

Dyslexia Working Group Progress Report

Submitted to:
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Introduction

During the 2019 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly called for the creation of a Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) through the passage of H.B. 19-1134. See section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. Under the statute, the Commissioner of Education was required to convene a working group to improve the educational outcomes for student with dyslexia. The DWG has six tasks outlined in statute:

1. Analyze current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates;
2. Analyze the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia related laws;
3. 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;
4. 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;
5. Identify and recommend components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators, including the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost;
6. 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 recommendation 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
7. Provide recommendations to CDE concerning the design and implementation of the pilot program.

In addition, the Dyslexia Working Group must, “analyze and integrate, as appropriate, the work and recommendations of other previous and ongoing state initiative related to improving the identification and support of students who have dyslexia.”

Progress of the Dyslexia Working Group

Selection of Working Group Members

The authorizing legislation for the DWG required the group to include the following members:

- A parent of a child identified with dyslexia;
- A parent of a child identified with dyslexia and a disability;
- A school district literacy specialist;
- A school district director of special education;
- A state or national literacy expert;
- A state of national dyslexia expert;
- Two elementary grade teachers, one of whom teaches in a rural or small rural school district;



- A principal of an elementary school in rural school district or an employee of a BOCES who has expertise as a literacy specialist;
- A faculty member of an IHE who teaches in an approved educator preparation program for elementary grade teachers; and
- A member of the local chapter of the international dyslexia association.

CDE solicited nominations and applications for the DWG to determine appointment recommendations for the Commissioner of Education. The application was open from June 2019 through August 2019 with 79 applications received for the 11 positions on the DWG. CDE recommended applicants to the Commissioner for appointment based on the quality of their application packet and their ability to serve through the duration of the working group. At the direction of the Commissioner, CDE included a priority to include members who were representative from across the state, including small rural and rural districts, urban and suburban districts.

Table 1 shows the membership of the DWG.

TABLE 1: Dyslexia Working Group Membership by Region and Role

Member	Region	Role
John Alexander	Out of State	A state or national literacy expert
Jamie Brackney	Pikes Peak	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability
Alex Christy	Metro Area	Two elementary grade teachers, one of whom teaches in a rural school district or a small rural school district
Kathleen Collins	Northwest	A principal who is employed at an elementary school in a rural school district or an employee of a board of cooperative services who has expertise as a literacy specialist
Tamara Durbin	Northeast	A school district director of special education
Amanda Harris	West Central	Two elementary grade teachers, one of whom teaches in a rural school district or a small rural school district
Karin Johnson	Metro	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia and a disability
Andrea Kamper	Northwest	A parent of a child who is identified as having dyslexia
Karen Leopold	Metro Area	A member of the local chapter of an international dyslexia association
Kathy McCall	North Central	A school district literacy specialist
Laura Santerre-Lemmon	Metro Area	A state or national dyslexia expert
Jennifer Urbach	North Central	A faculty member of an institution of higher education

Facilitation of the Working Group

CDE contracted with an objective, skilled, third-party facilitator to manage the working group meetings and record the working group’s recommendations through the reports required within the authorizing statute. After conducting a transparent process to solicit proposals from interested individuals, the department considered



the literacy expertise and content knowledge regarding dyslexia as well as facilitation experience in making the selection of Ms. Deborah Hunsaker, M.ED., as the facilitator of the Dyslexia Working Group.

Process for Conducting the Working Group

For the 2019-20 school year, the department scheduled the DWG meetings for the following dates:

- September 20, 2019
- October 17, 2019
- December 6, 2019
- January 8, 2020
- March 12, 2020
- April 8, 2020
- May 22, 2020

All meetings of the Dyslexia Working Group are open to the public; however, only working group members have an active role in the meeting. CDE is keeping an updated DWG webpage (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/codyslexiaworkgroup>) where all meeting dates, locations, and notes are posted for transparency.

Progress of the Dyslexia Working Group

By the time this report was written, the DWG has met three times. The initial focus of the DWG is on the first two deliverables within their charge:

- Analysis current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates; and
- Analysis of the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia-related laws.

In the sections that follow, the process and summary of conclusions the DWG has made is described.

