

Report to the Colorado General Assembly: House Bill 08-1223

Submitted to:
**Joint House and Senate Education Committees
and
Colorado State Board of Education**

By:
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Introduction

H.B. 08-1223 encourages the Colorado Department of Education to provide support and training to educators regarding students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia, as part of its technical assistance to school districts, administrative units, residential treatment facilities, correctional facilities, and local education agencies in a coordinated effort with teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education. See section 22-2-133, C.R.S. The statute promotes technical assistance and training in the areas of awareness, assessment, identification, evidence-based progress monitoring, and scientifically based interventions.

The statute also requires the department to annually report its activities and status of technical assistance and training to the State Board of Education and the education committees of the House and Senate. This report documents these activities for the 2019-20 school year.

Literacy Technical Assistance and Training

Overview

The department's support for literacy primarily occurs through cross-unit collaboration between the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) and the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU). The primary areas of focus for the department's literacy work in the 2019-20 school year have been providing training and support for teachers who serve students who struggle with literacy, including those with dyslexia, the continued implementation of the Colorado READ Act (H.B. 12-1238), and literacy training for teachers who serve students with disabilities. The department has also been working to support the Dyslexia Working Group and the implementation of a dyslexia pilot program, authorized by H.B. 19-1134. While the department produces an [annual report](#) regarding the Dyslexia Working Group, a high-level overview of the work will be provided in this report due to its relevance.

Dyslexia Working Group

During the 2019 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed H.B. 19-1134 which initiated a Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) and authorized the department to support a dyslexia pilot program. See section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. The DWG has six primary responsibilities outlined in statute:

- Analyze current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates;
- Analyze the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia related laws;
- Identify and recommend appropriate dyslexia screening tools and processes as well as comprehensive assessments that address the recognized challenges of dyslexia, including phonological processing, phonemic awareness, and decoding and encoding skills;
- Identify and recommend a statewide plan for supporting students who are identified as having dyslexia, including specific intervention structures and their components, which must include evidence-based interventions, progress-monitoring systems, and data collection systems;
- Identify and recommend components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators, including the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost;
- Identify and recommend educator training for in-state approved programs of preparation for teacher and alternative teacher programs and recommended training for current educators, based on effective practice in other states, as well as recommendations from state and national



organizations focusing on literacy. The recommendations concerning educator training may include the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost; and

- Provide recommendations to CDE concerning the design and implementation of the pilot program.

More information about the DWG, the membership, and its first annual report can be found here:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/codyslexiaworkgroup>.

Teaching and Learning Initiatives

During the 2019-20 school year, the department's Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) provided numerous professional development opportunities for teachers and other school professionals with responsibilities for addressing the needs of students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia. A great deal of professional development support was focused on supporting teachers in their acquisition of scientifically or evidence-based practices in reading. The following section lists high-level details of the literacy activities provided by the TLU. The literacy efforts in the TLU are managed by the Literacy Team in the Preschool through 3rd Grade (P-3) Office. The Literacy Team provides support to Colorado districts, schools, and educators in effective reading assessment, instruction, and intervention through direct technical assistance and training as well as through online resources. This work includes supporting districts with the goals of the READ Act: early identification of and effective intervention for reading challenges for children in grades K-3. Thus, the Literacy Team's implementation activities for the READ Act are reported here.

READ Act Webinar Series

- S.B. 19-199 Update Webinars. Beginning in August of 2019 and continuing through October of 2020, the P-3 Office in partnership with the Executive Director of TLU, hosted monthly webinars related to the changes to the READ Act in S.B. 19-199. Webinars provided ongoing information and an opportunity for the field to submit questions related to S.B. 19-199. Seventeen webinars were provided with an average attendance of 75 participants.
- Bi-Monthly Office Hours Webinars. From March of 2020 through August of 2020 the Literacy team hosted webinars twice a month to support the field with the immediate needs of implementing the READ Act during COVID-19.
- Topic Specific Webinars. The literacy team hosted several webinars with various topics including significant reading deficiency (SRD) identification, READ Plan development, budget planning, understanding instructional program reviews and alignment between school readiness and READ Act Assessments.

