

Dyslexia Testimonial

-Alisa Matteoni

To Whom It May Concern,

The school experience for my three dyslexic children has been nothing but challenging. I believe forming a dyslexia task force would be a strong first step in addressing the literacy concerns in our schools.

I remember the excitement each of my boys had on their very first day of school. Just like the other kids, they each walked into the classroom willing, engaged, and ready to learn. They started out carefree and confident. It was only a matter of time before everything changed. Dyslexics don't fit into the standard system. Slowly, each of my boys began to fail in the one skill at the center of their school day, reading. They started to hear "you're not fast enough", "focus", "try harder" and "don't be lazy". They started to see shorter spelling lists and lower grades. I began to realize that my children were not being taught how to read. As a parent, I knew that reading was necessary, and looked at the teacher and the school for help. Teachers were confused and unable to identify what the issue was.

By the time we figured out that the struggle was dyslexia, it was too late for my oldest son. He was not diagnosed with dyslexia until the end of 7th grade. The lack of early intervention destroyed his self-esteem. When someone fails over and over again at something that is expected to be easy, it creates a feeling of shame. The damage and impact dyslexia has had on him is significant. He continues to be treated for anxiety and depression. Each one of my dyslexic children feels inadequate and our entire family's mental health has been affected. If we can change one single thing about dyslexia it would be to find a way to alleviate shame.

Our teachers, principals, and the school district do their best to be supportive, but the problem is much bigger. Sadly, most teacher training colleges still do not offer courses on dyslexia – not even to people who get a Masters as a Reading Specialist or a Masters in Learning Disabilities. Dyslexic students are misunderstood by the very educators that are trying to support them. The answer is to properly support and educate the educators.

Thank you for considering House Bill 2602 and supporting the one in five dyslexic students who are brave enough to go to school every day!

Sincerely,

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