

Comment Report

SF 2004

A bill for an act establishing the advanced dyslexia specialist endorsement competitive grant program within the department of education and making appropriations.

Subcommittee Members: Taylor, J.-CH, Giddens, Kraayenbrink

Date: 01/31/2024

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: Senate Lounge

Name: Katie Greving

Comment: I support this bill because the Dyslexia Specialist endorsement is crucial training for Iowa teachers. This 18 credit hour credential trains teachers in the science of reading, and this approach is the standard of care for ALL kids not just those who have learning disabilities. The Dyslexia Specialist endorsement was created as a result of the 2019 Dyslexia Task Force. That group of a variety of stakeholders studied dyslexia and literacy in Iowa for over a year and unanimously recommended that this new credential be developed and offered in our state. The teachers who have gotten this endorsement so far describe it as lifechanging! Many educators want to pursue it, but cost is a big barrier. Please invest in this so that all Iowa kids can become proficient readers. Remember that the legislature funds a number of other tuition grant/scholarship programs, so this type of funding is not unique.

Name: Megan Hunemuller

Comment: I am in support of SF 2004. Dyslexics in Iowa are at a huge disadvantage, as are our educators, at no fault of their own. Our higher ed schools have dropped the ball when it comes to educating our upcoming teachers about dyslexia. When students graduate from college and are ready to take on a role in educating our students, they should not only understand what dyslexia and how it affects students, but they also should be able to recognize the signs and be prepared to help accommodate these students. Dyslexia affects 1 in 5, the more educators we can get through this Dyslexia Specialist endorsement, the better!! As with everything, cost is a huge factor and I hate that it holds some of our best educators back from being able to further their education while helping all Iowa students succeed. Please consider passing this bill.

Name: Bambi Boggs

Comment: In regards to bill SF 2004, I would like to discuss that teachers would have great difficulty accessing current professional development funds for the endorsement. I asked for my district to support me when I accepted the Dyslexia Specialist position. My application for the endorsement was already sent and accepted in March. I had not started the courses yet, I was hired in March as the Dyslexia Specialist position and accepted by the University of Iowa in May. I transitioned into my position in August of that school year. I was told I could use my \$5,000 signon stipend towards the cost. Which after taxes was only \$2,000. While funds for Professional Development are allotted to districts. The accessibility and amount of negotiations that have to happen to get districts to support teachers' collegelevel courses vs. filling out a PD request for attending a conference or AEA Professional development training is significant. I will explain that in my district when I asked my Curriculum Director about the statement of how funds are used she provided a very detailed explanation. Some of the Professional Development funds can be shifted to other needs like possibly hiring an additional Special Education teacher. There is not an

abundance of unused funds just sitting around. When districts report Professional Development costs to the State it does not show that some of that money was moved to cover a more significant need. Thus, not all the funds must go to Professional Development. We discussed whether allocating funds vs general one lump fund source could support understanding of funds. The school districts need explicit knowledge to support staff and one way to do that is to allocate funds directly to that. They need more specific guidelines for the allocation of resources.

Name: Casey Condon-Yu

Comment: I support SF 2004. Financial burden should not prevent teachers from educating themselves about dyslexia, and learning about appropriate instructional methodology. I believe one of the best ways to create successful students is to invest in teachers.

Name: Melissa Kissell

Comment: I am in support of SF 2004. This scholarship would provide much needed learning around dyslexia. Teachers are hungry for this learning because they are faced daily with the monumental task of teaching kids with reading disabilities to read. Many of these children will never be diagnosed, yet dyslexia affects 1 in 5 students. Furthermore, this training is a necessity since most Iowa colleges do not provide training in the Science of Reading and dyslexia. As we know, many Iowa teachers cannot afford higher education because their salaries are stretched thin. Please vote yes on this bill for Iowa kids!

