



COLORADO
Department of Education

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

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and
Colorado State Board of Education

By:
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Introduction

House Bill (H.B.) 08-1223 requires the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), as part of its responsibility for supporting literacy instruction, to provide support and training to educators regarding students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia. These services are a part of the department's 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. 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

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 2022-2023 school year have been supporting districts with their implementation of READ Act assessments that include dyslexia screeners as well as providing training for principals and administrators in evidence-based practices in literacy. CDE has continued implementation of the Colorado READ Act (H.B. 12-1238 and Senate Bill (S.B.) 19-199) and literacy training for teachers who serve students with disabilities. The department has also continued to support the Dyslexia Working Group and next steps since the conclusion of the dyslexia pilot program, authorized by H.B. 19-1134. The second year of the dyslexia pilot program was completed in May 2023. While the department produces a separate 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 H.B. 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 practices 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 fourth year of work during the 2022-23 school year. The DWG recommendations from the year 4 report include the following.

Recommendation #1: Amendments to the READ Act

The Colorado READ Act was created to address early identification of and intervention for students at risk of not reading at grade level by the end of third grade. While the READ Act has elevated the importance of early literacy and has recently made significant progress with teacher training, Colorado is one of few remaining states that does not specifically name dyslexia in its literacy legislation, nor does it require universal screening for dyslexia. The DWG would like to promote future improvements of the READ Act to include universal dyslexia screening, by the following actions:

- The DWG recommends that the READ Act be amended to include the term dyslexia as a subcategory of Significant Reading Deficiency (SRD) and to define it consistent with the CDE adopted definition of dyslexia for the purpose of universal screening, identification, and appropriate intervention.
- Relatedly, the DWG continues to recommend that the READ Act be amended to include universal dyslexia screening, with added specificity for grades K-3 and for students in any grade who have not been previously screened. In addition, the DWG suggests that CDE provide guidance to schools that the READ Act screening process shall assess for dyslexia-risk and that Significant Reading Deficiency is indicative of the characteristics of dyslexia (e.g., difficulty with phonological processing; slow, inaccurate, or labored oral reading; difficulty with spelling; difficulty with rapid naming; and difficulty with letter naming).
- The DWG continues to recommend that the READ Act be amended to require the five criteria for dyslexia screening tools to be a part of all READ Act approved interim assessments, as described in previous reports and noted above. With that, the DWG recommends that the Colorado General Assembly require that dyslexia screening tools be used by all schools.
 - **CDE Action:** Staff have shared these recommendations with the State Board of Education which has authority for the policy action required by the recommendations.
- The DWG continues to recommend that CDE develop guidance on differentiating the five criteria for dyslexia screening tools by grade level. A specific suggestion is to develop a chart that shows each of the five criteria and appropriate times for administration by grade level in conjunction with the READ Act procedures in place. The chart should be posted next to the READ Act approved interim assessments list on CDE's website (<https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readinterimassessments>).
 - **CDE Action:** Staff will continue to offer guidance to local education providers regarding READ Act assessment options and will confer with vendors on the timing in which these assessments should be administered.
- The DWG recommends that the DWG supports CDE and the State Board of Education in continuing to review pre-service teacher training programs to ensure that they are informed by the science of reading and include training in awareness of dyslexia and appropriate instruction and intervention.
 - **CDE Action:** Department staff have listed the requirements for the science of reading on the website and continually work with Institutions of Higher Education on inclusion of these in their



programs

(https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/educatorpreparation_standards_matrices).

Recommendation #2: Increased Awareness of Reading Specialist Requirements

The DWG recommends increasing awareness of parents/caregivers of children with dyslexia, teachers, administrators and other relevant stakeholders about Colorado's new Reading Specialist requirements, which require, amongst other things, that the reading specialist recognizes that dyslexia, dysgraphia, and other reading disorders exist along a continuum of severity and understands how reading difficulties and their characteristics may change over time in response to instruction and development. Information about Reading Specialist requirements will help parents, teachers and administrators better understand what resources are available to support their child/student.

- To raise awareness about the Reading Specialist requirements, the DWG recommends that CDE incorporates information about the requirements into the CDE Dyslexia Handbook.
 - **CDE Action:** Department staff will continue to update the Dyslexia handbook and incorporate information about the Reading Specialist requirements in the handbook (<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/codyslexiahandbook>).
- The DWG recommends that CDE post information in an easy-to-access location about the Reading Specialist requirements on its website.
 - **CDE Action:** Department staff have posted information about the Reading Specialist requirements on the website (https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/educatorpreparation_standards_matrices).

