

**2021 HOUSE EDUCATION**

**HB 1131**

# 2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Education Committee Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1131  
1/13/2021

Relating to credentials for specialists trained in dyslexia
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**Vice Chair Schreiber-Beck** called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. Roll call was taken with Reps. Heinert, Hoverson, D. Johnson, M. Johnson, Longmuir, Marschall, Pyle, Richter, Simons, Zubke, Guggisberg and Hager present. Rep. Owens was absent.

### Discussion Topics:

- Trained professional deficit
- Online course availability
- Appropriateness of interventions
- Dyslexia and the criminal justice system

**Rep. Strinden** introduced the bill, #722

**Sarah Robinson** – Assoc. Professor, UND, #671

**Kari Bucholz** – Haley's Hope, #672, #673

**Lea Kugel** – Special Education Coordinator, ND Department of Public Instruction, #581

**Anna Hoover** – Outreach Coordinator, Decoding Dyslexia ND, #302

**Rep. Zubke** made a **Do Pass motion**, seconded by **Rep. Richter**.

### Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Mark S. Owens	AB
Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck	Y
Representative Ron Guggisberg	Y
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	Y
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Y
Representative Jeff A. Hoverson	Y
Representative Dennis Johnson	Y
Representative Mary Johnson	Y
Representative Donald Longmuir	Y
Representative Andrew Marschall	Y
Representative Brandy Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Luke Simons	Y
Representative Denton Zubke	Y

**Motion carried** 13-0-1. **Rep. Simons** is the carrier.

**Additional written testimony:** #677.

Vice Chair Schreiber-Beck closed the hearing at 10:55 AM.

*Bev Monroe, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**

**HB 1131: Education Committee (Rep. Owens, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1131 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

**Michelle L Strinden**

**ND House of Representatives**

**Testimony on HB 1131**

**Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> 2021**

Good morning Madam Chair Schreiber-Beck and members of the House Education Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Strinden and I represent the people of South Fargo's District 41. I have the privilege to introduce HB 1131 on behalf of the thousands of students and families affected by Dyslexia and reading differences across our state. Dyslexia affects 15 to 20 percent of students and I have personal experience as one of my children was diagnosed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. In the 2019 session, I sponsored and our legislature passed HB 1461 as a Dyslexia Pilot program that I am very pleased to report is currently being implemented in 3 pilots in ND. Last session, our House Education Committee heard almost 4 hours of compelling testimony from ND students and their parents who have been affected negatively by the lack of proper core reading instruction. The Dyslexia Specialist Credential was amended out of the original bill in the 2019 session, largely due to a lack of identified training opportunities for educators and specialists. The position of Dyslexia Specialist has already been filled in Grand Forks as a result of the Dyslexia Pilot Program.

North Dakota has a severe shortage of professionals trained at a high level in the science of reading. The science of reading is a term that refers to research that reading experts and cognitive scientists have done that now show how the human brain learns to read. Decades of evidence based research (especially in the last twenty years) has shown that reading does not come naturally and that it must be taught systematically and explicitly. The human brain is hardwired to naturally learn how to speak. It is, however, not hardwired to learn how to read. Most children need to be explicitly taught how to connect letters and words, including but not limited to dyslexic children.

Currently, in North Dakota, less than half of our students are reading proficiently. I believe this is because our students are not given reading instruction that enables them to decode language and learn how to read. Early education is the time when dyslexic children and others with more mild difficulties need to be systematically and explicitly taught how their spoken language is represented in written language. This bill aims to develop a workforce that is trained and prepared to have a higher level of expertise based in the science of reading. This shift in training and teaching will help ALL

students learn to become better and stronger skilled readers-not just dyslexic students. Dyslexic students often need more of this type of reading instruction than the average student learning how to read.

Higher education in North Dakota is just beginning to fill this gap between research and practice. At the University of North Dakota, Dr. Sarah Robinson has recently developed a three-part course offering a Dyslexia certificate in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. There are also training and professional development opportunities offered at private tutoring centers in Bismarck and Fargo. Additionally, now more than ever there are many remote and virtual training and tutoring options available.

The Dyslexia Specialist Credential is a necessary next step that will help address the challenges our educators face in meeting the needs of students with reading difficulty. Additionally, it will assist in building awareness, help to better serve our students and families in underserved areas, and work to improve our overall reading proficiency. In addition, it will encourage more North Dakota institutions of higher education to develop course work and training for our educators and reading professionals in this area. I urge your support of HB 1131 and thank you for your consideration. I will stand for any questions you may have.

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Robinson and I am a clinical associate professor of speech-language pathology at the University of North Dakota. Prior to earning my Ph.D., I worked as a speech-language pathologist in the public school system for 9 years.

Unfortunately reading achievement, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, has not changed in North Dakota since the last time I testified before you. According to the 2019 data, only 34% of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and 32% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students are reading at or above “proficient” levels, falling behind 28 states. Thus, the need for continued attention to this topic.

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile?chort=1&sub=RED&sj=AL&sfj=NP&st=AP&year=2019R3>

I will keep my testimony to two main points.

1. All educators need training in dyslexia. Neuroscience has repeatedly shown that with appropriate early instruction, we can change the learning trajectory for a child with reading difficulties. We cannot cure dyslexia, but we can eliminate or reduce the amount of special education a child may need to learn to read. This begins with teaching current, evidence-based methods based on the science of reading in all ND classrooms. An individual trained in dyslexia could lead professional learning communities within the schools.

- Some in ND have already embarked on educating other educators in current evidence-based methods. Kerri Whipple and Erica Kindem, of SSEC, are leading 57 educators in LETRS training. Other states have made significant gains on the NAEP following this training.
- A dyslexia certificate, consisting of a series of three courses, will be offered at UND beginning in the fall 2021. All courses will be offered online. The first course focuses on the science of reading and language-based reading disorders. This course is appropriate for all educators. The second course is focused on the assessment of dyslexia and language-based reading disorders and the third teaches evidence-based intervention methods.

2. We do not need more funding to improve reading scores; we need to quit funding programs that have not proven successful.

- Screening for dyslexia is not expensive. Most districts are already screening pre-literacy and literacy skills. I have worked with school districts to interpret their screening data in a more meaningful way. There is also an increasing number of free or inexpensive screening tools.
- Labor intensive programs with weak evidence should be replaced. Programs, such as Reading Recovery, were not designed for students with dyslexia and are not appropriate for teaching students with dyslexia. Instructional programs based on the science of reading have been shown to help ALL readers, including those with dyslexia.

This final link is meant to provide a point of reference to see where other states are with dyslexia education. It might be useful to those pursuing this issue in our state.

<https://coh.dyslexiaida.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2020/11/Dyslexia-Roadmap-Guide-for-School-Districts-single-page-copy.pdf>

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee, I thank you for your time. I am available to answer any questions.

Respectfully,

Sarah Robinson

You will find all of this information at this site:

<https://dyslexiaida.org/university-programs-accredited-by-ida/>

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) consistently finds that 35% of fourth graders in the United States are reading at a level that is below basic. Research has demonstrated that most reading difficulties can be resolved or diminished when reading is taught by a highly knowledgeable and skilled teacher.

The identification of individuals with dyslexia and other reading difficulties, and appropriate instruction by a well-trained teacher using a structured approach to teaching reading, has been a cornerstone of IDA since its beginning.

The components of Structured Literacy™ are outlined in the IDA [Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading](#), and [Structured Literacy™: An Introductory Guide](#), an Educator Training Initiatives brief from IDA.

To ensure that teachers and specialists are appropriately trained, IDA reviews and accredits teacher training programs and will begin certifying individuals in 2016.

For more information about the IDA Standards and credentialing, [click here](#). IDA views accreditation and certification as key strategies to change the way reading is taught in classrooms across America. Through accreditation and certification, IDA develops a direct line that connects teacher preparation programs to teacher competency and, in turn, to student achievement. IDA accredited programs produce highly knowledgeable and skilled teachers of reading who seek certification and positively impact reading achievement for all students.

