



State of New Hampshire

GENERAL COURT

CONCORD

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 1, 2015

TO: Honorable Margaret Wood Hassan, Governor
Honorable Shawn Jasper, Speaker of the House
Honorable Chuck W. Morse, President of the Senate
Honorable Paul C. Smith, House Clerk
Tammy L. Wright, Senate Clerk
Michael York, State Librarian

FROM: Representative Jack Balcolm, Chairman

SUBJECT: Final Report on Committee to Study Policies Which it Determines are Necessary for Dyslexic Students HB 519, Ch. 172:1, Laws of 2015

Pursuant to HB 519, Ch. 172:1, Laws of 2015, enclosed please find the Final Report of the Committee to Study Policies Which it Determines are Necessary for Dyslexic Students.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I would like to thank those members of the commission who were instrumental in this study. I would also like to acknowledge all those who testified before the commission and assisted the commission in our study.

Enclosures

cc: Members of the Committee

Final Report
Committee to Study Policies Which it Determines are Necessary for Dyslexic Students
HB 519, Ch. 172:1, Laws of 2015
November 1, 2015

Introduction

Pursuant to HB 519, Chapter 172:1 Laws of 2015, the House Speaker assigned six Representatives to the Committee to Study Policies which it Determines are Necessary for Dyslexic Students. The Committee consisted of the following State Representatives:

Hon. Jack Balcom – Hillsborough District 21 (Chairman)
Hon. David Kidder – Merrimack District 05
Hon. Karen Ebel – Merrimack District 05
Hon. James Grenier – Sullivan District 07
Hon. Deanna Rollo – Strafford District 18
Hon. Glenn Cordelli - Carroll District 04

In Compliance with this assignment, the Committee met four times to solicit public testimony from experts in the field. The Minutes can be found attached as Annex A. A list of individuals who testified, answered the Committee's questions and made recommendations are listed with their respective organizations as Annex B. Annex C contains the Committee's proposed legislation. Annex D contains supporting documentation.

In Summary

Findings and recommendations from the Committee resulted in proposed legislation reflecting approaches adopted and successfully implemented by many other States including Minnesota, Arkansas and Texas. The legislation was the result of study and proposals by the Committee and key stakeholders. The Committee believes that this proposed legislation will have wide-based support and could be funded under the current adequacy funding for Special Education. In addition, early literary screening in Title I schools could be federally funded. The proposed legislation is included in this report as Annex C.

Detailed Findings

Definition for study purposes:

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurological 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 and or auditory processing of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Additional consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced experience that can impede the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge (IDA/NICHHD, 2002). Dyslexia is one of the most common learning disabilities. Research from the National Center on Learning Disabilities suggests that one in five individuals is affected by dyslexia (NCLD, 2015).

Much of the testimony heard by the Committee focused on the following finding. The earlier children who struggle are identified and provided systematic, intense instruction, the less severe and costly their problems are likely to be (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Torgesen, 2002). With adequately intensive instruction, however, even older children with dyslexia can become accurate. Given the results of this research, any proposed legislation should include a requirement for early screening.

Further testimony found the impact that dyslexia has is different for each person and depends on the severity of the condition and the effectiveness of instruction or remediation. The core difficulty is with word recognition and reading fluency, spelling, and writing. Some students with dyslexia manage to learn early reading and spelling tasks, especially with excellent instruction, but later experience their most debilitating problems when more complex language skills are required, such as grammar, understanding textbook material, and writing essays. Students with dyslexia can also have problems with spoken language, even after they have been exposed to good

language models in their homes and good language instruction in school. They may find it difficult to express themselves clearly, or to fully comprehend what others mean when they speak. Such language problems are often difficult to recognize, but they can lead to major problems in school, in the workplace, and in relating to other people.

The effects of dyslexia reach well beyond the classroom. Dyslexia can also affect a person's self-image. Students with dyslexia often end up feeling "dumb" and less capable than they actually are. After experiencing a great deal of stress due to academic problems, a student may become discouraged about continuing in school. The characteristics and indicators listed below are some of the most common. The list is not exhaustive and few students would show all of these signs. Characteristics of students with dyslexia change over time depending on the grade level and/or state of reading (as described by Jeanne Chall in her book, *The Stages of Reading Development*) that the individual has reached. The following are some common characteristics of dyslexia at different grade levels. These levels of characteristics should be thought of as a continuum. If a student is not displaying the characteristics of his/her grade level, the previous grade level should also be looked at.

