



COLORADO DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

# Concerning Literacy Challenges That Include Dyslexia Annual Report House Bill 08-1223

Submitted to:

**House Education Committee  
Senate Education Committee  
Colorado State Board of Education**

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## Executive Summary

House Bill 08-1223 ensures the provision of technical assistance pertaining to Colorado public school students with literacy challenges that include dyslexia. The Department provided various training opportunities to address the needs of students with literacy challenges throughout the state. These trainings were provided through cross unit collaboration by The Office of Literacy, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and The Exceptional Students Services Unit (ESSU). The following report summarizes the training and technical assistance provided to the field in 2013.

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## Introduction

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**House Bill 08-1223:**

The focus of H.B. 08-1223 is the provision of technical assistance pertaining to Colorado public school students with literacy challenges that include dyslexia.

**Colorado Department of Education Responsibility:**

The implementation of technical assistance has been charged to the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). Requirements of the legislation include training to address the needs of students with literacy challenges including dyslexia. This training must include, but is not limited to, the areas of:

- awareness
- assessment
- identification
- evidence-based progress monitoring
- scientifically based interventions

This training and technical assistance is to be reflective of a tiered continuum of intensity for intervention consistent with a Response to Intervention (RtI) model. In addition, it is encouraged to be coordinated with current best practices and work already occurring in the teacher preparation programs at state institutions of higher education. Per the requirements of the bill, an annual report is due to the State Board of Education and to the Education Committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

## **2013 Report**

The Department focus on literacy has been accomplished through cross unit collaboration by MTSS, ESSU and the Office of Literacy. The focus this year has been on the implementation of the READ Act H.B. 12-1238. The READ Act fits nicely within the context of this previous legislation H.B. 08-1223, which focused on providing technical assistance concerning issues faced by students with literacy challenges to districts, schools, residential treatment facilities and other local education agencies throughout the state.

### **The Office of Literacy provided the following trainings for:**

#### **Teachers/professionals working with K-3 students:**

**READ Act Basics:** Professional development was offered to teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, BOCES representatives and other interested educational partners. The focus was on the implementation of the READ Act, including assessments, identification of a student with a significant reading deficiency, attributes of universal instruction and interventions, minimum reading skill competencies, grant funds associated with the READ Act and reporting requirements. The READ Act Basics training was offered throughout the state (approximately 18 trainings) in the spring of 2013 to reach all sections of the state. A recorded webinar was also provided for those individuals that could not attend a scheduled training.

#### **BOCES Regional support / Taking the READ Act deeper:**

Full day support was provided for district and school leaders in implementation of the READ Act at a deeper level. The presentation provided background of the READ Act as well as focused on ELL students and Special Ed students, diagnostic assessments, interim assessments and READ Plans.

#### **Technical Assistance to the field:**

The Office of Literacy provided technical assistance to the field through an FTE allocation of 8.0. Additionally, contract support was offered as supplemental support in order to reach all parts of the state. The technical assistance included modeling lessons, data analysis, walk-throughs, professional development sessions as requested by schools, districts and BOCES, program reviews, data analysis, assessment reviews, READ Plan reviews, etc. The technical assistance was provided first to those districts with the highest need based on 2012/2013 reading data.

#### **Recorded webinars:**

The Office of Literacy has recorded webinars to help build the capacity for teachers and administrators. We currently have two webinars posted at

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

#### **Early Literacy Assessment Tool:**

This project, through the School Finance Act, currently involves 121 districts, 413 schools and approximately 92,000 students throughout the state. The support with the Early Literacy Assessment tool includes professional development on the reading continuum, best practices with data-driven instruction, data analysis, etc. These professional development opportunities occurred throughout the state in the summer, fall and winter of 2013.

## **The Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) provided the following trainings for:**

### **Teachers/professionals working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing:**

Signing Children's Literature: Professional development was offered to educational interpreters in May 2013 in the greater Denver Metro area and again in October 2013 on the Western Slope.

The Colorado DHH Mentor Program: This program provides on-going technical assistance to the field in all areas related to deafness, with literacy being the most requested topic. The Mentor Program is currently in 23 schools and a minimum of 35 hours over three years is provided to each school submitting a request.

### **Teachers/professionals working with students with autism spectrum disorder:**

ASD Literacy Institute: A five-day institute included 80 participants from around the state identified by their district as the person/team responsible for literacy instruction or professional development for students with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). The Institute was led by two national experts, Dr. Williamson and Dr. Christi Carnahan.

ASD Literacy Coaching: This one-day intensive training was designed for CDE ASD consultants. Two national leaders in the field of ASD provided this one-day intensive training as a precursor to the ASD Literacy Institute.

### **Teachers/professionals working with preschoolers with disabilities:**

Spring 2013 State Child-Find meeting: Preschool professionals, including child find coordinators, preschool special education coordinators, some directors of special education and other early childhood personnel (approximately 110 participants) attended a session entitled *123s of ABCs: Early Literacy Leading to Early Reading*, with session presenter Lynn Kuhn, in the spring of 2013.