## Independent Teacher Training Programs Accredited by IDA

The following programs have been awarded IDA Accreditation:

Program	Credential
Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE)	Classroom Educator
Search AOGPE Accredited Training Programs:	Associate Level
<a href="https://www.ortonacademy.org/accreditation/aogpe-accredited-programs/">https://www.ortonacademy.org/accreditation/aogpe-accredited-programs/</a>	Certified Level

Kari Bucholz: Haley's Hope 701-373-0397 [kari@haleyshope.org](mailto:kari@haleyshope.org)



### **AIM Institute for Learning and Research**

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

Pathways to Proficient Reading

Credentials:

<https://institute.aimpa.org/professional-training>

### **The Apple Group for Dyslexia**

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

OG in 3D Dyslexia Certificate Program

Credentials:

<http://applegroupdyslexia.com/>

### **The International Multisensory Structured Literacy**

**Education Council (IMSLEC)**

Multisensory Structured Language Education Specialist

<https://www.imslec.org/>

### **Institute for Multisensory Education (IMSE)**

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

Comprehensive IMSE Orton-Gillingham Training

Credentials:

<https://www.imse.com>

### **Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling**

**(LETRS)** Search Training & Support for IDA Approved

Credentials: <https://www.voyagersopris.com/professional-development/leters/overview>

## Lexercise

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

Lexercise Teacher Training

Credentials:

<https://www.lexercise.com/schools>

## Mayerson Academy

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Reading Practicum I

Credentials:

Orton-Gillingham Multisensory Reading Practicum II

<https://www.mayersonacademy.org/strong-schools/orton-gillingham/>

## National Institute for Learning Development (NILD)

Level I

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

Level II

Credentials:

Level III

<http://nild.org/educational-therapy-training/courses-workshops/>

## Neuhaus Education Center

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved

Online Literacy Interventionist Program

Credentials:

<https://www.neuhaus.org/educators/literacy-interventionist-preparation>

## The Reading Teacher's Top Ten Tools (RTTTT)

Search Tools for IDA Approved Credentials:

<https://readingteacherstoptentools.com/>

### Wilson Reading System (WRS)

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved	Level I WRS Certification
Credentials:	Level II WRS Certification
<a href="http://www.wilsonlanguage.com">www.wilsonlanguage.com</a>	

### Yoshimoto Orton-Gillingham Approach (YOGA)

Search Training Courses/Providers for IDA Approved	Classroom Educator
Credentials:	Dyslexia Specialist
<a href="https://www.ortongillinghaminternational.org/our-training-programs">https://www.ortongillinghaminternational.org/our-training-programs</a>	

## University Programs Accredited by IDA

The following programs have been awarded IDA Accreditation:

STATE	INSTITUTION	CREDENTIAL/PROGRAM	ACCREDITATION
AR	University of Central Arkansas	UGRAD Elementary Education GRAD Reading	Accredited
CO	Colorado College	GRAD Literacy Intervention Specialist Program	Accredited
CT	Fairfield University	GRAD Reading and Language Development	Accredited
	Southern CT State University	GRAD Reading	Accredited
FL	Southeastern University	UNGRAD Elementary Education with Reading/ESOL Endorsements	Accredited

## DYSLEXIA TEACHER TRAINING

		UNGRAD Special Education with Reading/ESOL Endorsements	Accredita
	University of Florida	Dyslexia Certificate Program	Accredita
MA	Gordon College	GRAD: Reading Specialist	Accredita
	MGH Institutes of Health Professions	GRAD Reading	Accredita
MS	University of Southern Mississippi	GRAD Dyslexia Therapy	Accredita
	William Carey University	GRAD Dyslexia Therapy	Accredita
NJ	Fairleigh Dickinson	CERTIFICATE: Orton-Gillingham Teacher	Accredita
NY	Columbia University	GRAD Reading Specialist	Accredita
OH	Anitoch University Midwest	CERTIFICATE: Dyslexia Certificate Program	Accredita
	Mount Saint Joseph's University	GRAD: Reading Science Program ENDORSEMENT: Reading	Accredita
	Notre Dame College	Reading Endorsement	Accredita
	University of Dayton	UGRAD Early Childhood/Middle Level/Intervention Specialist GRAD Reading Endorsement	Accredita
PA	Arcadia University	GRAD: Reading Specialist Program	Accredita
	Clarion University	GRAD: Special Education: Reading Concentration	Accredita

## DYSLEXIA TEACHER TRAINING

	Drexel University	GRAD Special Education: Multisensory Reading Concentration	Accredita
	Robert Morris University	GRAD: Reading Specialist & Structured Literacy Intervention Certificate	Accredita
		GRAD: Special Education	Accredita
	Saint Joseph's University	M.S.: Special Education/Systemic Literacy	Accredita
		B.S.: Elementary Education PreK-4 Special Education	Accredita
	Temple University	UGRAD: Early Childhood Education (ECED) UGRAD: ECED/Special Education	Accredita
TX	Southern Methodist University	GRAD: Reading and Writing	Accredita

## CERI Certification

The Center for Effective Reading Instruction (CERI), an affiliate of the International Dyslexia Association, issues certifications to those who possess the knowledge and skill necessary to implement Structured Literacy practices.

Select CERI certifications are awarded only to those educators who have demonstrated the ability to have a meaningful impact on the rate of improvement for students identified as “at risk” for reading failure or identified with a Specific Learning Disability, including dyslexia.

**To Learn More About Certification** please visit the [Center for Effective Reading Instruction](#).

# KPEERI Exam

## Knowledge and Practice Examination for Effective Reading Instruction

### About the Exam

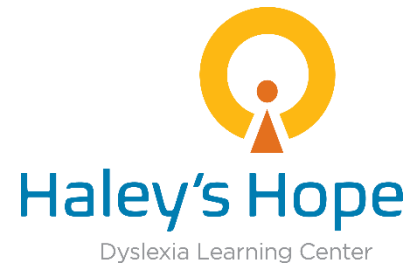
The **Knowledge and Practice Examination for Effective Reading Instruction** (KPEERI), formerly the **Certification Examination for Effective Reading Instruction** (CEERI), measures an educator's knowledge of the principles and practices of Structured Literacy™.

Structured Literacy™ is an approach to reading instruction that is beneficial for both general education students at risk for reading difficulties due to a variety of factors (e.g. low socio-economic status, status as an English learner) *and* for students with disabilities.

This approach is characterized by the provision of systematic, explicit instruction that integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing and emphasizes the structure of language across the speech sound system (phonology), the writing system (orthography), the structure of sentences (syntax), the meaningful parts of words (morphology), the relationships among words (semantics), and the organization of spoken and written discourse.

General information related to the exam can be found in the KPEERI Handbook which is available [HERE](#).

Testimony for Public Hearing  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE  
House Bill # 1131



Good morning Chairman and members of the Education Committee;

My name is Kari Bucholz, Founder and Executive Director of Haley's Hope. Haley's Hope is a comprehensive dyslexia learning center located in West Fargo; however, we provide services to the entire state of North Dakota.

Thank you for the opportunity to address House Bill #1131...

As a mom of a profoundly dyslexic son, who has dedicated the past 15 years studying dyslexia and language based learning disabilities, I had always hoped North Dakota could start to say the word dyslexia, believe it is real, and work on discovering how to help students across our state who struggle with this learning style. That happened with the passing last session of HB 1461.

I have been working with the school districts granted funds through HB 1461 to research dyslexia in our State. It has been exciting, yet still frustrating. Exciting that many great teachers and administrators are working to understand and learn how to help these particular students, but frustrating that again, they are being asked to accomplish goals they are not qualified to do.

I have received calls about how to identify students, what assessments to implement, what programs to use as interventions. I have talked to special-ed personnel who now have some good teaching tools, but don't know how, when, or why they are using them. Some have our students in two or more programs at the same time- an extremely frustrating situation for each child. Don't get me wrong, I am happy to help, but my limited communication with these well intended individuals, who are just trying to understand what they were asked to do, is extremely inefficient and inadequate.

The knowledge required to answer these questions to guide successful outcomes take years of education. Like any specialty area; in business, health care, or academics; dedication to studying researched based information is critical.

Dyslexia is the most misunderstood learning disability in our nation, not just in North Dakota. Truly understanding dyslexia, or language based learning disabilities, takes dedication and time.



The State of North Dakota needs to invest in the proper training and certification for dyslexia specialists in order to truly move our state forward in the area of effective literacy instruction.

I have provided a lengthy list of training programs recommend by the International Dyslexia Association. These trainings are invaluable to understanding what dyslexia is, how to properly identify it, and when and what interventions are appropriate.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to stand for any questions.

Kari Bucholz

Founder | Director and Dyslexia Specialist  
Dyslexia Studies and Language Based Learning Disabilities  
C-SLCT – Center for Effective Reading Instruction  
Irlen Certified Screener  
ASDEC-Multisensory Math 1





**TESTIMONY ON HB 1131  
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**January 13, 2021**

**By: Lea Kugel, Special Education Regional Coordinator**

**Office of Special Education**

**701-328-4561**

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lea Kugel, and I am a Special Education Regional Coordinator with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to speak on behalf of the ND Department of Public Instruction in favor of HB 1131 regarding amending and reenacting the North Dakota Century Code to include credentials for specialists trained in dyslexia.

