

MINUTES

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON DYSLEXIA

December 15, 2021
Room 142-S—Statehouse

Members Present

Jim Porter, Chairperson
Senator Brenda Dietrich, appointed substitute member to the committee
Jennifer Bettles
Sarah Brinkley
Jamie Callaghan
Tally Fleming
David Hurford
Alisa Matteoni
Christina Middleton
Jeri Powers
Angie Schreiber
Mike Burgess, Ex Officio
Lori McMillian, Ex Officio

Members Absent

Jennifer Knight
Jeanine Phillips
Sonja Watkins
Laura Jurgensen, Ex Officio

Staff Present

Jessa Farmer, Kansas Legislative Research Department (KLRD)
Norma Volkmer, KLRD
Jessie Pringle, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Nick Myers, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Tamera Lawrence, Office of Revisor of Statutes
Deborah Bremer, Committee Assistant

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15 AFTERNOON SESSION

Committee Introduction and Opening Remarks

The Chairperson called the meeting to order at 1:39 p.m. in room 142-S. The Chairperson noted that this will be the last meeting of the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia (Task Force).

Receipt of Written Reports

The Chairperson acknowledged the receipt of the following reports:

- Mischel D. Miller, Director, Teacher Licensure and Accreditation, and Catherine Chmidling, Education Program Consultant for Higher Education, Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), submitted a brief report on “Private Institutions of Higher Education” ([Attachment 1](#));
- KSDE “2021 Dyslexia Update” ([Attachment 2](#));
- Kansas Association of Educational Service Agencies (KAESA) “Supporting the Recommendations of the Dyslexia Task Force” ([Attachment 3](#));
- Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) Council of Education Deans, November 9, 2020, “The Professional Training of Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers Regarding Dyslexia and the Science of Reading” ([Attachment 4](#)); and
- KBOR Council of Education Deans, December 2021 Addendum to “The Professional Training of Pre-Service and In-Service Teachers Regarding Dyslexia and the Science of Reading” ([Attachment 5](#)).

The Chairperson reviewed ongoing work related to the Task Force, including creation of the official KSDE Dyslexia Handbook, which is finished and in the process of review. He stated the previous dyslexia coordinator at KSDE had resigned, and Dr. Laurie J. Curtis, Early Literacy/Dyslexia Program Manager, has been hired at KSDE as of December 1, 2021. He stated she has an extensive experience in literacy, including working the past three years in Ethiopia, and the students of Kansas are very lucky to have Dr. Curtis as a leader in this area.

The Chairperson stated that, to make sure accountability for addressing dyslexia is a continuous process, there are two major things that will make a difference: the responsibility for screening evaluation, and professional development in structured literacy and the Science of Reading. These both have been officially embedded in the Kansas accreditation system for public schools and private schools that are accredited by the KSDE. These policies and procedures are now part of the accreditation system and will have to be implemented in order for schools to qualify for full accreditation in Kansas. Also, at the recommendation of the KBOR Council of Education Deans, additional program standards have been adopted for universities that issue licenses to teachers in Kansas. The Chairperson said those have been approved and adopted and are part of the process for both the public and private schools.

The Chairperson noted the State Board of Education (State Board) made several recommendations to the Legislature for funding in terms of dyslexia that were not approved;

however KSDE, through the federal American Rescue Plan Act, has had funds made available, and several literacy initiatives have been funded for the next three years. He stated \$15.0 million has been allocated for Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Science (LETRS) Training, \$8.5 million has been allocated for FastBridge, and \$650,000 has been allocated for Renaissance Learning. He stated the funds allocated are for screening and evaluation purposes and for the Dyslexia Coordinator position for the next three years. He stated that after three years, legislative support might be required to fund this position. He stated he is finding a great deal of support and recognition that dyslexia and literacy is an absolute critical issue for schools. He shared a literacy link program that was funded through a literacy grant through KSDE, titled the Kansas Teaching and Leading Project. He referenced the Project's website at kansasteachingandleadingproject.org, and stated the website has many resources for literacy, including videos, assessments, and contacts for support.

The Chairperson stated the Task Force's brief meeting is to make sure the programs implemented by the Task Force are being maintained and to ensure programs and initiatives created by the hard work of the original Task Force are being carried forward.

He noted there was a recent Special Committee on Education meeting, and the resulting discussion found that the Legislature, the State Board, and KSDE should find ways to focus on one project. The project recommended by that Committee was to focus on having every Kansas student read at the third-grade level when they reach third grade. He said the State Board met with Senator Baumgardner and both are on board with that project. He noted that success at the third-grade reading level was key to helping children succeed in life. There is also a process for the State Board and the Legislature to meet together during the Legislative Session and talk in-person about important issues so they can best serve the children of Kansas.

Adjourn

The Chairperson noted he originally planned to simply send reports to members, but the Task Force wants to be completely transparent and share any information, so a meeting was scheduled. The effort to make sure every child can read is ongoing. He said he thanked staff and all the members of the Task Force for their tremendous work over the years of effort. He stated he hopes the members would keep in touch and, if there are issues that need to be addressed, he wants to continue to communicate, and he encourages everyone to remain in contact and solve problems cooperatively for the benefit of the children of Kansas.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Prepared by: Deborah Bremer

Edited by: Jessa Farmer

Approved by the Committee on:

January 10, 2022

(Date)