

Testimony regarding SB 2219
Senate Education Committee
Feb 10, 2021

2/08/2021

Dear Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

My name is Luke Schaefer and I am the Executive Director of the Central Regional Education Association, one of seven service agencies that exist to provide support to ND schools in many forms. Further, I am a member of the ND State Lead Team for ND Multi-Tiered System of Supports which is a framework to provide training, coaching, and resources to schools to help them create systems which will get students the help they need, when they need, whether that is academic, behavioral, or social-emotional. Lastly, I have been an educator in ND for 17 years. I would like to provide testimony for how SB 2219 aligns with the philosophy and practices we teach in MTSS, an evidence-based approach to increasing student outcomes.

This bill would continue the efforts laid out for providing a critical intervention to students who typically would not receive it. Many of our schools have systems which provide 1-1 learning for students who are at least two years behind on their learning, receiving support from special educators, paras, or specially designed instruction. They also have supports, if they receive Title 1 dollars, for students who are more than one year behind on their learning to work in very small groups or in some instances, 1-1 situations. However, few lack the resources to work 1-1 with students who are falling behind, but have not reached the point where services are available- the bubble students.

Reading Corps is designed specifically to assist students who are just below their grade level proficiency with intentional, 1-1 interventions offered by specifically trained tutors. Students receive 20-minute intervention daily with specific changes in practice as they improve and the tutors are guided by interventionists in the school with Master Coaches who push in to check progress and offer guidance. The evaluation of the program speaks for itself; 79% of students in Reading Corps interventions in the 2019-2020 school year had more than a year's growth, which meant they closed the gap to their proficiency. Further, when 99 students receiving these interventions were measured against like students in other districts, Reading Corps students outscored their peers by nearly 70 points on their interim assessments; that's the same as 18 weeks of instruction.

Schools engage in many aspects of assisting students through a system called MTSS. The simple way to make a system is get your general education teachers to be as good as possible. Then have specific interventions for students who general education isn't quite working and they are slipping behind. Then use a team-based problem-solving approach (like an IEP) for students who both instruction and strategic interventions are not working. The recipe calls for knowing these pieces before students start to fail. Key beliefs related to this bill for schools who engage in MTSS include:

1. Early prevention
2. Clearly articulated goals and decision-making protocols
3. Using assessments to determine student needs to the skill level (breaking down complex problems)
4. Matching evidence-based interventions to the skill deficit
5. Using data to monitor, communicate and make ongoing decisions to get back on track
6. Building Infrastructure & Supports – resource allocation, Professional learning, scheduling, access
7. Watching and monitoring fidelity and evaluation of the implementation at all points along the continuum.

This bill addresses the number one belief, that of early prevention mechanisms. Addressing student reading proficiency is one of ND's Strategic Vision Framework outcomes, to increase the number of students proficient in reading by 3rd grade. This program is incredibly efficient, and effective at that outcome.

Thank you for your tireless work and for gaining a deeper understanding of this program and the benefits that it will afford so many students in ND.

Respectfully submitted,

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Executive Director, Central Regional Education Association