Name: Kara Veach

Comment: I cannot express enough how absolutely needed the Dyslexia Specialist endorsement program is in the state of Iowa. As a proud holder of this endorsement and a member of cohort one from the U of I, I am now equipped to teach students diagnosed with dyslexia and those with the characteristics of dyslexia. On almost a daily basis, I am able to use the knowledge acquired through the dyslexia specialist endorsement program as I model instruction for teachers and also design instruction for students that I tutor. Most school districts have programs (curricula) that they have previously purchased. These programs may need more robust instructional strategies/routines to successfully support dyslexic students. I am trained to "beef up" these programs to support all students including those with dyslexia. Again, this knowledge and deep understanding of dyslexia and the science of reading was, largely in part, acquired through this endorsement program. The scope of this work is HUGE! We need more teachers and consultants trained through the Dyslexia Specialist endorsement programs available in Iowa. To make this more accessible for teachers and consultants, a grant is so very needed. Please vote yes to this bill. Iowa's students are so worth the expense!

Name: Kristen Condon

Comment: I support this bill.

Name: Dottie Condon

Comment: I support this bill immensely. Family members old and young would have/will benefit from this bill

Name: Lisa Hawker

Comment: I wholeheartedly support SF2004. As a General Education Literacy Consultant from Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency, I was fortunate enough to be a part of the inaugural cohort at the University of Iowa. Because of the knowledge and expertise I've gained through this intensive training, I am equipped to build capacity in the 21 district my agency serves. Because the original Dyslexia Task Force recommended a Dyslexia Specialist for each agency, nearly every area in Iowa has a Dyslexia Specialist that is available locally to build capacity in classroom teachers and support implementation of curriculum, and can cofacilitate systems through effective curriculum adoption. In addition to becoming highly skilled in the delivery of

Structured Literacy in the General Education setting, we also were trained to administer and interpret diagnostic assessments that indicate characteristics of dyslexia. We were trained to match intervention to skill deficit with evidence based instructional practices and identify evidence based materials to do so. This equips us to codesign specially designed instruction for intervention as well as in the special education setting. Students with Dyslexia do not necessarily have Individual Education Plans, so it is essential that classroom teachers have the knowledge and skill gained from this endorsement program. The original infrastructure for this movement toward Dyslexia expertise originally relied upon AEA Dyslexia Specialists to build the capacity in districts and provide implementation coaching and support to the systems that do not have the funding, infrastructure or human resource to broadly acquire this knowledge "in house". This scholarship is a step in the right direction to begin building expertise and capacity with teachers across the state, as it provides financial means and removes a barrier for equitable access. Please vote yes!

Name: Katie Duda

Comment: I 100,000% support this bill. Continuing education to help teachers, help more students become successful, confident humans is a no brainer. Dyslexia runs in my family and many of us older family members wish we had the tools that my younger family members have sought out. Problem is that I see how hard they have fought for accommodations and continuously fight to have them met by their teacher who still think dyslexia shouldnt require the teacher to put in any effort to accommodate their students needs.

Name: Amy Tharp

Comment: I writing to support bill SF 2004, which would establish the advanced dyslexia endorsement competitive grant program. I am currently working on my Dyslexia Specialist endorsement through Grand View University and paying for this out of pocket. This endorsement is so important for our teachers, students, and families in the state of Iowa, and we need to do more to ensure it is financially accessible to more educators, thus having a positive impact on the lives of our students. Unfortunately, our schools do not/cannot provide financial support for this type of training, so it falls on the shoulders of educators. The Dyslexia Specialist endorsement provides educators with a solid foundation in the Science of Reading, the approach to teaching reading that is best for ALL students, not just those with learning differences. Research has shown that all but a very small percentage of children can learn to read, but this cannot happen without identification and systematic and explicit instruction. We have to stop setting our children up for failure because they deserve our BEST, and what we are doing is not our best. When we know better, we do better ... and it is time that we start doing better! The Reading League provides a free resource entitled Science of Reading: Defining Guide (available here: <https://www.thereadingleague.org/whatisthescienceofreading/definingguideebook/>). I encourage you to read this document in its entirety, but at least pages 2829 (Calls to Action for All Stakeholders) ... "We call on EDUCATORS to embrace opportunities to learn about the science of reading, reflect upon their practice, and challenge approaches to reading instruction that are not aligned with the scientific evidence." (page 28) "We call on POLICYMAKERS to develop solutions that prioritize the acquisition and application of the science of reading in schools, and ensure that they are supported by realistic timelines and resources." (page 29) You, our POLICYMAKERS, can make a difference for our EDUCATORS by ensuring that bill SF 2004 continues to move forward!