Analysis of Other States' Dyslexia Policies

The DWG researched and reviewed nine other state plans. These nine plans were selected using the International Dyslexia Association website (<https://dyslexiaida.org>) outlining the legislation status of each state. According to the International Dyslexia Association review, in the "2013 initial review, only 22 states had dyslexia laws. Furthermore, many of these states only hinted at dyslexia with-in their existing laws, but there was little guidance as to how to identify and help individuals with dyslexia. As of the review in March of 2018, 42 states have dyslexia-specific laws, and, among the states that have passed laws, most have updated their education codes to clearly define dyslexia and provide guidelines to school districts on how to identify dyslexia and provide evidence-based interventions. Ten states now have a dyslexia handbook and one state has a resource guide, and the term dyslexia is now an integral part of parent-teacher conferences, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 504 plans, and the school community as a whole." The states selected had web accessible written guidance or handbooks that were available for review. The group divided into subcommittees to review and analyze other states plans.

The group used the following guiding questions when reviewing each plan:

- As you read the state plan and reviewed the website, what stood out to you about statewide legislation for dyslexia? What are the highlights?



- How has each state implemented statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia-related laws?
- What is the effectiveness of the statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia-related laws?

From this review, the group has eliminated further study into Arizona, California, and Tennessee. The DWG members determined that these state plans lacked specificity, professional development aspects, and actionable guidelines. The group will continue to review and analyze plans from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oregon and Texas. While strengths varied plan to plan, the group determined that further time and research would be valuable on the basis of website (i.e., tools, support, accessibility), specificity in screening and curriculum, professional development and teacher training. Full notes on the state plans are included as Appendix B of this report.

Analysis of Current National and Statewide Data

The group analyzed the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data for reading using the available 2017 data for 4th grade students. This set of data was selected because it is standardized across the country so states can be compared. Colorado ranked higher than 21 states, lower than 3 states, and not significantly different from 26 states. Colorado remains below the national average in Scaled Score for Students with Disabilities. The group determined that while the data was useful for determining general achievement in reading in each state, the NAEP data includes subsets for students with disabilities, but lacks specificity to dyslexia and that achievement scores are only one measure of student success. Dyslexia specific data sets are not often collected, and when they are, states are not making that data accessible to the public. The NAEP data did give the group another source to consider achievement success when reviewing the selected plans. Of the state plans listed for further exploration, only one, New Jersey had a higher scaled score than Colorado (233 compared with 225) in 2017. Likewise, only New Jersey and Colorado performed higher than the national average scaled score (221). A summary of NAEP data is included in table 2.

TABLE 2: 2017 NAEP Scores in 4th Grade Reading
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
2017 Reading Data for Reviewed Dyslexia State Plans

State	2017 At or Above Basic	2017 At or Above Proficient	2017 Scaled Score	2017 Scaled Score for Students with Disabilities*	2015 Scaled Score for Students with Disabilities*
NATION	67%	36%	221	186	186
Arizona	61%	30%	215	183	177
Arkansas	63%	31%	216	171	181
California	62%	31%	215	175	165
COLORADO	71%	40%	225	178	178
Louisiana	56%	26%	212	180	184
Mississippi	60%	27%	215	182	181
New Jersey	78%	49%	233	204	203



State	2017 At or Above Basic	2017 At or Above Proficient	2017 Scaled Score	2017 Scaled Score for Students with Disabilities*	2015 Scaled Score for Students with Disabilities*
Oregon	63%	33%	218	182	183
Tennessee	65%	33%	219	182	176
Texas	60%	29%	215	186	182

*The students with disabilities groups includes all students with disabilities and may contain students with dyslexia depending on identification guidelines of each state.

Next Steps for the Dyslexia Working Group

At the September 2019 meeting of the DWG, the working group analyzed 2017 NAEP data along with the state dyslexia plans. Since then, the 2019 NAEP data has become available and will be considered by the group during the further study of state plans. Based on these data, the DWG will add Massachusetts, Florida, and District of Columbia to its review of state plans. Finally, in accordance with HB 19-1134 (section 22-20.5-103 2), the group will 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. A final report on these recommendations will be provided in June 2020.



