

Testimony for the Senate Committee on Education
In support of SB 612
March 17, 2015

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I have been a special education teacher for 10 years and work directly with students and teachers on a daily basis. I am a National Board Certified Teacher and have taught in 3 different school districts in urban and rural settings. Through my undergraduate and graduate programs, I have received no training in strategies to effectively teach students with Dyslexia. However, after receiving professional development from Haskins Laboratory a spark was lit and I was determined to learn more. Because of this, I have personally pursued further information of effective strategies for students with Dyslexia. I have spent thousands of dollars of my own money and countless hours of my own time to access this information and am in constant pursuit of more knowledge.

What I have found in teaching is that some kids come to school with a solid foundation ready to learn to read while others come without a base, not yet ready to learn letter sounds or how to put those sounds together to make words; oftentimes these are our Dyslexic students. I've found that all teachers know what to do when kids start Kindergarten with that solid foundation. It's important to note that this foundation has nothing to do with how parents have prepared their child, the student's socio-economic status, race, or ethnicity. This has to do with if a child has the phonemic awareness skills needed for emergent reading. Our teachers are fantastic and ready to teach kids with this solid foundation, but when kids lack the skills of phonemic awareness our teachers' don't have the right knowledge to build this foundation.

As the only teacher in my school who has training in teaching students with Dyslexia many of my colleagues, who are general education and special education teachers, come to me asking for strategies to help their struggling students learn to read. I struggle with wanting to give them time and support and balancing my own caseload and responsibilities. Teachers need more than a 45-minute brainstorming session, and more than I can give them. They need more and I need more, and we don't know where to turn to get it.

Oftentimes when a student doesn't come to school with a solid foundation, that child ends up in Special Education. Unfortunately, Special education is a wait to fail model. As a resource room teacher, I don't evaluate and begin to provide kids with special education services until they are about two years behind, which in most cases, at the earliest is in 2nd grade. At this time they need to make more than 1 years growth each year in order to catch up to their peers, when they are already feeling like a failure. This is frustrating because we don't need to wait this long to identify students with Dyslexia. Research has shown that as early as the age of 5 Dyslexia is identifiable with 92% accuracy.

There are a number of viable screening options for Dyslexia. We are already mandated by ODE to conduct a kindergarten screening. Adding a few simple assessments to screen for indicators of Dyslexia would require minimal additional resources and would provide teachers and the school with tremendously valuable information. Additionally, more training for our hard working, caring teachers would give them the tools they need to help our students succeed.

I appreciate your time and consideration of Senate Bill 612. And urge you and your colleges to take action for Oregon Students.