

March 1, 2015

To Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am the mother of three children who attend school in the BEAVERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT: aged 15 (Jonathan), 13 (Nicholas) & 10 (Ana Marie). Both Jonathan & Ana Marie have been diagnosed with dyslexia and have had tutoring off & on since 1st grade.

Both Ana & Jonathan had difficulties learning their alphabet in preschool, both with remembering the sounds and the names of the letters. They continued their school career with teachers consistently saying that they're a little behind but that they were doing fine. However, being a stay at home mom and a volunteer in the classroom, it was always quite obvious to me that they were significantly behind where their peers were. I was consistently told that it was because we were in such a high achieving school and that the benchmarks for their grade levels were being met. However, I could see their learning flat-lining and that they were getting better and better at hiding their difficulties.

We were finally able to get my son tested towards the middle of 3rd grade by the school as there was a discrepancy between school performance and intelligence. He was found to have a very poor working memory and was given help specifically with reading & writing on an IEP. However, it often seemed as if the resource teachers never quite knew how to help him. He was well liked as he did not have any of the issues similar to other children in the group he was included with. They tried to help but he was eventually tested out in 6th grade. Given we were seeing very little results from being pulled from class, we went along with the decision. He is going to be a sophomore in high school this coming school year and consistently scores poorly in Lit & Comp classes & Foreign Language. These are classes where either reading, comprehension, writing skills or rote memorization are at a premium and specifically where his disability is not being addressed. We had him independently tested for dyslexia in 3rd grade (given that his father and paternal grandmother were also dyslexic). He was diagnosed as having mild dyslexia for which he went to some classes to develop strategies to work with his learning disability but often feel a preschool or kindergarten diagnosis would have been extremely beneficial in getting him help before he ran into such major difficulties and when the impact would have been much more significant.

My daughter was tested independently in 4th grade as the attempts to have the school test her were denied, as she was not a full grade level behind in school. (Testing criteria changed in the 5 years since my son was tested.) She was also diagnosed with dyslexia but more severely than her brother. We currently have a Orton-Gillingham tutoring for reading and spelling currently but it was also recommended that she have a math tutor for the summer.

In speaking with every one of my childrens' teacher (primarily at the elementary level) I was consistently flabbergasted at how little the teachers knew about dyslexia or the signs to watch for as early as Pre-K programs. I am amazed that the special education teachers

do not have a plan to deal with helping these types of students who manage to be doing poorly enough in school to be even get tested. I truly feel that this is a huge problem that can be helped tremendously with teacher education, early diagnosis & proven treatment methods. This is a public problem and help should be readily available through the school system. **My husband was diagnosed when he was in 2nd grade which was 39 years ago.** It is a real issue but yet I believe there is a belief in the education system that it is a myth and doesn't really exist.

I honestly believe that if teachers were trained to read the warning signs and to have a set of tools to use for the students, the long term benefits would be significant. I also believe that a standard set of accommodations for those with this learning disability is necessary such as extra time on tests, reduced length of papers, fewer spelling words, etc.

It's time for Oregon and the entire country to recognize this issue in the public education realm in order for the 20% of students who are struggling with this learning disability. No matter how much help we parents can provide, they are in school 7 ½ hours a day 9 months of the year with teachers who have been trained to help them learn. They are the people who should be best equipped to educate all of our children.

Please support Senate bill 612 to help educate Oregon's teachers!

Sincerely,

Laura Rich
Beaverton, Oregon
Mother of 2 out of 3 dyslexic kids
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