

**Testimonies in support of House Bill
HB 2552
Representatives and parents from
the Fundamental Learning Center
Wichita, KS**

Testimony in support of House Bill of HB 2552

An Act Concerning Education;

Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32, 117

Given by: Jeanine Phillips, Executive Director

Fundamental Learning Center, Inc., Wichita, Kansas 316-684-7323; funlearn.org

Good afternoon honorable members of the Kansas House of Representatives. Thank you for your service to the citizens of the Great State of Kansas. In addition, I want to thank you for your attention to the literacy crisis facing our kids. Thank you, Representatives Erickson and Williams, for your authorship and sponsorship of this Bill.

My name is Jeanine Phillips. My background includes a BA in Elem. Ed., and MS in Adult Education. I have always loved to teach. For the past 20 years I have been the Co-Founder and the Executive Director of Fundamental Learning Center (FLC) in Wichita, Kansas. *FLC is a 501(c)(3) educational organization established in 2000 to enlighten parents, educators and the related public to the educational needs of a child who struggles to learn to read, especially those who are dyslexic.* Over the course of the past 20 years, FLC's dedicated and passionate staff have provided thousands of parents and educators across the state and nation with evidence-based and proven literacy methodologies that work to teach literacy-resistant children to read, write and spell.

As many non-profit organizations start, FLC established its roots with a personal story, one experienced by my co-founder, Gretchen Andeel and myself. Our experiences created the personal realization, cause, and mission that opened the doors for others. 1990 was the year I realized my personal mission. That was the year my youngest, Cooper, medically struggled to survive his kindergarten year in Littleton, Colorado, because he was an unidentified dyslexic. Since 1990, I have had the opportunity to meet many of the top scientists who study dyslexia, have attended hundreds of hours of specialized conferences, workshops, courses, and programs of promise. Since Cooper's diagnosis of dyslexia in 1991, in Kansas, I have spent my professional career gathering research-based knowledge that improved his life as well as the lives of the thousands of children, their parents, and educators. I was inspired by the fact that Kansas refused to identify dyslexia in the classroom when Cooper was 7. By 1992, science had proven that dyslexia was a specific learning disability, genetic, and affected 20% of the population. Furthermore science factually stated the evidence-based methodology needed to teach any child to read, write and spell, understood and proven through the research results garnered by the National Institutes of Child Health & Development (NICHD).

When I first traveled to Topeka to introduce my cause related to dyslexia to the State Board of Education in 2001, I shared the national low-literacy concerns reported in the National Reading Panel Report (1998). This

report focused on the fact that 40% of our nation's children were reading below proficiency. But to my dismay, the Kansas education system strongly argued that parents in Kansas shouldn't worry. "Kansas was teaching children how to read." I knew differently. I had attended a conference that focused on the 1998 NAEP scores. The 1998 NAEP Kansas scores reported 63% of our Kansas fourth graders were reading below proficiency! During the next 13 years of testifying in Kansas, I continued to focus on the NAEP scores. Other states were gaining on our Kansas kids. The Dept. of Ed. continued to say children were being taught to read but NAEP scores continued to show differently. Kansas scores remained flat (never varying more than 1% up or down for 20 years while other states slowly improved), until 2019. In 2019, Kansas 4th grade reading scores fell 4 points. Today NAEP reports 67% of Kansas 4th graders are reading below proficiency.

The time is now. Our kids, dyslexic or not can't wait for school-based solutions. *The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence & crime is welded to reading failure - US. Dept. of Justice. *75% of unemployed adults have reading or writing difficulties - National Institute for Literacy. *70% of the inmates in America's prisons can't read above the 4th grade level - Proliteracy. *43% of Americans with the lowest literacy skills live in poverty. 70% have no job or a part-time job - National Institute for Literacy. **The Kansas Reading Readiness Act** is just one step in many that Kansas must take to address this crisis.

I applaud all New sections of HB 2552 and encourage each and every one of you to pass HB2552. We are in a state of emergency and many solutions will need to be put into place to save our children! As I ended many testimonials in the past, "Please do the right thing". Pass this Act.

Testimony in support of House Bill, HB 2552

An Act Concerning Education, Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32,117
Given by Roger D. Lowe, Member of the Board of Directors of the Fundamental Learning
Center, Inc., Wichita, KS and Vice President Emeritus, Wichita State University.

Representatives Erickson and Williams, I send my thanks and appreciation for your interest in making improvements in the literacy problems that exists in the State of Kansas, and for your efforts to make improvements by sponsoring **HB 2552**. This effort is of extreme importance to the parents and the kids. I applaud each of you and members of your committee for your efforts.