Appendices

Appendix A

Links to Data and State Plans

National Assessment of Educational Progress data – nationsreportcard.gov

Louisiana: <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academics/a-guide-to-dyslexia-in-louisiana.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

Arizona: <https://cms.azed.gov/home/GetDocumentFile?id=5ada56093217e11d10341d52>

Arkansas: http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/public/userfiles/Learning_Services/Dyslexia/DRG-Final-12-13-17-JS1.pdf

California: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/cadyslexiaguidelines.pdf>

Illinois: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Dyslexia-Handbook.pdf>

Mississippi Best Practices:

<https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OAE/OEER/Dyslexia/mississippi-best-practices-dyslexia-handbook-2010-12-13.pdf>

New Jersey: <https://www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/dyslexia/NJDyslexiaHandbook.pdf>

New York Guidance: <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/new-york-state-education-department-98330/>

New York Q&A: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/documents/q-and-a-students-with-dyslexia-dysgraphia-dyscalculia.pdf>

Oregon Screening and Support: https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/SpecialEducation/RegPrograms_BestPractice/Documents/dyslexiascreeningplanappendix.pdf

Oregon Plan for Universal Screening:

<https://www.ode.state.or.us/wma/initiatives/idea/dyslexia/dyslexiascreeningplansept2016.pdf>

Tennessee - https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/special-education/dys/dyslexia_resource_guide.pdf

Texas: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter074/19_0074_0028-1.pdf

Washington: <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/reading/pubdocs/dyslexiaresourceguide.pdf>

Wisconsin <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/sld-dyslexia.pdf>



Appendix B

State Plan Review Notes

This section contains the working group's notes on state plans it reviewed.

Arizona

Positives:

- IDEA definition for dyslexia
- Includes guidelines for parents of what they could do at home

Negatives:

- Organization difficult to follow
- Lacks specificity
- Needs to identify and direct information more clearly to intended audiences

Overall Recommendation: Arizona is early in this process. Legislations just passed in July 2019 and is not as specific as Colorado's legislation. Arizona is adopting similar screening processes as other states. Interesting statute: students are held back from 4th grade if they do not pass 3rd grade state reading assessment unless the student has dyslexia. In the current form, this guidance is not recommended for continued review.

Arkansas

Positives:

- Website is intuitive to use
- Transparent process
- Manual has a section on screeners which is age appropriate and skill specific
- Dyslexia specialists trained and used throughout the state to help schools for reporting and support
- Different level of screeners and specificity for each grade level, including students beyond 3rd grade
- Rapid naming screener including colors and access for teachers

Negatives:

- None noted

Overall Recommendation: The specificity of this plan makes it recommended for further study. Reviewer recommends conference type style for getting out the information. Maybe follow up with a phone call on resources.

California

Positives:

- Used International Dyslexia Association definition of dyslexia
- Broke down symptoms of dyslexia and how to identify and assess



- Handbook was accessible
- Chapters were short and easy to digest
- Lists assistive technology resources and resources for families
- Formal identification tools
- Includes social and emotional (grit and motivation) indicators
- Law passed in 2015 and had a Dyslexia working group, which included Sally Shaywitz and included a Shaywitz screener and list of assessments in appendix of plan

Negatives:

- Screeners and assessments is where the plan breaks down
- Uses MTSS process for checklist with pre- and post-tests which leaves room for error and delays support for students
- Does not specify high-quality curriculum despite indicating one needs to be used
- List is not for classroom teachers and needs to be administered by psychologist or special education teacher.

Overall Recommendation: While some pieces of this plan are good, it is not recommended for further research. No specifics on teacher training. NAEP data grew only slightly (2 points). Includes social and emotional (grit and motivation) indicators that is an important piece.

Colorado

Positives:

- Has a guidance document that is an on-line format which includes accessible written material, links to resources and videos
- Materials are downloadable and printable chapters
- Guidance document but also includes a lot of professional development
- Contains research studies that other states are lacking
- Descriptions and resource for dyslexia and children with disabilities, English Learners, ADHD, autism, and twice exceptional learners; comorbidities
- Begins with a comprehensive literacy program and the importance for all students

Negatives:

- Not all text will be relevant to all readers due to the depth and amount
- It is designed to digital so presentation is different than most states due to the on-line format
 - How will it look when it enters the phase of lots of people coming to the website so it is not too overwhelming?
- Unclear about the lists of the approved assessments and programs the READ Act already has in place

Overall Recommendation: More needs to be done to merge current information into a full guidance plan.