Preschool/Kindergarten: All parents are encouraged to take advantage of screenings offered by their school district. At this stage, students are developing the underlying oral language base necessary for learning to read. Signs that indicate possible difficulties with reading acquisition include: Delayed speech → Confusion with before/after, right/left, and so on → mispronounced words; persistent baby talk → difficulty with recognizing and producing rhymes, i.e., common nursery rhymes such as "Jack and Jill" and "Humpty Dumpty" difficulty learning and remembering rote information such as letter names (also phone number and address) → difficulty remembering and following directions.

Grades 1-3: At this stage, children are developing basic word recognition skills both through the use of word attack strategies and contextual cues. Students with dyslexia will show some of the following characteristics: → Difficulty remembering names or shapes of letters → Difficulty acquiring vocabulary or using age appropriate grammar → Difficulty putting ideas on paper. → Reverses letters or the order of letters when reading. → Inability to learn to associate letters with sounds; such as being unable to connect the letter "b" with the "b" sound → Confusion of visually similar letters (b/d/p, w/m, h/n, f/t) → Confusion of auditorily similar letters (d/t, b/p, f/v) → Difficulties remembering basic sight vocabulary → Problems with segmenting words into individual sound and blending sounds to form words → Reading and spelling errors that involve difficulties with sequencing and monitoring sounds/symbol correspondence such as reversals of letters (past/pats), omissions (tip/trip), additions (slip/sip), substitutions (rip/rib) and transpositions (stop/pots) → Omission of grammatical endings in reading and/or writing (-s, -ed, -ing, etc.) → Difficulty remembering spelling words over time and applying spelling rules → Inability to read common one-syllable words or to sound out even the simplest of words; such as mat, cat, hop, nap.

Grades 4-8: At this stage, children progressing normally have mastered basic reading skills and are now expected to learn new information from reading. Many students with dyslexia continue to have significant difficulties with developing word recognition skills and therefore have trouble coping with more advanced reading activities necessary to succeed in the upper elementary grades and beyond. → Difficulty understanding concepts and relationships → Significant difficulty reading and spelling multisyllabic words, often omitting entire syllables as well as making single sound errors → Lack of awareness of word structure (prefixes, roots, suffixes) → Frequent misreading of common sight words (where, there, what, then, when, etc.) → Difficulties with reading comprehension and learning new information from text because of underlying word recognition difficulties → If underlying oral language problems exist affecting vocabulary knowledge and grammar, difficulties in comprehension of text will occur → Significant difficulties in writing related to problems in spelling as well as organizing ideas in High School, College and Adult Students at this stage are expected to analyze and synthesize information in written form as well as acquire factual information. Although many individuals with dyslexia may have compensated for some of their difficulties with reading, others many continue to have problems with automatic word identification. → Continued difficulties with word recognition which significantly affect acquisition of knowledge and ability to analyze written material → Slow rate of reading → Continued difficulties with spelling and written composition → Difficulty with note taking in class → Trouble learning a foreign language.

Dyslexia is a life-long condition. Early identification and intervention is the key to helping people with dyslexia achieve in school and in life. Most people with dyslexia need help from a teacher, tutor, or therapist specially trained in using a multisensory, structured language approach. Dyslexia and other related learning disorders cannot be cured. Proper instruction promotes reading success and alleviates many difficulties associated

with dyslexia. When students with dyslexia receive academic therapy outside of school, the therapist should work closely with classroom teachers, special education providers, and other school personnel. Students may also need help with emotional issues that sometimes arise as a consequence of difficulties in school. Mental health specialists can help students cope with their struggles. Instruction for individuals with learning differences should be: → Explicit – directly teaches skills for reading, spelling, and writing. Systematic and Cumulative – has a definite, logical sequence of concept introduction → Structured – has step-by-step procedures for introducing, reviewing, and practicing concepts. Immediate, corrective feedback is necessary to develop automatic word recognition skills. → Multisensory – engages the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic channels simultaneously or in rapid succession.

Main Conclusion:

It is cost efficient to identify and take remedial action for reading disabilities (e.g. dyslexia) at the earliest opportunity than to pay a far greater cost in later years during the student's academic journey through PK-12.

