Teachers and school systems need to understand why these tools are not being used.

Alisa Matteoni, Task Force member, stated the social and emotional needs of students with dyslexia must be talked about and looked at, and concerns surrounding dyslexia should not be limited to the aspect of reading difficulty. The overall culture of schools needs to change to how the dyslexic student is addressed as a whole person. She offered statistics that show 15–20 percent of the population has a language-based learning disability and most of this is dyslexia. She urged the Task Force to remember dyslexia is not simply a reading issue, but also how the child is treated in school. She shared a learning disability simulation is something the Blue Valley school district is implementing and is much needed.

Laura Jurgensen, Task Force member, presented a document outlining strategies to increase the number of districts implementing Kansas MTSS and Alignment ([Attachment 3](#)). She presented funding recommendations for expanding the state MTSS and Alignment training team, professional development, and Hold Harmless Transition for school districts moving to a MTSS framework.

Final Task Force Recommendations

Chairperson Porter recommended the definition created by the IDA, found on page three of Appendix A in the Draft Recommendation document, be adopted and incorporated into the final report.

Ms. Schreiber made a motion, Jeanine Phillips seconded, to incorporate the IDA definition of “dyslexia” into the final report of recommendations. The motion carried unanimously.

Jennifer Knight made a motion, Ms. Fleming seconded, to accept the Chairperson and Subcommittee Chairpersons Draft Recommendations, with the changes that were accepted by consensus or voted on at this meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairperson Porter stated his gratitude to the Task Force. He noted he serves on many groups and his life is enriched by the people with whom he works, and the Task Force has been an enriching experience for him personally. He acknowledged that the State of Kansas is not where the Task Force wants it to be; while the State has made much progress, there is a long way to go. However, he is glad the Task Force did not stray into discussions about topics like unfunded mandates and other things that would distract from the ultimate goal of helping children with dyslexia learn to read.

With thanks for the many hours of service the members of the Task Force have given, Chairperson Porter adjourned the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia at 11:45 a.m. with the promise recommendations would be shared in a swift and clear manner.

Prepared by Deborah Bremer

Edited by Edward Penner

Approved by the Committee on:

January 29, 2019

(Date)