

## HB 1231 Dyslexia Early Screening and Intervention

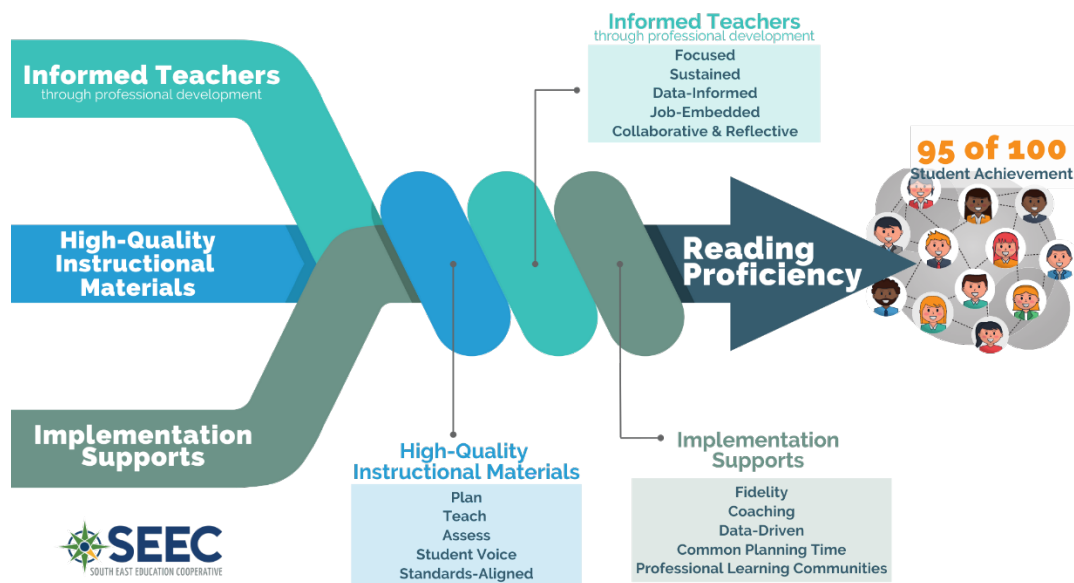
Kerri Whipple, Director of Literacy, South East Education Cooperative

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Good morning, Chair Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee,

For the record my name is Kerri Whipple, and I work on literacy and language initiatives with the South East Education Cooperative. We are one of seven regional education agencies in North Dakota. As part of my work at SEEC, I have been supporting the Southeast Consortium Dyslexia Pilot Program group.

Through our literacy work with districts, we realized that successful systems have three components that create positive outcomes for students. We refer to these three components as the SOR (Science of Reading) Strands of Success.



Through the dyslexia pilot program, our member schools had the funding to bring in experts to help them understand that they likely already have the assessments that they need to identify students who have characteristics of dyslexia. They also funded teacher trainings like LETRS, Foundations of Reading, Reaching All Learners and other SOR-based opportunities (you may also hear this called structured literacy). They funded the training itself as well as substitute teacher pay. This meets our first SOR Strand of Success – informed teachers. When teachers share a common language and work toward a common goal, it is known as collective efficacy. Education researcher John Hattie found that collective teacher efficacy is the one of the top factors that influences student achievement.

We have trained over 750 educators in LETRS, over 275 educators in Foundations of Reading and more than 1500 educators in Reaching All Learners in the past 4 years in North Dakota. The great thing about the Science of Reading work is that it benefits all students and harms none. Students with characteristics of dyslexia benefit greatly when their teachers have deep knowledge around structured literacy. This bill supports the work that has resulted in student outcomes for students with characteristics of dyslexia.

Once teachers have high knowledge, they need the right materials in their classrooms to practice their new skills. This may include materials for all students in the general education classroom for tier I instruction or materials for intervention for students who are found to need additional help based on their assessment results. Our second strand of success is just this – High Quality Instructional Materials. Our dyslexia pilot schools used funds to purchase and train on specific interventions to help students with characteristics of dyslexia. This bill asks schools to ensure that their interventions are aligned with how the brain learns to read, which supports all students.

The third strand of success is implementation supports which can be accomplished in many ways. The schools in our SE consortium worked together as a professional learning community to examine their data and make decisions about supports for their students. This group planned professional learning together based on the needs of their teachers, created reports to share with stakeholders, and have shared their journey with other schools at the NDMTSS conference. In addition, some of our most successful dyslexia pilot schools also have literacy coaches. This bill asks each school to have someone on staff who understands characteristics of dyslexia and assessment and intervention processes. This person may support staff in similar ways to a coach.

Schools may already have some of the requirements of this bill in place, and they just need training about how to use the information that they have. For example, most schools already use an assessment system for universal screening that will help them identify students in need of this type of intervention, but they may need training to be able to view their assessment data in a new way. For other requirements in this bill, such as professional development, funding is necessary to carry out the good work that this bill requires.

Without an appropriation, our testimony can be viewed as neutral because these requirements would be a burden on our schools as an unfunded mandate. However, it is my understanding that an appropriation for the work in this bill was submitted as an amendment to SB2284. Our support for this bill is contingent on this funding. If appropriately funded, this bill would benefit not only students with characteristics of dyslexia, but all students in North Dakota.

In section 1 of this bill, the seven areas of competency are similar to, but not the same as NDCC 15.1-21.12.1, which is the area of code that relates to professional development for in-service teachers. The areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension are the same. However, the areas of assessment and correction of reading difficulties in this bill are different. In 15.1-21.12.1 areas a and c are scientifically-based and systematic and direct instruction. It would be easiest for the educational system in ND if the required components for pre-service and in-service teachers are an exact match. I believe this would also require a repeal of NDCC 15.1-13-35.1 which asks all preservice K-12 teachers (in the higher education portion of the bill) to prepare to teach beginning readers, which may be an unnecessary burden for some high school content area educators.

I am happy to stand for any questions you may have regarding the Science of Reading work that has been happening across our state.