Other States Actions:

With the hopes of separating dyslexia from a large umbrella of student learning disorders, the states of Alabama, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas, have passed legislation for the recognition of a dyslexia day, week, or month. During the past two years (2013-2014) and in concert with other States, New Hampshire's Governor has proclaimed October as Dyslexia Awareness Month. The purpose of this declaration is to promote awareness throughout the state on: the numbers of students in NH with reading disorders, the importance of early screening for dyslexia, and the importance of educating the educators who work with dyslexic students. Awareness by educators, legislators and parents can make all the difference in a student's ability to succeed.

On such dates, schools and mental health practitioners are encouraged to educate others about the common characteristics of dyslexia, as well as the appropriate accommodations and interventions:

- Reading is the cornerstone of all learning and is critical for college and career readiness. The ability to read and understand written and digital text is of the highest importance in all subject areas. Current issues of New Hampshire's school age students reveals:
- Dyslexia is the most common type of learning disability
- Seventy-five to eighty percent of kids with Specified Learning Disabilities (SLD) have some form of dyslexia. Terminology and labels differ from state to state and even in NH schools. This creates confusion. The parents are told their child has an SLD, but don't realize their child has dyslexia.

Reading not only includes foundational skills such as fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension, but also the strategies for applying those skills to make meaning from text and transfer knowledge across the school day and beyond. Regular opportunities to read widely, intentional reading instruction at all grade levels, and thinking about what is learned while reading, fosters growth in reading for all learners.

The New Hampshire Department of Education (DOE) and other reading experts agree with the Committee's conclusions that screening students at an early age can increase the academic success of our students while reducing the overall cost of remedial treatment for these students later. Treatment is then accomplished by providing guidance and technical assistance on implementation of academic standards, current literacy best practices, multi-tiered systems of intervention, and reading policy administration. This includes ensuring that teachers will have access to appropriate training programs.

Standards and Assessments:

The New Hampshire PK-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts (ELA), which includes reading standards, need to be reviewed by DOE and revised as necessary periodically to ensure assessment and standards keep pace with best practices. All of the ELA standards, including reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, media literacy and language, are also assessed at the classroom level through teacher- and district-selected assessments or by language arts curriculum publishers and national assessment organizations.

SUMMARY

Summary of Recommended Legislation:

Based on the needs recognized by the study committee and related recommendations, the Committee developed draft legislation reflecting those recommendations.

Testimony heard by the Committee clearly indicated that most children identified as having the characteristics of dyslexia can be treated successfully. To accomplish this most effectively, early literacy screening, identification and the use of best practice interventions and treatment models for dyslexia are vital. Accordingly, the proposed legislation would require universal basic early literacy screening at the kindergarten and first grade levels for characteristics that are associated with risk factors of dyslexia and at appropriate times thereafter. Public schools would then be required to provide best practice interventions and support services to identified students. The legislation would require that parents be notified of evaluation information and findings, and have the option for an independent evaluation at their own cost.

To support public school districts in the most efficient and cost effective manner, the proposed legislation provides for the NH Department of Education's employment of a Reading Specialist, highly trained, certified and with field experience in dyslexia treatment. State-funded, the Reading Specialist will act as the primary source of information and support for NH school districts for dyslexia awareness, intervention and support.

Pursuant to the proposed legislation, the Reading Specialist would develop a program to ensure professional awareness of the characteristics of dyslexia and related best practices and accommodations in public schools. The Reading Specialist will work with the Council of Teacher Education and the Division of Higher Education at the NH Department of Education to ensure all teacher education programs at New Hampshire-supported institutions of higher education provide such professional awareness. Additionally, a key role of the Reading Specialist will be to develop an online reading support guide, the Dyslexia Resource Guide, with a committee of experts to be convened by the Reading Specialist, which can be used by all school districts as a resource in supporting students with dyslexia.

If passed, the NH DOE would employ a Reading Specialist by January 1, 2017 and the Dyslexia Resource Guide to public school districts would be available by September 1, 2017. Universal early literacy screening would be required in public schools by January 1, 2018.

Respectfully Submitted

Rep. Jack Balcom, Chairman

Annex A – Minutes of Committee Meetings. The Committee met on the following dates:

September 29, 2015

October 19, 2015

Annex B – Participating Organizations:

Cindy Waltman, NH Association of School Psychologists and Plymouth State University.

