



COLORADO
Department of Education

Report to Colorado General Assembly: House Bill 08-1223

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

By:
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Introduction

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 Committee and the State Board of Education.

Literacy Technical Assistance

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 2023-24 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 S.B. 19-199) and literacy training for teachers who serve students with disabilities. In addition, the department has continued to support the Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) since the conclusion of the dyslexia pilot program, authorized by H.B. 19-1134. The final 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 DWG's 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 seven 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 fifth year of work during the 2023-24 school year. The DWG recommendations from the year 5 report include the following:

Recommendation #1: Dyslexia Screener Benchmark Requirement

The DWG continues to recommend that a dyslexia screener be added to the benchmarking requirements for all school districts. With that, the DWG recommends that the READ Act be amended to include a requirement that all K-3 students undergo an additional dyslexia screener. This should start in the 2025-26 school year, beginning with kindergarten. In each additional school year, an additional grade level should be added (kindergarten and first grade in 2026-27; kindergarten, first grade and second grade in 2027-28; and K-3 in 2028-29 and beyond). The DWG recommends that the dyslexia screener have a “Strong Evidence” rating by the Institute of Education Science (IES) and comprehensively evaluate the following components of literacy:

- Phonological processing
- Letter-sound correspondence
- Encoding
- Fluency
- Oral language
- Rapid automatized naming

Recommendation #2: Adopted Definition of Dyslexia

The DWG continues to recommend 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 definition of dyslexia for the purpose of universal screening, identification, and appropriate intervention.

Recommendation #3: Make Indicators of Dyslexia More Accessible

The DWG continues to recommend that CDE develop guidance on how to more effectively assess the indicators of dyslexia. The DWG suggests the development of a chart that shows each of the recommended assessments 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 under [READ Act Approved Assessments](#).

Recommendation #4: Pre-Service Teacher Training Programs

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 with appropriate instruction and intervention. Specifically, in the Rules for the Administration of Educator License Endorsements [1 CCR 301-101](#), [4.02](#) Elementary Education Endorsement (Grades K-6), the explicit mention of dyslexia should be included, along with the following:

- Definition of dyslexia
- Specific indicators and what to look for
- Assessment tools
- Need for screening



The DWG recommends identifying other ways in which the training can be implemented to further and more effectively support teachers/personnel with the implementation and application of instruction grounded in the Science of Reading and Best First Instruction.

Recommendation #5: Training for K-12 Educators

The DWG recommends expanding training for educators in K-8 and even K-12 and/or other school personnel. Included in the training should be an explicit mention of dyslexia. In ongoing training for K-12, include:

- Definition of dyslexia
- Specific indicators and what to look for
- Assessment tools
- Need for screening
- Trained interventionist/s within middle & high schools to support and/or deliver services and professional development

With this, the DWG also recommends identifying other ways in which the training can be implemented to further and more effectively support teachers/personnel with the implementation and application of instruction grounded in the Science of Reading and Best First Instruction.

Recommendation #6: Dissemination of Dyslexia Resources

The DWG recommends identifying avenues for disseminating information and resources to stakeholders regarding dyslexia and related topics (e.g., pilot school materials and the CDE Dyslexia Handbook). Specifically, share the CDE Dyslexia Handbook and resources across Colorado with:

- CoKID & CoKID Regional and City Affiliates
- Colorado District Literacy Leaders
- The Reading League-Colorado
- International Dyslexia Association-Rocky Mountain Branch
- School Districts

Recommendation #7: Formation of Additional Working Groups

The DWG recommends that the General Assembly form three additional working groups of essential stakeholders pertaining to each of the following areas:

- The first group would be charged with investigating and utilizing the existing research and body of evidence on the impact of in-district, in-school, and outside tutoring resources on student achievement and growth.
- The second group would be charged with investigating and utilizing the existing research and body of evidence on the impact of science of reading aligned with Best First Instruction in Tier 1 instruction on student achievement and growth.
- The third group would be charged with integrating instruction grounded in the Science of Reading within the classroom, instructional and pedagogical knowledge, and performance evaluation rubrics where all components of supervision and evaluation come together.

**Recommendation #8: Dyslexia Therapist/Specialist Endorsement**

The DWG recommends that a dyslexia therapist/specialist endorsement (pool of specialists) through accredited college or university or national accreditation/certification such as ALTA CALT, CALT-QI or OGA Fellow be established.

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 2023-24 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, per S.B. 22-004, required 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 2023-24. 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 that the courses include a dyslexia component.

As of Fall 2024, over 27,000 individuals met the K-3 teacher training requirement, over 5,000 individuals met the grade 4-12 reading interventionist training requirement and over 2,000 individuals met the K-3 school administrator training requirement. Moreover, 179 districts met the READ Act training requirements by the beginning of the 2024-25 school year. Of these, 45 districts met this requirement with state board-approved good cause extensions. Districts determine which individuals are required to complete the training requirements based on the job duties and functions of their roles. Approximately 20,000 K-3 teachers, 5,000 4-12 reading interventionists, and 2,000 K-3 school administrators were required to complete these training requirements.

