

Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia

REPORT

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Task Force largely organized its recommendations around the structure of its subcommittees on Pre-service and In-service Professional Development, Screening and Evaluation Process, and Evidence-based Reading Practices. The Subcommittee on Current State and Federal Law recommended the Task Force target all recommendations to the appropriate audience and request necessary resources for the implementation of all Task Force recommendations.

Pre-service:

- The Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) should modify the Educator Preparation Program Standards to include the International Dyslexia Association's (IDA) Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading;
- KSBE should require candidates for K-6 teaching licenses, English Language Arts endorsements, reading specialist teaching licenses, and special education teaching licenses to pass an examination of their knowledge of the science of reading. KSBE should study and approve a test or multiple tests to satisfy this requirement; and
- The Legislature should provide funding to train college of education professors who teach reading to become cognizant in the science of reading. Training could include conference participation, educational experiences, webinars, and relevant education materials.

Professional Learning:

- KSBE should require school systems to provide evidence-based and consistent professional development opportunities consisting of training regarding the nature of dyslexia, an introduction in procedures to identify students who are struggling in reading, and an introduction to intervention strategies and procedures. The content of the professional development should include those areas listed in Appendix A;
- KSBE should encourage colleges of education in Kansas to develop a course of study with a specialization in dyslexia and dyslexia-like characteristics. This course should be geared toward a Science of Reading endorsement (English for Speakers of Other Languages endorsement could be used as a model for the structure of this endorsement). This course of study should align with the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards. This course of study should include practica experiences working with students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia with appropriate supervision and leadership development skills such that the person who graduates with this endorsement can train other classroom teachers and reading specialists within their school district. The training for classroom teachers should be consistent with the IDA document, *Dyslexia in the Classroom: What Every Teacher Needs to Know* (Appendix B); and
- The Legislature should provide funding for school districts to train appropriate staff on dyslexia and recognizing dyslexia and the use of screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools that are sensitive to the characteristics of dyslexia.

Screening and Evaluation Process:

- KSBE should require every accredited school district to screen and identify students at risk of dyslexia or demonstrating the characteristics of dyslexia;
- KSBE should amend the Kansas Education Systems Accreditation model to require districts to implement a rigorous tiered system of supports subject to external review;
- KSBE should develop and provide to school districts criteria for vetting and approving tools and materials for screening and assessing students for characteristics of dyslexia; and
- The Legislature should provide additional funding to districts for the purpose of acquiring screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools that are sensitive to the characteristics of dyslexia. KSBE should provide recommendations to districts on appropriate screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools.

Evidence-based Reading Practices:

- KSBE should require each accredited school district to utilize structured literacy as the evidence-based approach to teaching literacy skills to all students and promote early intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. KSBE should utilize the “Components of Structured Literacy Checklist” from *The New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook* (Appendix C) to evaluate structured literacy programs for accreditation purposes. KSBE should ensure school districts are made aware of information concerning structured literacy training and information currently available from the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (Appendix D);
- KSBE should direct the creation of a dyslexia handbook for use by schools in Kansas. The creation of the handbook should involve input from a broad array of stakeholders; and
- KSBE should identify a dyslexia coordinator within the Kansas State Department of Education.

Other:

- **Task Force continuation.** The Legislature should reappoint the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia (Task Force) to meet once per year for three years to monitor progress of implementation of the recommendations. The reappointed Task Force should include the same members and also include the consulting conferees participating in the November 28, 2018, and January 10, 2019, meetings of the Task Force; and
- **Dyslexia definition.** The Task Force concluded the definition of “dyslexia” used by schools and policymakers should be the definition provided by the IDA, which states dyslexia is “a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.”

Proposed Legislation: None