In 2019, legislators passed HB 1461 pertaining to reading screenings and a dyslexia screening pilot program. Section one of the bill states each district shall include phonetic awareness, decoding, and spelling in their reading screening program and must offer to screen students whenever parents, legal guardians or teachers request it. A specialist trained in dyslexia would be beneficial to school districts as they conduct screenings and review assessment results.

Section two of the bill created a dyslexia screening pilot program which includes a definition of dyslexia that reads “Dyslexia means a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with accurate

or fluent recognition of words and poor spelling and decoding abilities, independent of the individual's general intelligence level.” The bill goes on to say a "Specialist trained in dyslexia" means an individual who: (1) Has expertise providing training in phonological and phonemic awareness, sound and symbol relationships, alphabet knowledge, rapid naming skills, and encoding and decoding skills; (2) Is fluent in the dyslexia intervention process; and (3) Has training in identifying dyslexia.

The ND Department of Public Instruction has had ongoing communication with the dyslexia pilot sites and has been overseeing dyslexia pilot program implementation. Three dyslexia pilot sites were established. Universal screening procedures were identified and conducted with all students under the age of seven to flag students with possible dyslexia characteristics. Cut scores were determined to assist in deciding which students would be screened with a dyslexia secondary screener in order to identify more specific skills that correlate with dyslexic deficits.

After students were identified through the universal and secondary screening process, various dyslexia interventions were put in place at each of the sites and tools were selected to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention. All three sites experienced some delays in providing intervention to students and monitoring progress due to COVID-19 restrictions, so data collection and reporting is slightly behind schedule.

Students identified with dyslexia would be better equipped to make sufficient gains in reading with interventions provided by a dyslexia specialist who has expertise in dyslexia screening, identification and dyslexia specific instruction. In addition, school staff would benefit by having a dyslexia specialist on staff who could offer professional development to all teachers in the areas of phonological and phonemic awareness, sound and symbol relationships, alphabet knowledge, rapid naming skills, and encoding and decoding skills.

An area that has caused some difficulties with the dyslexia pilot sites and for some districts across the state has been hiring or training specialists in dyslexia. One of the dyslexia pilot sites continues to explore different avenues for training dyslexia specialists which include looking at dyslexia specific curriculum from other states or taking on-line classes designed with evidence-based research from the Dyslexia Training Institute. The creation of a dyslexia credential to add to the teachers' license would help encourage the creation of in-state university programs and motivate teachers to pursue the specialized training required to best serve our students. NDDPI stands ready to administer the necessary process to provide this opportunity to our teachers for our students.

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony, and I will stand for any questions that you may have.

## Decoding Dyslexia, North Dakota

Hello, my name is Anna Hoover, and I am the outreach coordinator for Decoding Dyslexia. I have lived in Williston, North Dakota for the past five years. I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, and moved to Williston in 2015 to work as a special education paraprofessional and taught kindergarten in Williston on an Alternative Access license in 2018-2019. I have been a part of this organization since 2019. I have dyslexia, which was diagnosed when I was four years old. Therefore, I am quite passionate about this cause.

2020 has been a year of change and challenges for us all. We were all blindsided by this pandemic that has crippled our lives, after which came a strong movement in our country for criminal justice reform. You might ask how criminal justice reform is related to dyslexia. Let me explain why I believe it is. The criminal justice system and the education system go hand-in-hand, and we can see cracks in both systems that are related. I had the privilege of speaking on the phone with William from Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana's office in November 2020, and he explained that Senator Cassidy's website states that, as defined in Section 3635 of the First Step Act, "Dyslexia means an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader, most commonly caused by a difficulty in the phonological processing (the appreciation of the individual sounds of spoken language) which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell. Furthermore, the First Step Act, which President Trump signed into law, included my provision to screen inmates for dyslexia so they can receive the assistance they need to learn to read, reenter society, and break the cycle of incarceration" (Cassidy, 2019, p. 1). This is something that our education system is lacking with respect to the early identification of dyslexia and interventions for it. According to the Pub-med

2000 website, “Approximately 80% of prison inmates are reported to be functionally illiterate. Furthermore, we studied 253 subjects selected randomly from more than 130,000 Texas prison inmates. We found that 47.8% of the inmates were deficient in word attack skills. Word attack skills were detected in each group defined by gender and ethnicity. Nearly two thirds of the subjects scored poorly in reading comprehension” (Moody, 2000, p. 1). I believe that it is unacceptable that we have to wait for the criminal justice system to diagnose dyslexia.

The fact is that there is an unequivocal link between dyslexia and criminal behavior. The structure of society requires a person to be literate to be a functioning member of society. Given that dyslexia is the number one cause of illiteracy, it is vital to address this issue rather than neglect it if we want to help people stay out of prisons. We cannot set people up to fail when we are able to diagnose dyslexia easily and have viable treatment options.

It is clear that children with dyslexia have their own unique struggles with cognitive, personality, and mental health development (Huang, p. 2). If there is a lack of understanding and support on their parents, teachers and peers’ part, these children will grow up with emotional instabilities that are correlated directly with their dyslexia (Ibid.). Another study has also shown that children with dyslexia are more prone to such characteristics as introversion and abnormal psychoticism and neuroticism (Ibid., p. 6). Ultimately, this simply shows that children with dyslexia can develop a set of characteristics and feelings that unfortunately, those who have the power to make changes sometimes neglect systematically.

Two approaches can be taken with respect to dyslexia and crime. For those who are already in the criminal justice system, Senator Cassidy’s work with the First Step Act can provide the necessary opportunities for inmates to learn and emerge on the other side having resolved some of the issues that might have given them criminal incentives in the beginning. However, it is also

vital to offer proper support and help to those who are diagnosed. This is my ultimate goal in Decoding Dyslexia. Children need teachers who are prepared well, have the skills to address issues that arise with dyslexia, and can provide students with the tools to learn and grow beyond their diagnosis. This could inevitably solve some criminal behavior problems that arise in later developmental stages. We know that a disproportionate number of inmates are dyslexic and raising parents and teachers' awareness of the way to support these children properly in their early years could make a radical difference in reducing criminal incentives.

Our education system has failed our students, and while I understand that it is difficult to be a teacher, we need to be doing more in early childhood and elementary school to identify and diagnose dyslexia. By providing the necessary awareness, testing measures, and educational tools, a large majority of problems could be mitigated early on. The sheer amount of neglect that dyslexic children face has set them up to fail miserably when the solution is clear. Not all dyslexic children have to fall into patterns of criminal behavior; the facts are clear that supporting children at an early stage can redirect the developmental characteristics that might surface and give them their well-deserved opportunity to thrive and become active members of a society that actually accepts and helps them.

**Testimony in Favor of House Bill 1131**  
**Sixty-seventh Legislative Assembly of North Dakota**  
**Submitted By: Alysia Budd**

Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee. I regret that I am not able to be present this morning, but thank you for taking the time to read my written testimony. My name is Alysia Budd and I am in favor of House Bill 1131. I am providing a double testimony and am testifying both professionally and personally.

My professional background is that I am a pediatric occupational therapist with a graduate certificate in Dyslexia and Language-Based Learning Disabilities. I am a certified handwriting specialist, a certified Barton tutor, a dyslexia screener, and I currently have over 120 hours of formal Orton-Gillingham training and additional practicums with the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. I have over 20 years of experience working with, and evaluating children with various developmental and learning concerns. I am also the founder and director of Inspiring Minds, Center for Dyslexia and Literacy, a non-profit center for dyslexia in Bismarck where we offer specialized assessment and tutoring for dyslexia and literacy concerns for individuals ranging in age from preschool through adulthood.

We are also a training center, providing a wide variety of workshops and trainings for educators, schools, universities, parents, and other professionals. We offer full Orton-Gillingham training for those seeking certification in OG, as well as several workshops ranging in time from 1 hour introductory sessions to full days. We customize trainings based on a school's or an organization's goals and budget.

Most importantly, I am an incredibly proud mother of three sons with dyslexia and a wife of a husband who also has dyslexia.

I want to begin by thanking everyone involved with dyslexia legislation last session. Your support for the 1 in 5 has made a difference. Over the past two years, I have seen a significant decrease in families being told dyslexia is not real by their schools. I have also had an increase of collaboration from educators and other professionals in our local districts with our shared students. This is all so wonderful! The dyslexia community is thankful for the role legislation has played.

Although we are beginning to see some progress, there is still a long way to go. HB 1131 is another step in the right direction for our North Dakota students, families, and educators. It is vitally necessary for schools to have access to training and resources for dyslexia that are available right here in North Dakota, and for specialists highly trained in dyslexia to be available to schools to provide support not only to students, but to classroom teachers and parents. Dyslexia is ***not*** isolated to a special education issue. *Dyslexia is a general education issue.* Many students with dyslexia stump their teachers and specialists and; therefore, do not receive adequate accommodations and/or support.