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 training requirements. The ELSR team also developed an application process for districts and educator preparation programs to submit courses to be reviewed and approved to meet the READ Act training requirements.

More information about the READ Act training requirements can be found at [READ Act Teacher & Administrator 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, identify potential reading difficulties early, and support struggling learners. These courses



were made available to Colorado teachers free of charge by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood. Over 24,800 early childhood educators have participated in this professional development opportunity since it began in the fall of 2014.

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 department has updated the READ Act webpage, which now includes a newly developed webpage: [Science of Reading Literacy Series](#). This webpage includes a series of turnkey professional development options for districts to use to support implementation of evidence-based practices in the Science of Reading and is organized by topic area. Districts can request live training sessions or attend virtual training sessions provided by the Elementary Literacy and School Readiness Office to learn the content and take the training materials back to their districts to provide additional training for staff. More information can be found at the [Colorado READ Act webpage](#).
- The Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) Project, annually funded through the School Finance Act, included 140 districts and the Charter School Institute in the 2023-24 school year. The project annually funds licenses for a subset of approved READ Act assessments for districts and professional development on data analysis, data-driven instruction, mapping student assessment results to early literacy foundational skills, and effective progress monitoring. The ELAT project provides assessment licenses for Amplify's mCLASS DIBELS 8 and mCLASS Lectura. Participants also had the opportunity to access professional development offered through both in-person training and virtual webinars, which provided easier access to teachers in rural Colorado school districts. CDE worked with the Early Literacy Assessment Tool project vendor to develop guidance on the use of the available additional screening measures to support screening for indicators of risk including dyslexia. More information can be found on the [Early Literacy Assessment Tool webpage](#).

Stakeholder Engagement in Early Literacy

The department's public information campaign, *Read with Me*, is 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 a 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 from birth through age 5. Primary deliverables produced for the campaign are 15-, 30-, and 60-second video advertisements, a [campaign website](#), 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 where 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 [READ With Me Today](#) website had more than 57,000 visits. More information can be found at [READ With Me 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 2023-24 school year and the beginning of the 2024-25 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 completed eight hours of advanced literacy-based training, Tier 2 with coaching from the national experts. The 2024-2025 ASD Literacy Institute will take place in January 2025.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Online Webinars.** Two online webinars are available on the CDE Professional Development website that address 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 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 using the Unified English Braille Code.
- **Communication and Emergent/Conventional Literacy of Students with Blindness/Low Vision.** Monthly virtual 90-minute sessions called Sound Bites were held in January-April and October - December 2024. Topics that addressed literacy for learners with visual impairment, including blindness, were: executive functioning needs to support academic learning; assistive technology specific to using map reading apps; written self-advocacy strategies; and writing SMART goals tied to literacy needs. The State Conference on Blindness/Low Vision was held on September 20-21, 2024 on the topic of Cortical/ Cerebral Visual Impairment and Academic Excellence. Specific literacy assessment and specially designed instructional strategies were highlighted for learners with CVI, which represents the largest population of students with visual impairments, including blindness, in public schools. Over 60 Colorado teachers of students with visual impairments attended.
- **Communication and Emergent/Conventional Literacy of Students with Deaf-Blindness.** The following 2024 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: *Supporting Self Determination Skills of Learners with Deaf-Blindness*; February: *Concept Learning for Children with*

Deaf-Blindness Part 1; and March: Concept Learning for Children with Deaf-Blindness Part 2. The topic of the June 24-25, 2024 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs was From Interaction to Formal Language: Becoming the Excellent Observer and Thoughtful Communicator with Children Who Are Congenitally Deafblind.

- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Hearing Impairments, Including Deafness.** The OSE launched a new approach for identifying deaf students with a significant reading deficiency. State and regional training on this approach were offered at the beginning of the 2024-25 school year and on-going coaching will be provided throughout this school year. Training regarding the multi-sensory approach to phonemic awareness was held in December 2024. Additionally, the OSE has an on-going regional training model and mentor program supporting Teachers of the Deaf in using evidence-based practices for assessment and literacy instruction. Online Deaf Education Office Hours have been offered to address accessibility and literacy-specific issues for students with hearing differences and the specific assessment needs of students with limited auditory access.
- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Significant Support Needs:** Staff from Dynamic Learning Maps provided a two-day training in September 2024 on the topic of *Using Data to Make Instructional Decisions for Students with the Most Significant Support Needs*. The training was designed for teachers and administrators who instruct students on the alternate achievement standards and have alternate test results from the previous year(s). This session focused on the different types of data available to guide reading instruction and how to use data to develop and implement instructional plans utilizing DLM's mini maps. Twenty-five teachers participated in this training and follow-up coaching sessions will be provided in the Spring of 2025.
- The Significant Support Needs (SSN) Network Team conducted two virtual book study opportunities (Spring and Fall 2024) highlighting the text *Comprehensive Literacy for ALL: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write*. The team provided 4 sessions with up to 12 teachers in each session. A total of 75 teachers completed the book study during the 2023-2024 school year.
- Three ESSU presentations were provided at the Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conference on the following topics: (a) encouraging communication between school and home; (b) encouraging student communication and literacy; and (c) understanding the Expanded Evidence Outcomes (EEO) and their link to instruction, and how to incorporate them into literacy and math activities at home. The PEP Conferences were held in January, April, and October 2024.
- **Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Professional Learning:** Literacy for Multilingual Learners. The Office of Special Education collaborated with the Office of Elementary Literacy and School Readiness to provide 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 65 participants from the Pikes Peak Region. Additionally, the OSE provided a 70-minute version of the training to Colorado providers from Facilities Schools at the annual Kaleidoscope Conference in Adams 12 School district as well as a 90-minute training version to 30 Colorado providers at the annual Reading in the Rockies Conference. The Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities specialist provided 3 45-minute training sessions each to approximately 30 Durango educators regarding oral language development with Universal Design for Learning to support Multilingual Learners and those with disabilities to access and benefit from reading

