


**State of Connecticut
Connecticut General Assembly**

**Task Force to Analyze the Implementation of Laws
Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training
(Special Act 19-8)**

REPORT of FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

December 17, 2020

Co-Chairs
Jule McCombes-Tolis, Ph.D.
Allison M. Quirion



[Task Force Web Page](#)

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AGENDA

WELCOME & OPENING


- Connecticut's Dyslexia Landscape
- Legislative Precursors to the Task Force
- Establishment & Charge of the Task Force
- Membership by Subcommittee
- Meeting Calendar

PRESENTATION OF FINAL REPORT

- Findings and Recommendations

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ADJOURNMENT



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CONNECTICUT'S DYSLEXIA LANDSCAPE

SNAPSHOT



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PREVALENCE

- Students with Specific Learning Disabilities/Specific Learning Disabilities-Dyslexia represent the greatest percentage of SWD in CT's schools (~37%)
- Since 2014, CT's school population has ↓ by 3%, but Special Education prevalence has ↑ by 15%
- Since 2015, CT's dyslexia prevalence rate has ↑ by 200% - even so, this number represents <1% of the state's total student population, whereas research suggests *actual* prevalence estimates fall between 10-20%.
- Begs the question: how many students who are not meeting minimum reading achievement thresholds today are undiagnosed?



| YEAR | Special Education Prevalence | Special Education Count (k-12) | All K-12 Student Count |
|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2007-08 | 11.5% | 64,375 | 559,500 |
| 2008-09 | 11.6% | 64,187 | 555,411 |
| 2009-10 | 11.6% | 63,968 | 551,461 |
| 2010-11 | 11.6% | 63,486 | 548,052 |
| 2011-12 | 11.7% | 63,651 | 541,727 |
| 2012-13 | 12.1% | 65,096 | 537,595 |
| 2013-14 | 12.4% | 66,132 | 532,320 |
| 2014-15 | 13.0% | 68,445 | 527,832 |
| 2015-16 | 13.4% | 70,055 | 522,906 |
| 2016-17 | 13.9% | 72,420 | 519,885 |
| 2017-18 | 14.5% | 74,708 | 515,935 |
| 2018-19 | 15.0% | 76,815 | 511,367 |

| | 2015-2016 | 2016-2017 | 2017-2018 | 2018-2019 |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Students with SLD | 24,287 | 25,661 | 26,910 | 28,071 |
| Students with SLD/Dyslexia | 727 | 1,149 | 1,766 | 2,294 |

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PERFORMANCE

- While SWD improved in ELA performance by approximately 8% since 2015, 84% of these students did not meet ELA SBAC performance criteria for grade 8.
- The gap between the reading achievement of SWOD and SWD has remained steady since 2017 and has moved very little since 2015.



| | SBAC ELA MET/EXCEEDED | 15-16 % | 16-17 % | 17-18 % | 18-19 % |
|---------|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| GRADE 8 | GENED | 61.7 | 59.8 | 62.8 | 62.7 |
| | SPED | 14.4 | 14.3 | 16.0 | 15.6 |
| | % DIFF | -77% | -76% | -75% | -75% |

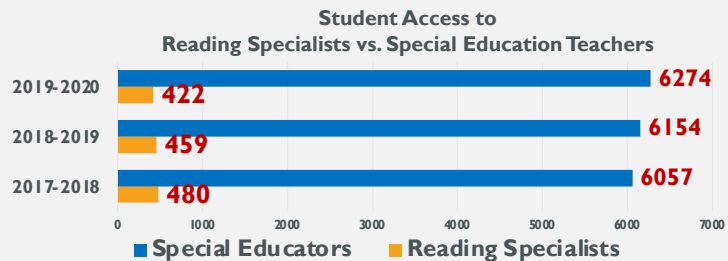
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ACCESS

- Special Educators and Reading Specialists are prepared to serve different populations of students and as such their training differs greatly.
- There are only 422 Reading Specialists employed by Connecticut's schools compared to 6,274 Special Education teachers.
 - This # represents a decline of > 12% since the 2017-2018 academic year.
- **Equity and access issue:** Hartford Public Schools employs 0 Reading Specialists while Greenwich Public Schools employs 18.
- Increasing the number of these specialists in our schools may help to alleviate our current achievement gaps and may help to ameliorate the current special education shortage by freeing up the remedial reading caseloads of select special educators.



