

March 13, 2014

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today in support of dyslexia legislation in the state of CT. However it not only needs to be recognized as a learning disability. I am asking for increased education of classroom teachers in its signs and symptoms and of special educators in treating this disability with evidence based educational treatment programs. The earlier the intervention is begun the better for the dyslexic child.

One in 5 persons have of dyslexia. It is currently under-diagnosed and therefore under-treated in the public school systems. This is a shame because children with dyslexia are often very bright with high IQs. However because of their difficulty with reading, writing and spelling their inherent intelligence is "dumbed-down." Subsequently if dyslexics are not empowered through proper education, their potential will be squashed including their vocational career opportunities, ability to positively contribute to society and to provide for their own families.

In most public schools these dyslexic children are missed. Educators are not aware of the symptoms of dyslexia and don't know to refer for special education services. Also many special educators are also unaware of dyslexia issues and how to best help these students. The good news is that research- based treatments exist. These can assist a dyslexic student reach their true potential. Classroom teachers and special education teachers must be trained to address these students' needs quickly and adequately, in the public schools.

Here is a brief synopsis of my son's story...

It is a story of a child left behind but one with potential for a hopeful future since his diagnosis of dyslexia and subsequent implementation of specific interventions.

Drake attended a CREC pre-k 3, pre-k 4 and kindergarten program at the Reggio Amelia School of the Arts in Avon, CT. He was referred for speech problems in pre-k3 but denied services, was re-referred in pre-k 4 but never received approved services and finally began speech services in kindergarten. Academically he fell behind his peers in learning the alphabet, its sounds and writing letters in pre-k 4 and was therefore unable to learn any sight words. In kindergarten he was unable to read, write, hold his pencil correctly and continued to fall behind his peers despite a tier 3 reading intervention. By the end of the year his learning issues were apparent to all and a IEP was put in place.

Frustrated with his lack of progress at Reggio we transferred him to our town of Avon kindergarten program at Roaring Brook School. Here he received special education services for speech and reading but continued to fall behind. In the spring I finally was able to get the school to do some educational testing with him. It showed he was bright but having trouble in many areas that affect his ability to read, write and spell. When I told the school psychologist that I thought he had

dyslexia I was quickly told that there was no such diagnosis accepted by the CT educational system and asked if I even knew the definition of dyslexia.

Luckily I was prompted by a private reading tutor we hired to seek additional testing. Sure enough he was diagnosed with a severe language based disability called dyslexia. Since this diagnosis we have privately funded tutors for my son to the tune of over \$4000 in the last year.

He IEP was amended at the end of first grade and he is getting increased school services. I am hopeful that these interventions will be helpful but wish he had received a diagnosis and interventions sooner. In cases of dyslexia the sooner the diagnosis, the sooner the treatment, the better the outcome.

Please help my son and as well as 1 in 5 students who have dyslexia best succeed in our public school system. Dyslexia must be recognized as a learning disability by the public school systems. Classroom teachers and special educators must be schooled in the awareness of dyslexia signs and symptoms. Special educators must be trained in evidence based, research proven methods of treatment to implement with these children. The earlier the intervention is begun the better for the dyslexic child, the school and society as a whole.

I have hope for dyslexic students and their future. I hope you do too. Please support RHB 5562 section 1 an act concerning special education and children with a language based disability called dyslexia.

Sincerely,
Christine Fernald
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