

3/11/15

Education Committee Members:

I am Kim Winslow, mother of 5 children of which 3 are dyslexic. I battled my school system in Weston for 5 years before my my now 12 year old was recognized as dyslexic and receiving an appropriate intervention. Now my school system has recently refused to identify my twin 7 year olds as dyslexic despite testing results that prove otherwise.

Despite the step forward in recognizing dyslexia as a specific learning disorder on the IEP, the current system of identifying dyslexic children is broken. Having dyslexia under a special education umbrella creates a problem in that the school identifies SPED students only if they score below (a very generous) average on achievement tests. This is NOT an appropriate way to identify dyslexic children. The fix is simple. The schools need to be mandated clearly defined criteria for identifying dyslexic students and they need to identify early.

Not only do we need to help schools identify dyslexic students, but also how to help them. Once identified as dyslexic there must be appropriately trained staff on hand to facilitate an appropriate evidence-based intervention such as Orton-Gillingham. It is useless to identify dyslexia without an ability to intervene appropriately.

There also needs to be professional development to train the school faculty to recognize red flags of dyslexia. Statistics say 20% of children have dyslexia and less than 10% have asthma. Imagine taking your child to the doctor with a frequent cough, shortness of breath and chest tightness and being told to just wait it out as it'll likely get better. Doesn't that sound silly? That's exactly what I was told when I went to my child's 1st grade teacher with dyslexia symptoms.

Thank you for your commitment to our children's education. I am in support of Senate Bill No. 1054, An Act Concerning Students with Dyslexia.

Kim Winslow
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