

MINUTES

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON DYSLEXIA

December 9, 2019
Room 582-N—Statehouse

Members Present

Jim Porter, Chairperson
Representative Brenda Dietrich, Vice-chairperson
Senator Bruce Givens
Senator Ty Masterson
Jennifer Bettles
Jaime Callaghan
Tally Fleming
David Hurford
Jennifer Knight
Alisa Matteoni
Christina Middleton
Jeanine Phillips
Jeri Powers
Angie Schreiber
Mike Burgess, ex officio
Laura Jurgensen, ex officio
Lori McMillian, ex officio

Members Absent

Sarah Brinkley – Excused
Sonja Watkins – Excused

Staff Present

John Hess, Legislative Research Department
Edward Penner, Legislative Research Department
Zach Fridell, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Nick Myers, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Deborah Bremer, Committee Assistant

Conferees

Cynthia Hadicke, Program Consultant, Kansas State Department of Education
Brad Neuenswander, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas State Department of Education

Others Attending

[See Attached List](#)

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Chairperson Porter opened the meeting at 10:01 am. He shared that the previous report of the Task Force was presented to the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) where it was accepted in whole, with one caveat that the recommendations be implemented as soon as possible rather than in the time frames laid out in the report. He indicated the intent of KSBE was that the recommendations be implemented sooner than the report indicated. He thanked those on the Task Force who served on the KSBE committee that made the report possible. Chairperson Porter also noted the consultants who had served the Task Force in 2018 had all been invited back for the follow-up meetings.

Christina Middleton noted 145,000 people saw the post of the action by KSBE on social media. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

Chairperson Porter noted the focus now is to implement the changes with efficacy and efficiency and decisions must focus on what is best for children, not for adults.

Charge from Legislature and Review of Legislative Activities

Edward Penner, Kansas Legislative Research Department, presented a report noting the official charge of the Legislature to the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia in 2019 is to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the previous recommendations of the Task Force. Also, he shared the Legislature has approved the Task Force meeting one day each in 2020 and 2021. He reminded the members the open meetings rules are still in order while the Task Force continues to exist ([Attachment 1](#) and [Attachment 2](#)).

Presentation by Kansas State Department of Education

Cynthia Hadicke, Program Consultant, Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), presented the actions that KSDE is taking as a result of the recommendations from the Task Force on the topics of Pre-Service, Professional Learning, Screening and Evaluation Process, Evidence-based Reading Practices, and a definition of dyslexia ([Attachment 3](#) and [Attachment 4](#)).

Brad Neuenswander, Deputy Commissioner, KSDE, was present and answered several questions. Discussion included what school psychologists are able to do in the area of dyslexia diagnosis and how universal diagnosis of dyslexia can be achieved in Kansas. There was concern there needs to be statewide leadership from KSDE in the form of a dyslexia coordinator as soon as possible.

Alisa Matteoni read a complaint from a parent recently sent to KSDE and the response from KSDE as a sign of the current stance of the agency towards dyslexia ([Attachment 5](#)). She felt the complaint response indicates the timeline of the KSDE to be too far in the future, implementing in 2024. Angie Schreiber recommended KSDE use private dyslexia experts in training teachers and school personnel.

Chairperson Porter noted the easy work has now been done and changing the culture surrounding dyslexia will require great effort. Jeanine Phillips shared that her learning center is seeing a shift in teacher training for the better; however, she noted there is still a misconception about the visual aspect of dyslexia and there is still a stigma attached to this issue.

Jennifer Knight spoke of attending a national conference on dyslexia in Mississippi and urged that those speakers should be brought to Kansas. Jaime Callaghan noted that the Mississippi rollout of their dyslexia program, in light of where they are beginning, should be inspiring to Kansas. Jennifer Knight noted that the Mississippi experience included a focus on “pushback” and that she was impressed that the professors being required to pass the practice test their students would take as part of changing culture. Jeanine Phillips brought up an Arkansas mini-documentary on their dyslexia situation. Representative Dietrich reminded the group of the meeting two years ago in the House Education Committee when parents and educators passionately shared the difficulties across districts with dyslexic students. She spoke about how much progress has been made but noted that it is important to keep our foot on the gas and continue to make progress for children.

Christina Middleton asked how information is being disseminated. She heard through parents that the time line for implementation is 2024. Chairperson Porter noted this is not the case and the Task Force needs to make sure that correct information is shared.