Perhaps some of your committee members may have been in the legislature, long enough to remember me, but I am sure many have not, so permit me to introduce myself. I am Roger Lowe. Prior to my retirement in 2013, I was Vice President for Administration and Finance for 45 years and Senior Vice President for another 5 years at Wichita State University. Upon my retirement, I was honored, by both the House and Senate, with official Certificates that were nicely framed and presented to me for those 50 plus years of service to the State of Kansas, and WSU. I want you to know that those certificates hang proudly in my office.

I tell you that, because during all of those years in higher education, I never realized the K-12 year programs of the State of Kansas, have not recognized dyslexic as a problem for young children, or to recognize the "Science of Reading." It was only after joining the Board of the Fundamental Learning Center in January, 2014, that I was enlightened about the neglect and suffering that thousands of Kansas kids have endured, over all of those years. They have suffered from their classmates calling them stupid and dummies, simply because they could not keep up, due to their inability to read, write, and spell. Their self-esteem plummets. Many of these kids are very bright, but simply need help, in proper teaching of them how to read. After allocating millions and millions of additional dollars into the public schools, the level of reading proficiency has continued to decrease. The results will remain the same, unless appropriate legislation is approved to correct the problem. Private schools also have those same limitations in their programs, given that their teachers do not have the specialized training.

It is for that reason, I am honored to offer this testimony and to fully support your efforts and to ask for your approval of **HB 2552**. This will help the parents and especially the children, giving them a chance in life to become leaders in our State and communities, so that they can appropriately contribute to society.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I will be happy to answer questions or share further information. My cell is 316-644-9408 and email roger.lowe@wichita.edu.

Testimony in support of House Bill of HB 2552
An Act Concerning Education;
Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32, 117
Given by: Tammi Hope
806 N Faulkner Wichita, Kansas 316-806-6497

Good afternoon honorable members of the Kansas House of Representatives. Thank you for your faithful service to our state. It is my desire to express my support for HB2552. The catalyst for my interest in this piece of legislation is the educational journey of my own child. Let me briefly share the experience of my youngest son, Caleb. It was in grade 3 in District 259 that we first observed signs of reading failure. My once happy and confident son started to dislike school had grown withdrawn and quiet. With the help of his 4th-grade teacher, the BIST (Behavior Intervention Support System) process was initiated to begin to collect data and log intervention strategies and results. At the end of that year, an IEP was created to address his needs in reading. However, these interventions would not take place in earnest until the following school year. All classroom interventions to this point had been ineffective. Moreover, the intervention strategies employed as a result of his IEP did not include evidence based structured literacy instruction. By this time, his negative disposition toward education and low self-esteem had become deeply rooted. As a parent, I could not continue to watch as my son spiral downward both emotionally and academically. I, therefore, sought outside assistance for remediation in reading. I took training in literacy intervention since I could not afford to hire a tutor. I worked with him five days each week in a structured literacy program in addition to daily help with his homework. We worked tirelessly for several years. As a result, in Highschool, his IEP was changed to consult and accommodations only as instructional hours were no longer required for remediation in reading.

As chronicled by our experience, this bill would have greatly benefitted my son and family. The evidenced based structured literacy instruction he desperately needed could have been administered by professionals in the industry. Additionally, using 3rd-grade assessment scores would mean that intervention would have started a year early for Caleb. This would have saved him one full year of academic failure and embarrassment. Moreover, the financial cost of that instruction would not have burdened our family.

I am confident that my son's experience with reading failure is not unique. I also know that my ability to assist him with this struggle is unique as many families do not have the knowledge or the means to secure interventions outside of their public school. It will only be through the progressive and bold wisdom of legislation like HB2552 that other children can have positive outcomes in reading intervention. This funding is a start in the right direction and must move forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Tammi M Hope

Testimony in support of House Bill of HB 2552
An Act Concerning Education;
Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32.117
Given by: Ann Welborn, Director
Darrel and Dee Rolph Literacy Academy at the
Fundamental Learning Center, Inc., Wichita, Kansas 316-684-7323;
awelborn@funlearn.org

Good afternoon members of the Kansas House of Representatives. My name is Ann Welborn and I am currently the Director of the Darrel and Dee Rolph Literacy Academy at the Fundamental Learning Center in Wichita, Kansas. I previously spent thirty-seven years in public school education with the last twenty-five as an elementary principal. I want to thank you all for your efforts in supporting all students in Kansas schools when it comes to reading proficiency.

As an elementary principal, I found it frustrating to see the number of students struggling to read in each grade level including my own son. Teachers and Paras were trained to deliver what was considered evidenced-based curricula but what we now know this was not structured literacy. The NAEP scores for the last thirty years have remained unchanged in Kansas with 67% of 4th grade students performing below proficient in reading in 2019. This directly coincides with the type of reading instruction I observed during my thirty-seven years in public education. This is a huge concern for teachers, parents and students. We know that students who learn differently need to be instructed through a structured literacy program provided by a trained instructor in the areas of reading, writing and spelling. Students who are not taught in this way, will continue to fall further behind in school.