### **Teachers/professional working with student with visual impairments and blindness:**

State Conference on Blindness and Visual Impairment: During the October 3-4, 2013 State Conference on Blindness and Visual Impairment training was focused on the effective design and practices of literacy instruction within the context of the READ Act and the Colorado English Language Arts Standards. The featured speaker was Dr. Frances Mary D'Andrea from the University of Pittsburgh, who specializes in literacy issues related to students with visual impairments.

### **Teachers/professionals working with students with specific learning disabilities:**

SLD Webinar - Framework for Basic Reading Skill Assessment and Instruction: Literacy expert Melody Ilk lead this webinar which targeted administrators and special education team leaders. It addressed the attributes of Specific Learning Disabilities in the area of basic reading skills; assessing to screen, diagnose and monitor progress; and ways to strengthen the connection between specific deficits and instruction/intervention within a multi-tiered system of instruction and support. There were 50 participants, including special education teachers, school psychologists, building principals, district administrators, special education directors and coordinators, literacy interventionists, literacy coaches and higher education clinical professor.

SLD Reading Professional Development - A Deeper Dive into Phonology and Advanced Decoding: These five, full-day, regional professional development sessions addressed the research basis and specific instructional strategies for teaching phonology and advanced phonics, particularly to students with identified Specific Learning Disabilities in the area of basic reading skills. The presenter was Melody Ilk and there were a total of 350 participants across all sessions, including special education teachers, related services providers, special/general education administrators, reading interventionists and literacy coaches.

**Teachers/professionals working with students with significant support needs:**

2013 Summer Institute on Deafblindness and Significant Support Needs (SSN): This weeklong institute/course addressed literacy instruction and assessment for students with significant disabilities including deafblindness and significant communication impairment. The institute covered a number of essential literacy topics including emergent literacy, language and communication intervention, oral and written language development and literacy assessment practices specific to learner with SSN.

Ongoing literacy support for students with SNN: This focused literacy training was directed for teachers of students with significant support needs. The training included three days of professional development followed by three days of intensive and focused coaching. Participants included teachers, para-professionals and administrators and the training and coaching was provided by the ESSU SSN consultant.

**Teachers/ professionals working with students placed in approved facility schools:**

A high percentage of students placed in Approved Facility Schools have been identified as needing special education, such as, Significant Emotional Disturbance, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Significant Cognitive Needs and Specific Learning Disabilities. Many of the general education students in facility schools are at-risk for academic failure due to significant academic deficiencies in all areas of basic skills, including literacy. The Office of Facility Schools, which is part of ESSU, held focused Approved Facility Schools monthly meetings to provide facility schools directors of special education and education coordinators literacy training related to the Colorado State Standards in the area of English Language Arts. These half-day trainings were led by The Office of Facility Schools curriculum specialist. On average, the number of monthly participants was 40 SPED directors and education coordinators. Additionally, a full day of literacy training was provided to all teachers (special education, general education and content-specific teachers) working in an approved facility school. This training was provided regionally, with two full-day sessions for teachers from facility schools located in the greater Denver metro area, one full-day session in the southern region (Pueblo), a full-day session for the northern region (Fort Collins) and a full-day session for the Western Slope (Grand Junction). Approximately 185 teachers attended one of these five regional sessions.

**ESSU grant supported technical assistance for improved literacy outcomes for students with disabilities:**

Additionally, the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) has made substantial funds available to school districts and BOCES through a competitive grant process. Four *Increasing Achievement Literacy Grants* were awarded this year. The scope of these grants, which focuses on improving literacy outcomes for students with disabilities, includes 13 districts within the San Luis BOCES, 7 districts within the Northwest BOCES, as well as the Poudre School District and the Jefferson County School District. Each grant site has developed a collaborative course of action which includes professional development for special educators as well as general education professionals, implementation of specific literacy programs and strategies and on-going progress monitoring of student outcomes.

**The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) provided the following trainings for:****Improving Literacy Outcomes for Grades K-3:**

This course provided professional development based on current scientific research regarding reading assessment, instruction and intervention within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Content focused on literacy skill development for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency and spelling. Participants gain an understanding of literacy development for typical readers in order to more accurately understand and identify students with reading disabilities such as dyslexia.

The course provided primary teachers and specialists with information and resources to intervene appropriately and develop a body of evidence for identification and instruction for students with reading disabilities.

### **Improving Literacy Outcomes for Grades 4-12:**

These professional development trainings were based on current scientific research regarding reading assessment, instruction and intervention within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Content was focused on literacy skill development for students in 3rd grade and beyond, in the areas of reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. In order to more accurately understand and identify students with reading disabilities such as dyslexia, participants gain an understanding of literacy development for typical readers and how to identify and intervene for common breakdowns in literacy development for students with disabilities. This course provided intermediate and secondary teachers and special educators with information and resources to intervene appropriately and develop a body of evidence for identification and instruction for students with reading disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

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The Colorado Department of Education will continue to focus on the implementation of the READ Act throughout the 2014 year. All three units mentioned in this report will continue to provide technical assistance and training linked to literacy across the state.

Continued support will include, but not be limited to data decision making, assessments used to drive instruction, foundational literacy skills for K-1 teachers state-wide, implementing and streamlining individual student plans, etc. In order to continue to implement the H.B. 08-1223, cross-unit collaboration, including working with School Readiness, will be the focus and priority.