

March 4, 2019

Good afternoon Chair Wagner, and Members of the Senate Education Comm.,

My name is Lisa Lyon and I am a founding member of Decoding Dyslexia Oregon. Thank you for calling this meeting and asking for an update on the effects of implementation. First, I would like to thank the Senate for their foresight when they passed Dyslexia legislation four years ago. Requiring the ODE to hire a Dyslexia Specialist has been a monumental ingredient attributing to the success of the rollouts of the professional development training for educators and the screening implementation.

We understand that these legislative efforts are the tip of the iceberg and that there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done before families and students start to experience measurable change. Systemic change is not a quick fix.

Unfortunately, the story we just heard from Tara, is typical of parents who try to work within their neighborhood school for dyslexia remediation. As the resource and referral specialist for Decoding Dyslexia, I hear from approximately 100 families annually, and know that Tara's story is not unique, but is far too common. When families reach out for help with similar issues, I let them know, that within our current system, there really are no easy answers. This is especially true, if you are an economically challenged family, who cannot afford to purchase best practices through private tutoring.

We created a survey last week for parents and educators to inform our discussion today. More than 400 people responded overall. More than sixty percent were teachers and more than fifty percent were parents. Some were both educators and parents.

In addition to the anecdotal evidence I hear from parents when they request information and resources, the data from this survey reflect that, for the most part, parents are not seeing the effects of the legislation. When parents were asked: "Overall, has the educational experience for your child changed this year (since the enactment of legislation): An overwhelming 83 percent responded: "No change." While 14 percent said, "Yes, for the better."

The most positive response from parents was to the question: "My child has access to Assistive Technology," with more than 65% answering, Yes, or Somewhat. Additional questions inquired about using the term dyslexia in IEP/504 meetings, effective intervention and instruction, awareness of dyslexia at the school, etc. and we will make those results available to you.

The responses from educators were more positive. As you know, nearly 1,000 educators have cumulatively had, close to 30,000 hours of training. When asked: "How has the 612 teacher training legislation affected you," more than 75% of educators responded that they want more training (on top of the 30 hours they already received) and in addition, more than 75% are hopeful that more teachers will be trained in their schools.

How can we interpret this strong demand for teacher training? If teachers felt adequately prepared, would more than 75% of educators who responded want more training? (And I believe Carrie's numbers showed an even stronger response and her sample size was larger.) Nevertheless, the need for training from educators is clear. We must look to the universities to

do their part. Educators want more training and this is not just our opinion, or the opinion of parents. It is also the opinion of educators. Educators like Heather, who are going online, or out of state because Oregon's universities do not offer meaningful coursework in the foundations and science of reading.

Fortunately, for Oregon's children, some universities have already taken the first step towards acknowledging the gaps in their coursework. Both Southern Oregon University and George Fox allow for educators who complete the 612 training of certain providers, to apply for college credits. This is a creative solution for universities while they incorporate missing content into their courses. Can other universities do the same?

We must think creatively, use money wisely and create change as quickly as possible. Could Oregon partner with other states who have already produced online training modules to get more information out to educators? Why must each state recreate the wheel and spend more money to duplicate work that has already been done?

School districts might consider uniting together to force change in educator prep at the university level. Why should districts continue to hire graduates if they are not prepared to teach struggling readers? Districts might also question, why should they, carry the financial burden, of retraining educators who arrive unprepared?

More can be done to prepare our earliest learners for kindergarten. We have been told that money is being earmarked for Oregon's Early Learning Systems in the ODE's Early Learning Division. This would be the perfect place to incorporate a strategic partnership by including pre-literacy curricula that is guided by scientific research. To be clear, this would not involve paper and pencils, but oral games and activities through which children would learn to manipulate the building blocks of language to prepare for reading acquisition.

Moving forward, the best way to improve educational outcomes for students with dyslexia is to make sure that they have appropriate reading instruction. To do this, teachers need to be trained, parents need to be informed, and accountability and support need to be systematic. We ask you to consider the legislative recommendations proposed by ODE. When parents and educators were asked to choose the legislation they wanted most, they did not want to choose between ODE's suggestions - they wanted them all.

Thank you for your attention.

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