instruction in English. The specialist also provided 2 45-minute sessions for the Southeast BOCES staff of approximately 60 educators.

- **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 Specific Learning Disabilities in reading and writing.
- **Specific Learning Disability Online Literacy Courses.** The OSE launched sessions in the spring and summer of 2024 for the course *Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (APORD)* and the online course *Equipped for Reading Success (ERS)*. There were 147 participants who registered for the APORD and ERS spring and summer sessions in 2024. In August the courses were transitioned to an on-demand format for participants to access at any time. Participants who engaged in these courses were provided with 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 delivered an in-person October 2024 training course for 30 educators in Southeast BOCES. The training focused on the use of student reading data to make instructional and evaluative decisions, focusing on using rate of improvement to identify students at risk. The presentation included information about what data is most meaningful when evaluating a student's performance.
- **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:
 - **Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Partner Training: Systematic Instructions for School Teams.** Vicki Clarke and Nicole Palumbo shared the essential elements of their AAC partner training program and their experiences training staff in a school for students with significant special needs and complex communication challenges on September 21, 2023. The webinar and training program covered AAC partner strategy instruction, practice and discussion, and development of a plan for embedding AAC models throughout the academic day.
 - **Exploring Assistive Technology Tools to Support Communication and Literacy in the SWAAAC Loan Library.** The SWAAAC Loan Library offered this training February 21, 2024. The training covered the wide variety of AT tools to support communication and literacy for students with Complex Communication Needs (CCN) in Colorado public schools that are available in the library. This webinar explored some of the newest devices to hit the shelves of the Loan Library that support communication and literacy for students with CCN disabilities. The webinar covered a variety of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, as well as resources that support the development of literacy skills and promote active and meaningful participation in literacy activities.
 - Breakout sessions at the June 2024 **Conference for Assistive Technology and Education** included literacy related topics:
 - **Teaching and Assessing Speech Recognition as Assistive Technology for Writing.** This four-hour workshop by Dan Cochrane and Kelly Key, on a popular guide *Speech Recognition as AT for Writing* is available for free at [Using Speech Recognition as AT](#)

[for Writing](#). This 4-hour workshop demonstrated scaffolded steps to teach speech recognition skills to individual students and how to adapt them to whole group instruction. Data collection strategies were also provided.

- Using AT to Make Language Experience Books. This conference session covered language experience books as a meaningful and fun way to teach literacy skills to children with disabilities. Assistive technology can provide access and engagement in reading and writing activities. During this session participants drafted a language experience book to use with their students.
- The Science of Reading through the Use of Assistive Technology. This presentation was designed for those who instruct, love, and care about students with significant cognitive disabilities.
- Bringing Literacy to Life: Using AAC & Sensory Elements to Build Connections. A hallmark feature of a comprehensive literacy program is helping learners build connections to what they are reading. During this session participants examined the benefits of incorporating AAC, literacy, and sensory components into lessons, and discussed how incorporating these elements into lessons increases learners' motivation, connection to, and engagement with the content.
- The Statewide Assistive Technology, Augmentative, and Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) Unconference was held in conjunction with the Colorado Assistive Technology Expo in September 2024 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.
- **Structured Literacy Project:** During the 2023-24 school year, the OSE continued implementation of the Structured Literacy Project. The project has long standing goals of significantly increasing the total numbers of students in kindergarten through third grade reaching grade level 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 principals as each participating school implemented daily Structured Literacy routines and evidence-based strategies across all tiers of instruction. The OSE devoted one literacy specialist and three literacy coaches to the project during the 2023-24 school year.
- **Literacy Specialist In-Person Trainings:** The ESSU Literacy Specialist completed a two-session training on Dyslexia Identification, Assessment, and Instruction for approximately 100 special educators in a large Denver-metro district during the 2023-24 school year. Similar professional learning events were completed for special education staff at two rural BOCES.

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.