Name: Jacqueline Shinn

Comment: I support SF 2004 and know the benefits would be widespread with this funding. As a parent of a dyslexic child, I have had to fight and advocate to get teachers with specific dyslexia training to be the one working with my child and not always

successfully. The advanced dyslexia endorsement funding would benefit all students but especially those who do need it. It took us a lot of private tutoring costing us personally tens of thousands of dollars which most families cannot do to make up the progress that did not occur with teachers who were not trained. My son is severely dyslexic and we could have caught it sooner and got him help to prevent him falling so far behind if more teachers had the training. While not all children are dyslexic, the training these teachers would receive with this funding, will end up improving all childrens education with the methods they learn and can share with gen ed teachers. I personally feel this endorsement (and the funding of it) would make a bigger impact than anything else you could fund at this time. If a child can read, their knowledge potential is unlimited! My son could not read without working with those who have this endorsement.

Name: Lonna Anderson

Comment: As a school administrator, I support SF 2004. The current cost is a barrier and as a result is limiting the pool of teachers who have the knowledge and skills to appropriately support struggling readers. SF 2004 is essential for increasing the number of teachers within our school districts who can make a significant difference in Iowa students ability to be successful readers.

Name: Randy Califf

Comment: I am in favor of this bill because the Dyslexia Specialist endorsement is a key element to supporting an environment that best equips our teachers to help all children reach their reading potential. This endorsement trains teachers in the science of reading, which is a gold standard all children, including both those with and without dyslexia or other learning disabilities. Further, the Dyslexia Specialist endorsement was created as direct outcome and recommendation of the Dyslexia Task Force which was created by the 2019 Legislature. Our organization has received feedback from teachers that the training is outstanding. Teachers should not have to invest their own money in receiving this essential training. This funding can have a tremendous impact on the lives of thousands of Iowa students every year.

Name: Carrie Johnsen

Comment: I support the dyslexia endorsement scholarship bill. Iowa schools are lacking teachers with dyslexia knowledge. Parents have to seek help outside of the schools in order for their child to learn how to read and that is for only those who can afford tutoring. There are teachers who would like to have this endorsement, but money is the obstacle that is preventing them to do so. School districts are not able to take on this financial responsibility either. The only way we are going to spread the word and learn more about dyslexia is through education and it starts with teachers. They are our life support.

Name: Kelly Condon

Comment: I support this bill. We lean on our teachers to educate our children to the best of their ability & we should be supporting them. If our teachers have the opportunity to gain more education to help our students succeed, we should find a way to keep the financial obstacles out of the way. Education/school is a childs full time job. We want them to enjoy it & be successful at it. Teachers with continued education of dyslexia would give them the tools to help students excel. I have seen first hand the hurdles one has with dyslexia. I have also seen first hand the success one has as well given the proper tools. Helping teachers helps our students. One teacher touches the minds of countless students. The more teachers that have the opportunity to educate themselves about dyslexia means more students that gain the assistance & education they deserve. Again, I support this bill!

Name: Jess Bogdan

Comment: I am in support of Bill SF 2004. This bill will allow teachers within Iowa to acquire needed knowledge to serve students struggling to read within our schools and

classrooms. This assistance provides a valuable opportunity for Iowa educators that may otherwise not be an option for many to take on financially without this grant. Please support this bill.

