

My name is Lonnie Henderson and I have a BA in Elementary Education from Western Oregon State College and a Masters of Education from the University of Oregon.

I am writing today to describe the lack of preparedness that I received for teaching struggling readers along with colleagues who face the same struggles teaching Dyslexic students.

During my college courses, I didn't learn how to screen students for reading difficulties or how to intervene when students fail to read. College course work did not include teaching students with dyslexia. Instead, I was taught how to treat everyone the same.

My first student teaching experience was with a teacher who didn't model strategies to teach the struggling students in the third grade classroom. Many students struggled to read and blame and excuses were made by the teacher. My second experience was with a master teacher but during reading time we had the "High reading group." I didn't get to experience the struggling students nor did I see modeled effective instruction.

I began my teaching career as a second grade teacher at a Native American school. I soon found out that I was not equipped to teach the struggling students in my classroom and my colleagues only had excuses and blame but not answers. I wasn't happy with my best not being good enough and still having to pass on students who could not read fluently or at all.

As my career progressed I taught fourth grade and realized that these same students were just passed on each year and known as the Chapter 1 kids; kids that would always struggle to read or not learn to read at all. I had numerous parents of struggling students who struggled in school themselves. One such parent stated that he was dyslexic and dropped out after the ninth grade and didn't want that for his son. I also had parents that stated that school was easy for them and couldn't understand why reading was so difficult for their child. I didn't have any answers for either of these parents.

I have three kids of my own. My wife and I, both teachers, read to them since they were born. We "exposed" them to reading every chance we could. My daughter, the oldest, learned how to read at an early age. Our middle son learned to read at a typical age. Our youngest son though, struggled to learn to read, spell, and write. We thought he was just "Leo the late bloomer." We didn't know what was wrong, what to do, or how to help him. By fourth grade we had him tested and learned he was dyslexic. We were both devastated because we were not trained to recognize and teach our own dyslexic child. This delay in diagnosis resulted in years of costly private reading therapy and intervention.

Not only were we not equipped to recognize and teach our own son but neither were his regular classroom, special education, and reading teachers. Many of his teachers said that our son was teaching them.

My current position as a literacy coach and teacher mentor reminds me every day how important it is that the college education programs teach preservice teachers how to teach

struggling readers and students with dyslexia. I work with special education teachers, reading teachers, and regular classroom teachers that don't know what to do with these students.

Many of the colleges claim that they teach a session on dyslexia. If our colleges are preparing our teachers then why are our reading scores so low? Why am I still getting asked what to do with struggling readers? Do they ask past graduates, who are in their first few years of teaching, if they are equipped to teach students with dyslexia and then verify that by the students reading scores?

If teachers graduated from college proficient in recognizing and teaching students with dyslexia, Oregon's reading scores would look very different along with graduation rates. My own son was an example of the lack of teacher preparation required to meet the needs of a student with dyslexia. We have a chance to change this for students.

It is important that we screen all **Kindergarten and First grade students every year for dyslexia not one or the other as now stated in SB 1003.**

DO NOT DELETE FROM SB 221 *that the instruction be consistent with the knowledge and practice standards of an international organization on dyslexia, or we will have the same lack of preparedness.*

Every students deserves to be taught to read!

**Sincerely,
Lonnie Henderson**