

Good Afternoon:

My name is Jennifer Dawson and I'm the single mother of a dyslexic child. My son Tate is a third grader at Sunnyside Environmental School in Portland, Oregon. My son was diagnosed profoundly dyslexic at the end of his first grade year. He repeated kindergarten. This is the first time I have ever submitted testimony for legislation.

Much of the research would ally dyslexia only with reading and writing and sometimes math issues, but I am here to say that dyslexia has touched every aspect of my son's life, and our family's lives collectively. I attend each end every one of his tutoring sessions in order to better understand how to support him. It helps that I have a background in literature, writing and philosophy. It's time we look at dyslexia more holistically. This is why it is vitally important that we acknowledge it at the university level as well as at the primary school level. These acknowledgements will lead to a better societal understanding, not just in the area of dyslexia, the most common learning disability, but I believe it will lead to a better understanding of the importance of incorporating and accommodating different learning styles overall. It's a win for everyone.

Dyslexia doesn't simply disappear in college or after accommodations. It is lifelong. Two of the areas in which I notice my son struggling the most are with organization and sequencing. He tends to have difficulty explaining things, or knowing where to start when a project is at hand and how to carry it through. He doesn't speak up very often in class, but can talk nonstop at home.

Tate began with Barton training and a program called Fast Forward, and he's currently learning the fundamentals of language and all of the relationships that lie therein through a process called Structured Word Inquiry (SWI). It's a process that helps the student understand the story behind each word.

Far from turning Tate off to reading and writing his dyslexia has turned him into a word scholar. Luckily he didn't fall through the cracks of a broken educational system. We found the right supports that are working well for him, and frankly, many of these can work well for ALL students. SWI plays upon the strengths of his dyslexia--his love of routine, structure, building, patterns, and answering the question "why?"—and who doesn't love a story? However, we had to go outside the school system at great financial cost to our family to give our son the proper foundation he needs.

By not equipping teachers with the right tool bag, the system continues to allow extremely bright children, like my son, to remain in the shadows. It is challenging for them to share their amazing gifts with the world. My son thinks on a very big picture level and his insights are important contributions. They cause me to think

differently about the world and are worthy of sharing. Yet it is unfortunately the case that if a student seems to stumble with his or her words, or needs a little extra processing time before answering a question, or is reluctant to speak in class, the teachers will invariably pass right over them. No one wants to admit this is the case, but time and time again it is.

We need more awareness on this issue and not less. Since my son was diagnosed, I have spoken to several other parents whose children are having difficulty reading and writing, but their issues are often not considered severe enough to merit any additional accommodations. I think the implementation of these teacher training measures will help teachers to be more acutely aware of different learning styles, prompting them to adopt more multifaceted and multisensory learning approaches that will benefit all students. It will lead to a greater awareness of different learning styles overall.

Dyslexics are usually big picture thinkers, thinking outside of the box. Approximately 85% of CEOs are dyslexic. Contrast this with the prison system: In the US it is estimated that 48% of inmates are dyslexic. These people have fallen through the cracks. Think about the benefit to society if 20 percent of the population, the portion of the population estimated to be dyslexic, were more fully supported to realize their potential. I ask you, wouldn't this be a better outcome? Please do not allow HB2412 to be repealed.

I want to thank the panel for allowing my testimony to be part of the proceedings today.