



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# Report to the Colorado General Assembly: House Bill 08-1223

Submitted to:

**Joint House and Senate Education Committees and the Colorado State Board of Education**

By:

**Colorado Department of Education**

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## Purpose

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Pursuant to House Bill 08-1223 (C.R.S. 22-2-133), the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is required to submit an annual report to the education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate concerning technical assistance and training it has made available related to students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia. The report summarizes the training and technical assistance provided in 2014 through the CDE Office of Literacy, the Exceptional Students Services Unit, and the Office of Learning Supports.

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## Introduction

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House Bill 08-1223, Concerning the Provision of Technical Assistance Pertaining to Colorado Public School Students with Literacy Challenges That Include Dyslexia, encourages the Colorado Department of Education to provide support and training to educators. Specifically, the statute promotes technical assistance and training in the assessment and scientifically based interventions for students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia, within a response to intervention framework.

Training must include, but is not limited to, the areas of:

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

Training and technical assistance is to be reflective of a continuum of supports provided within a response to intervention framework and is encouraged to be coordinated with current best practices. Furthermore, the statute encourages the department to “provide technical assistance and training to school districts, administrative units, residential treatment facilities, correctional facilities, and local education agencies in a coordinated effort with teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education” (section 22-2-133(2) C.R.S.).

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## Technical Assistance and Training Summary for 2014

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The department focus on literacy has been accomplished through cross-unit collaboration between the Office of Literacy, the Exceptional Student Services Unit, and the Office of Learning Supports. The primary focus of the department’s literacy work for 2014 has been on the continued implementation of the Colorado READ Act, House Bill 12-1238, and training for teachers who serve students with disabilities.

### ***Activities Provided by the Office of Literacy***

The goals of the READ Act, early identification of and effective intervention for reading deficiencies for children in grades K – 3, is consistent with the intent of House Bill 08-1223. Thus, the implementation activities for the READ Act enacted by the Office of Literacy are reported here. The Office of Literacy provides support to Colorado districts, schools, and educators in effective reading assessment, instruction, and intervention through direct technical assistance and training as well as through online resources.

***Profession Development.*** Professional development was provided to general education teachers, special education teachers, reading interventionists, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, instructional leaders and principals through the READING Foundations Academy. The READING Foundations Academy is a no-cost training focused on explicit and systematic universal instruction in reading with an emphasis on foundational reading skills based in the standards. Participants are able to dig deeper into the decoding and language, study the



connection to the Colorado Academic Standards, and explore methods for engaging students in comprehension and writing every day. Approximately 700 educators from across the state participated in 2014. The READING Foundations Academy will continue to be offered in 2015.

*Technical Assistance.* The Office of Literacy, through regional technical assistants, provided ongoing literacy support to the field. The support consisted of providing support for reading data analysis, reading lesson modeling, classroom walk-throughs, and professional development sessions as requested by schools, districts, and BOCES. The priority for this technical assistance was to schools rated as priority improvement or turnaround according to the state's accountability system.

*Online Resources.* The Office of Literacy developed and disseminated online resources, including learning modules and recorded webinars, to build the capacity for teachers and administrators in effective reading assessment, instruction, and intervention. A series of 11 learning modules on the cycle of reading instruction were made available on the [Office of Literacy website](http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/). These modules were designed to provide information on early intervention, reading skill development, assessments, instructional design and progress monitoring to determine effective instruction. Furthermore, the office hosted a number of webinars to support the use of State Board-approved interim assessment in the identification of significant reading deficiencies per the READ Act. Webinars can be found on the READ Act Assessment page: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/resourcebank>.

*CDE's Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project.* This project, through the School Finance Act, involved 124 districts, 417 schools and approximately 110,000 K-3 students throughout the state. Support provided by this project in 2014 included professional development on reading assessment, the reading continuum, data analysis, and best practices with data-driven instruction.

#### ***Activities Provided by the Exceptional Student Services Unit***

The Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) provided numerous professional development opportunities for teachers and other school professionals with responsibilities for addressing the needs of students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia. These opportunities included workshops, online courses, webinars, seminars, and literacy institutes developed to address the specific literacy needs of students with disabilities. They are delineated in this report by disability category. Additionally, the Exceptional Student Services Unit addressed student literacy challenges through literacy-focused grants and the provision of technical assistance provided by ESSU disability specific specialists and/or the ESSU literacy specialist.

*Professional Development Related to Students with Significant Support Needs.* A number of trainings were offered for teachers and other school professionals addressing literacy needs of students with significant support needs, including students with an intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, and deaf-blindness.

Weekly virtual Communities of Practice (CoP) meetings were conducted. These were held after school hours for teachers working with students who use the alternate achievement standards for instruction and who take the alternate assessment. Teachers were required to view the self-directed modules before the CoP. During the virtual CoP meeting, CDE staff answered the questions of participants and enhanced the information by providing additional resources. The sessions were recorded and posted on the website. This project will continue into 2015.