The number one concern we hear day in and day out at the center is parents being told their child is doing too well to receive accommodations. Keep in mind, most students with dyslexia are average to above average in intelligence, some have gifted IQ's. So they are often incredibly bright and teachers mistake this for them doing just fine and not needing any accommodations, services, or support.

The trouble is, students with dyslexia often experience anxiety and exhaustion from working so hard. To deny correct and appropriate accommodations in a classroom setting based on a perception that a student is doing "just fine" is not acceptable. They deserve us as adults ensuring they are successful in all of their learning environments.

The anxiety and exhaustion then overflows into the home when the school day is done. The teachers may never see the full effect it is having, because these students hide it all day long, but they then collapse when in a safe place. It is devastating. I am having to homeschool my youngest this year due to these very reasons. It is unnecessary that families are still going through this emotional turmoil simply because of a lack of an understanding of what dyslexia really is, how to identify and support it in the classroom, and how dyslexia affects more than just reading.

There is an entire science to learning, including reading. A dyslexia specialist would be able to help reinforce this knowledge within the school setting. Scientific research using functional MRI's has proven just how difficult it is for those with dyslexia to activate the areas in the brain needed for proficiency in reading and spelling. Dr. Sally Shaywitz, from the Yale Center of Dyslexia and Creativity, has shown that there are differences in which areas of the brain activate in a dyslexic brain during reading versus a non-dyslexic brain during reading. This research has shown that areas in the left hemisphere needed for reading are not properly activating in a dyslexic brain. Research has also shown that with intensive, explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction (also known as the Orton-Gillingham/Structured Literacy approach), these areas do begin to activate over time allowing for increased reading proficiency (Shaywitz, 2020). Dyslexia is not a vision problem. Individuals with dyslexia do not see things backward as many of us were told throughout the years. Although vision issues can co-exist with dyslexia, those issues are separate. Dyslexia exists along a spectrum as other neurological differences often do. We see students with a wide variety of symptoms and severity at our center, but all with the common underlying features of difficulties in the foundations of phonemic and phonological awareness ultimately resulting in difficulties with reading, spelling, and written expression. The good news is this - we know what dyslexia is, we know what to do about it, and it can be identified early.

I would also like to touch on the fact that dyslexia is one of the reasons why some of our students are experiencing social-emotional difficulties, yet in most cases, dyslexia isn't even being recognized, especially when they are compensating for their deficits, going unidentified. If we don't identify why a student is acting out, depressed, experiencing anxiety, or exhibiting symptoms of ADHD which may be wrongly diagnosed, our efforts with social-emotional programming are futile. The emotional damage that results when dyslexia is not identified, supported, and correctly remediated is staggering.

- 1 in 6 children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, four times the rate for children with proficient third grade reading skills (Hernandez, 2011)
- Approximately 80% of prison inmates are functionally illiterate, 48% of them being dyslexic (Moody, et.al., 2000)
- U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy included a provision for screening inmates for dyslexia in the First Step Act (S.3649)
- According to Dr. Nadine Gaab, PhD, a "late diagnosis of dyslexia often leads to low self-esteem, depression, and antisocial behavior" (Fliesler, 2017).



It is a myth that dyslexia can't be identified early, as it is possible to identify early warning signs as young as ages 3-4, particularly when there is a family history of language-based learning disabilities. Dr. Nadine Gaab, PhD of Boston Children's, along with her colleagues, studied the brains of infants with and without a family history of dyslexia. They discovered the following:

- "Atypical brain development associated with Developmental Dyslexia is already present within the first 18 months of life" (Gaab, et. al, 2015)
- Dyslexia is genetic, and those brain differences are present in infancy.
- Children are entering Kindergarten with a brain "less optimized to learn to read" (Gaab, 2017).
- A wait-to-fail approach results in "considerable psychological damage and stigma" (Fliesler, 2017)

With regards to the credentialing of dyslexia specialists, it will be vital to define the qualifications carefully in order to ensure proper training and expertise are both achieved, and that schools are given time to develop these resources as it is not a quick process.

It was previously discussed that all that is needed for our schools are reading specialists, that we don't need dyslexia specialists. Reading specialists are an essential part of the team, but their caseloads are huge, and there is so much more to dyslexia than solely the reading piece. We need a team approach in our ND schools, with schools having access to specifically trained dyslexia specialists in order to help coordinate student intervention and accommodations, support teachers, and support parents.

Being a reading specialist, or having a masters in education, does not mean that there is specific training and education regarding dyslexia. My boys worked with reading specialists, yet not one of them identified dyslexia in them. Their teachers were trained in whole language and balanced literacy approaches that are *not* the same thing as the Orton-Gillingham/Structured Literacy approach that is *essential* for dyslexia. So as much as they did all they could to help my boys, it was ineffective instruction that did not remediate their difficulties. A specialist in the area of dyslexia would have been able to help coordinate services more effectively not only with services being provided individually, but also to help ensure carryover within the classroom.

To effectively address dyslexia in our North Dakota schools, we should aim to have a multidisciplinary team approach. Dyslexia specialists come from a variety of professional backgrounds which enhances the overall approach, and increases collaboration amongst varied professionals. Those who are certified and trained to remediate dyslexia are also from varied professional backgrounds.

It is also important that as a community, we realize that the responsibility of full remediation of dyslexia does not fall solely on our schools who are also educating hundreds of students with various learning and emotional difficulties. What is the responsibility of the schools is to acknowledge dyslexia, provide a learning environment, emotional support, and curriculum that is effective for all learners, to learn the science of reading, and to be knowledgeable of all of the areas impacted by dyslexia for up to 20% of their student population.

We have read the science, we have seen the incredible effectiveness of correct instruction, the turn around in students' self-efficacy and self-esteem for the better when correct accommodations and support are provided, and we can continue to work do better.

North Dakota has an opportunity to what is right for our students with dyslexia, and I ask that you vote yes on House Bill 1131. Vote yes and "Say Dyslexia" for the 1 in 5. Thank you for your time and your consideration on HB 1131.

#### References

Fliesler, N. (2017). A 30-minute screening test for dyslexia? Retrieved from <https://vector.childrenshospital.org/2017/04/30-minute-dyslexia-screening-test/>

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websites:

<https://cassidy.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/cassidy-announces-dyslexia-screening-provision-included-in-new-criminal-justice-reform-bill>

**2021 SENATE EDUCATION**

**HB 1131**

# 2021 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Education Committee**  
Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1131  
3/17/2021

## **A BILL relating to credentials for specialists trained in dyslexia.**

**Chair Schaible** opened the hearing at 2:30 PM.

### **Discussion Topics:**

- Dyslexia pilot program
- Science of reading
- Student emotional damage
- Genetic connection
- In state university programs

<b>Senator</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
Chairman Schaible	P
Senator Elkin	P
Senator Conley	P
Senator Lemm	P
Senator Oban	P
Senator Wobbema	P

**Rep Strinden – Dist 41** - introduced the bill #9877

**Alysia Budd, Dir Inspiring Minds** – testified in support #9833

**Pam Krueger, Dickinson State instructor** – testified via Zoom in support #9836

**Lea Kuegel, Dir Special Ed – DPI** – testified in support #9459

**Anna Hoover, ND Dyslexia Decoding** – testified in support # 8954

**Cooper Leininger, UND student**– testified in support #9839

### **Additional written testimony:**

**Daniel Ludvigson – New Leipzig – neutral # 9599**

Adjourned at 3:45 PM

*Lynn Wolf, Committee Clerk*

Michelle L Strinden

ND House of Representatives

Testimony on HB 1131

Wednesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Good morning Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Strinden and I represent the people of South Fargo's District 41. I have the privilege to introduce HB 1131 on behalf of the thousands of students and families affected by Dyslexia and reading differences across our state. Dyslexia affects 15 to 20 percent of students and I have personal experience as one of my children was diagnosed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. In the 2019 session, I sponsored and our legislature passed HB 1461 as a Dyslexia Pilot program that I am very pleased to report is currently being implemented in 3 pilots in ND. Last session, our House Education Committee heard almost 4 hours of compelling testimony from ND students and their parents who have been affected negatively by the lack of proper core reading instruction. The Dyslexia Specialist Credential was amended out of the original bill in the 2019 session, largely due to a lack of identified training opportunities for educators and specialists. The position of Dyslexia Specialist has already been filled in Grand Forks as a result of the Dyslexia Pilot Program.

