

February 8, 2013

Testimony: SB 44

Chairman Abrams and members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak today on behalf of Senate Bill 44 concerning the identification and response to intervention for children with dyslexia.

This is my seventh year of testifying before an education committee on behalf of legislation that would improve educational opportunities for children with dyslexia. Respectfully, I wish to respond to some of the testimony from those invested in the status quo and thus opposed to this bill. I hope you will also consider these responses.

KSDE and KASB et. al. have often claimed that they are already addressing the needs of children with dyslexia. But they cannot provide any real empirical proof for these claims. Since they do not even seek to identify them, how can they possibly know whether they are properly educating students with dyslexia? Furthermore, National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reports have shown no improvement in literacy for Kansas students in decades and this year's AYP reports from KSDE show that literacy rates have actually gotten worse. Every year I bring a roomful of *new* parents and grandparents from all over the state to testify about the poor education students with dyslexia and the associated devastation thus visited on families and futures. In short, no one ought to believe that the problem is being addressed; and we should be skeptical that any real effort is being made.

KSDE will, no doubt, refer to their Multi-Tiered System of Support as their solution for appropriate education for children with dyslexia. MTSS has been implemented long enough to assess its effectiveness; but there is no evidence to suggest it is any more successful than the outdated discrepancy model. Indeed, my own experience is that children with dyslexia fare little better now than they have in the past; MTSS is little more than an appearance of change rather than any real improvement.

It will also be suggested that this bill goes beyond the minimum Federal requirements for appropriate interventions and accommodations. I suggest that our low literacy rates can be attributed, in part, to this attitude that we need only do the very minimum to teach basic reading skills. Our children deserve better.

Concerning questions of costs and funding, the KSDE has provided the required fiscal note for this bill and it actually seems negligible. But this bill is not about requiring *more* money for educating our children; it is about using the money already budgeted in a much more precise and effective manner. This bill says, rather than approaching questions of literacy intervention through drawn-out and frustrating 'trial and error', we must identify the actual nature of the problem and respond with empirically proven methods for success. Stop blindly throwing money at an issue and, instead, use data-based decision making to determine interventions that really work. Indeed, some districts may cite increased costs from this legislation, but I submit that it is not a matter of needing more funding; it is, instead, the responsible re-allocation of resources from what is not working to empirically proven strategies for intervention.

I implore the Committee to not allow the opposition to make unjustified, unproven claims or to distract with cost scenarios that have little to do with helping children or the proper administration of resources, and everything to do with preserving the status quo.

Thank you for your time and God bless.

Terry Sader, Ph.D.
Chair, Kansas Dyslexia Coalition
316-250-3920
tsader@butlercc.edu