CDE, in collaboration with the Colorado Deafblind Project and the North Carolina Deafblind Project, conducted a series of five virtual CoP meetings that were facilitated by Dr. Penny Hatch and Dr. Claire Greer from the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Drs. Hatch and Greer are



among the primary writers of the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Alternate Assessment program which was designed to measure what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do. These experts provided additional training, information, resources, and answered questions from teachers working with students who receive their instruction on the alternate achievement standards.

In addition to these trainings, a significant supports needs specialist from CDE provided coaching and training to teachers from the San Luis Valley BOCES who teach students receiving their instruction on the alternate achievement standards. Follow up coaching and training will occur in the Spring of 2015.

*Professional Development Related to Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).* Training for teachers and other school professionals addressing literacy needs of students with specific learning disabilities were provided through multiple activities.

The ESSU offered a five-month project called *Basic Reading Skills – Building a Strong Foundation for Reading Success*. Literacy specialist staff conducted four regional full-day workshops in January as the initial training component of the project. Each cohort of participants took part in two follow-up webinars in order for technical assistance to be provided during implementation. Implementation surveys were completed half-way through the project with final reports submitted to provide evidence of student outcomes related to the implementation of the instructional practices addressed through the project. A total of 265 educators participated in this project, including special and general education teachers, reading specialists, reading interventionists, instructional coaches, paraprofessionals, preschool educators, bilingual education specialists, and district administrators.

Another similar project, entitled *Phonology, Advanced Decoding, and Word Study for Students with SLD – Continuing to Build a Strong Foundation for Reading Success* was in the fall of 2014. The project consisted of a three regional full-day workshop as the initial training component of the project with follow-up webinars for technical assistance to be provided during implementation. A total of 117 educators participated in the project including special and general education administrators, district-level administrators, instructional coaches, district specialists, specialized service professionals, paraprofessionals, general education teachers, and special education teachers. This project will continue through the Spring of 2015.

*Professional Development Related to Students with Speech and Language Disabilities.* The ESSU provided a number of trainings for teachers and other school professionals addressing the needs of students with speech and/or language disabilities. State-wide and regional trainings and workshops focused on building knowledge and skills in the understanding of how oral language supports literacy development.

The *Early Childhood Literacy Workshop* focused on the early childhood population and interventions to support vocabulary, phonological and phonemic awareness development for students with disabilities as well as students who are struggling with these concepts. Teams of early childhood educators were encouraged to attend. This workshop was offered throughout the state including a face-to-face offering in Denver and at six remote locations with attendance of 123 early childhood educators. The intent to provide this workshop at seven locations throughout the state was for all districts to have the opportunity to receive this information.

A series of regional trainings entitled *Closing the Gap on Student Outcomes* was provided for speech-language pathologists and speech-language pathology assistants and focused on the impact of oral language development on literacy skills. The completion of nine trainings has trained 363 professional and was open to all school districts.



*Professional Development Related to Students with Visual Impairment or Blindness.* ESSU also provided training for teachers and other school professionals addressing the needs of students with visual impairment or blindness. The 2014 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness offered a one-semester advanced course on *Literacy for Students with Significant Support Needs*. This was an advance-level course for participants who have previously attended a five-day introductory session in either the 2011, 2012, or 2013 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness. The advanced course addressed literacy instruction and assessment for students with significant disabilities including deafblindness and significant communication impairments. The course had an emphasis on emergent literacy, language, and communication intervention and offered the participants practical guidance through videos, case studies, and specific methods. The course was sponsored by the Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project within the Exceptional Student Services Unit of the CDE. Over 90 people were trained across the two 2.5 day sessions offered in the summer of 2014.

The *Be All You UEB! A Unified Braille Update* course was offered to Colorado teachers certified in the area of visual impairment (TVIs) and school district braillists in October 2014. Over 120 people were trained in the Unified Braille Code, which is a modified literary and braille code from the New English American Edition Code. The United States will formally adopt UEB by January 2016. A second Advanced UEB train-the-trainers event is planned for January, 2015 to detail the technical components of UEB for math, science, and computer use.

*Professional Development Related to Early Childhood Special Education.* ESSU offered technical assistance and training to teachers and other school professionals addressing the needs of young children through early childhood special education.

The Early Childhood Literacy Summit was a joint effort between CDE, the University of Northern Colorado, Head Start, and Early Intervention (Part C). There were 100 participants, comprised of teams that included general educators, special education teachers, child care providers, family members, and Head Start staff. Participants had time each day to work on action plans that they would take back to their community. Follow up was conducted to assure that teams were implementing their action plans.