North Dakota has a severe shortage of professionals trained at a high level in the science of reading. The science of reading is a term that refers to research that reading experts and cognitive scientists have done that now show how the human brain learns to read. Decades of evidence based research (especially in the last twenty years) has shown that reading does not come naturally and that it must be taught systematically and explicitly. The human brain is hardwired to naturally learn how to speak. It is, however, not hardwired to learn how to read. Most children need to be explicitly taught how to connect letters and words, including but not limited to dyslexic children.

Currently, in North Dakota, less than half of our students are reading proficiently. I believe this is because our students are not given reading instruction that enables them to decode language and learn how to read. Early education is the time when dyslexic children and others with more mild difficulties need to be systematically and explicitly taught how their spoken language is represented in written language. This bill aims to develop a workforce that is trained and prepared to have a higher level of expertise based in the science of reading and structured literacy. This shift in training and

teaching will help ALL students learn to become better and stronger skilled readers-not just dyslexic students. Dyslexic students often need more of this type of reading instruction than the average student learning how to read.

Higher education in North Dakota is just beginning to fill this gap between research and practice. At the University of North Dakota, Dr. Sarah Robinson has recently developed a three-part course offering a Dyslexia certificate in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. There are also training and professional development opportunities offered at private tutoring centers in Bismarck and Fargo. Additionally, now more than ever there are many remote and virtual training and tutoring options available.

The Dyslexia Specialist Credential is a necessary next step that will help address the challenges our educators face in meeting the needs of students with reading difficulty. Additionally, it will assist in building awareness, help to better serve our students and families in underserved areas, and work to improve our overall reading proficiency. In addition, it will encourage more North Dakota institutions of higher education to develop course work and training for our educators and reading professionals in this area. I urge your support of HB 1131 and thank you for your consideration. I will stand for any questions you may have.

**Testimony in Favor of House Bill 1131**  
**Sixty-seventh Legislative Assembly of North Dakota**  
**Submitted By: Alysia Budd**

Thank you, Chairman Schaible and members of the committee. My name is Alysia Budd and I am in favor of House Bill 1131. I am providing a double testimony and am testifying both professionally and personally.

My professional background is that I am a pediatric occupational therapist with a graduate certificate in Dyslexia and Language-Based Learning Disabilities. I am a certified handwriting specialist, a certified Barton tutor, a dyslexia screener, and I currently have over 120 hours of formal Orton-Gillingham training and additional practicums with the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators. I have over 20 years of experience working with, and evaluating children with various developmental and learning concerns. I am also the founder and director of Inspiring Minds, Center for Dyslexia and Literacy, a non-profit center for dyslexia in Bismarck where we offer specialized assessment and tutoring for dyslexia and literacy concerns for individuals ranging in age from preschool through adulthood.

We are also a training center, providing a wide variety of workshops and trainings for educators, schools, universities, parents, and other professionals. We offer full Orton-Gillingham training for those seeking certification in OG/Structured Literacy, an approach that adheres to the science of reading and is essential for students with dyslexia, as well as several workshops ranging in time from 1 hour introductory sessions to full days. We customize trainings based on a school's or an organization's goals and budget.

Most importantly, I am an incredibly proud mother of three sons with dyslexia and a wife of a husband who also has dyslexia.

I want to begin by thanking everyone involved with dyslexia legislation last session. Your support for the 1 in 5 has made a difference. Over the past two years, I have seen a significant decrease in families being told dyslexia is not real by their schools. I have also had an increase of collaboration from educators and other professionals in our local districts with our shared students. This is all so wonderful! The dyslexia community is thankful for the role legislation has played.

Although we are beginning to see some progress, there is still a long way to go. HB 1131 is another step in the right direction for our North Dakota students, families, and educators. It is vitally necessary for schools to have access to training and resources for dyslexia that are available right here in North Dakota, and for specialists highly trained in

dyslexia to be available to schools to provide support not only to students, but to classroom teachers and parents. Dyslexia is ***not*** isolated to a special education issue. *Dyslexia is a general education issue.* Many students with dyslexia stump their teachers and specialists and; therefore, do not receive adequate accommodations and/or support. Every single content area can be impacted by dyslexia, including music class and physical education. Most students with dyslexia are not found eligible for an IEP, yet they still need to be understood and taught in ways that are effective for how they learn —in every single subject area.

The number one concern we hear day in and day out at the center is parents being told their child is doing too well to receive accommodations. Keep in mind, most students with dyslexia are average to above average in intelligence, some have gifted IQ's. So they are often incredibly bright and teachers mistake this for them doing just fine and not needing any accommodations, services, or support.

The trouble is, students with dyslexia often experience anxiety and exhaustion from working so hard. To deny correct and appropriate accommodations in a classroom setting based on a perception that a student is doing “just fine” is not acceptable. They deserve us as adults ensuring they are successful in all of their learning environments.

The anxiety and exhaustion then overflows into the home when the school day is done. The teachers may never see the full effect it is having, because these students hide it all day long, but they then collapse when in a safe place. It is devastating. I am having to homeschool my youngest this year due to these very reasons. It is unnecessary that families are still going through this emotional turmoil simply because of a lack of an understanding of what dyslexia really is, how to identify and support it in the classroom, and how dyslexia affects more than just reading.

There is an entire science to learning, including reading. A dyslexia specialist would be able to help reinforce this knowledge within the school setting. Scientific research using functional MRI's has proven just how difficult it is for those with dyslexia to activate the areas in the brain needed for proficiency in reading and spelling. Dr. Sally Shaywitz, from the Yale Center of Dyslexia and Creativity, has shown that there are differences in which areas of the brain activate in a dyslexic brain during reading versus a non-dyslexic brain during reading. This research has shown that areas in the left hemisphere needed for reading are not properly activating in a dyslexic brain. Research has also shown that with intensive, explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction (also known as the Orton-Gillingham/Structured Literacy



approach), these areas do begin to activate over time allowing for increased reading proficiency (Shaywitz, 2020). Dyslexia is not a vision problem. Individuals with dyslexia do not see things backward as many of us were told throughout the years. Although vision issues can co-exist with dyslexia, those issues are separate. Dyslexia exists along a spectrum as other neurological differences often do. We see students with a wide variety of symptoms and severity at our center, but all with the common underlying features of difficulties in the foundations of phonemic and phonological awareness ultimately resulting in difficulties with reading, spelling, and written expression. The good news is this - we know what dyslexia is, we know what to do about it, and it can be identified early.

I would also like to touch on the fact that dyslexia is one of the reasons why some of our students are experiencing social-emotional difficulties, yet in most cases, dyslexia isn't even being recognized, especially when they are compensating for their deficits, going unidentified. If we don't identify why a student is acting out, depressed, experiencing anxiety, or exhibiting symptoms of ADHD which may be wrongly diagnosed, our efforts with social-emotional programming are futile. The emotional damage that results when dyslexia is not identified, supported, and correctly remediated is staggering.

- 1 in 6 children who are not reading proficiently in third grade do not graduate from high school on time, four times the rate for children with proficient third grade reading skills (Hernandez, 2011)
- Approximately 80% of prison inmates are functionally illiterate, 48% of them being dyslexic (Moody, et.al., 2000)
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- According to Dr. Nadine Gaab, PhD, a "late diagnosis of dyslexia often leads to low self-esteem, depression, and antisocial behavior" (Fliesler, 2017).

It is a myth that dyslexia can't be identified early, as it is possible to identify early warning signs as young as ages 3-4, particularly when there is a family history of language-based learning disabilities. Dr. Nadine Gaab, PhD of Boston Children's, along with her

colleagues, studied the brains of infants with and without a family history of dyslexia. They discovered the following:

- “Atypical brain development associated with Developmental Dyslexia is already present within the first 18 months of life” (Gaab, et. al, 2015)
- Dyslexia is genetic, and those brain differences are present in infancy.
- Children are entering Kindergarten with a brain “less optimized to learn to read” (Gaab, 2017).
- A wait-to-fail approach results in “considerable psychological damage and stigma” (Fliesler, 2017)

With regards to the credentialing of dyslexia specialists, it will be vital to define the qualifications carefully in order to ensure proper training and expertise are both achieved, and that schools are given time to develop these resources as it is not a quick process.

It was previously discussed that all that is needed for our schools are reading specialists, that we don’t need dyslexia specialists. Reading specialists are an essential part of the team, but their caseloads are huge, and there is so much more to dyslexia than solely the reading piece. We need a team approach in our ND schools, with schools having access to specifically trained dyslexia specialists in order to help coordinate student intervention and accommodations, support teachers, and support parents.

Being a reading specialist, or having a masters in education, does not mean that there is specific training and education regarding dyslexia. My boys worked with reading specialists, yet not one of them identified dyslexia in them. Their teachers were trained in whole language and balanced literacy approaches that are *not* the same thing as the Orton-Gillingham/ Structured Literacy approach that is *essential* for dyslexia. So, as much as they did all they could to help my boys, it was ineffective instruction that did not remediate their difficulties. A specialist in the area of dyslexia would have been able to help coordinate services more effectively not only with services being provided individually, but also to help ensure carryover within the classroom.

