

My name is Eileen Riccardi. I live in Fairfield, CT. I fully support HB 7254, An Act Requiring Special Education teachers to complete a program of study in evidence based structured literacy intervention for students with Dyslexia. I believe this act is one small step to help young students progress in school, and meet increasing demands at the level of proficiency.

As a parent of a child with dyslexia, I can say these children are robbed of time to do their work, in school, and at home. Any strategy the schools can offer would greatly benefit their efforts to keep up with their peers and perhaps, very importantly, not lose their self-esteem secondary to always being a step or much more, behind their average reading peers. These students need to be acknowledged and given the chance to do their best, just as every student is.

My child grabbed onto all the strategies taught, but this was not offered in the school and in fact I was told my child was "average" by a school personnel." Educational testing revealing scores in the 90th percentile range and scores related to reading skills in the 20th percentile range, produce an average right in middle". I was told this was "good news". I saw this as a child with real strengths and real weaknesses. My child could not remember the sounds of letters of the alphabet after kindergarten. My child could not say the words known to be on the "red words list". My child was extremely sad to be reading books with only a few pages in it, while peers were reading books with a hundred or more. My child was well aware at the age of 5 that others were far beyond in performance.

These children need to read for pronunciation, fluency and comprehension. Children with Dyslexia may need 3 or more times to read each sentence to fully understand it. Their rate of reading if most often quite slow. They desperately need every supportive intervention possible, to promote their education and prevent the negative feelings that are inherent when one is unable to keep up.

I provided my child with private tutoring specifically to learn how to read. I was fortunate to be able to pay for this expensive help. This help, however, should be provided by the very institution responsible to facilitate learning. How can we encourage improvements in Curriculum, such as STEM and Common Core, if many of our children struggle simply to read a sentence and understand it?

This is my written testimony, and I will not be testifying in an open forum.

Thank you for your consideration.

Eileen Riccardi