

My name is Elisabeth Herdic, I live in Lebanon, Connecticut. I fully support HB 7254, An Act Requiring Special Education Teachers to complete a Program of Study in Evidence- Based Structured Literacy Interventions for students with Dyslexia. My 10 year old daughter, Addisyn, is dyslexic and dysgraphic. This bill is a much needed first step in the right direction with regards to addressing the needs of the bright, creative, perceptive, curious, imaginative students struggling with Dyslexia. The sheer fact that Special Education teachers are currently not certified in the proven, best, evidence-based techniques in remediating the most common reading disability is mind boggling to me as a parent. I am a nurse, and I liken this fact to me not having been taught anything about cardiology in school. How is that possible? It is necessary for Special Educators to obtain this evidence-based instruction while they are in Institutions of Higher Learning so that they can be prepared to meet our students needs when they enter schools. I have heard too often that it will "take too long to obtain Orton Gillingham certification once teachers have graduated and entered the workforce". That schools cannot "train a teacher for that length of time". If this certification was obtained while a teacher was in their Institution of Higher Learning, that would not be an issue. They also would be immediately able to meet the needs of the struggling reader because the structured literacy interventions that have been proven to help Dyslexic students has also proven successful for all struggling readers. This program of study needs to require supervised practicum hours so that the training is consistent, supported and effective.

Our daughter transferred to The Rectory School this year for 5th grade. Attending a school with teachers that are trained in evidence-based methods for Dyslexic students has been life changing for Addisyn, and in turn our whole family. The Rectory School truly looks at our child and her learning needs as unique, and they address them as she needs so that she can become successful. She has an Orton Gillingham tutor at school that works with her daily on reading and writing, and helps her apply those strategies to all of her subjects. Most importantly, all of her teachers receive training in the dyslexic learner. All of her teachers understand how her learning disabilities affect her, and therefor can use the evidence base methods they have been instructed in to educate her. Academically she has made so much progress and we are only $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way through the year. She is asking to read out loud at night, and does so with the strength of pride in her voice, meticulous caution in making sure she doesn't skip words, and inflection in her tone that proves she understands the story she is telling. Her excitement towards reading is now palpable. She is still a slow reader, but she needs to be so that she is accurate. Her spelling and writing still need significant progress, but again it is much improved from where she started prior to switching schools. She has more awareness about the words she struggles with and her writing is more legible. She now has strategies so that she knows how to help herself or access resources. I know that this too will continue to improve. As her academic success has grown, so has her self esteem. Her depression lifted, her anxiety dissipated, and her confidence in her academic areas of interest took over. Don't get me wrong, school is still not easy for her, but she is optimistic as she feels her progress. Addisyn still has some nights that tears are spilled into her homework, and she will always need to work harder than her peers. But now, instead of being provided with shortcuts, she is given strategies to succeed. She is taught study skills and organization, areas that many dyslexics struggle with.

Her tutoring is built into her schedule, so she does not miss other important subjects were Dyslexics typically excel like science, history and the arts. She is given opportunities to explore her creativity and ability to think outside the box. She was selected as one of two students in 5th-9th grade to represent the school at the State level for her invention in the Invention Convention program. Now the positives far outweigh the struggles.

I am so thankful that Addisyn is now soaring with the evidence based structured literacy approach she is receiving. I am thankful that we had the interest, time and knowledge to support our daughter through her very difficult years, and that she is now in a school that fits her needs perfectly. But, so many students do not have this. Research shows that students who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade have higher dropout rates, higher rates of incarceration, and higher rates of anxiety and depression. Special education teachers need this training to meet the needs of the many students like Addisyn. Truly all teachers do. Regular education teachers need this training to be able to identify Dyslexic students, and get them into Special Education, where they must have have evidence based structured literacy interventions. Hopefully, one day that training will also be required of all teachers so that the methods that work can be implemented through the academic day. I urge you to pass HB 7254 and take the first, very common sense step, in effectively and appropriately educating these very smart, talented students.