



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

STUDY COMMITTEE ON IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT OF DYSLEXIA

Room 411 South
State Capitol
Madison, WI

September 18, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 3:30 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. Amanda Stuck; and Public Members Nancy Dressel, Steven Dykstra, Donna Hejtmanek, Ann Malone, Brenda Warren, and Michael Weber.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Rep. Mike Rohrkaste and Sen. Tom Tiffany.

APPEARANCES: Dr. Colleen Pennell, Assistant Professor of Literacy/Elementary Reading, Carroll University; Kathy Champeau, Legislative Chair, Wisconsin State Reading Association; and Debra Zarling, Literacy Coordinator, Oshkosh Area School District.

Approval of the Minutes from the August 29, 2018 Meeting

Public Member Donna Hejtmanek moved, seconded by Public Member Steven Dykstra, that the minutes of the August 29, 2018 meeting be approved. The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Presentations by Invited Speakers

Dr. Colleen Pennell, Assistant Professor of Literacy/Elementary Reading, Carroll University

Dr. Pennell described research findings on the characteristics of effective teacher preparation programs, such as sustained clinical practice and field placements in classrooms. She shared research on the elements of exemplary literacy education programs and the qualities of exemplary first grade teachers of literacy. She suggested content that should be incorporated in preparation programs for pre-service teachers, such as neuroscience and developmental science. Dr. Pennell overviewed the complexity of learning to teach and the most effective ways to support teachers in this process. She informed the committee regarding the preparation of teachers of early literacy, emphasizing that scientific research has not identified any one method or program as the “silver bullet” for literacy acquisition.

Dr. Pennell stated that there is no consensus in the field regarding a definition of the term “dyslexia” or a single approach to remediating children with dyslexia. She questioned the evidentiary basis for estimates of the prevalence of the condition in the population. She encouraged the committee to address the needs of all struggling readers and not only those identified as dyslexic.

Dr. Pennell reviewed the state requirements for a teacher to be licensed, as well as the standards that teacher preparation programs must meet for state approval. She expressed concern about the implications of recent changes to teacher licensure, including lifetime licenses, “fast track” preparation programs leading to licensure, and broad license bands (K-9 and 4-12.) She suggested that the committee consider ongoing professional development for educators, and greater support for beginning teachers in their first three years of practice.

Dr. Pennell then answered questions from the committee on several topics including teacher induction programs, educator attrition rates, and the best way to distinguish under s. 121.02 (1) (c) 3., Stats., which interventions qualify as “scientifically based”.

Kathy Champeau, Legislative Chair, Wisconsin State Reading Association and Debra Zarling, Literacy Coordinator, Oshkosh Area School District

Ms. Champeau and Ms. Zarling were joined by Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) president Deborah Cromer and Dr. Colleen Pennell. Ms. Champeau began by describing WSRA as a professional organization with approximately 2,500 members whose mission includes helping all Wisconsin students acquire a high degree of literacy. Ms. Champeau noted that the intent of WSRA is to bring a collaborative spirit to the study committee proceedings.

Ms. Champeau discussed research relating to literacy instruction and stated that one of the most critical factors is teacher expertise. Ms. Champeau stressed the importance of having high quality – as opposed to merely licensed – teachers for all children, regardless of a child’s geographic location. According to WSRA, teaching literacy is complex and it requires a comprehensive approach. Ms. Champeau also discussed accomplishments of WSRA members, including a recent meeting focused on learning about *The Dyslexia Debate*, a book that includes foreword remarks by Dr. Scanlon’s research partner.

Ms. Champeau next addressed each topic outlined by the Legislative Council Memorandum, "Topics for Committee Discussion," which the committee would consider that afternoon. Ms. Champeau indicated that WSRA supports the publication of a guidebook and that WSRA would like to be a partner in the development of such a publication. Regarding the topic of a dyslexia specialist at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), Ms. Champeau questioned whether existing resources at DPI may already cover the duties of a dyslexia specialist, and urged the committee to further investigate the duties of existing positions at DPI. She then discussed the challenges of creating a definition for the term "dyslexia" since there is no universal definition, and since the field is still debating the term.

Regarding changes to school district reports on curriculum, Ms. Champeau noted that there is already access to the information required by such reports, and stressed the importance of ensuring that school districts are aware of reporting requirements. Regarding teacher training and licensing requirements, she noted that WSRA supports revisiting recent changes in licensure, such as lifetime licenses and broad license bands (K-9 and 4-12). She recommended that student teaching be a required component of licensing. Ms. Champeau also stated that WSRA supports FoRT testing for all applicants, including lifetime and out-of-state applicants. In addition, Ms. Champeau stated that WSRA supports the current law with respect to literacy screening requirements, since it allows school districts flexibility regarding which assessment tool to use.

