



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

STUDY COMMITTEE ON IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DYSLEXIA

Room 411 South
State Capitol
Madison, WI

August 29, 2018
9:30 a.m. – 4:05 p.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Kulp called the meeting to order. A quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Bob Kulp; Vice Chair Patty Schachtner; Rep. Mike Rohrkaste; Rep. Amanda Stuck; and Public Members Nancy Dressel, Steven Dykstra, Donna Hejtmanek, and Ann Malone.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sen. Tom Tiffany; and Public Members Brenda Warren and Michael Weber.

APPEARANCES: Amy Schulting, PhD., M.Ed., LP, Dyslexia Specialist and Victoria Weinberg, PhD., Implementation Specialist (SLD AND MTSS), Minnesota Department of Education; Tom Keily, Education Commission of the States; Professor Donna Scanlon, University of Albany, State University of New York; Barbara Felix, Decoding Dyslexia; and Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison, and Barb Novak, Literacy Consultant, Department of Public Instruction.

Approval of the Minutes from the July 9, 2018 Meeting

Vice Chair Schachtner moved, seconded by Representative Rohrkaste, that the minutes of the July 9, 2018 meeting be approved. The motion was approved on a vote of Ayes, 8 (Chair Kulp; Vice Chair Schachtner; Reps

Rohrkaste and Stuck; and Public Members Dressel, Dykstra, Hejtmanek, and Malone).

Presentations by Invited Speakers

Victoria Weinberg, PhD., Implementation Specialist (SLD AND MTSS) and Amy Schulting, PhD., M.Ed., LP, Dyslexia Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education

Dr. Weinberg discussed the development of the informational paper *Navigating the School System When a Child is Struggling with Reading or Dyslexia*. A number of individuals and organizations participated in the creation of the paper, including individuals with dyslexia, parents, teachers, evaluators, and special education teachers. The creators began the process by determining the audience of the paper, which included parents, students, teachers, and school administrators.

Dr. Weinberg next discussed key components that assisted her in facilitating the development of the paper. For example, she sought input from the target audience in generating the questions that would be addressed in the paper. In addition, she asked participants to set forth their non-negotiable items; that is, items that would make a participant walk away from the process of developing the paper. Dr. Weinberg also prioritized protecting the opinions of all participants by providing multiple opportunities to be heard and address each other with questions. Finally, Dr. Weinberg discussed the process for reviewing the paper and the participants' agreement that all members had to commit to supporting the final product.

Dr. Weinberg answered questions from committee members, including questions about challenges after the publication of the paper. Dr. Weinberg noted that one challenge is implementation of the recommendations in the paper, since the paper is primarily about information sharing.

Dr. Weinberg was joined by Amy Schulting, who discussed her credentials and experience as a dyslexia specialist. Dr. Schulting emphasized the importance of evidence-based systemic instruction for all readers, as well as early identification and intervention. Dr. Schulting answered questions by committee members and shared recommendations with the committee.

Tom Keily, Education Commission of the States

Mr. Keily provided the committee with an overview of dyslexia-related policies across the nation, specifically those codified in state laws or administrative rules. These included several types of policies such as intervention requirements, parental involvement requirements, state and district dyslexia specialists, and professional development for educators. Other categories included state task forces, requirements for school districts to submit relevant reports to their state authorities, and screening assessment for early identification of reading difficulties.

Mr. Keily then summarized the components of guidance documents and informational materials on dyslexia that other states have developed. Common components include a definition of dyslexia, characteristics of dyslexia, information on the screening process, and tools used to identify struggling readers, intervention and instructional strategies, and information on special education evaluation and assessment procedures. These materials contain resources

for teachers and parents, and in some states, information about compliance requirements for schools and districts under state policies.

Mr. Keily addressed committee questions, such as the most widely used policies and the order of priority in which states usually adopt various policies.