Louisiana

Positives:

- Website is informative and very accessible for all roles
- Very specific with lists including screeners on the five components of reading
- Plan narrow downs and gives choices
- Provides a table of programs, age groups, and costs
- Includes two dyslexia specific screeners and other global tools
- Includes specific information about process for parents and teachers
- Lists five characteristics of students with dyslexia
 - Clear process
 - Recommendations for who should be on the student appraisal committee
 - Connections to MTSS

Negatives:

- None reported

Overall Recommendation: Move forward with this plan. Louisiana has had a Dyslexia law since 1998. There is good growth data, pathways for 504 plans, and special education. Professional growth ladder system in place for teachers (master, mentors, etc.). Gives clarity for developing guidance in Colorado.

Mississippi

Positives:

- Describes the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and identification with regard to dyslexia
- Includes a comprehensive list including targeted assessments with a descriptor of how to use the tools and what to look for in the results
- Includes a state dyslexia screening assessment
- Includes definitions, identifications, accommodations
- No approved list but multisensory program review process with lists of programs
- Requirement for local school boards to provide interventions for students but left it open to districts on how to determine that
- NAEP data showed positive score improvement for children with disabilities and students eligible for free and reduced lunch

Negatives:

- None noted

Overall Recommendation: Mississippi began legislating for Dyslexia in 1996. An early pilot program and a dyslexia therapy program showed some strengths but not overall on 3rd state assessment. The state develops institutes on strategies and accommodations for elementary and secondary. The website has tools and supports and has a K-3 early reading program to pay attention to. Some parts of the guidance are exemplary, however, other parts are outdated. The state is revising the handbook again. The long-term effort and persistence to find the correct guidance is compelling for further study.



New Jersey

Positives:

- Handbook is thorough
- use of International Dyslexia Association aligned definition
- Every teacher K-3, special education, and English language arts teachers receives 2 hours of professional development every year in screening, accommodation and technology
- Extensive chapter on structured literacy
- Tools to help teachers

Negatives:

- Resources online but not the laws
- Details left unspecified and indicates that districts need to determine and include resources on website schools can use
- Not sufficient resources for teachers on websites
- Screening information has to be provided by state to districts
- Handbook includes an indicator checklist and a screening instrument but not recommendation on how to do it or how to use it
 - What does it look like?
 - What are the recommendations?

Overall Recommendation: There are enough details in this handbook to make it a candidate for further review. NAEP data for New Jersey is another compelling reason to continue reviewing this plan.

Oregon

Positives:

- Similar to READ Act in Colorado with making reading a priority for all students with good core instruction
- Parent notification and involvement with entire process
- Not lengthy and really concise
- Website is inclusive of:
 - Universal screening tools
 - Targeted assessments
 - Different training opportunities for teachers to access
- Includes a training model
- Provides screening of all students for dyslexia

Negatives:

- Nothing specific about dyslexia screening effectiveness could be found

Overall Recommendation: Senate Bill 6-12 was enacted in 2015 and required hiring a dyslexia specialist who convened a working group. Each school has to have one K-5 teacher to receive training and then provides training to their school. All pre-service teachers receive training on dyslexia (although



reviewer is not sure whether this happens at university or at district level). Updates in 2017 include teacher training in dyslexia and screening upon entry to school. Guidelines are concise and current. Reviewer recommends this plan for further study.

Tennessee

Positives:

- Name of the law (“Say Dyslexia”)
- Excellent Dyslexia Advisory Council annual report
- Notification of parents
- Created a 24/7 hotline

Negatives:

- Materials are presented in a way to sway opinion
- Lacking clarity
- Broad use of terms and definitions
- Not very clear and actionable
- Tiered process not well spelled out
- Legislation identifies council and testing that should exist but not details about processes and programs
- The 2013 to 2017 data doesn’t show good change

Overall Recommendation: Not recommended for further research. Dyslexiatennessee.org is a more interesting site/resource to explore.

Texas

Positives:

- Screening for all kids in kindergarten
- Teacher training is strong and professional development is required for all teachers and teacher candidates including identification of students with dyslexia
- Includes identification information using both qualitative (behaviors) and quantitative data
- Discusses training and differences for general education teachers and specialists

Negatives:

- Lists screener components but not the specific screeners

Overall Recommendation: Effectiveness data included interviews that showed teachers were familiar with laws and requirements but needed more training and resources. Handbook describes a lot about English Learners and Spanish and English reading in both languages and also twice exceptional students. This state is recommended for further review.