To effectively address dyslexia in our North Dakota schools, we should aim to have a multidisciplinary team approach. Dyslexia specialists come from a variety of professional backgrounds which enhances the overall approach, and increases collaboration amongst varied professionals. Those who are certified and trained to remediate dyslexia are also from varied professional backgrounds. This is an important thing to understand moving forward. Dyslexia specialists are very highly trained in the area of dyslexia. Some have a degree in education, but there are several other related degrees that are included in this field. Speech therapy and occupational therapy being a couple of examples, but there are others as well.

It is also important that as a community, we realize that the responsibility of full remediation of dyslexia does not land solely on our schools who are also educating hundreds of students with various learning and emotional difficulties. What is the responsibility of the schools is to acknowledge dyslexia, and to provide a learning environment, emotional support, and curriculum that is effective for all learners. To learn the science of reading, and to be knowledgeable of all of the areas impacted by dyslexia for up to 20% of their student population.

We have read the science, we have seen the incredible effectiveness of correct instruction, the turn around in students' self-efficacy and self-esteem for the better when correct accommodations and support are provided, and we can continue to work do better.

North Dakota has an opportunity to what is right for our students with dyslexia, and I ask that you vote yes on House Bill 1131. Vote yes and "Say Dyslexia" for the 1 in 5. Thank you for your time and your consideration on HB 1131.

#### References

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**Testimony in Favor of House Bill 1131****Sixty-seventh Legislative Assembly of North Dakota, Submitted By Pam Krueger**

Thank you, Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Pam Krueger, and I am in favor of House Bill 1131.

My concern for students with dyslexia and interest in teacher training is a result of over sixteen years of training and experience. I am an instructor in the teacher education program at Dickinson State University, an Orton-Gillingham fellow in training, and I am currently completing my PhD in Teacher Education at the University of North Dakota. I have had the privilege of tutoring many amazing and talented children and adults with dyslexia for many years, and have witnessed how with proper identification and remediation, they can become fluent readers and successful students with their self-esteem intact.

I believe that a credential for specialists in dyslexia will be helpful in three ways- in training new teachers who are currently in Teacher Education Programs, in providing professional development and support for current teachers, and in directly supporting students with dyslexia.

General education teachers, reading specialists, and even Special Education teachers are not always taught about dyslexia or best practices for working with students with dyslexia, yet they are expected to help them to be successful. As others have stated, it is believed that one in five people have dyslexia; therefore, all teachers will have students with dyslexia in their classrooms. In the research for my degree, not yet published, I surveyed a random sample of elementary administrators and K-3 general education, reading/Title 1, and Special Education teachers about their knowledge of dyslexia. Their responses showed that, as in other parts of the country, knowledge about dyslexia is increasing, but there are some myths that are still holding on, even in the field of education.

- 86% of all types of teachers and 87% of administrators believed that seeing letters and words backwards is a characteristic of dyslexia

- 70% of teachers and 84% of administrators believed that eye tracking exercises would remediate difficulties for students with dyslexia
- 61% of teachers and 65% of administrators believed that colored overlays and lenses would help
- 16% of teachers and 11% of administrators scored some truth to the statement that general education teachers receive training in dyslexia
- 20% of teachers and 24% of administrators scored some truth to the statement that Special Education teachers receive training in dyslexia.
- 37% of teachers stated that they learned the most about dyslexia from “my own research and reading”, 24% said from “professional development” and 17% said from “a Teacher Education Program”.

Although these statistics show a need for changes in Teacher Education Programs, they also show a need for specialists in the area of dyslexia who can provide ongoing professional development, support for current teachers, and support for students with dyslexia.

Since the passing of HB 1461 at the last Legislative Session, there has been a movement started by teachers in the field that are part of the pilot study from that Bill. These teachers have reached out to Teacher Education Programs in North Dakota to work together to learn more about Structured Literacy (or the Orton-Gillingham Approach) which is an approach to reading and writing that is imperative for students with dyslexia. This type of instruction is direct, systematic, explicit instruction in the structure of the English language. All students benefit from this type of instruction, but for students with dyslexia it is imperative. Simply having research-based programs in schools is not enough. Explicit teaching requires explicit knowledge.

In my research, I also surveyed K-3 general education, reading/Title 1, and Special Education teachers about their knowledge of the structure of English language and reading research, and I found the following:

- Less than 60% of teachers stated that they were very good or experts at teaching the basic, foundational skills for reading, phonemic awareness, and phonics.
- The average percentage of correct answers were:
  - Phonological Knowledge was 61%
  - Phonics Knowledge was 63%
  - Morphological knowledge was 57%
  - Reading Research/Researchers knowledge was 50%.

A credential for specialists in dyslexia will allow for the training of specific teachers who understand dyslexia and best practices for teaching reading and writing to 1 in 5 of our students. They can also provide continuing professional development for general classroom teachers. And they can be that one person in the school or district that parents and students can reach out to for direction and understanding. Although we tend to blame Teacher Education Programs for the lack of strong teacher knowledge, I would suggest that teaching reading is as Louisa Moats says, “rocket science”. We do not expect students to graduate from Teacher Education Programs as experts in reading instruction and dyslexia as it takes years to become experts, but we do need to provide the additional and continuing training and support required. A credential for specialists in dyslexia is the next step in providing this training and support. I ask you to support House Bill 1131.

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1131  
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**March 17, 2021**

**By: Lea Kugel, Special Education Regional Coordinator**

**Office of Special Education**

**701-328-4561**

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Schaible and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lea Kugel, and I am a Special Education Regional Coordinator with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to speak on behalf of the ND Department of Public Instruction in favor of HB 1131 regarding amending and reenacting the North Dakota Century Code to include credentials for specialists trained in dyslexia.

In 2019, legislators passed HB 1461 pertaining to reading screenings and a dyslexia screening pilot program. Section one of the bill states each district shall include phonetic awareness, decoding, and spelling in their reading screening program and must offer to screen students whenever parents, legal guardians or teachers request it. A specialist trained in dyslexia would be beneficial to school districts as they conduct screenings and review assessment results.

Section two of the bill created a dyslexia screening pilot program which includes a definition of dyslexia that reads “Dyslexia means a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin and characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent recognition of words and poor spelling and decoding abilities, independent



of the individual's general intelligence level.” The bill goes on to say a "Specialist trained in dyslexia" means an individual who: (1) Has expertise providing training in phonological and phonemic awareness, sound and symbol relationships, alphabet knowledge, rapid naming skills, and encoding and decoding skills; (2) Is fluent in the dyslexia intervention process; and (3) Has training in identifying dyslexia.

The ND Department of Public Instruction has had ongoing communication with the dyslexia pilot sites and has been overseeing dyslexia pilot program implementation. Three dyslexia pilot sites were established. Universal screening procedures were identified and conducted with all students under the age of seven to flag students with possible dyslexia characteristics. Cut scores were determined to assist in deciding which students would be screened with a dyslexia secondary screener in order to identify more specific skills that correlate with dyslexic deficits.

After students were identified through the universal and secondary screening process, various dyslexia interventions were put in place at each of the sites and tools were selected to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention. All three sites experienced some delays in providing intervention to students and monitoring progress due to COVID-19 restrictions, so data collection and reporting is slightly behind schedule.

Students identified with dyslexia would be better equipped to make sufficient gains in reading with interventions provided by a dyslexia specialist who has

expertise in dyslexia screening, identification and dyslexia specific instruction. In addition, school staff would benefit by having a dyslexia specialist on staff who could offer professional development to all teachers in the areas of phonological and phonemic awareness, sound and symbol relationships, alphabet knowledge, rapid naming skills, and encoding and decoding skills.

An area that has caused some difficulties with the dyslexia pilot sites and for some districts across the state has been hiring or training specialists in dyslexia. One of the dyslexia pilot sites continues to explore different avenues for training dyslexia specialists which include looking at dyslexia specific curriculum from other states or taking on-line classes designed with evidence-based research from the Dyslexia Training Institute. The creation of a dyslexia credential to add to the teachers' license would help encourage the creation of in-state university programs and motivate teachers to pursue the specialized training required to best serve our students. NDDPI stands ready to administer the necessary process to provide this opportunity to our teachers for our students.

On behalf of the Department of Public Instruction, we recommend HB 1131, as written receive a Do Pass. If the committee feels changes or improvements are necessary, we would gladly participate in committee or work meetings to draft amendments to further strengthen the bill and ensure changes do not have

unintended consequences on the state's mission of delivering quality education services or its fiduciary responsibilities to our taxpayers.

