



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

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

Submitted to:  
**Joint House and Senate Education Committees  
and  
Colorado State Board of Education**

By:  
**Colorado Department of Education**

January 2023

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## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
<u>Literacy Technical Assistance and Training</u>	<u>3</u>
Overview	
Dyslexia Working Group	
<u>Teaching and Learning Unit Initiatives</u>	<u>5</u>
K-3 Evidence-Based Teacher Training	
Professional Development Related to Early Literacy, Birth to Kindergarten	
Technical Assistance Related to K-3 Literacy	
<u>Exceptional Student Services Unit Initiatives</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Conclusion</u>	<u>9</u>



## Introduction

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As part of its responsibility for supporting literacy instruction, House Bill (HB) 08-1223 requires the Colorado Department of Education to provide support and training to educators regarding students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia. These services are a part of its technical assistance to school districts, administrative units, residential treatment facilities, youth services facilities, and local education agencies in a coordinated effort with teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education. See section 22-2-133, C.R.S.

The statute also requires the department to annually report its activities and status of technical assistance and training to the joint House and Senate Education Committees and the State Board of Education.

## Literacy Technical Assistance and Training

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### Overview

The department's support for literacy mainly occurs through two units at CDE: the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) and the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU). The areas of focus for the department's literacy work in the 2021-2022 school year have been providing training and support for teachers who serve students who demonstrate literacy challenges, including those with dyslexia, the continued implementation of the Colorado READ Act, and literacy training for teachers who serve students with disabilities. The department has also continued to support the Dyslexia Working Group and the implementation of a dyslexia pilot program, authorized by HB 19-1134. While the department produces an [annual report](#) regarding the Dyslexia Working Group, a high-level overview of the work is provided in this report due to its relevance.

### Dyslexia Working Group

During the 2019 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed HB 19-1134 which initiated a Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) and authorized the department to support a dyslexia pilot program. See section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. The DWG has six responsibilities outlined in statute:

- Analyze current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates;
- Analyze the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia related laws;
- 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;
- 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;
- Identify and recommend components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators, including the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost;
- 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 recommendations 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

- Provide recommendations to CDE concerning the design and implementation of the dyslexia pilot program.

The DWG completed its third year of work during the 2021-22 school year. The DWG recommendations and CDE actions from the year three report include the following:

- **Recommendation #1.** As recommended in the 2021 Annual Report, the DWG continues to recommend that CDE revise the rubric to review current READ Act interim assessments by October 2022 and share that information with the groups the DWG identified (i.e., CDE, college and teacher preparation programs, Colorado government agencies, and educator training opportunities). Following the review, the DWG recommended that CDE create and disseminate a chart that indicates which subtests of approved interim measures assess specific dyslexia indicators.
  - **CDE Action.** CDE added an optional worksheet for vendors to use to demonstrate inclusion of a dyslexia screener:  
[https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/2022readactadvisorylist\\_assessmentreviewprocess](https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/2022readactadvisorylist_assessmentreviewprocess).
- **Recommendation #2.** The DWG developed components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators in fulfillment of task five of its legislative charge. The DWG recommended the information be located on the CDE website and the CDE Dyslexia Handbook.
  - **CDE Action.** CDE added the training to CDE's website and the CDE Dyslexia Handbook. In addition, several resources were added to the website to support educators understanding of dyslexia: [https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-sld\\_resources\\_literacy](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-sld_resources_literacy).
- **Recommendation #3.** The DWG recommended that CDE post and disseminate the Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation for Dyslexia Identification Chart developed by the DWG as a resource for schools. The DWG recommended that Spanish-language assessments be added to the chart as well as specific test descriptions. The DWG recommended the information be located on the CDE website and the CDE Dyslexia Handbook.
  - **CDE Action.** Prior to action being taken, CDE must conduct an analysis of the assessments recommended to ensure they are appropriately aligned with each skill area identified. A comprehensive analysis of Spanish-language assessments will need to be completed prior to any action being taken on this recommendation.
- **Recommendation #4.** The DWG recommended that CDE post and disseminate the Comprehensive Dyslexia Assessment Chart with the addition of a forthcoming flowchart and additional resources to be developed by the DWG to support the understanding of the levels of assessments.
  - **CDE Action.** Prior to action being taken, CDE must conduct an analysis of the assessments recommended to ensure they are appropriately aligned with each skill area identified.