Brad Neuenswander shared there are monthly webinars for school personnel and dyslexia is one of the topics addressed in those webinars. The majority of Kansas school districts get their professional development services through regional service centers. He described that they will use many methods to communicate recommended and required dyslexia policy and service changes. Chairperson Porter agreed the changes are happening and some of these changes started as soon as the Task Force began its work. Mr. Neuenswander agreed there has been ongoing communication about this issue from the beginning of the Task Force. He assured the Task Force there continues to be aggressive action to share and implement the Task Force and KSBE recommendations. Heath Peine shared his view on the district perspective, that in a small district he feels comfortable to share these changes quickly, but a larger district requires more time for clarity of message. Brad Neuenswander says the accountability for implementation is KSDE’s responsibility. He shared that as soon as the recommendations came out, KSDE knew it would need a person on point.

Deb Farr stated if parents are concerned and not getting the services they need, they should contact KSDE directly. She noted all school psychologists are qualified to diagnose any Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) disability, including dyslexia. She noted while administrators sometimes may oppose a school psychologist’s dyslexia diagnosis, dyslexia is a type of a specific learning disability under IDEA. If staff do not know how to do make such a diagnosis, she recommended a professional development plan for them.

Discussion and Conclusions

Chairperson Porter noted the recommendations directed to KSBE have been addressed, but the funding recommendations to the Governor and Legislature have not been addressed. The Task Force discussed about how to address funding needs, agreeing that earmarking funds for a statewide dyslexia coordinator specific position would be most effective.

Senator Givens made a motion that the Legislature fund a statewide dyslexia coordinator position in 2020. Representative Dietrich second. The motion passed.

Ms. Farr shared her concern that the training of teachers is a place funding could be involved, as teacher training can be time consuming and expensive.

Lori McMillian asked if KSDE could have a conference where this could be rolled out above the district level. Jaime Callaghan noted this has been occurring, so this is a path that

has been taken, but mandating participation in relevant conferences has not been chosen. Ms. Phillips asked about a pilot program that could be funded. Senator Masterson recommended the KSBE is a more nimble body and could develop that type of program. Chairperson Porter stated pilot projects usually focus on specific communities and he believes dyslexia efforts ought to focus on every child in Kansas. He also noted most of the recommendations have been mandated for everyone, not just specific communities.

Mr. Peine stated the first step of this whole program is to find the students and recommended a consistent screening method, used for every child, to jump-start the process.

Representative Dietrich stated expenditures need to be very focused, starting with a statewide dyslexia coordinator position is the appropriate place to begin, and that person should focus on a consistent screening method for all students. Further funding issues will need to be decided through the appropriation process.

Angie Schreiber noted there are five screening tools Ms. Hadicke, KSDE, has available for schools. However, Ms. Schreiber also noted districts use the screening tools, but then do not know what to do with the information from the screening tools.

Presentation by Jaime Callaghan

Jaime Callaghan described the process her district has been going through and offered to share a brief presentation to the group. After a short break, she presented on the approach of the Auburn-Washburn Unified School District. There was a short discussion on the pitfalls of changing culture on dyslexia and how to bypass problems and increase efficiency. Ms. Phillips stated children who may not be dyslexic but are struggling also thrive under dyslexia-friendly classrooms. Tally Fleming shared that her student load, as a reading specialist, is 40 and additional funding would make so much more possible.

Representative Dietrich asked about the role of the administrator in this whole process. Ms. Callaghan answered she has started at the system level first. Ms. Matteoni added that the top administrators need to have the basic dyslexia workshops along with all the other teachers. David Hurford stated all children should be taught to read using the science of reading.

Chairperson Porter thanked Ms. Callaghan and everyone for the discussion. Chairperson Porter stated it was his hope for the next meeting of the Task Force to be led by a dyslexia coordinator from KSDE. By consensus, the Task Force requested the report of the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia be sent to six applicable Committees of the Kansas Legislature: the House Committee on Appropriations, Senate Committee on Ways and Means, the House and Senate Committees on Education, the House Committee on K-12 Education Budget, and the House Committee on Higher Education Budget.

Chairperson Porter indicated that the 2020 meeting of the Task Force would likely be in November or December of 2020 and adjourned the meeting at 12:46 p.m.

Prepared by Deborah Bremer

Edited by Edward Penner

Approved by the Committee on:

January 21, 2020

(Date)