

As you probably know, Autism affects one in 52 children which is 2% of the population. So, every school in Kansas is affected by autism. What you might not know is the dyslexia affects 1 in 5 children that is 20% of the students in our school districts. This means that in every classroom from kindergarten to twelfth grade sits a child, and probably 2 or 3, who have dyslexia – that's a lot of kids! And to be sure, dyslexia is real. In fact, congress also agreed that it was real when it included dyslexia as a qualifying condition under the Special Education eligibility category of Specific Learning Disability and this was in 1975. Since that time we have collected a tremendous amount of evidence about how dyslexia is manifested in the brain, how it manifests in the classroom, the genetic component of dyslexia, but more importantly, we know what works for students with dyslexia. Despite this mountain of research that has been well documented Kansas is 1 of 8 states that has no process in place to identify or provide intervention for these students.

So, what is dyslexia? The dys part of dyslexia means lack of ability, the lexia part means with language. So, the simplest definition is lack of ability with language. However, it is much more complex than that definition. It is a deficit in the phonological processing of the language, meaning the sound system of our language. It is not a vision or a hearing problem. The brain of an individual with dyslexia is processing language, but it is taking alternative pathways in the brain making it much more difficult to learn to read and write. It is an unexpected difficulty because the individuals with dyslexia have average to above average IQs, yet they are struggling with learning to read and write like their peers. It is often called the hidden disability because you can't look at someone and tell they have dyslexia.

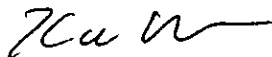
Imagine being a smart kid sitting in class day after day, failing day after day, despite knowing you were smart. Imagine being told to 'work harder,' 'focus,' or to 'try harder.' Imagine that you know you have, dyslexia, yet, you are told it doesn't exist. Every day you are told to be more motivated. My son, Spencer who fails day after day and continues to try is not lacking motivation. Imagine being the parent of this child and having current research-based information about dyslexia and being told the school has nothing to help. Imagine going to a parent support group and being told the best thing I could do for my son would be to move to Missouri where they recently passed HB1928 and SB638.

Parents of students with dyslexia have the right to believe the school system is going to provide the appropriate education for their child to be successful in school. Just like when a parent brings their child to a doctor and trust they know how to help their sick child, parents believe that the schools know how to help their struggling child because they are the education professionals. Unfortunately parents don't know that the school staff are ill prepared to help their child and that their child will most likely not receive identification of what the problem is or the type of remediation that is supported by evidenced-based research to help kids with dyslexia learn to read and write. And, make no doubt about it, these kids can learn to read and write with the appropriate remediation and supports.

It is time for Kansas to stand up and take charge of giving appropriate dyslexia screening and resource tools to ALL our teachers, school psychologists and administrators so that they can finally begin to answer the questions parents are asking and meeting the needs of 20% of the students in

our schools! You owe it to these kids, to these parents and to your community to pass bill HB 2602 and prepare all Kansas kids for a successful education career and life beyond.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Reed', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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