In conjunction with the CDE Early Childhood Special Education staff and Office of Literacy staff, the Colorado Preschool Program and Results Matter team developed a language and literacy training based on the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. The first iteration, covering the basics of research-based best practices for expressive and receptive language, book awareness and knowledge, phonological awareness, print concepts, alphabet knowledge, and early writing, was delivered twice to school district staff in Roaring Fork and to lead classroom teachers, coaches, and coordinators with the Otero Junior College Head Start program for Lamar, La Junta, Las Animas, and Manzanola.

*Professional Development Related to Students with Emotional Disabilities.* In 2014, ESSU conducted a training specific to teachers and other school professionals addressing the literacy challenges of students with emotional disabilities. This training for teachers of students with significant emotional disabilities (SED) was provided via a webinar-based training entitled *Students with SED and Literacy*. The training focused support on the identification of literacy challenges and evidence-based literacy supports offered through a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

*Professional Development Related to Autism Spectrum Disorder.* Support for teachers and other school professionals in addressing the literacy challenges of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) was also provided by ESSU. During the early months of 2014, ESSU completed the first ASD Literacy Institute. The Institute which began in the early Fall of 2013 included 83 participants grouped into 23 district, facility schools or



BOCES teams. Teams included both special and general education professionals. This group received follow up coaching, project support, and training throughout the Spring of 2014 and then participated in an advanced training in December of 2014 with two national autism/literacy experts.

A second ASD Literacy Institute began in the Fall of 2014. This second cohort of trainers included 80 participants and 20 district, facility schools or BOCES teams. The initial training included a total of five days of team training, broken into a two-day session in early fall and a three-day session on early December of 2014. All five days were led by two nationally recognized experts in the field of autism and literacy. This Institute will continue into 2015.

In addition, the CDE ASD team provided additional coaching and on-site technical assistance through the state throughout the year. Additional webinar training, conducted by the ASD Literacy Institute experts was offered state-wide.

*Professional Development Related to Facility School.* The ESSU provided technical assistance and training specific to teachers and other school professionals addressing the literacy challenges of students placed in approved facility schools. A series of regional trainings was offered during 2014 to address the literacy needs of students placed in hospitals, and residential treatment facilities, as well as students placed into day-treatment. The trainings addressed the literacy needs of students grades K-12 with an emphasis on oral language and vocabulary development. All trainings were conducted by the ESSU Literacy Specialist. The nearly 200 participants represented all currently approved facility schools.

*Grants to Support Professional Development.* The ESSU continues to support the four multi-year *Increasing Achievement Literacy Grants*, initially awarded in 2012. The scope of these grants, which focus on improving literacy outcomes for students with disabilities, included 13 member school districts of San Luis BOCES, the seven member districts of 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 has included professional development for special educators as well as general education professionals, implementation of specific literacy interventions and strategies, and the on-going progress monitoring of student outcomes. Technical assistance and supportive literacy training has been provided to each of these sites by the ESSU Literacy Specialist.

Through the ESSU Results Driven Accountability process, additional literacy technical assistance was made available to all administrative units in Colorado. This customized literacy support was offered throughout the year by the ESSU disability-specific specialists as well as the ESSU literacy specialist.

### ***Activities Provided by the Office of Learning Supports***

The Office of Learning Supports provided a number of trainings related to literacy within a response to intervention framework. CDE has been working to implement a blended model for academic supports (also known as the response to intervention framework) with behavioral supports (also known as positive behavior intervention supports) known as a Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS). This formed the basis of the trainings and technical assistance offered through the Office of Learning Supports. The following trainings related to literacy have been provided by this office.

*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 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 gained an understanding of literacy development for typical readers in order to more accurately understand and identify students with reading disabilities such as



dyslexia. This 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 learning and reading disabilities.

*Improving Literacy Outcomes for Grades 4-12.* This course also provided professional development based on current scientific research regarding reading assessment, instruction, and intervention within a MTSS for teachers of students in 4<sup>th</sup> 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 gained 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 learning and reading disabilities.

## Conclusion

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The department has a strong vision for Colorado that has been enabled by several years of education policy and is anchored on four goals:

- Start strong – ensuring all kids start school ready and supported to learn
- Read by third grade – ensuring all kids reach reading proficiency by the end of third grade
- Meet or exceed standards – ensuring all kids meet our Colorado Academic Standards as they progress through their schooling
- Graduate ready – ensuring all students leave our doors ready for the next door they open, whether that be college or career

These four goals, working together, ensure that we are supporting students every step of the way throughout their education.

The issues faced by students with literacy challenges can make it very difficult for students to experience academic success across the curriculum. Providing training and technical assistance to Colorado educators to support these students in reaching reading proficiency and ultimately academic success is an important aspect of the role of the Colorado Department of Education.