Michael Harris, Lyme School District

Andrea Harris, Hanover School District

Brenda Peters, Specialist in reading, Children’s Dyslexia Center

Alma Velasquez-Ermatinger, Bilingual reading specialist

Bebe Casey, Decoding Dyslexia

Mary Earick, DOE

Carol Patten, NH International Dyslexia Association

Anne Eaton, NH International Dyslexia Association

Aileen Cormier, Children’s Dyslexia Center

Jennifer Pomykato, NH School Administrators Association

Virginia Borrero-Mendel, School Psychologist

P. Alan Pardy, NH Association Special Ed Admin.

Dean Michener, NH School Boards Association

Nathan Jones, School Psychologist

Rick Ladd, House Chair of Education

Annex C

HB 519 Study Committee Draft Legislation

I. SCREENING AND TREATMENT FOR DYSLEXIA AND RELATED DISORDERS

(A) All students, including English for Speakers of Other Languages students, enrolling in New Hampshire’s public schools shall be formally screened using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) or an equivalent cost effective screener for the identification of characteristics that are associated with risk factors for dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia upon entering kindergarten or first grade, and at appropriate times thereafter, to monitor progress. The screening required by this section shall begin no later than January 1, 2018.

(B) Once a student is identified as having characteristics that are associated with risk factors for dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, the student’s public school district shall provide best practice intervention and support services.

(C) Once a student is identified as having characteristics that are associated with risk factors for dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia or dysgraphia, the student’s parents or guardians will be immediately notified and provided with any and all evaluation information and findings, in addition to periodic formal evaluative results based on individual written intervention and support plans developed with the student’s parents or guardians.

(D) A parent or guardian has the right to submit the results of an independent evaluation from a licensed reading or intervention specialist highly trained in dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia or dysgraphia for consideration by the student’s public school district. A parent or guardian submitting an independent evaluation assumes all fiscal responsibility for that independent evaluation.

II. READING SPECIALIST IN THE NH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

(A) No later than January 1, 2017, the New Hampshire Department of Education shall designate a Reading Specialist to enable the Department to provide New Hampshire public school districts with the support and resources necessary to assist students with dyslexia and related disorders and their families. This Reading Specialist will provide technical assistance for dyslexia and related disorders to New Hampshire school districts.

(B) The Reading Specialist will:

- (1) Be highly trained and certified in best practice interventions and treatment models for dyslexia, with expertise in related disorders, dyscalculia, dysgraphia best practice interventions and treatment models;
- (2) Will have a minimum of three years of field experience in screening, identifying and treating dyslexia and related disorders; and
- (3) Be responsible for the implementation of professional awareness required under the program approved by the NH Department of Education.

- (C) The Reading Specialist will serve as the primary source of information and support for New Hampshire school districts addressing the needs of students with dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia and dysgraphia.
- (D) The Reading Specialist position will be funded by the State of New Hampshire.

III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING FOR ALL TEACHERS

(A) No later than September 1, 2017, the Reading Specialist will develop and maintain a program to ensure all New Hampshire teachers and school administrators have access to materials to support professional awareness of best practices on:

- (1) Recognition of the characteristics of dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia; and
- (2) Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia.

(B) The New Hampshire Department of Education's Council of Teacher Education, the Division of Higher Education, and the Reading Specialist shall collaborate to ensure that all teacher education programs offered at New Hampshire's state-supported institutions of higher education provide explicit professional awareness of best practices on:

- (1) Recognition of characteristics of dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia and dysgraphia; and
- (2) Evidence-based interventions and accommodations for dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia and dysgraphia.

III. DYSLEXIA RESOURCE GUIDE

No later than September 1, 2017, the Reading Specialist will maintain a program in the form of an online Reading Support Resource Guide to be used by New Hampshire school districts as a resource. This guide, the Dyslexia Resource Guide, will be developed by a committee of experts in the fields of dyslexia, related disorders, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia to be convened by the Reading Specialist. The Reading Specialist will maintain a committee for the purpose of updating the Dyslexia Resource Guide, as necessary.

IV. RULES AND REGULATIONS

The NH State Board of Education shall adopt any rules and regulations necessary to administer this section.

V. DEFINITIONS

(A) "Dyslexia" means a specific learning disability that is:

- (1) Neurobiological in origin;
- (2) Characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities that typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language; and
- (3) Often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.

(B) "Related Disorders" includes disorders similar to or related to dyslexia, such as a phonological processing disorder, reading fluency disorder and dysphasia.

ANNEX D

Annex D contains related source documents to support the Committee's Findings.