Name: Kristine Hill

Comment: I am currently enrolled in the dyslexia specialist endorsement program at Grand View University and a 30year veteran teacher in our public school system. The students in our state, whether in public or private schools, need more teachers with this endorsement. Dyslexic students need more advocates and teachers who have knowledge about how they process. This endorsement provides a way for this to happen. These students are smart and creative. They will be and are great contributors to our society. They need people in the trenches with them to help them process school and learn to adapt to their future. My son was diagnosed with dyslexia when he was in 6th grade. Prior to that, he had teachers tell us he would outgrow his reading issues. He was given adaptations that do not work for dyslexic students. This is not the fault of the teachers because you don't know what you don't know. If we have more teachers that do know in our state, then the other teachers in the districts have a resource to turn to. This scholarship helps make sure that more people get the endorsement. I can tell you that I wanted to get my master's degree and other endorsements sooner in my career. However, my family could not afford it. I know there are young teachers in my district who would like to pursue the endorsement, but they cannot due to the financial burden that it would create. Please consider passing this bill to allow some aid to our teachers. Many teachers cannot use school money for this as the schools use that money to provide professional development for the district. There are conferences for staff to attend, curriculum training, and other professional development that costs a great deal of money. This bill would give a boost towards having more teachers with knowledge about dyslexia in our state. Please give this bill serious consideration.

Name: Jennifer Lamm

Comment: I am writing in support of this bill to fund scholarships for the dyslexia specialist endorsement. Teachers need and want to learn more in order to support children in their classrooms. We know most students will not receive an evaluation/diagnosis because of the cost for parents. Arming teachers with the knowledge they need to support ALL students with or without the diagnosis is crucial. Cost of wanting to learn more should be more accessible for educators.

Name: Jenny Corkrean

Comment: I support SF2004 as a parent of a severely dyslexic 6th grader. Schools need to be equipped to support basic learning for those with dyslexia. Schools are currently not able to provide the instruction needed for our dyslexic children to succeed. Reading, writing and spelling are basic rights for a person to be successful in life. Proper instruction is a privilege (time, access to trained instructors and money) of those (parents) able to identify that more is needed beyond what is being provided with the current instruction methods. I cant help thinking how much further our child would be if schools and private tutoring were both providing the systematic, explicit, multi sensory, highly structured instruction methods required to be successful from the beginning. I fully support providing scholarships to get more of these qualified instructors in the public school system and available to provide much needed specialized instruction for dyslexic students to be successful in life.

Name: Michelle Veach

Comment: I support this bill. We need as many teachers as possible to receive this Dyslexia Endorsement. It is much easier and cheaper to intervene for our 15% of the student population who are dyslexic while they are young instead of reactively trying to catch up kids who are behind. I believe it would be cheaper to fund Teacher expertise vis this Endorsement, than to fund IEPs and reading remediation. My child was never

identified as Dyslexic we as parent's had to figure out and then pay tutors to relearn how to read. So far we have paid \$16,000 in private interventions. One knowledgeable teacher K5 could have spared my child 6 years of learning loss.

Name: Dawn Philbin

Comment: I support all of the dyslexia bills. So many families need help with getting their child help with dyslexia researched methodologies to increase their child's skill set and reading writing and spelling. Dyslexia impacts all academic areas and areas outside of school as well. If targeted early, so many social emotional, and society issues can be improved in order to benefit overall communities long term in positive ways.

Name: Renee Saarloos

Comment: I support SF 2004. As a parent of a dyslexic son, my journey proved that Iowa educators have not been properly trained in how to identify dyslexic students in their classrooms each year. This is through NO fault of their own. We need to come alongside those staying in the educational field and support their desire to deepen their knowledge of how to support their struggling students. Providing an opportunity to offset the cost of tuition is imperative. Ultimately, this knowledge will benefit all students across Iowa.