| Special Educators | Reading Specialists |
|--|---|
| Psychoeducational Theory & Development of Handicapped Children. | Developmental Literacy |
| Program Planning & Evaluation of Handicapped Children | Tests & Measurement in Reading & Language Arts |
| Diagnosis of Handicapped Children. | Diagnosis & Remediation of Reading & Language Arts Difficulties |
| Curriculum & Methods of Teaching Handicapped Children | Content & Disciplinary Literacy |
| | Language Arts (incl. Written Expression) |
| Special Education Practicum: Handicapping Condition I (Not Specified) | Supervised Remedial Reading Practicum I |
| Special Education Practicum: Handicapping Condition II (Not Specified) | Supervised Remedial Reading Practicum II |



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LEGISLATIVE PRECURSORS TO THE TASK FORCE



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2014 – PUBLIC ACT 14-39

- Amends the Individualized Education Plan to include "Specific Learning Disability/Dyslexia" as a Primary Disability.
- Adds the detection, recognition and evidenced-based interventions for students with dyslexia to be included, as part of the curriculum, to any program of teacher preparation leading to a certification.



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2015 – PUBLIC ACT 15-97



- Directs the Commissioner of Education to designate an employee of the DOE to provide information and assistance to parents and the BOE relating to the detection, recognition and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for students with dyslexia.
- Defines dyslexia as articulated within DOE's IEP Manual & Forms.
- Enhances P.A. 14-39 by requiring no fewer than 12 clock hours of instruction to address dyslexia in pre-service educator preparation programs.
- Adds dyslexia in-service teacher PD.
- Directs the DOE to develop or approve a reading assessment for use by local BOE, which includes "identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for dyslexia ... or other reading-related learning disabilities".

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2016 – PUBLIC ACT 16-92



- Adds the requirement, on and after July 1, 2017, for any (1) certified employee applying for a **remedial reading, remedial language arts or reading consultant endorsement**, or (2) applicant for an initial, provisional or professional educator certificate shall have **completed a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts that includes supervised practicum hours and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia.**

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2017 – PUBLIC ACT 17-3

- Adds the requirement, on and after July 1, 2018, any certified employee applying for a **comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education endorsement**, or (B) applicant for an initial, provisional or professional educator certificate and a comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education endorsement shall have **completed a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts that includes supervised practicum hours and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia.**



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2019 – PUBLIC ACT 19-8

- Established a Task Force to analyze and make recommendations on issues relating to the implementation of the laws governing dyslexia instruction and training in the state.



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MEMBERSHIP BY SUBCOMMITTEE AND CHARGE



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EDUCATOR COMPETENCIES

- ✓ Make recommendations for the structured literacy content knowledge and pedagogy that pre-service and in-service educators should obtain in order to be able to effectively and consistently meet the needs of students at risk for reading failure, including students with dyslexia.
- ✗ Examine and make recommendations on whether current in-service professional development models are appropriate to provide in-service training and professional development for teachers with the knowledge and understanding to meet the needs of dyslexic students.

Allison Van Etten, Chair

Stonington Public Schools
Appointed by President Pro Tempore of the Senate

Laura Carl

Decoding Dyslexia Connecticut
Appointed by Majority Leader of the Senate

Amy Geary

Montville Public Schools
Appointed by Speaker of the House of Representatives


Judith Rosenfield

Parent
Appointed by Speaker of the House of Representatives



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- ✓ Examine and make recommendations on whether institutes of higher education in the state are complying with licensure requirements set forth in statute.
- ✓ Make recommendations for the structured literacy content knowledge and pedagogy that candidates in programs of teacher preparation should obtain in order to be able to effectively and consistently meet the needs of students at risk for reading failure, including students with dyslexia. (Collaborated with Educator Competencies Subcommittee)
- ✗ Develop a Reading Standards Matrix.
- ✗ Make recommendations on supervised practicum method
- ✓ Make recommendations that provide professors with the knowledge they need to supervise candidates in programs of teacher preparation in a practicum with an at-risk reader


HIGHER EDUCATION MANDATES & COMPLIANCE

Jule McCombes-Tolis, Co-Chair
Fairfield University
Appointed by Majority Leader of the House of Representatives

Rachael Gabriel
University of Connecticut
Appointed by Governor


Allison M. Quirion, Co-Chair
Parent
Appointed by President Pro Tempore of the Senate

Laura Reynolds
Southern Connecticut State University
Appointed by Governor



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- ✓ Recommendations on whether the Department of Education's "Approved Menu of Research Based Grades K-3, Universal Screening Reading Assessments (June 2018)" meets the requirements of section 10-14t of the general statutes.
- ✓ Recommendations on whether the screening assessments listed are appropriate and represent current research on the science of reading and assessments.
- ✓ Recommendations on the components needed to assist and identify, in whole or in part, students at risk for dyslexia, or other reading-related learning disabilities.
- ✗ Recommendations on whether reporting screening data for all school districts would be beneficial.

