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Legislative Task Force Testimony

Kansas Board of Regents Colleges/Schools of Education

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On behalf of the Kansas Board of Regents Colleges/Schools of Education, this overview of the collective efforts to address the professional training of pre-service teachers regarding dyslexia and the science of reading is presented. There are three main themes, which are general summary statements that encapsulate our collective efforts, and selected examples from each institution (not an exhaustive list). It is hoped that this report will provide some context and insight about the work done to advance work within our state on the importance of meeting the needs of students with dyslexia, especially as it relates to teacher preparation and supporting our K-12 partners.

### **Professional Development and Scholarship**

Within the Regent Colleges/Schools of Education, initiatives to encourage and promote access to on-going professional development for faculty regarding dyslexia and the science of reading have been enacted. This has been a multifaceted approach, designed to deepen the knowledge base and professional practice of faculty so that they can better support students in educator preparation programs. Several faculty members have completed the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development and facilitator trainings. The LETRS program is designed to strengthen approaches of the fundamentals of reading instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and language. The colleges have invested funding to support faculty members to participate in regional and national conferences focusing on the science of reading and dyslexia. Faculty have engaged in professional readings (including books, scholarly articles and research studies) centered on dyslexia and the science of reading, and have engaged students in expanded conversations on these concepts. The faculty of the colleges have conducted planning sessions for the implementation of science of reading into curricular and program enhancements based on professional expertise and insights gained in the aforementioned professional engagement activities. Additionally, faculty have conducted on-going research and scholarship centering on dyslexia and the science of reading.

#### *Selected Examples:*

ESU –7 faculty have completed or are in the process of completing LETRS training and 2 faculty completed LETRS facilitator training. This will help ensure integration of these concepts into instruction.

WSU – Faculty regularly attend professional conferences and engage in professional study on dyslexia and related reading disorders and include content from the Reading Panel report, the International Literacy Association, International Dyslexia Association and the Council for

Exceptional Children. Faculty have also completed professional readings including works such as Kilpatrick's *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* and *Essentials of Dyslexia*.

### **Curricular Enhancements**

Colleges/Schools of Education have been committed to a careful review of courses and programs for teacher preparation programs regarding dyslexia and the science of reading. The reviews have been conducted in two phases. The first phase identified elements of dyslexia instruction which were already embedded in existing course and program structure. These elements were examined at a deeper level to ensure the intentional emphasis was given to these concepts and to make any appropriate improvements. The second phase was employed to develop and integrate missing elements related to dyslexia instruction into courses and programs. Course syllabi in targeted programs (Elementary Education, English/Language Arts 6-12, High Incidence Special education, and Reading Specialist) were matched to the IDA standards. Additionally, guiding the reviews have been the central tenets from structured literacy, which includes these teaching principles: explicit instruction, diagnostic teaching, being systemic and cumulative – and these six elements: phonology, sound-symbol, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics. These critical elements have been integrated into alignment, development and revision initiatives ensuring all components are introduced and fully applied in each of the above-named programs. Science of reading and dyslexia focused activities, resources and experiences have been integrated and emphasized in courses. This commitment extends to the on-going cycle of improvement which is core to the programs in higher education and an expectation of our accreditation standards.

#### *Selected Examples:*

FHSU – For the reading specialist program, multiple courses are being updated to meet IDA standards and address structured literacy and the science of reading. Instructional activities have been incorporated to align with components of the KSDE dyslexia training teachers are receiving in their schools. Undergraduate literacy courses are being updated to meet IDA standards and address structured literacy and the science of reading. Informed by LETRS training, instructional activities have been incorporated to align with components of the KSDE dyslexia training teachers are receiving in their schools.

KSU – The course, EDEL 411 K-2 Literacy, which is required for all elementary education students, focuses extensively on the five pillars of reading as stated in the 2000 National Reading Panel Report, including work in oral language development, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Similar work is occurring across other programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

## **Standards, New Courses and Revised Programs of Study**

Colleges/Schools of Education have been committed to developing and adopting teacher preparation standards related to dyslexia. This has been extended into the development of new/revised courses regarding dyslexia training. Faculty served on committees to revise Reading standards and conduct crosswalk between reading and special education standards. New courses have been developed or existing courses re-imagined to address the need to develop a specialization in dyslexia and struggling readers. Several of these courses are embedded in existing programs for not only easy access but also as insurance of keeping this in training of future educators. Programs of study and courses have gone through curriculum mapping to ensure complete coverage of concepts related in dyslexia instruction. Program faculty have also mapped out plans to include dyslexia content within multiple courses —not just the literacy courses. Although literacy courses will have the majority of the content, other method courses (as applicable) incorporate lessons on determining and addressing best practices within dyslexia instruction as well as incorporating resources. Thus, colleges have built upon the state standards to create more rigorous program curricula. Faculty teams have contributed to the curriculum development process by creating clarifying support materials, such as curriculum maps and scope and sequence documents. Through both horizontal and vertical alignment, programs have ensured that instruction is aligned with the standards across all courses.

### *Selected Examples:*

PSU – A new course, SPED-862 General Education Curriculum for Students with High Incidence Disabilities, is an applied course to prepare teacher candidates to work with students who have high-incidence disabilities accessing general education content. A focus of the course includes working with dyslexia and struggling readers, and the course is aligned with IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards. Additionally, several faculty members served on the KSDE standards development committee to incorporate IDA concepts.

KU – In addition to addressing dyslexia/KSDE standards, faculty are making more explicit connections among courses, aligning with CAEP expectations, and updating readings (e.g., Reading Research Quarterly's themed issue on the science of reading) – this approach is targeting required courses that cut across our four reading/literacy programs. KU made curricular revisions in multiple courses in the teacher licensure program to address the dyslexia and reading standards. Finally, KU is developing a new online certificate program in Dyslexia.

WU – The course, ED 402, Teaching Struggling Learners, which is required for all elementary education students, primarily focuses on literacy assessments and how assessment data is used to pin-point students' reading needs. Once needs are determined, pre-service teachers are trained on how to address students' reading deficits.