Name: Jama Johnson

Comment: I am writing in support of this bill. As a member of the first cohort for the U of I Dyslexia Endorsement, the knowledge I gained from this degree drastically changed how I instructed students as a Title I reading teacher. This is knowledge that teachers are not getting through their coursework or professional development and is necessary for struggling readers, especially those with dyslexia. Easing the barrier of cost could allow for more teachers to receive this training and impact many more students. This learning has also helped me move from classroom teacher to AEA literacy consultant and dyslexia specialist. I can now help students and teachers in my region in ways that wouldn't have been done in the past. Please support the teachers who can benefit from this learning experience and consider how many more students could be impacted.

Name: Alex Cushman

Comment: I am largely in support of this bill. I am a mother of two children who were recently diagnosed with Dyslexia AND a teacher of fifth grade reading. My sons are in second grade and have had phenomenal teachers grades pk2, but none of them were aware of the major signs that my sons showed of Dyslexia. This says so much about the education even our phenomenal teachers are needing in Dyslexia awareness. Had I not known there was a family history of Dyslexia, they could have continued to have gone undiagnosed and floundering without remediation and retraining of their brains. I am so grateful for the friendship of another teacher and AEA Dyslexic Specialist who is a friend of mine who is able to utilize her expertise in the field to help me and my children understand what was going on in their brains. I am so thankful for her knowledge in the lives of my own children and undoubtedly also every student she works with. She is one Dyslexic specialist in our entire region though! If we had funding allocated for this endorsement, I feel we would get many teachers in with our kids who would be equipped with the right knowledge and power to really move our student population in the direction of reading proficiency which is so needed in our state. As a teacher who has been teaching 12 years and also has a Masters degree in Literacy Education I also was not prepared to recognize Dyslexia in my own children and classrooms. If we know that one in five children have Dyslexia or other reading disabilities, it is a staggering amount of students in Iowa classrooms. Teachers are already doing so much, and funding towards an endorsement in this incredible topic would be an opportunity I think many teachers would gravitate towards willingly to help ensure the continuing success of Iowa's students. I am actually already enrolled for the endorsement at Grand View

University beginning in May and look so forward to the impact I am going to make on our districts kids in conjunction with other teachers all over the state who have chosen to do the same. A grant would make this a much easier decision for me to continue in this great work and ease some of the financial stress that the cost of the endorsement would create. Iowas teachers, future and our students would be ABSOLUTELY deserving of these funds!

Name: Elizabeth Hoksbergen

Comment: I am a former teacher and principal; currently, I serve as the Director of Assessment and Learning for Apples of Gold. I have an advanced degree as an Educational Psychologist and I am a Dyslexia Therapist. I am also a Wilson Credentialed Trainer and travel across Iowa to provide formal training in the Wilson Reading System(a goldstandard, comprehensive structured literacy/OrtonGillingham program that works even for children with profound dyslexia) for school districts. I have served children, parents, educators, and school districts as it relates to the science of reading, the etiology and neurobiology of dyslexia, and effective intervention and accommodations for dyslexia for over two decades. I served as an appointed member of the Dyslexia Task force and recommended that a professional development continuum be developed for all educators and administrators in our state. Recently, I had the privilege to design coursework for the Dyslexia Endorsement offered through Grand View University; additionally, I had the unique opportunity to teach three of the endorsement courses. Finally, my PhD dissertation involves a study that investigates the power of high fidelity structured literacy to improve literacy skills while simultaneously changing the brain's cognitivelinguistic function. This, in turn, literally resets the child's trajectory for literacy, learning, and life. I share this background as context for what follows. We must turn the tide in Iowa for all children; to do this comprehensive implementation of structured literacy across all tiers (I, II, and II)is absolutely essential. For two decades, at Apples of Gold, we have had the marvelous opportunity to help countless children who have been on IEPs for reading for many years learn to read, spell, write, and comprehend; many have been able to exit their IEPs. So, what does this have to do with scholarship funding for the Dyslexia Endorsement? We must galvanize a large number of educators and administrations with highlevel knowledge of the science of dyslexia; this will empower them to lead (the Latin root "duc" in educate means "to lead") charge in bringing deep and lasting change to the educational landscape of our great state. Those who complete the Dyslexia Endorsement will be equipped to provide and oversee highquality intervention for those with dyslexia, and they will have the knowledge to help facilitate instructional change for all readers. Structured Literacy is founded on thousands of empirical, replicated scientific studies (spanning numerous fields, including linguistics, neuropsychology, education, and cognitive science); we call this corpus of replicated scientific literature "The Science of Reading". Contrary to what I heard one of the legislators say regarding the SSB 3069 bill, the Science of Reading is NOT a specific program; that is a misunderstanding of some who do not work in the field. There are now multiple structured literacy programs (with 23 now accredited by the International Dyslexia Association) that are ALL rooted in the Science of Reading. To expedite the turning of the tide in our state for those with dyslexia and to change the learning trajectory for all learners, one of the most efficient, deeply effective ways to bring true, systemic change is to fund Dyslexia Scholarships for those who will be pursuing the Dyslexia Endorsement. Although as a Republican, I may see some types of funding differently than others, this is money we can not afford to wait to approve. Thank you, Elizabeth Hoksbergen