Finally, Ms. Champeau noted that WSRA supports summer school and extended day programs, early learning initiatives for oral language, funding Read to Lead grants, and funding for reading specialists that are required under current law.

Discussion

At the request of Chair Kulp, Legislative Council staff read the committee scope to review the committee's charge. Chair Kulp then began the discussion by asking each member to identify his or her top priorities for legislative proposals. After each member identified priorities, Chair Kulp requested members to consider the elements a guidebook should include, and be prepared for a dialogue regarding other legislative proposals in the afternoon. The committee recessed for a lunch break.

When the committee reconvened, Chair Kulp and Legislative Council staff facilitated a continuing discussion of the legislative options identified in the memorandum, "Topics for Committee Discussion." The committee also discussed the priorities identified by members during the morning discussion. First, the committee considered how legislation should specify the participants and process to develop and publish a guidebook.

There was unanimous consent among committee members that the committee's work products should include a guidebook. Chair Kulp initiated discussion on how best to develop such a guidebook, including whether other state guidebooks would be appropriate models. Some members expressed the view that the guidebook should be tailored to the specific needs and standards of Wisconsin. Chair Kulp asked whether an existing body should create the guidebook. After some discussion, the committee directed Legislative Council staff to draft legislation creating an advisory council to develop the guidebook. Committee members unanimously agreed on the importance of balanced, broad representation of all perspectives on

the advisory council. The committee determined that the membership of the advisory council should include stakeholders such as parents of students with dyslexia, parents of students struggling with reading, teachers, administrators, and representatives of DPI, Decoding Dyslexia, IDA, and WSRA. Legislative Council took note of additional suggestions for membership of the advisory council for drafting purposes.

The committee next determined the audience of the guidebook. Some committee members proposed the creation of two guidebooks for different audiences, while others advocated that a single guidebook should be created. The committee determined that a single guidebook would be created to reach an audience of parents, guardians, teachers, and administrators.

Regarding the contents of the guidebook, the committee determined that the legislation should provide the advisory council with a few broad points of direction, concluding that the guidebook should contain information regarding: (1) identifying signs of dyslexia and struggling reading; (2) education strategies shown to improve academic performance of students with dyslexia and students struggling with reading; and (3) a description of resources and services available to such students. The committee concluded that the advisory council should address defining the term “dyslexia,” although the advisory committee should not be required to create a definition. Regarding distribution, the committee determined that the guidebook should be distributed on the DPI website, school districts websites, and the websites of the partners creating the guidebook. Finally, the committee determined various deadlines for the creation of the advisory council and publication of the guidebook.

The committee then discussed drafting instructions for a proposal creating a dyslexia specialist position in DPI. Some members expressed concern with placing such a position in DPI. Others noted that DPI already employs literacy consultants and disability consultants. Committee members discussed what type of assistance the specialist would provide, and whom the specialist would serve. Some members emphasized the importance of specialized training in dyslexia concerns, which members differentiated from the training of a reading specialist. Legislative Council staff provided the example of Minnesota’s statutory requirements regarding the qualifications and job duties of a dyslexia specialist in the state department of education. There was general consensus among committee members that a proposal should utilize Minnesota’s language as a model. WSRA stated that there are multiple perspectives on the nature of dyslexia and remediation, making the Minnesota definition of a dyslexia specialist problematic. WSRA also expressed a concern that a dyslexia specialist would tell educators they must change their teaching. Committee members responded that the dyslexia specialist would be a resource, not an authority to tell educators what to do.

Chair Kulp noted that improving teacher preparation and continuing professional development for educators was universally cited by members as a committee priority. During discussion, committee members and WSRA supported the drafting of recommendations on three recent developments regarding teacher preparation requirements: the creation of lifetime licensure, the expansion of alternative and emergency licensure pathways, and broad licensure bands (K-9 and 4-12). Some committee members stated that the licensure changes are so recent that they should not be revisited by this committee. The majority of members supported drafting recommendations to express the need for further consideration of the impact of these changes.

Other Business

There was no other business brought before the committee.

Adjournment

The committee adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

JO:JN:ty

[The preceding is a summary of the September 18, 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.>]