

Submitter: Anna Ingram
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB3198

My name is Anna Ingram and I am a Eugene 4J parent, but I am also part of the dissemination team for the National Center on Improving Literacy at the U of O. My son's reading disability story is long and the anger, anxiety, and hopelessness of a parent trying to get her son appropriate reading instruction in an Oregon school are difficult to convey in print - but I will try. I was concerned about my son's reading instruction starting in Kindergarten because his teacher told us that the class would study letters as they came up organically. When he was struggling in first grade his teacher gave me a list of 200 common words that she wanted him to memorize. I knew this wasn't how kids learn to read, but we tried it anyway. The school did NOT provide him with extra help. They told us that he would catch up, he was fine, and one day it would just click. When I told his second-grade teacher that I was concerned about his reading, she said he was doing fine and would catch up. Since the school wasn't concerned we decided to have him assessed privately for a disability. My son was diagnosed with suspected dyslexia and reading-related anxiety. He started the 3rd grade reading 18 words a minute with 80 being the goal. His accuracy was 50% - imagine looking at a paragraph and only being able to read half the words. He didn't understand that you write letters from left to right on the same line to form words. He was in the THIRD grade. On curriculum night they passed out bookmarks with tips for reading at home: look at the picture, guess from the first letter, or pick a word and see if it sounds right. Actually sounding out the letters in the word was not recommended. These strategies, sometimes called 3-cueing, do NOT make good readers and in many cases slow down the process of learning to read - especially if these strategies have to be unlearned. We finally got IEP Services but he still did not receive evidence-based instruction. He's learned to read because I shell out thousands of dollars a year to have him tutored with explicit, systematic instruction. I've worked with reading researchers at the U of O for almost 20 years. I KNOW what good instruction looks like and I have access to so many resources, but I couldn't get my son the support he needed. What happens to families who can't pay for private evaluations or tutors or who don't have time to advocate - because it's nearly a full-time job? This is a question of equity. Students with invisible disabilities should be part of the equity conversation. There has to be systematic statewide change because my son's story is NOT unique. While I don't believe that this bill will fix all of our problems with literacy instruction, It is a place to start. It has many of the pieces that have been successful in other states. We need to pass this bill and make sure districts are on board so we can give all kids the chance that my son never had.