Professor Donna Scanlon, University of Albany, State University of New York

Dr. Scanlon began her presentation by discussing her background and the subjects of her research, which include the causes and correlates of reading difficulty. Dr. Scanlon set forth the position that in research literature, the terms dyslexia and reading disability tend to be used interchangeably and that a variety of causes may influence a child's ability to accurately and quickly read the words in a text. These causes may include a limited understanding of and/or skill with the alphabetic code, limited oral language, limited confidence in one's reading ability and limited engagement in meaning-making while reading. Dr. Scanlon stated that learning to decode words is one of several skills needed for reading comprehension and must be balanced with background knowledge. A child struggling to read may not possess this background knowledge, without which the child may have difficulty connecting with the reading material.

Dr. Scanlon discussed various studies that she conducted, including a study of traits of successful readers. She found that successful readers need to be motivated to read and write, have a strong basis in alphabets, word learning, and meaning construction. In her research, Dr. Scanlon found that most reading difficulties relating to word reading skills can be prevented through effective, scientifically tested instruction provided by teachers in the early grades. She also found that children's literacy skills grow at different rates, and that children need to learn about the workings of the alphabetic code to be successful readers.

Dr. Scanlon also discussed the fact that teacher knowledge and practice is an important determining factor of literacy learners' development, especially among those who demonstrate the weakest skills. In her research, she examined the relative effectiveness of different interventions in kindergarten and strategies for effectively teaching literacy. Based on her findings, she developed an approach to teacher development organized around instructional goals for the children. Finally, Dr. Scanlon addressed questions from members, including whether a dyslexia diagnosis may be helpful for some struggling readers and the merits of specific intervention tools.

Barbara Felix, Decoding Dyslexia

Ms. Felix described the work of her organization, Decoding Dyslexia, which serves the parents of children with dyslexia. She stressed the importance of early identification and interventions for children with dyslexia, to minimize adverse outcomes in their education, health, and eventual employment. Ms. Felix shared, from her experience and the experience of other parent members, how a diagnosis of dyslexia and having a name for the condition can be helpful in remediating their children's challenges.

Ms. Felix presented the results of a Decoding Dyslexia survey of parent members regarding their experiences, including the availability of support in schools for students with dyslexia. She urged the committee to ensure that identification takes place early enough to

remediate children's difficulties in the early grades, and to help schools provide support for dyslexia and effective instructional methods.

Ms. Felix then took questions from the committee regarding her recommendations for screening tools, guidance materials, and a state dyslexia specialist.

Dee Pettack, Legislative Liaison, and Barb Novak, Literacy Consultant, Department of Public Instruction

Ms. Pettack began with an overview of the governance structure of the public education system in Wisconsin, and the roles of federal, tribal, state, and local authorities. She then described various measures of growing poverty and changing enrollment in Wisconsin school districts, especially rural districts. She noted that rural districts have fewer students and greater poverty, describing how the school funding formula impacts education services schools can offer in these districts. She concluded that these factors likely influence Wisconsin's lower ranking among states for reading assessment scores.

Ms. Novak discussed the legislative history of current state law requirements for early literacy screening and standards for reading interventions. She outlined limitations on the use of federal funds to comply with state statutes, and how this dynamic can lead to the use of fewer reading specialists and more general classroom teachers to implement reading interventions. Both speakers covered the history of the Governor's Read to Lead Council and Grant Program, enacted in 2011 Wisconsin Act 166.

Ms. Novak provided an overview of DPI's role in the adoption of local academic standards. These standards include reading foundational skills as part of English Language Arts. She suggested the committee support schools and districts in making local decisions about how to comply with "standard C" and how to implement the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework with struggling readers.

Ms. Pettack and Ms. Novak then took questions from the committee, including questions regarding teacher preparation, reading specialist certification, and the Foundations of Reading Test (FORT).

Plans for Future Meetings

The committee plans to next meet on **Tuesday, September 18, 2018, at 10:00 a.m., Room 411 South, State Capitol.**

Other Business

There was no other business brought before the committee.

Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

JO:JN:ty

[The preceding is a summary of the August 29, 2018 meeting of the Study Committee on Identification and Management of Dyslexia, which was recorded by WisconsinEye. The video recording is available in the WisconsinEye archives at <http://www.wiseye.org/Video-Archive>.]