More information about the DWG, the membership, and its second annual report can be found here:

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



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## Teaching and Learning Unit Initiatives

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The literacy team at CDE 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. This work includes supporting districts with the goals of the READ Act: early identification of and effective intervention for reading challenges for children in grades K-3. During the 2021-22 school year, the literacy team in the Elementary Literacy and School Readiness Office continued to provide professional development for teachers in their acquisition of scientifically or evidence-based practices in reading pursuant to changes to the READ Act prompted by the passage of SB 19-199.

In addition, the State Board of Education approved changes to the Rules for the Administration of the Colorado READ Act 1 CCR 301-92, including changes to the list of assessments for identifying significant reading deficiencies. The rules include five approved interim reading assessments starting in 2024-25 (a reduction from the current 7 assessments), and a requirement that all approved assessments screen for indicators of dyslexia.

### K-3 Evidence-Based Teacher Training

The literacy team has continued the work related to the evidence-based training in teaching reading required by SB 19-199 for all kindergarten through 3rd grade teachers who provide literacy instruction. CDE provides both an asynchronous online training course and a synchronous virtual-live training course at no cost to districts. The content for the online training course was developed by Public Consulting Group (PCG) in partnership with CDE staff, and the virtual-live course was developed by Keys to Literacy and is delivered by the literacy team. The CDE literacy team ensured that both courses align with the requirements of the READ Act Rules and include a dyslexia component. In the coming year, the CDE staff will begin the development process of the training for administrators and principals as required by SB 22-004.

As of January 2023, over 20,800 individuals fulfilled the K-3 teacher training requirement. Of these participants, CDE staff confirmed approximately 13,661 are teachers who were required to take the training by districts. In addition, 179 districts met the READ Act teacher training requirement by the beginning of the 2022-23 school year. Of these, 24 districts met this requirement with State Board of Education approval through good cause extension criteria.

Besides providing two training options at no cost, the literacy team developed an advisory list that includes six additional training options that are approved to meet the READ Act teacher training requirement. The literacy team also developed an application process for districts and teacher preparation programs to submit courses to be reviewed and approved to meet the READ Act teacher training requirement.

More information about the K-3 teacher training can be found here:

<https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/teacher-training>.

### Professional Development Related to Early Literacy, Birth to Kindergarten

The Early Learning Language and Literacy Sequences, available through the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System, are self-paced, online courses that provide teachers with background information on evidence-based strategies to promote language and literacy development, prevent future reading problems, early identification of potential reading difficulties, and support struggling learners. These courses were available to Colorado teachers free of charge. Over 24,800 early childhood educators have participated in this professional development opportunity since its inception.



## Technical Assistance Related to K-3 Literacy

The department's Elementary Literacy and School Readiness, through regional literacy consultants, provided ongoing literacy support and technical assistance to schools and districts across the state. The technical assistance consisted of support for data analysis, coaching, consulting, and professional development sessions as requested by schools, districts, and BOCES.

- The READ Act webpage has been updated with three newly developed subpages: Science of Reading Resources, Educator Resources, and Parent Resources. These webpages include information to help school administrators, educators, parents, and community partners in answering questions surrounding reading and reading instruction, provide literacy tips and activities, and provide support in decision making and incorporating the science of reading into practice. More information can be found here: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy>.
- The Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project, annually funded through the School Finance Act, included 140 districts and the Charter School Institute in the 2021-22 school year. The project annually funds licenses for approved READ Act assessments to districts and professional development on data analysis, data-driven instruction, mapping student assessment results to early literacy foundational skills, and effective progress monitoring. Participants also had the opportunity to access professional development offered through webinars providing easier access to teachers in rural Colorado school districts. CDE worked with the two Early Literacy Assessment Tool project vendors to develop guidance on how their tools could be delivered in a remote setting for those schools where it was necessary. More information can be found here: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/assessmenttool>.
- Read with Me is the department's public information campaign designed to raise awareness of the important roles educators and parents have in teaching children to read by providing school and home environments that promote reading. CDE contracted with a local communications firm to develop the public information campaign. The firm conducted research with parents and educators and developed the theme "Food. Water. Shelter. Love. Reading." The goal is to remind parents and caregivers that they are their child's first teachers and encourage them to make reading an essential activity from day one.