Recommendation #3: What Teachers Should Know About Dyslexia

The document, What Teachers Should Know About Dyslexia, is intended to help Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) in Colorado teach pre-service and in-service educators about dyslexia. This document provides a matrix of topics, possible course placement, and resources across early childhood, primary, secondary, and special education. Topics include, but are not limited to what is dyslexia, characteristics of dyslexia, assessments appropriate for dyslexia, methods to help students with dyslexia, gold standard resources for preservice teachers, and gold standard method concepts for all levels. With this, the DWG recommends:

- The What Teachers Should Know About Dyslexia matrix (working document) be used to inform curriculum development for Institutes of Higher Education in Colorado. Further, the DWG recommends that IHEs use this document to help guide reauthorization efforts.
 - **CDE Action:** Department staff will post the What Teachers Should Know About Dyslexia document on the Educator Preparation website and reference it when working with Institutions of Higher Education.
- CDE distributes the What Teachers Should Know About Dyslexia matrix (working document) via its website and other appropriate channels.
 - **CDE Action:** Department staff will add the What Teachers Should Know About Dyslexia document to the webpage that has reading resources just for Institutions of Higher Education (<https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/readingresourcesforprepprograms>).

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

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



Teaching and Learning Unit Initiatives

The Elementary Literacy and School Readiness (ELSR) 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 2022-2023 school year, the literacy team in the ELSR 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 S.B. 19-199.

K-3 Evidence-Based Teacher Training

The ELSR team continues the work related to the evidence-based training in teaching reading required by S.B. 19-199 for all K-3rd grade teachers who provide literacy instruction. In addition, an amendment to the READ Act, S.B. 22-004, requires that grades 4-12 reading interventionists who provide literacy instruction and K-3 school administrators (including principals) must complete training to meet the requirements of the READ Act with reporting starting in 2024-2025. 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 ELSR team. The CDE ELSR team ensured that both courses align with the requirements of the READ Act and State Board of Education rules, as well as include a dyslexia component.

As of Fall 2023, over 23,000 individuals met the K-3 teacher training requirement. Moreover, 179 districts met the READ Act teacher training requirement by the beginning of the 2023-24 school year. Of these, 24 districts met this requirement with state board-approved good cause extensions.

In addition to providing two training options at no cost, the ELSR team developed an advisory list that includes six other training options that are approved to meet the READ Act teacher training requirement. The ELSR 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 identify 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 ELSR Office, 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 Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES).



- The READ Act webpage has been updated and includes three newly developed webpages: [Science of Reading Resources](#), [Educator Resources](#), and [Parent Resources](#). These web pages 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 146 districts and the Charter School Institute in the 2022-23 school year. The project annually funds licenses for a subset of 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>.

Stakeholder Engagement in Early Literacy

The department's public information campaign, *Read with Me*, is designed to raise the 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 early years 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 have been distributed to libraries through the Colorado State Library. All materials are produced in English and Spanish. Using a multi-screen strategy, advertisements are provided 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 2022-23 school year and the beginning of the 2023-24 school year.

- **Autism Literacy Institute.** This statewide institute was conducted by nationally recognized experts on literacy and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Dr. Christi Carnahan and Dr. Pam Williamson. The institute's content focused on an approach to literacy that included instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. Each aspect of literacy is linked to the unique cognitive, social, and communication issues inherent in ASD. Thirty-five school-based providers participated in the 2023-2024 Autism Literacy Institute. An additional 19 educators will complete eight hours of advanced literacy-based training, Tier 2 with coaching from the national experts.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Online Webinars.** Two online webinars were made available during 2023 on the CDE Professional Development website that addressed the cognitive profiles common in ASD and their influence on reading comprehension.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) TASN-ATBAS Webinar Series.** Effective Literacy and Writing Instruction for Students with ASD. The Kansas Tri State (CO, KS, NE) partner offered a free two-part webinar to explore evidence-based interventions to enhance reading and writing engagement for learners with ASD and diverse learning needs. This webinar series catered to a diverse range of learner profiles accommodating individuals with varying levels of vocal proficiency.
- **Braille Competency.** The OSE continues to support the state requirement for all Colorado public school teachers to be licensed and endorsed as teachers of students with 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 and Emergent/Conventional Literacy of Students with Blindness/Visual Impairments.** Monthly virtual 90-minute sessions called Sound Bites were held in January-April and September - December 2023. Topics that addressed literacy for learners with visual impairment, including blindness were assistive technology considerations for children with cortical visual impairment; print considerations for learners with low vision, dyslexia and visual impairment; assistive technology for middle school students with blindness/visual impairments; and tactile graphics and braille for students with blindness/visual impairment.
- **Communication and Emergent/Conventional Literacy of Students with Deaf-Blindness.** The following 2023 two-hour virtual trainings were offered through the Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project's webinar series: January: *Topic Setting for the Early Communicator who is Blind/Visually Impaired or Deaf-Blind*; February: *Virtual Stories: IEPs for Children with Deaf-Blindness*; March: *Tactile Strategies for Children with Deaf-Blindness*; and April: *Tactile Sign Language for Children with Deaf-Blindness*. The topic of the June 27-28, 2023 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs was the *Communication Matrix: Assessment to Intervention*.
- **Communication and Emergent/Conventional Literacy for Students with Significant Support Needs.** The Significant Support Needs (SSN) Network Team conducted one additional (Spring 2023) book study highlighting the text *Comprehensive Literacy for ALL: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write* Book Study. This involved 4-5 sessions with 10-20 teachers in each session. A total of 250 teachers completed the book study during the 2022-23 school year. The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss provided funding to purchase the books. Several administrative units conducted their own book studies because of participation in this project, including Douglas County, Boulder Valley, Jefferson County, Cherry Creek, and Aurora School Districts.