Chairman Schaible and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony, and I will stand for any questions that you may have. Thank you for your time.

## Decoding Dyslexia, North Dakota

Hello, my name is Anna Hoover, and I am the outreach coordinator for Decoding Dyslexia. I have lived in Williston, North Dakota for the past five years. I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland, and moved to Williston in 2015 to work as a special education paraprofessional and taught kindergarten in Williston on an Alternative Access license in 2018-2019. I have been a part of this organization since 2019. I have dyslexia, which was diagnosed when I was four years old. Therefore, I am quite passionate about this cause.

2020 has been a year of change and challenges for us all. We were all blindsided by this pandemic that has crippled our lives, after which came a strong movement in our country for criminal justice reform. You might ask how criminal justice reform is related to dyslexia. Let me explain why I believe it is. The criminal justice system and the education system go hand-in-hand, and we can see cracks in both systems that are related. I had the privilege of speaking on the phone with William from Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana's office in November 2020, and he explained that Senator Cassidy's website states that, as defined in Section 3635 of the First Step Act, "Dyslexia means an unexpected difficulty in reading for an individual who has the intelligence to be a much better reader, most commonly caused by a difficulty in the phonological processing (the appreciation of the individual sounds of spoken language) which affects the ability of an individual to speak, read, and spell. Furthermore, the First Step Act, which President Trump signed into law, included my provision to screen inmates for dyslexia so they can receive the assistance they need to learn to read, reenter society, and break the cycle of incarceration" (Cassidy, 2019, p. 1). This is something that our education system is lacking with respect to the early identification of dyslexia and interventions for it. According to the Pub-med

2000 website, “Approximately 80% of prison inmates are reported to be functionally illiterate. Furthermore, we studied 253 subjects selected randomly from more than 130,000 Texas prison inmates. We found that 47.8% of the inmates were deficient in word attack skills. Word attack skills were detected in each group defined by gender and ethnicity. Nearly two thirds of the subjects scored poorly in reading comprehension” (Moody, 2000, p. 1). I believe that it is unacceptable that we have to wait for the criminal justice system to diagnose dyslexia.

The fact is that there is an unequivocal link between dyslexia and criminal behavior. The structure of society requires a person to be literate to be a functioning member of society. Given that dyslexia is the number one cause of illiteracy, it is vital to address this issue rather than neglect it if we want to help people stay out of prisons. We cannot set people up to fail when we are able to diagnose dyslexia easily and have viable treatment options.

It is clear that children with dyslexia have their own unique struggles with cognitive, personality, and mental health development (Huang, p. 2). If there is a lack of understanding and support on their parents, teachers and peers’ part, these children will grow up with emotional instabilities that are correlated directly with their dyslexia (Ibid.). Another study has also shown that children with dyslexia are more prone to such characteristics as introversion and abnormal psychoticism and neuroticism (Ibid., p. 6). Ultimately, this simply shows that children with dyslexia can develop a set of characteristics and feelings that unfortunately, those who have the power to make changes sometimes neglect systematically.

Two approaches can be taken with respect to dyslexia and crime. For those who are already in the criminal justice system, Senator Cassidy’s work with the First Step Act can provide the necessary opportunities for inmates to learn and emerge on the other side having resolved some of the issues that might have given them criminal incentives in the beginning. However, it is also

vital to offer proper support and help to those who are diagnosed. This is my ultimate goal in Decoding Dyslexia. Children need teachers who are prepared well, have the skills to address issues that arise with dyslexia, and can provide students with the tools to learn and grow beyond their diagnosis. This could inevitably solve some criminal behavior problems that arise in later developmental stages. We know that a disproportionate number of inmates are dyslexic and raising parents and teachers' awareness of the way to support these children properly in their early years could make a radical difference in reducing criminal incentives.

Our education system has failed our students, and while I understand that it is difficult to be a teacher, we need to be doing more in early childhood and elementary school to identify and diagnose dyslexia. By providing the necessary awareness, testing measures, and educational tools, a large majority of problems could be mitigated early on. The sheer amount of neglect that dyslexic children face has set them up to fail miserably when the solution is clear. Not all dyslexic children have to fall into patterns of criminal behavior; the facts are clear that supporting children at an early stage can redirect the developmental characteristics that might surface and give them their well-deserved opportunity to thrive and become active members of a society that actually accepts and helps them.

**Testimony in Favor of Bill 1131**

**Cooper Leininger**  
**cooperleininger@gmail.com**

My name is Cooper Leininger, I was a student of Alysia Budd's at Inspiring Minds my junior and senior year of high school, specifically for dyslexia tutoring. I am now a junior at UND majoring in Commercial Aviation. I have come today to share my story and give my testimony in support of Bill 1131 and the integration of Dyslexia Specialists into the school systems. A little bit about how I struggle with dyslexia; I have trouble with handwriting, spelling, some number issues and I omit letters when reading. I will go more in-depth later in the testimony. To start off I want to give the legislation a quick fact. Before I started tutoring with Alysia, my GPA was around the 2.0 mark, and I finished high school with a 2.6 cumulative GPA. My current cumulative GPA at UND is a 3.6 and I plan to keep it that way.

In our current school system, we are judged so heavily by our GPA, that once my GPA started to slip it was easier for me to play the role of a 2.0 student and not do an assignment. Teachers wouldn't ask questions, and I would not have to struggle through assignments. This turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy where teachers believed I was a student who did not care; therefore I started to not care. I would lie about my grades to my parents and friends because of how ashamed I was of them. I was doing the bare minimum to keep my GPA above the school's minimum so they would not reprimand me and so the school would allow me to play hockey and not tell my parents about how truly terrible I was actually doing. This was all fueled by the fact that the teachers and educators around me did not understand dyslexia and took my deficiencies as things I

simply could not do. It was demoralizing for teachers to believe that because I made simple spelling mistakes and simple mathematical errors that the limit of my mind's abilities was lesser than my peers. They would make feeble efforts to help me, in the same way they would help other students, but that simply did not work for me. They would assume I was acting stupid and wasting their time because I would be able to do a complicated part of an assignment but would continually get something simple wrong. Math for example, I understand college level algebra and have done pre-calculus, but sometimes I can look at a simple addition problem and that's the part that trips me up. My pre-calc teacher would not understand where my errors were coming from and why I couldn't do the problems correctly. To be fair, why should he? He should be able to expect a student in that class to multiply  $7 \times 8$  in their head without any problem. But things like this were the places I struggled and I, nor my teachers, understood why. In my mind I was stupid and just could not do the problems. I did not know why I would struggle so much; so how could a non-specialist help me if I didn't even know what I needed help with. There was a time in my science class that I was not understanding a part of balancing equations and after asking my question, he asked if I understood part X, I responded "yes". He then asked if I understood part Y, I responded "yes" again. He then asked, "if you get part X and Y, how do you not understand this?". I then said, "I get those two parts but how did you get the answer?". His response was, "you are clearly trying to waste class time and are intentionally being disrespectful". He then sent me out of class to the principal's office and assigned me detention. At that point I stopped asking questions because this is how a lot of my interactions would go with teachers. Although teachers would get frustrated, I was never one to be disrespectful. A



normal question scenario would be me presenting a question and ending with the teacher saying, "I don't know what you are not getting about this."

Just before starting my tutoring with Alysia, I was at probably the lowest point in my life. I was depressed and had lost all want to do good in school. Every time I tried, I either couldn't, or teachers would belittle me for the questions I would ask. There is a point to this story of mine, and it's simply that Alysia completely changed my life for the better. Students with dyslexia are easily left behind because of the things I previously talked about, but we are not stupid, or slower than other students, we just learn differently. This is the easiest way I can explain my experience with dyslexia; I learn differently, not slower. I don't take longer nor am I less mentally abled. I needed to learn how I learn and how to help myself. I use plenty of tools to help me excel in higher education. I use text to speech, speech to text, change fonts in documents, spellchecker, and grammar checking. As another example of difference in learning, I have gone through three years of college and have not used a single notebook, nor have I taken hardly any notes on my computer or laptop. I have a 3.6 GPA and have less than one page of typed notes total. I have learned my learning style and figured out what works for me. These things don't work for others just like the way others learn doesn't work for me.

The reason this bill is important to me and why I am here today is my experience does not, and should not, be the experience of future students who have dyslexia. With correct intervention at a young age, kids can learn the way they need to learn and by the time they get to middle school or high school they will not have these problems. It is extremely important to screen kids at a young age and get them the help they need.