K-3 SCREENING

Alissa Heizler Mendoza, Chair
Parent
Appointed by Minority Leader of the House of Representatives

Fumiko Hoeft
University of Connecticut
Appointed by Minority Leader of the Senate

Bryan Klimkiewicz
Connecticut Department of Education
Appointed by Commissioner of Education



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NON-REPORTING SUB-COMMITTEES



**NATIONAL
LANDSCAPE**

- Propose formatting and content considerations for the final report to be submitted by the Task Force.

Rachael Gabriel
Laura Raynolds



**DATA
COLLECTION**

- Support information requests submitted by the Clerk on behalf of the Task Force.

Bryan Klimkiewicz
Jule McCombes-Tolis
Allison M. Quirion



MEETING CALENDAR

| Task Force Meeting Calendar | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| All Meetings scheduled 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | | |
| Meeting Information and Related Resources: Task Force Website | | |
| October 17, 2019 Room 2A of the LOB | November 21, 2019 Room 1C of the LOB | December, 2019 No Meeting. |
| January 16, 2020 Room 1E of the LOB | February-May Legislature in Session: No Meetings | June 18, 2020 Virtual |
| July 16, 2020 Virtual | August, 2020 No Meeting | September 17, 2020 Virtual |
| October 15, 2020 Virtual | November 19, 2020 Cancelled | December 17, 2020 Virtual |



FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



All recommendations were voted on and unanimously approved by the members of the Task Force, with the exception of one abstention for practicum supervisor qualifications.

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FINDING

HIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE

No agency (public or private) presently assumes responsibility for monitoring and determining Educator Preparation Program compliance with Connecticut dyslexia-specific statutes.

HIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND
COMPLIANCE

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Task the Connecticut State Board of Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education with the responsibility of monitoring and determining Educator Preparation Programs compliance with dyslexia-specific statutes utilizing Task Force approved Educator Preparation Program Candidate Outcomes and Compliance Targets and Audit Protocol Frameworks

and/or

amend Connecticut's Agreement with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (or other accrediting body agreement) to require a review of Educator Preparation Program's compliance with Connecticut dyslexia-specific statutes into accreditation decisions.



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FINDING

HIGHER EDUCATION MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE

No agency, including the CSDE, verifies or confirms that applicants applying for a Connecticut teaching license/certification have met Connecticut dyslexia-specific statutory requirements as part of the State certification application review process.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Task the Connecticut State Department of Education to revise existing Certification Checklists to include documentation that applicants for a Connecticut certification, including out of state applicants, have met pre-service dyslexia-specific statutory requirements as part of their required major and concentration coursework in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Require Educator Preparation Programs to complete a revised Certification Checklist, to include documentation that applicants have met pre-service dyslexia-specific statutory requirements as part of their required major and concentration coursework, when recommending program candidates to the Connecticut State Department of Education for certification.

FINDING

HIGHER EDUCATION MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE

Compliance measures, audit procedures and frameworks do not presently exist for Connecticut’s Educator Preparation Programs with regard to dyslexia- specific educator preparation requirements. Due to the lack of any frameworks, data that was provided by Connecticut State Department of Education was not adequate to fully support evaluation and provide a conclusive determination regarding compliance.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- The CSDE and The Connecticut State Board of Education to Adopt Audit Protocol Frameworks aligned with approved Candidate Outcomes and Compliance Targets, as developed and approved by this Task Force.