I am a former teacher and principal; currently, I serve as the Director of Assessment and Learning for Apples of Gold. I have an advanced degree as an Educational Psychologist and I am a Dyslexia Therapist. I am also a Wilson Credentialed Trainer and travel across Iowa to provide formal training in the Wilson Reading System(a gold-standard, comprehensive structured literacy/Orton-Gillingham program that works even for children with profound dyslexia) for school districts. I have served children, parents, educators, and school districts as it relates to the science of reading, the etiology and neurobiology of dyslexia, and effective intervention and accommodations for dyslexia for over two decades. I served as an appointed member of the Dyslexia Task force and recommended that a professional development continuum be developed for all educators and administrators in our state. Recently, I had the privilege to design coursework for the Dyslexia Endorsement offered through Grand View University; additionally, I had the unique opportunity to teach three of the endorsement courses. Finally, my PhD dissertation involves a study that investigates the power of high fidelity structured literacy to improve literacy skills while simultaneously changing the brain's cognitive-linguistic function. This, in turn, literally resets the child's trajectory for literacy, learning, and life. I share this background as context for what follows. We must turn the tide in Iowa for all children; to do this comprehensive implementation of structured literacy across all tiers (I, II, and III) is absolutely essential. For two decades, at Apples of Gold, we have had the marvelous opportunity to help countless children who have been on IEPs for reading for many years learn to read, spell, write, and comprehend; many have been able to exit their IEPs. So, what does this have to do with scholarship funding for the Dyslexia Endorsement? We must galvanize a large number of educators and administrations with high-level knowledge of the science of dyslexia; this will empower them to lead (the Latin root "duc" in educate means "to lead") charge in bringing deep and lasting change to the educational landscape of our great state. Those who complete the Dyslexia Endorsement will be equipped to provide and oversee high-quality intervention for those with dyslexia, and they will have the knowledge to help facilitate instructional change for all readers. Structured Literacy is founded on thousands of empirical, replicated scientific studies (spanning numerous fields, including linguistics, neuropsychology, education, and cognitive science); we call this corpus of replicated scientific literature "The Science of Reading". Contrary to what I heard one of the legislators say regarding the SSB 3069 bill, the Science of Reading is NOT a specific program; that is a misunderstanding of some who do not work in the field. There are now multiple structured literacy programs (with 23 now accredited by the International Dyslexia Association) that are ALL rooted in the Science of Reading. To expedite the turning of the tide in our state for those with dyslexia and to change the learning trajectory for all learners, one of the most efficient, deeply effective ways to bring true, systemic change is to fund Dyslexia Scholarships for those who will be pursuing the Dyslexia Endorsement. Although as a Republican, I may see some types of funding differently than others, this is money we can not afford to wait to approve. Thank you, Elizabeth Hoksbergen