The OSE also provided a March one-day make and take workshop on Emergent Literacy with a focus on shared reading, self-selected story listening (listening to and interacting with a range of books across a range of genres), alphabet interaction and phonemic awareness. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Caroline Musselwhite.

- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Hearing Impairments, Including Deafness.** The OSE is piloting a small group of professionals using a guided body of evidence to identify deaf students without access to audition who have a Significant Reading Deficiency and creating a bank of resources for implementing specially designed instruction. 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.
- **Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Webinar: Literacy for Multilingual Learners.** The Office of Special Education collaborated with the Office of Elementary Literacy and Kindergarten Readiness to provide 1.5 hours of professional learning on the development and use of content and language objectives to ensure oral language development when providing high quality evidence-based instruction in literacy to multilingual learners. This event also included important considerations for the evaluation of multilingual learners suspected of having a specific learning disability. There were 45 participants from around the state.
- **Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Technical Assistance Support.** The department's Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Specialist provides ongoing technical assistance to districts around best practices for literacy instruction to multilingual learners identified with and suspected of having disabilities.
- **Specific Learning Disability/Dyslexia Instructional Support.** The OSE developed a coaching guide for the online literacy course Equipped for Reading Success. This guide was designed to support instructional leaders in helping teachers implement the instruction and assessment strategies presented in the online course. This will help teachers better support students with Specific Learning Disability in literacy, including students with dyslexia.
- **Specific Learning Disability Online Literacy Courses.** The OSE launched sessions in the spring, summer and fall of 2023 for the course, Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (APORD) and the online course Equipped for Reading Success (ERS). There were 80 participants who completed the APORD and ERS spring and summer sessions in 2023. There are 50 participants enrolled in the fall 2023 sessions of these two online courses. Participants who engaged in these courses were provided a comprehensive learning experience encompassing research, critical elements of assessment, and intervention to remediate reading difficulties, including dyslexia.
- **Specific Learning Disability In-Person Training.** The Specific Learning Disability (SLD) specialist and the dyslexia specialist from the OSE delivered an in-person training for about 30 educators focusing on dyslexia and SLD. The presentation included information about what dyslexia is and how educators should approach data gathering for a body of evidence for an SLD evaluation when the suspected disability is dyslexia.
- **The Statewide Assistive Technology Augmentative Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) Program.** The SWAAAC program, which receives significant funding through the Exceptional Student Services Unit's Office of Special Education, offered the following professional development opportunities addressing literacy:



- An online training on *Technology Supports for Reading Writing and Math with a Focus on High Incidence Disabilities* featured technology tools which deploy quickly in the classroom to support common academic activities, such as reading, taking notes, and completing worksheets was held in February 2023. Just over 160 participants learned to implement accessibility features, extensions, and apps to support students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. This recorded training has also been accessed via YouTube by an additional 91 viewers.
- Breakout sessions at the June 2023 Conference for Assistive Technology and Education included literacy related topics such as *Chromebook Accessibility Tools*, *Empowering Learners with Varying Complexities: How ALL Students Can Develop Literacy Skills*, *Innovative Technologies in Special Education*, and *uPAR: A Game Changer*. This virtual conference registered 157 Colorado public school-based professionals. *The Chromebook Accessibility Tools* session was recorded and accessed by an additional 129 viewers.
- The Statewide Assistive Technology, Augmentative, and Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) Unconference was held in conjunction with the Colorado Assistive Technology Expo and featured several breakout sessions focused on literacy and language: AAC & Literacy and AAC Assessment. The approximate 10-15 participants in each session curated information, strategies, and resources that were then shared with all 393 registered SWAAAC Team Members.
- The Fall SWAAAC workshop *Gestalt Language Processing and Considerations for Augmentative Alternative Communication* addressed language learning and instructional strategies for students who are Gestalt language processors and use Augmentative and Alternative means of communication. There were 235 Colorado service providers in attendance, representing 45 Administrative Units.
- **Structured Literacy Project.** During the 2022-23 school year, the OSE continued implementation of the Structured Literacy Project. The project has established goals of significantly increasing the total numbers of students in kindergarten through third grade 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 four literacy coaches to this project during the 2022-23 school year. The coaches were extensively involved in addressing continuity of daily Structured Literacy and addressing any continuing learning loss in reading that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusion

CDE continues to hold reading, especially in the early grades, as a high priority. 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 outlined 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.