

June 17, 2015

Dear Madam Chair, Mr. Co-Chair and Members of the Sub-Committee,

I am here today to give testimony as an educator in support of the funding of Senate Bill SB 612. When I graduated with my Masters of Education in 2009 I thought I would be prepared to teach elementary students regardless of their background or abilities. What I quickly learned was that I was not prepared to guide parents or even answer questions regarding dyslexia when asked. It wasn't until a fellow teacher sent me information on the warning signs of dyslexia that my eyes were opened. I started thinking about the students I had taught that I had struggled to help. Students that although they appeared to be so smart couldn't write down their ideas couldn't read fluently and one memorable child that in addition to his reading and writing struggles couldn't even tie his shoes in the fourth grade. I decided that if I was to be the teacher I wanted to be I had to educate myself on dyslexia.

Through my search for knowledge I found a tutoring program that teaches reading and spelling in a multisensory approach. I started to use it with my own children. Some of the feedback I received was, "Wow! I wish they would have taught me this in Kindergarten." Fact of the matter was she had been taught it in Kindergarten she just hadn't been able to understand and retain that information the way it was presented to her. The more I worked with the multisensory systematic and explicit tutoring program the more excited I got. As for my own children they started receiving meeting scores on their report cards but more importantly were able to read and enjoy a book cover to cover.

My personal experience and success with the tutoring program led me to a desire to find a way to apply these concepts to my general education classroom. I started to use some of the teaching tools and found my class excited by the tricks to remembering rules of spelling. Feeling the excitement from my students inspired me to keep searching for a training for the general education teacher. This winter I finally found that training, it was one day but it was powerful. I left there inspired and eager to get fully trained in the future.

The difference in my classroom from the beginning of the year to the end when I started using multisensory methods was huge. Before the multisensory approach my struggling students were visibly starting to shrink and hide during circle time. After they became more engaged in the concept I was teaching and more willing to volunteer their opinions and knowledge. One of my at risk students earlier in the year never raised his hand and would try to blend in with the carpet. After presenting information in a multisensory way he was eager to share his observations and would even blurt out "I see a diagraph Mrs. S." even when it wasn't reading time. He was so excited to share his knowledge about diagraphs and blends that he saw them everywhere and told anyone that would listen. Knowledge is power and boy did he feel the power and the pride of owning that knowledge.

Learning about dyslexia has been life changing for me. Just like my student felt with his digraphs and blends I too want to shout out my knowledge to anyone that will listen. In April I was asked to present on dyslexia to our staff. After my presentation I had teachers with over 15 years of experience asking me for more information. They wanted to know how to screen their students, they started thinking about students in their classroom that had warning signs and they wanted to know how they could help those students. I have spoken to many teachers that want to get trained, now that they know about dyslexia they want to know how to help. By passing Senate Bill SB 612 we will be one step closer to helping teachers and schools obtain the knowledge they need to help children with dyslexia achieve success through education.

Thank you for your time,

Elizabeth Skorohodov
Kindergarten Teacher
4437 NE 76th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97218