

My name is Kim Foss, I am a parent of a son named Connor who attends the Thomaston school system, an educator in the New Milford school district and an advocate of training in EARLY evaluation of and diagnosis of Dyslexia. I live AND VOTE in Thomaston, CT. I am providing testimony concerning Senate Bill No. 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia. I respectfully request you amend this bill to include licensure and teacher preparation requirements, which align with the IDA Knowledge & Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading, so we may meet the literacy needs of ALL students, including those with Dyslexia.

I am a parent of a student who has dyslexia and now that I know what to look for, I see these same attributes and deficiencies in my students so much easier. However, my district has never even mentioned training concerning accommodations for Dyslexia.

Comprehensive training within Higher Education for new teachers concerning Structured Literacy, is not being given BEFORE educators reach the classroom. If this can be done, we can save MILLIONS OF DOLLARS by catching it earlier and providing educators with the tools to support students with Dyslexia. Professional development is not intense and ongoing enough to do this. Training by running around the block on weekends is not enough for a triathlon! As a teacher, I need intense and ongoing training and most of what I get on professional development comes from loosely gathered groups and most times on topics like how to enter grades into a software program or how to evaluate data....all of which does not improve teaching methodology for Dyslexic students.

Tenured teachers have to be retrained in evidence based programs to help Dyslexic students and we MUST see teacher candidates within CT Institutes of Higher Education trained to meet the literacy needs of ALL students, including those with Dyslexia! If we can catch it earlier and intervene, it may stop the endless cycles of poor achievement, poor self esteem, lack of motivation, more useless intervention, poor success and behavior problems that missing the warning clues perpetuates. It costs more in the long run when students are not identified and not tended to. This education comes not from a few days of training but from in depth content curriculum in structured literacy.

So often, paraprofessionals are left with the task of assisting in the classroom. This is penny-wise and pound foolish. These vital support staff are being asked to perform vital tasks above their ability and not surprisingly, fail at it. They are not trained as teachers and have no time to create and implement the consistent evidence based programs students need. Students with Dyslexia need help from a teacher, tutor, or therapist specially trained in using a multisensory, structured language approach/structured literacy. We knew there was an issue in pre-school, mentioned it to his kindergarten teacher. who swent it off. Our son Connor.

- was in a district that failed to listen to us when we said something was wrong for 2 years and fell further and further behind.
- had \$5000 spent on summer reading intervention at Sylvan Learning Centers believing that more reading would do the trick. One year later and \$5000 poorer, there was NO DIFFERENCE!
- was the victim of a school's lackluster/avoidance approach to have him stay in from recess to help him finish what he did not do as a response to his 2 grade levels deficiency. A district where summer session in response to his lack of reading was to circle words on worksheets. When I asked if this was evidence based program to reading, I was laughed at. As you can imagine, that did not work.
- took math extra help after school for one year with a teacher who tried her best but had no frame of reference for his disability.
- was finally tutored privately by someone whom I researched and found to be highly-qualified in Wilson Reading which works for Dyslexics. Not UNTIL MY HUSBAND AND I HIRED this PERSON, TRAINED in Orton-Gillingham/Wilson Reading methods to meet his needs, did we see improvement.
- is additionally enrolled him in a Dyslexia Center program specially designed for students using research based interventions **for students who are dyslexic.**
- **is still attending lessons which we pay for and bring him to and from 4 days a week Tuesday through Friday, after school, on our dime with fidelity by a highly qualified practitioner using evidence-based interventions wherein Connor has made progress for the past 2 1/2 years but only because we were tenacious and worked outside the school system.**
- was blocked at each turn. We asked he be evaluated for Dyslexia and the school sent us to a practitioner who did not "believe in" Dyslexia and still to this day he is labeled as ADD. Thomaston school district worked very hard to ignore his issue from the first time in Kindergarten to the last time this year. Had we been placated with the Thomaston School District's misdirected efforts, we believe that he would still be unable to read. However, we wasted 4 years of school trying to get the help he needed.
- What the school district failed to see is that if they had used the right methods, he may have caught up and matriculated out of special education by now instead at the high, cost intensive level he is still in.
- Instead, they avoided the issue and it became worse. Sadly, our son may never be able to leave Special Education because the window was missed.
- For some students who do not have parents who are also educators, it will not be recognized early, and I see many of them in my 8th grade Science class. They fail to thrive and will never be as productive a citizen as they could have been. This insures we all pay for those students in every aspect of their lives as they never reach their full potential

Connecticut needs to move to a structured literacy model/approach in reading in order to meet the literacy needs of ALL students, including students with Dyslexia.

Here's a thought, how many of the incarcerated cannot read and did really poorly in school because of it. What is the cost then? This world is moving towards an increasingly service based economy and literacy is more important than ever. We owe it to ourselves to see that we do our best to catch it earlier and make progress while we still can.

Sincerely,

Kim Foss, mother, teacher, citizen