The target audience for the first year of the campaign is parents and caregivers of children birth through age 5. Primary deliverables produced for the campaign are 15-, 30-, and 60-second video advertisements, a campaign website ([ReadWithMe.today](https://readwithme.today)), and animated graphics for social media advertising. Flyers, stickers, posters and other materials for parents and their children were created and will be distributed to libraries through the Colorado State Library. All materials are produced in English and Spanish. Using a multi-screen strategy, advertisements will be seen on social media, traditional broadcast television and digital video platforms to reach parents and caregivers wherever they consume content and drive them to the campaign website for more information about how to support their child's reading success. Overall, the broadcast television, digital video and social media advertisements resulted in 8.3 million impressions among the general market and 2.8 million impressions among the Hispanic market. The ReadWithMe.Today website had more than 57,000 visits. More information can be found here: <https://readwithme.today/>.

## Exceptional Student Services Unit Initiatives – Office of Special Education

The Office of Special Education (OSE) at CDE provided numerous professional learning opportunities for parents, general and special education teachers, special service providers, and other school professionals with responsibilities for addressing the needs of students with disabilities who demonstrate literacy challenges,



including dyslexia. The OSE works closely with CDE's literacy team to ensure alignment with READ Act implementation efforts. These opportunities included workshops, online courses, webinars, seminars, and institutes developed to address the specific literacy needs of students with disabilities. The following section lists some key literacy activities provided by the OSE during the latter part of the 2021-22 school year and the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Online Webinars.** Two online webinars were made available during 2022 on the CDE Professional Development website that addressed the cognitive profiles common in ASD and their influence on reading comprehension.
- **Braille Competency.** The OSE continues to support the state requirement for all Colorado public school teachers licensed and endorsed in blindness/visual impairment to demonstrate braille competency within their first instructional year. Mentor support is offered to support the knowledge and skill set of reading and writing in the Unified English Braille Code.
- **Communication / Emergent Literacy Webinar Series.** Virtual trainings were held in January, February, and March 2022 to support parents and teachers in the communication and literacy instruction of students with significant support needs, including deaf blindness. Topics included: *Classic Literacy Lessons: Story Boxes, Experience Books, and Authentic Choice Making; Systematic Literacy Instruction for Students with Severe Disabilities (Part 2);* and *Supporting the Use of Consistent Literacy Interventions: A Framework for Collaborating with Educational Teams Serving Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss.* Each webinar had at least 75 participants in attendance.
- **Comprehensive Literacy for ALL – Make and Take Session.** The session with Dr. Caroline Musselwhite was held on November 1, 2022. There were 65 educators in attendance who learned how to make a variety of tools to provide access to books for students with significant support needs.
- **Comprehensive Literacy for ALL: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write Book Study.** The Significant Support Needs (SSN) Network Team conducted three (Fall 2021, Spring 2022, Fall 2022) book studies on this book. Each book study had 4-5 sessions per semester with 10-20 teachers in each session. A total of 200 teachers completed the book study. This was a collaborative project with the Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss who provided funding to purchase the books. Several administrative units conducted their own book studies as a result of participation in this project, including Douglas County, Boulder County, Jefferson County School Districts, and Aurora Public Schools.
- **Comprehensive Literacy Instruction for Beginning Readers and Writers.** This one-day training with Dr. Caroline Musselwhite was a collaborative project with Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project, Douglas County School District, and the Rocky Mountain Down Syndrome Association. This training will involve follow-up coaching during the 2022-23 school year for teachers who attended the training.
- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Hearing Impairments, Including Deafness.** The OSE continued its efforts to improve literacy skills for students who are identified as deaf/hard of hearing. A regional training model and mentor program supported Teachers of the Deaf in using evidence-based practices for assessment and literacy instruction. Online Deaf Education Office Hours were offered and addressed accessibility and literacy-specific issues for students with hearing loss and the specific assessment needs of students with limited auditory access.
- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Blindness/Visual Impairments.** The OSE continued its efforts to improve literacy skills for students who are identified with blindness/visual impairment (BVI). The OSE used the services of a state expert coach to support teachers



