

Testimony in support of dyslexia inclusion in teaching education
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My name is Dr Alexandra Verdieck-Devlaeminck

I work at OHSU as a family medicine physician. I am an assistant professor of family medicine and my work involves teaching residents and medical students. I am also a parent of a dyslexic student who it was apparent early on was having extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Due to my position and my background I was able to research what was going on with my child. I was able to learn about it, learn how testing works, how educational law works and how remediation works. I am also fortunate as a physician that I was able to afford tutoring as the school was not able even with her IEP to be able to give her the appropriate special education that would help. But I also know that not all have that privilege and I it is time that we allow teachers to have the skills to help all of our children.

My experience as a parent is that her teachers had no ideas what was going on. She seemed to do ok in school, she was smart in all other ways but she was really not able to learn how to read or write. My experience as a physician doing well child exams with kids is that parents admit they have a struggling student at home and they try really hard, they do extra work on reading and writing but aren't able to get anywhere and when that doesn't help a lot of times the teachers can't give us guidance because they can't recognize what is wrong. Some don't even know that dyslexia exists, as this is not a word that is used in many public school systems and it was not a word that is used in their training as they are becoming educators, even though it is a very common learning disability. That would be the equivalent of me as a physician teaching my students and my residents all about sore throats and telling them they are going to get better if they just wait a little longer, they will eventually go away, and ignoring that strep throat actually exists. Strep throat has obvious signs and symptoms, people get fever and headaches and if it's not treated, people can end up with bad heart disease and rheumatic fever. It is also not ok to miss dyslexia, not recognizing a reading disability is similar, giving them prognosis of difficulty with school for a long time and likely making it difficult for them to graduate from high school.

Helping all of our kids learn basic skills is not a political issue it is about enabling kids to reach their potential. I don't understand why anyone would oppose it. Why oppose allowing teachers that are teaching our children how to read about the most common problem involving reading and writing.

In the medical profession like the education profession we have standards for keeping up with changes in disease diagnosis and management and are required to pursue annual continuing medical education credits. This is helpful to both professions. As a medical educator I also know it is necessary to keep up with the latest standards. It is not acceptable for me to say "well we did it this way 10 years ago" when new and better research based medicine has been proven. My students will take me to task if I acted that way and I would be embarrassed and possibly be committing malpractice. In a similar way it is time for educators to step up, look at the latest research at best practices and change what they are doing if necessary, for the children.