K-3 Evidence-Based Teacher Training

The literacy office supported the review and roll out of the K-3 Teacher Training in scientifically or evidence-based practices as required by SB 19-199. Two training options are provided at no cost to districts by CDE. The content for an online training was developed by Public Consulting Group (PCG) in partnership with CDE staff. As of November 2020, there are 6,500 participants enrolled in the PCG online training. The literacy team also worked with the vendor Keys to Beginning Reading to roll out a face-to-face training. The training needed to be adapted due to COVID-19 and was revised to be a virtual training. The CDE literacy team is supporting 19 cohorts with an enrollment of about 300. The CDE literacy team ensured that dyslexia was a component addressed in both trainings.



The CDE team opened a review for additional professional development options to support the teacher training. There are six additional vendors that have been recommended to provide evidence-based training for teachers.

Professional Development Related to Early Literacy, Birth to Kindergarten

The Early Learning Language and Literacy Sequences, available through Colorado's Professional Development Information System, are self-paced, online courses that provided teachers with background information on evidence-based strategies to promote language and literacy development, prevent future reading problems, early identification of potential reading difficulties, and support struggling learners. These courses were available to Colorado teachers free of charge. Over 8,350 early childhood educators have participated in this professional development opportunity since its inception.

Technical Assistance Related to K-3 Literacy

The department's P-3 Office, through regional literacy consultants, provided ongoing literacy support and technical assistance to schools and districts across the state. The technical assistance consisted of support for data analysis, coaching, consulting, and professional development sessions as requested by schools, districts, and BOCES.

- The Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant Program. This competitive grant program, part of the READ Act, supports comprehensive, high quality literacy instruction through a school-wide approach. During the 2019-20 school year, CDE supported 56 schools through the grant program. Grantees are required to use evidence-based reading strategies. Schools in the grant program receive ongoing technical assistance from CDE and work with an approved literacy consultant to support instructional leaders and teachers with implementation. These grantees also receive access to professional development through the grant on the essential components of reading as well as data interpretation and analysis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all trainings and support were conducted virtually.
- The Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project. This project, funded through the School Finance Act, included 140 districts and the Charter School Institute in the 2019-2020 school year. The project annually funds licensing for approved READ Act assessments and professional development on data analysis, data-driven instruction, mapping student assessment results to early literacy foundational skills, and effective progress monitoring. Participants also had the opportunity to access professional development offered through webinars providing easier access to teachers in rural Colorado school districts. CDE worked with the two Early Literacy Assessment tool project vendors for guidance on how their tools could be delivered in a remote setting for those schools where it was necessary.

Exceptional Student Services Unit Initiatives – Office of Special Education

The Office of Special Education (OSE) provided numerous professional learning opportunities for general and special education teachers, special service providers, and other school professionals with responsibilities for addressing the needs of students with disabilities who demonstrate literacy challenges, including dyslexia. The OSE works closely with CDE's literacy team to ensure alignment with READ Act implementation efforts. These opportunities included workshops, online courses, webinars, seminars, and institutes developed to address the specific literacy needs of students with disabilities. The following section lists some of the key literacy activities provided by the OSE during the latter part of the 2019-20 school year and the beginning of the 2020-21 school year.



- Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties Online Course. This on-demand, online course was created in collaboration with Dr. David Kilpatrick. The OSE launched sessions in spring 2020 and summer 2020. A total of 188 participants completed the two courses. Participants who engaged in all thirteen modules were provided a comprehensive learning experience encompassing research, critical elements of assessment, and preventing and overcoming reading difficulties including dyslexia.
- Autism Literacy Institute. 52 school-based providers were involved with the 2019-20 Autism Literacy Institute, which featured national-level researchers and trainers. This institute was held in Durango beginning in October 2019. The OSE launched the first remote Autism Literacy Institute in November 2020. Forty-five school-based providers participated.
- Introduction to Reading Comprehension for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This online webinar is posted on the CDE professional development website and addresses the cognitive profiles common in autism spectrum disorder and their influence on reading comprehension.
- Braille Competency. The OSE continues to focus on the state requirement for all Colorado public school teachers licensed and endorsed in blindness/visual impairment (B/VI) to demonstrate braille competency within their first instructional year. Mentor support is offered to support the knowledge and skill set of reading and writing in the Unified English Braille Code.
- Communication / Emergent Literacy Webinar Series. The OSE's Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project is offering a 2020-21 school-year webinar series on topics including communication / literacy development for students with significant support needs, including deaf-blindness. The first two webinars were held in October and November 2020 and addressed symbolic / language-based communication assessment and instructional strategies. Two hundred participants were trained.
- Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Hearing Impairment, Including Deafness. The OSE continued its efforts to improve literacy skills for students who are identified as deaf and hard of hearing. A regional training model was implemented across Colorado and the Colorado Deaf/Hard of Hearing Mentor Program was used to support teachers of Deaf students in using evidence-based practices for assessment and methods to teach literacy skills. Online Deaf Education Office Hours were offered beginning in March to address accessibility and literacy-specific issues for students with deafness, including hearing impairment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The office hours have had consistent attendance of 200 or more personnel working with this population of high-need students.
- Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Blindness/Visual Impairments. The OSE continued its efforts to improve literacy skills for students who are identified with blindness/visual impairments (B/VI). The OSE used the services of two state expert coaches to support teachers of students with B/VI in using evidence-based practices for assessment and methods to teach literacy skills. Further, B/VI office hours were offered biweekly from March through May 2020 to provide a forum for teachers of students with B/VI to showcase and problem solve strategies to support literacy, and braille instruction during remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. The biweekly B/VI office hours were reinstated in September with a continued focus on remote instructional platform access and literacy instruction.



- Individualized Problem Solving within a Response to Intervention Framework. The OSE, in collaboration with the Office of Learning Supports, designed, and delivered a “train the trainers” training on intensive assessment and instruction. Five districts were represented in this training, which was designed for multi-disciplinary student problem solving teams who support students with reading disabilities, students suspected of having a reading disability, and those identified with intensive intervention needs.
- Literacy Needs of Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and English Learners. The OSE partnered with the University of Northern Colorado to provide an on-line course to assist teachers of the deaf in addressing the literacy needs of students who are both deaf and hard of hearing and English Learners.
- Lively Letters Training. This is a multi-sensory approach to teaching phonics, which was offered in November 2020 with 120 general and special educators, speech language pathologists, and other providers participating.
- Structured Literacy Project. During the 2019-20 year, the OSE continued implementation of the Structured Literacy Project. The project is currently being implemented in 30 elementary schools, with the goal to significantly increase the total numbers of students in grades K through 3 reaching grade-level reading proficiency. The project is focused on professional learning, coaching, and leadership training for teachers and instructional leaders. Each school has access to a literacy coach who works directly with teachers and supports the implementation of evidence-based strategies. The OSE continues to devote one literacy specialist and six literacy coaches to this project. Since March 2020, the coaches have worked primarily to support remote literacy instruction. The coaches were also involved extensively in a literacy-based 2020 summer school support to students involved in the project.

Conclusion

Success in school and in life is greatly influenced by students’ ability to read. Students with reading challenges, including dyslexia, need additional support to master foundational reading skills. CDE is committed to supporting educators, schools, and districts to continue to improve their instructional and intervention programs to provide the skills all Colorado children need to succeed. This report outlines the multiple programs and training opportunities that the department has implemented over the past year. In the coming year, the department will continue to collaborate across units and with stakeholders to support the needs of students who have literacy challenges, including those with dyslexia.