

To the Education Committee:

I am in support of HRB 5562, Section 1 and respectfully request the following additions: a formal definition of dyslexia and professional development so our teachers may receive resources to serve our dyslexic students.

Oct.. 2013 - My son Chase is six years old and has a reading disability. Our journey began when Chase was two years old and was not speaking. Chase attended Darcy School in Cheshire, Connecticut for Early Intervention Services from the ages three to five years old. Chase made huge strides in this time even though he still suffered from problems with listening and processing auditory information, as well as finding the correct words to express what he was thinking. Once in kindergarten Chase was having problems with learning the sounds of the letters and rhyming. Although he was able to memorize sight words and letter sounds he had problems retaining this information. No one at the school ever told me that my son had a reading disability I basically figured it out myself. Once I found the Yale Dyslexia and Creativity Website I realized my son had every red flag that a preschooler could have for Dyslexia.

The good news is that through people like Sally Shaywitz, cofounder of the Yale Dyslexia and Creativity Center, it is now possible to alter young childrens' lives and to teach them how to read. There is now evidence that if intervention is given early, in an explicit, systematic, multisensory approach, with intensity by a qualified individual a child's brain physically changes so they are better able to read.

The problem is the school districts are not implementing these strategies. All too often, as in my son's case, the school is giving my son intervention, however this intervention does not always follow a systematic approach and is not being taught exactly as intended and the person giving my son the intervention has not been properly trained. The school means well, but I feel as I am gambling with my son's future. Can you imagine the frustration that we as parents feel?

All the Special Education teachers I have met do not have any formal training in helping children with Dyslexia, even though 20% of the population suffers from Dyslexia and 80% of children in Special Education have a reading disability. There are so many initiatives to increase literacy yet many times the root cause is overlooked.

I am proud of my town and my state. We have a great educational system. It is unacceptable that we know how to help these young kids but have not. Please help us change things. I would love for Connecticut to be a model of how to teach every child to read!

UPDATE on Chase: March 12, 2014 -

Chase is doing well and has surpassed everyone's expectations for the year. He is reading above grade level (first grade). He has worked very hard for this; including two hours a week of private Orton Gillingham tutoring and five hours of pull out intervention a week with a small group at school. Most people would not see Chase as having dyslexia now. I contribute this to his early intense intervention. I was lucky to have a father who is well versed in neurology who told me that he thought my son may be dyslexic when he was five.

I write this letter for the parents that do not know. For the teachers who think that Dyslexia cannot be diagnosed until third grade. For the children who think they are stupid because in third grade they feel like they are the only child who can't read. Chase and I were the lucky ones, every child should have this opportunity to shine. Do the right thing, screen children for reading problems in kindergarten, let the parents know if Dyslexia is suspected and arm the parents with the information they need to help their children. If this is not done at the age of five then we will spend twice as much money and resources trying to remediate this child three years later.

Thank you for your time,

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