of students with BVI in using evidence-based practices for assessment and methods to teach literacy skills. Further, BVI Office Hours were offered monthly from January through May 2022 to provide a forum for teachers of students with BVI to highlight and problem solve strategies to support literacy, low vision access to print, and braille instruction. The monthly BVI office hours were reformatted in November 2022 as Sound Bites, offering monthly 90 minute virtual training/discussion sessions. Topics for November and December 2022 featured a national presenter on assessment and instructional strategies tied to the literacy needs of learners with cortical visual impairment.

- **Emergent Literacy Strategies for ALL Students.** In February 2022, the SSN Network provided a training session at the 2022 PEAK Parent Inclusion Conference. The session addressed how, with appropriate supports, students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can make progress toward becoming conventional readers, writers, and communicators. This presentation provided an overview of emergent reading strategies, including alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and shared reading.
- **Science of Reading for Students with Blindness/Visual Impairment.** Five four-hour virtual training sessions were offered in January – February 2022 to address the components Science of Reading (phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension) specific to the impact of blindness/visual impairment. The participants included teachers of students with visual impairments across the state.
- **Specific Learning Disability/Striving Readers Online Courses:** Two online courses were created in collaboration with Dr. David Kilpatrick. The OSE launched sessions in the Fall of 2021 and Spring and Summer of 2022 for both courses, *Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* (APORD) and *Equipped for Reading Success* (ERS), with completion by 100 participants for both courses. Participants who engaged in the courses were provided a comprehensive learning experience encompassing research, critical elements of assessment, and intervention to remediate reading difficulties, including dyslexia
- **The Statewide Assistive Technology Augmentative Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) Program,** which receives significant funding through the Office of Special Education, Exceptional Student Services Unit, offered two webinars, recorded for later viewing, to address literacy. These included:
  - *Technology Supports for Reading, Writing and Math with a Focus on High Incidence Disabilities.* This hybrid (live and virtual) training featured technology tools which deploy quickly in the classroom to support common activities such as reading passages, taking notes, and completing worksheets. Over 120 participants from across the state learned to implement accessibility features and apps to support students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia.
  - *Chromebook Accessibility Tools.* Continued focus was given to the careful application of accessibility tools to support all learners. This webinar explored the built-in text-to-speech tools (select to speak), alternative input tools (dictation, on-screen keyboard, digital handwriting), readability tools (magnifier, zoom, high contrast), and navigation tools (automatic clicks, sticky keys, and mouse cursor adjustments) available on Chromebooks through the Chrome browser.
- **Structured Literacy Project.** During the 2021-22 school year, the OSE continued implementation of the Structured Literacy Project. The project was implemented in 26 schools, with the goal to significantly increase the total numbers of students in grades K through 3 reaching grade level reading proficiency. The project continued its focus on at-risk early readers and students with disabilities. The project also continued to focus on professional learning, coaching, and leadership training for teachers and instructional leaders. Each participating school had access to a literacy coach who worked directly with teachers and supported the implementation of evidence-based strategies. The OSE devoted one literacy



specialist and five literacy coaches to this project during the 2021-22 year. The coaches were extensively involved in addressing continuity of daily structured literacy following significant episodes of remote learning during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years and addressing any learning loss in reading that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Conclusion

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CDE continues to hold reading, especially in the early grades, as a high priority for the Department. The department also remains committed to supporting educators, school leaders, and district leaders to advance the success of their instructional and intervention programs so all Colorado children have the skills they need to succeed in school and life. This report outlines the multiple programs and training opportunities that the department has implemented over the past year. CDE will continue to collaborate across units and with stakeholders to support the needs of students who have literacy challenges, including those with dyslexia.