



Barbara Steinberg, M.Ed.
PDX Reading Specialist, LLC
503.729.0110
steinberg@pdxreadingspecialist.com
www.pdxreadingspecialist.com

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Dear Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

I completed coursework for my initial teaching credential in California—which is where I began my teaching career. The full-time, 18 month program included ONE course on teaching reading (Fundamentals of Teaching Reading).

I spent ten years teaching in public school in Los Angeles—in classes ranging in size from 30-35. To this day I can remember the names and faces of those students who I could not appropriately support. I never received the education, training or support—and certainly there were no on-site resources to support me or the students I was concerned about. Could I have figured it out on my own? Absolutely. But I had no idea where to look or what I was looking at.

When I moved to Oregon in 2005, I was unable to get a job in a public school because I didn't have a master's degree (not necessary in CA, and not part of the preparation program). I was hired to teach in a private school. I quickly realized there was a significant population of students at this private school that were there *because* their public schools had failed them... (i.e. struggling students that didn't "qualify" for anything).

The school had two full time learning specialists (both trained in Orton-Gillingham). It was during an in-service early in my first year that one of the learning specialists spoke about dyslexia. As she spoke of the warning signs, I remember the faces of all the students I had "failed" flashing in my head... and it was at that moment the fire in my belly was ignited.

I became obsessed with learning everything I could about dyslexia. The more I learned, the more questions I had... and the more I learned, the angrier I became at how ill prepared I was to be a teacher. In 2008, I decided to go back to graduate school so I could get a formal education in reading disabilities. I had no intention of leaving the classroom, but it was the logical next step.

I searched around for a SPED/Reading Endorsement program that focused on reading disabilities... and surprise—there were none! After much discussion with various department heads, I settled on Marylhurst University. Ironic that I had to go private... the Dean of Education at Marylhurst (Tom Ruhl), was willing to design a program of study and mentor me through my Master's Thesis project so I could study what I wanted (no other school was willing to do that).

It should come as no surprise either there wasn't a single course devoted to reading disabilities in the Endorsement Program. Nor was there even a mention of dyslexia. Upon graduating with my M.Ed., I had many conversations with Tom Ruhl about this, and he made me an offer to do a lecture for the Reading Endorsement students the following year. Sadly, he died before this came to fruition and I've never pursued the opportunity with the new Dean.

Now that I had my Masters and Endorsements in hand, and a solid theoretical and practical understanding of dyslexia, I decided I was going to go back to the school system as a reading specialist. However, I didn't just want "a job" (again, my intention was not to leave classroom teaching)—I wanted a position in a school where I could be an advocate for change for struggling readers (who I knew were dyslexic even if they weren't "labeled"). Turns out, the job of a reading specialist was morphing into a paper pushing, teaching supporting (or IA training) model that had limited contact time with students. No, thank you.

So I decided the only way to meet the needs of these students was to go outside the system. This presented one primary moral challenge—why should only people who have money have access to my services? This continues to weigh heavily on me...

I had already received Orton-Gillingham training (while at Marylhurst), so I began tutoring students. Through word of mouth, people heard about me and my schedule was suddenly full. Realizing dyslexia tutoring was not short term, and it was inappropriate to put kids on a waiting list. I started searching for other qualified professionals to refer to. I was frustrated (again) by the lack of qualified professional tutors in our community. I knew there were passionate, educated, experienced educators (like me!), who if given the tools and training, could be wonderful professional tutors. And so, PDX Reading Specialist, LLC was born.

My role has shifted from just tutoring (I still tutor—because I love the ongoing relationship with kids!) to assessment and consultation. Because dyslexia is a "family affair", the tutors take the remediation piece and I support the family—help them develop strategies for home, 504 support, etc.

When I hear each family's story at the initial consultation, there are so many similarities, but the one that every family seems to say at some point is, "my child's teacher said 'he's fine'". And as a former classroom teacher, I know that educator's heart is in the right place when she says that. But she knows something isn't fine—she just doesn't know what or why.

I urge you to support Senate bill 612 to bring educational equity to all of Oregon's children.

Thank you,

Barbara Steinberg, M.Ed.