In HB 2552, under New Sec. 7., on page 5 and line 22 (1) insists that reading instruction must use evidence-based practices and programs. Without this bill, school funding will continue to flow to the same instruction that has not worked for the past 30 years. Students who learn differently cannot continue to wait another thirty years. The time is now to put an end to poor reading scores and pass this bill. Children all over Kansas need the opportunity to find the best structured reading program to fit their individual needs. I ask that you please consider passing this bill to help all kids become more confident and proficient readers. It would be a great benefit to many kids and families in Kansas.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and I appreciate all that you do for the great state of Kansas!

Testimony in support of House Bill HB 2552

An Act Concerning Education;

Kansas Reading Readiness Act amending SA 79-32, 117

Given by: Sarah Collins, *Parent* and Director of Development at
Fundamental Learning Center, Inc., Wichita, Kansas 316-684-7323; funlearn.org

Good afternoon, members of the Kansas House of Representatives. Thank you for your service and for your commitment to the citizens of the State of Kansas.

My name is Sarah Collins and I am first and foremost a parent to two boys, Austin and Alex. Austin is here with me today and has asked me to tell you his story in hopes you'll understand the importance of the bill before you (and why an eleven-year-old is willing to spend a day off of school in the state capital talking to strangers rather than at home pestering his little brother). Austin started public school five years ago a happy, energetic, brilliant kindergartener. He was eager to learn and excited for his first day in school. He had a new backpack, a fresh pack of crayons and a wonderful veteran teacher. We were all looking forward to seeing what he would accomplish!

Within a few weeks, however, his teacher started bringing concerns to me about his ability to learn, his willingness to participate, and inability to keep up with the class. This was surprising to us because people had always complimented us on how smart Austin was. As the weeks and months passed the situation only got worse. No matter what we tried, the methods his teacher employed, and the rewards we offered, Austin was simply NOT picking up the reading, writing & spelling skills his peers were. He became angry and withdrawn – he hated school and knew in his heart that he was “stupid”. Something had to change but we could not find any answers – not with the school staff or with the many private practitioners we went to. We encountered so many “cures” and “ideas” that it was hard to sort through and find something based in the science of reading – something proven.

It wasn't until a teacher in an afterschool art program recognized in Austin what she knew from her own daughter to be dyslexia, that we finally found hope. After an assessment confirmed that Austin indeed DOES learn differently than many of his peers. We found out that he is extremely smart and gifted (“genius level” if you ask him) and that there is a simple solution – an evidence-based teaching method proven to help not only dyslexics, but any struggling reader. Austin started school at a private school with in the Fundamental Learning Center in 2015 – not knowing his letters or letter sounds. Today, in his fifth year, he's reading Harry Potter to me.

We were fortunate to find a place for Austin to learn and are forever thankful that we had the time and resources to get him into this school. This type of specialized education WORKS, but it is expensive and I see families every day pooling resources to pay tuition, driving over an hour each way to make sure their kids get to the only place that can help. Our school is now full and has a waiting list. Please let me remind you that I did not pull my son out of public school

because I wanted something “better” for him. I placed him at FLC because this was the ONLY PLACE he was going to be able to learn to read, write and spell. Every student in our school is there because it is essential for them to learn this way. For kids like Austin who are not at our school the only option is private tutoring – which is expensive and typically has to take place outside the school hours. How can the average Kansas family make this work? They can’t. And as a result, those kids are left behind – struggling to read in a classroom with a teacher who desperately wants to help them, but lacks the tools. The funds in this bill provide a means for Kansas kids to access true evidence-based reading instruction and resources. If we don’t do this right – and follow the science towards proven methods of reading instruction, we not only waste a significant investment, we harm thousands of Kansas kids with our negligence.

When I explained this bill to Austin and asked if he wanted to join me today he said “Yes, because I don’t want any kids to feel the way I used to. I want ALL kids to get to learn to read like I did”.

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An Act Concerning Education;

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Given by: Kristin Rowley, *Parent*

E Pembroke Cir Wichita, KS

316-650-2180 Kristen.L.Rowley@gmail.com

My name is Kristen Rowley, a mother of 4 from Wichita Kansas. I am writing to ask you to support HB2552, The Kansas Reading Readiness Act.

According to KU Institute of Policy and Social Research there were 491,764 children enrolled in Kansas Public schools last year. (<https://ipsr.ku.edu/ksdata/ksah/education/6ed1b.pdf>). The International Dyslexia Association estimated that up to 20% (that's 1 in 5) students could have dyslexia. (<https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics-2/>) That works out to approximately 98, 352 students in Kansas struggling to read, write, and spell.