Most kids will go through the screening and nothing will come of it, but for the 1 in 5 that need a different style of learning, they could get that started right away. When I was in third grade, I was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD/ADHD). This was a wrong diagnosis, and I was put on meds that negatively affected my mood, appetite, and ultimately my physical and mental health. This misdiagnosis almost made it impossible for me to live out my childhood dreams of becoming a pilot. To obtain a FAA medical card you cannot be diagnosed with ADD or ADHD and cannot be on the stimulants used to treat ADD/ADHD. In order for me to get this diagnosis removed the FAA required me to do a very expensive and intensive psychological evaluation that took three eight hour days of testing. Over a year after applying for my medical card I was finally able to start flying. If I was able to be screened at the same time I was screened for ADD I would never have had these problems. To compound this, I did not get accepted to UND with my application. Due to my poor grades as a freshman and sophomore, I was unable to raise my cumulative GPA enough to reach their minimum GPA requirements. Although my grades improved tremendously my junior and senior years of high school, thanks to Alysia's tutoring and my wanting to learn, it simply wasn't enough. I had to speak with the Director of Admissions at UND to explain my situation and prove I had the ability to be successful at UND. I nearly had my dream of going to UND for pilot training taken away simply because I didn't get the appropriate help I needed soon enough. I have wanted to be a pilot since before I can remember. To say that my life would be on a very different path without Alysia is an understatement. I don't know what that path would look like, but I would not be the man I am today without the tutoring and skills she taught me in the short two years of tutoring I received.

For anyone that is passionate about something, being told “you can’t” is the worst, but also the most motivating thing you can hear. If I did not have such a strong passion for aviation, I guarantee I would have given up. But me not giving up and trying to get the help I needed, opened my eyes to the chaos of dealing with our school system. The only option the school had for me was to get a 504 plan, which ultimately did not help whatsoever. Talking with the school during my 504 planning was an experience so terrible I have almost eradicated it from my mind. My counselors and Principals' solutions were that I could be put in special education classes. I was then forced to go through their testing and scored above average in every area, proving that I did not need special education classes. Next, it was suggested that I could just go to a trade school instead of a four-year college. It was heart wrenching to hear my teachers, counselors, and principals throw away my dreams so quickly. Alysia was the only person who understood my mind and what I was going through. If it wasn't for my amazing mother and the work she did, I would have not gotten the help I needed.

Currently, I still struggle with different issues and use various tools to help myself excel at UND. To do the large amounts of research required for some classes I utilize text to speech software to read the articles to me. It's not because I can't read them, but because it is faster, and I can retain the information much better if I listen to it and only read parts of the articles. If I do read an article, I will copy and paste the articles into Word and change the font to one that is easier for me to read. When I read, I rely heavily on context to correct me when I read a word wrong. When I read, sometimes I end up reading the same sentence multiple times by accident, but the repetition really allows me to remember the content. I will look at words and omit letters and make new

words out of them that may not make sense, but it's what I see. The context of the articles will allow me to catch my mistake. As you can imagine, reading out loud in a class full of peers is quite embarrassing. It is true that I can't read as fast as some, but I am by no means below average for reading speed or comprehension. I believe my performance through three years of college is proof enough for that. When typing papers, I would not be able to survive without spellcheck and the define feature for words that could be similar. For example, collage and college are obviously very different but the spelling looks very similar. I can easily highlight and define them and figure out which one is correct. When someone sees me make mistakes like this, they can easily think I'm "going too fast" or just pass it off as I am dumb. I also still struggle with numbers and will mix them around sometimes, but this is very minor in my case. For this, having access to a simple calculator on my phone is more than enough to mitigate any problems I would have.

The things listed above are all things I still struggle with and work around, but it was the things I learned from Alysia that have allowed me to excel in higher education. My experiences with teachers and educators before Alysia were frustrating and futile, as they didn't know how to help. I didn't know what was wrong with my mind and why I was struggling so much. Alysia and tutors trained in dyslexia provide a place where I can make mistakes and have them explained to me in a way that makes sense to me. To this day, I won't write papers with people looking over my shoulder in fear of them judging me, but Alysia provided me with a place where I felt I could make the mistakes and not be judged. In my mind, tutors like Alysia are an easy patch to a relatively large hole in our education system. Countless people like me can benefit greatly from this bill.

Once implemented, students will not have to go through what I went through just to get the style of teaching they need and deserve. All in all, I do not care what you label it or what you call it. But the tutoring I received worked and all that's all that matters to me. I was finally getting answers to things that I had struggled with for years.

Thank you for your time and please feel free to contact me if I can help answer any questions that arise at a later date.

# ELGIN/NEW LEIPZIG PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT #49

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*Wanda Kirsch, Business Manager*

## **HB 1131 Testimony**

Chairman Owens and members of the committee, for the record my name is Daniel Ludvigson, Superintendent, Elementary Principal, MTSS Coordinator, and 504 Coordinator of Elgin/New Leipzig Public School and Southwest Special Education Unit President. I am writing this letter in regard to house bill 1131.

I have been an MTSS and 504 Coordinator for 9 years in addition to administrative duties. I have implanted Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (interventions for all students) both in my former school of Munich and now at Elgin/New Leipzig. The Elgin/New Leipzig Public School ranked second in the state for growth scores in ND between 2017 and 2019. I also serve as president of the Southwest Special Education Unit's board. I share this information to give you an idea as to my expertise and background.

The intent of this bill is honorable, and I applaud the people who want to help struggling readers. There are a few issues I do need to bring up. The first is that Dyslexia in and of itself does not qualify a student for an Individual Education Plan as its not in and of itself a learning disability. I know this because these students would qualify for a 504 plan and certainly do need assistance. School's do not diagnosis Dyslexia at this time as Dyslexia is a medical diagnosis that means the individual struggles with reading. In special education if the individual has a learning disability impeding learning we call this a Reading Disability.

Our school is a title-wide school and we have already have a reading specialist that serves our general education students. Adding a requirement to have a dyslexia specialist would be a duplication of specializations for our general education supports. Without additional funding tied to this requirement, it simply asks us to stretch our already limited resources. This means we need to invest less time in counseling, mathematics specialists, or even a reading specialist. I say this because at the end of the day we still have to balance our budgets. We presently periodically screen all students for our MTSS system. Students who have difficulties in reading show up and we provide intervention. This process is reflected in our success in helping students to learn to read.

I do support teachers having training related to reading in the primary grades as this is a critical phase in their development as readers. A skilled teacher can make a huge difference but to do this schools need to be provided the resources. This includes people to provide the training and the time to provide that training. Teachers are already asked to be counselors, disciplinarians, distance educators, and school nurses on a regular basis. They are stretched thin and simply asking them to do more with less with exacerbate the teacher shortage, as people will eventually walk away.

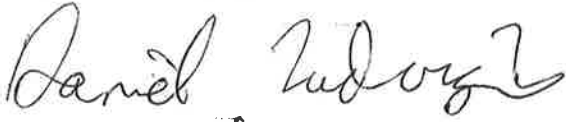
*The mission of the Elgin/New Leipzig Public School District is to provide a positive and safe environment that promotes lifelong learning to all individuals.*

I do support school-wide screenings and intervention systems. I have devoted much of my career to this. Detecting learning difficulties in reading, language arts, and mathematics early is critical. At these developmental stages in a child's life you have the most capacity to make a difference. This helps with all the areas I cited. I do support having school-wide screenings and a plan in place to address those students who are not at grade level. The benefits of doing so are highly researched and show a considerable impact on student learning.

I ask you to take this in consideration as you work on this bill. If anyone has questions they can contact me at [Daniel.ludvigson@k12.nd.us](mailto:Daniel.ludvigson@k12.nd.us) or 701-584-2374. I am more than happy to share any additional information you may find useful.

For your consideration,

Daniel Ludvigson  
Superintendent  
Elgin/New Leipzig Public School

  
3-16-2021

# 2021 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee  
Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1131  
3/23/2021

## A BILL relating to credentials for specialists trained in dyslexia.

**Chair Schaible** called to order at 9:36 AM.

**Discussion Topics:**

- Committee Work

**Sen Elkin** moved a Do Pass

**Sen Lemm** seconded

**Roll Call Vote: 6 Yeas; 0 Nay; 0 AB Motion Passed**

**Sen Lemm** will carry the bill.

Adjourned at 9: 45 AM

*Lynn Wolf, Committee Clerk*

Senator	Attendance
Chairman Schaible	P
Senator Elkin	P
Senator Conley	P
Senator Lemm	P
Senator Oban	P
Senator Wobbema	P

HB 1131	Vote
Chairman Schaible	Y
Senator Elkin	Y
Senator Conley	Y
Senator Lemm	Y
Senator Oban	Y
Senator Wobbema	Y



**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**

**HB 1131: Education Committee (Sen. Schaible, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1131 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.