

Dear Kansas Senate Education Committee,

I'm writing to respectfully request that you support the formation of a Dyslexia Task Force to study how this specific learning disability is affecting our young Kansans.

I believe it's important to shine a bright light on the subject to help children like my daughter. She comes from well educated parents who are involved in her schooling. We volunteer at school and take a keen interest in her education. Despite all of this, she went undiagnosed until she was 12 years old and in 7th grade. The only reason she finally received a diagnosis is because I took the initiative to have her tested by an outside specialist. But now that she has the diagnosis, the school is ill equipped to provide supportive interventions. In fact, she gets none. I have to pay for outside dyslexia tutoring.

She started showing signs of struggle in reading as far back as first grade. She was pulled out of regular class for reading support groups, but it never seemed to help (I now know that they were providing the wrong kind of help for a dyslexic). I attended every parent-teacher conference and discussed her struggles at length and even asked multiple times if she might have a learning disability. "No, she's a smart girl. It will click for her eventually," is what her teachers would routinely say. But it never did 'click' for her because she wasn't receiving the correct kind of support.

As she progressed through grade school, always many steps behind her peers with reading, her self esteem fell. She started to hate school and would cry trying to do her homework. Her teachers would say she just needs to try harder. Looking back, it breaks my heart to know that if she had been identified as dyslexic and received the appropriate interventions and support, she would have been able to avoid all of that soul-crushing self-doubt. If she had known that she simply learns differently and had the supports in place, her teachers would have been able to know the depths of her intelligence rather than them just assuming she wasn't trying hard enough.

Once she got the diagnosis, we started seeing a change in her personality. She started to gain self-confidence. Her grades improved. She's learning how to self-advocate in school for what she needs to be a successful student. Sometimes it's simply ensuring she has access to the audio version of a textbook, and other times it's having extra time of a test. While I'm pleased with her progress, I'm saddened by all of the wasted years where she wasn't given the opportunity to achieve to her highest potential simply because the school system didn't identify her as having a specific learning disability.

Again, please consider supporting the formation of a Dyslexia Task Force in Kansas.

Best regards,
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