Today, I want to tell you about 2 of those dyslexic students, my daughter, Kati (age 11), and my son Quincy, (age 9). Kati was 10 when she underwent an evaluation at Fundamental Learning Center in Wichita, KS. They told us she had the hallmark signs of a dyslexic learner and that she needed evidence-based phonics instruction to help her learn to read, write, and spell effectively. By this time in her school career she was in 4th grade and had already fallen far behind her peers in her ability to read. She had become shy, withdrawn, and avoided situations that would require her to read aloud in a group. Worst of all, she had labeled herself. That label was: STUPID. She was discouraged, demoralized, and had no self confidence in any area of her life. That fall I took training (Also from the Fundamental Learning Center) to be able to teach her to read using evidence-based instruction. It was time consuming and expensive, but it was worth it to help Kati thrive. I am happy to say that in the last 18 months she has made tremendous progress! She has improved her reading level by more than 2 grade levels, and she is now a confident, outgoing young lady. She no longer labels herself as stupid, she labels herself SMART and STRONG. What an amazing turn around!

Quincy was 8 when he was evaluated for dyslexia. For him, tutoring with mom was not the best plan. His discouragement took the form of tantrums, melt downs, and severe relationship challenges between himself and the rest of us in the family. We are still working on repairing those relationships. He was also falling behind his peers and struggling to keep a positive image of himself. He became unwilling to even TRY and instead acted out. We made the decision to enroll him in Rolph Literacy Academy, the laboratory school at Fundamental Learning Center. There he is challenged, engaged, and is growing

tremendously. He is now reading! His relationships within the family have improved with his confidence and growth at Rolph Literacy Academy. We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to send him there. It is not without cost, however. The only way he can attend is with the help of scholarships and the generosity of family members.

Now what does this have to do with HB2552? This bill provides provision for private schooling for dyslexic learners. It provides several opportunities for Kansas' children. First for those whose families are not financially able to undergo training themselves or send them to an appropriate school they will have a chance at solid, evidenced based instruction. Second it is an opportunity for success for students that would otherwise get left behind their peers, struggling their entire lives to read, write, and spell fluently. Next it can provide a hopeful future for students that otherwise would label themselves as STUPID. Last it will provide the opportunity to thrive for children that are otherwise discouraged and demoralized. We can do right by the next generation of Kansas students. Kansas' children are Kansas' future. What is good for them, is good for all of us.

Thank you for your time and dedication to Kansas Students.

Kristen Rowley

Dear Education Committee Members,

I am writing to share my family's experience in the education system as we deal with our children's dyslexia.

Our son, Barrett, qualified for reading assistance at our neighborhood public school when he was in kindergarten. And in 1st grade they discontinued the tutoring they had been providing. They said he was doing great but at the end of the year, his scores had dropped tremendously. Our impression was that they would have kept moving him along to the next grade no matter how poorly he performed.

For his 2nd grade year, we enrolled him in a private school. The fact that there was a serious problem in his ability to thrive became apparent as the teacher brought her concerns to our attention. One month in to the school year, we were having him evaluated which revealed signs of dyslexia and dysgraphia. Because of the lack of resources at any schools, we chose the best thing for him would be to enroll him at the Rolph Literacy Academy (RLA) in Wichita.

At RLA, Barrett has received an evidence based education that utilizes a program called Alphabetic Phonics which has been researched and studied and proven to help children with dyslexia learn to read.

Before we discovered his dyslexia & found RLA, Barrett was a 7 year old boy who had hit rock bottom and had given up on school. Defeated to the point where he would say "I'm just not smart like the other kids, mom" and would leave whole work sheets blank because what's the point when you try and get everything wrong anyway?? His spark for learning and all confidence he once had was gone.

Now, after three years at RLA, being taught in ways that his brain can learn, he is thriving, full of life, and loves learning!!! Our boy is back! And although he still struggles to read a bit, he has improved so much and is much more confident in his STRENGTHS, enabling him to look forward to the years ahead.

I have since began training to become a Reading Intervention Specialist so that I can also teach this program, which has been helpful because we found out Barrett's younger sister, Josie, is also dyslexic. We removed her from school so that I can homeschool her and tutor her in Alphabetic Phonics.

In our experience, the schools in Kansas are ill-equipped to meet the needs of about 20% of the kids who struggle with reading/writing due to conditions like dyslexia. My husband and I have had to take matters into our own hands, pay tens of THOUSANDS of dollars out of our own pockets, just to ensure that our children actually learn to read.

RLA and the Alphabetic Phonics program have made a huge positive impact in Barrett & Josie's lives!

My concern is that there are many programs out there that claim to help dyslexics, but are not based in evidence from research. Any move to support dyslexics in the schools NEEDS to be centered in programs that have been PROVEN to help.

Thank you for your time.

Audrey & Erik Goff
Derby, Kansas

