

March 28, 2017

My name is Cheryl Anthony. I have an MS in Curriculum and Instruction with a K-12 Reading Endorsement. I am a former classroom teacher and a Reading Specialist. I was also past president of the Oregon Branch International Dyslexia Association.

I am a dyslexia consultant and business owner. For the past 13 years, my team has been serving families in Oregon and Washington. It distresses me to only serve families who can afford to pay. This inequality among literacy education brings me here today. I currently have a staff of 9 people who are earning a living because teacher prep programs are not preparing their graduates to teach the fundamentals of reading.

The students my business serves have often been in Special Education settings for a number of years, but they have not qualified for special education because of the discrepancy model for allocating services. Oftentimes, kids with dyslexia are so bright that teachers are unsure why these kids are not performing better. However, when these kids are taught using OG structured approaches to literacy they make significant progress in their reading, spelling, and writing skills.

Yesterday I sat in meetings with parents who said their child is not being taught what they need to know in the areas of reading and writing. They expressed their gratitude for the approach we have taken with their child and the progress they are seeing in both areas. They also expressed that their child's teachers are expecting them to "know" how to do things that they are not being taught. I had to explain to the parents that teachers cannot teach what they do not know, and that many of the teachers have not been taught the skills they need to implement reading and writing instruction with the outcomes now expected.

My own personal journey has been similar....

After several years of teaching elementary school I wanted to improve my skills, with a focus on literacy and instruction. I attended PSU. The focus of my literacy classes was on Whole Language. I did not learn anything about dyslexia until I attended a conference in 2003 where I heard a talk on the subject. You can imagine my frustration when I discovered I had gone through 6+ years of higher education having never received instruction about dyslexia although it affects up to 20% of all learners!

I decided to learn more. I found the International Dyslexia Association, whose goal is to share the current research-based information on dyslexia. I attended conferences and eventually held many board positions, including President. Because of the IDA, I learned cutting-edge research and have gained the necessary knowledge and skills to make an impact in Oregon and Washington schools.

In addition, I have implemented a structured literacy based program at two separate schools with very good success...but I didn't learn anything about these effective programs while receiving my initial teaching and then later curriculum and instruction related degrees. Like so many others who serve these children, I had to seek out useful information I my own.

I have spent thousands of dollars and years of my time gaining information and expertise I expected to receive at the schools of higher education. Those hours of learning should have happened during my first few years of college, not during my post-graduate years. I believe all graduates of Oregon teacher

training programs should have the tools I needed to implement effective programs and instruction for struggling readers upon graduation.

A question for you today? Who teaches reading in our schools? Yes, almost all of our teachers teach reading to some degree or another. Our primary grade teachers have a huge responsibility to help children become literate at an early age, because the bulk of our literacy instruction happens in grades K-3. But, teachers I talk to from Oregon tell me that they know very little about dyslexia, a common learning difference that affects a large percentage of those struggling in reading.

Most classroom teachers do not have a basic understanding of how literacy happens. When does literacy really begin...what are the stages...how important is early oral language development? They do not know what questions to ask parents when they begin to see a child in their classroom struggling to read or spell. How do I know....because these teachers are sending me their students! They meet with me in my offices, frustrated that they did not know how to reach these students, until they attended a presentation about dyslexia outside of their university setting.

They do not know the symptoms of dyslexia and how prevalent this learning difference is. They do not know what approach to implement that would change the outcome for someone with dyslexia. Instead, they give more of the same kind of instruction, that didn't work the first time, within a smaller group. This goes on for years, and these disillusioned teachers are left to just shake their heads in frustration, knowing they don't have the skills to teach these children, often telling the families and the children they teach that they should just try harder...and the teachers *actually believe this!*

Additionally, I know individuals who are looking for a solid researched and evidenced based reading degree, from a place of higher education in Oregon...they are waiting...because to date, the programs in Oregon are lacking in their instruction. They are looking elsewhere, or waiting, because the evidence and information are out there, but Oregon institutions have yet to step up to the plate and teach what is offered elsewhere, with the intensiveness they are looking for.

I ask you today, to implement the dyslexia law, as initially proposed. The teachers need the knowledge to teach those with dyslexia and they need the experience that comes with a supervised practicum. They must be ready to provide literacy instruction to various types of learners when they walk out of the university with their degree. Students with dyslexia are in every school in Oregon. The cost to Oregon communities is too great to go soft on implementation of this law.

Proposed SB221 is a huge mistake and takes steps that perpetuates what has been happening during Oregon teacher preparation for years. Please implement HB2412 and retain alignment the IDA standards. This change will bring literacy to ALL Oregon students.

Submitted by Cheryl Anthony, MS Ed.

President

Successful Learning Educational Services LLC