| APPENDIX D. Outcome A: (12 Clock Hours) (Public Act 15-97) | | | | | |
|---|---|------|--|------------------|--------|
| All Connecticut Educator Preparation Programs prepare educators who are knowledgeable about how to detect dyslexia: They prepare educators to understand... | | | | | |
| | IDA | FORT | ILA | InTASC (General) | |
| A.1 | How learning to read differs from learning to speak, with most individuals requiring explicit instruction to learn how to read. | 1.2 | NA | 1.1 2.3 | 1d; 4j |
| A.2 | Factors impacting reading and writing acquisition, including the component structures of language language (phonology, orthography, syntax, morphology, semantics; organization of spoken and written discourse). | 1.1 | NA | 1.1 1.3 | 4j |
| | | 1.3 | Subarea 1: Objective 3,4 Subarea 2: Objective 5,7 | 1.1 | 4j |
| | | 1.4 | NA | None | |
| | | 1.5 | Weakly Implied | 4.2 | |
| | | 1.6 | NA | None | |
| | | 4F.1 | NA | 1.1 2.3 | |

FINDING

EDUCATOR COMPETENCIES

Guidelines, approved models and evaluation rubrics do not presently exist in Connecticut for in-service Structured Literacy training and professional development; as such, it was not possible to fully evaluate the appropriateness of existing professional development offerings.

EDUCATOR
COMPETENCIES**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The Connecticut State Department of Education to establish a Dyslexia In-Service Training and Professional Development Advisory Committee.
- Policymakers may provide flexible funding for continuing in-service and professional development opportunities that include sustained engagement, collaboration, mentoring, and coaching components, as well as institutes, workshops and seminars. Additional consideration needs to be given how out of state applicants will be supported in meeting statutory requirements (e.g., complete online modules). This is essential to ensure that out of state applicants possess the equivalent knowledge/skill as in-state applicants prior to being approved for certification.

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FINDINGEDUCATOR
COMPETENCIES

There are presently no Structured Literacy content knowledge and pedagogy targets for Connecticut's educators.

HIGHER
EDUCATION
MANDATES AND
COMPLIANCE**RECOMMENDATIONS:**


- The Connecticut State Department of Education and The Connecticut State Board of Education to Adopt Candidate Outcomes and Compliance Targets as developed and approved by this Taskforce.
- The Connecticut State Department of Education to review and refine the Capitol Region Education Council and State Education Resource Center webinar modules to align with Educator Preparation Program Candidate Outcomes/Compliance Targets.

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HIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND
COMPLIANCE

EDUCATOR
COMPETENCIES




RECOMMENDATIONS *(continued)*:

- The Connecticut State Department of Education and/or The Connecticut General Assembly to establish a Connecticut Higher Education Collaborative designed to provide Educator Preparation Programs and higher education faculty with access to training, information, materials, peer, and technical support designed to support their efforts to prepare certification candidates to meet Task Force approved Educator Preparation Program Candidate Outcomes/ Compliance Targets.
- Task the Connecticut State Department of Education to develop/adopt an annotated listing of sample course assignments and accompanying evaluation rubrics, aligned with Structured Literacy Educator Competencies and Educator Preparation Program Candidate Outcomes/Compliance Targets for higher education faculty to review and consider for adoption and implementation.

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EDUCATOR
COMPETENCIES
&
HIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND
COMPLIANCE



RECOMMENDATIONS *(continued)*:

- Task the Connecticut State Department of Education to adopt the approved Structured Literacy Educator Competencies as educator preparation targets.
 - These competencies are discipline specific and identify the competencies that educators belonging to the following categories must be prepared to demonstrate: *all* teacher preparation candidates, *all* Remedial Reading, Remedial Language Arts or Reading Consultant certification candidates, *all* Comprehensive Special Education or Integrated Early Childhood and Special Education certification candidates, and *all* Elementary K-6 educator certification teacher preparation candidates.
 - The International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards includes examples of coursework expectations that may serve as a reference for an annotated list of sample course assignments.

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FINDINGHIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE

Practicum & student teaching supervisors appointed by EPPs are not presently required to demonstrate specific competencies (knowledge, skill, experience) related to Structured Literacy. Recommendations below refer to practicum and student teaching supervisors appointed by Educator Preparation Programs, not to district-based cooperating teachers.

HIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Ensure Structured Literacy practicum and student teaching **supervisors** meet minimum knowledge, skill, and experience criteria approved by the Task Force.



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FINDINGHIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE

Connecticut General Statutes subsection (i) of Section 10-145d, does not align with the Regulations of the Connecticut State Board of Education: Regulations Concerning State Educator Certificates, Permits and Authorizations, which address both Practicum *and* Student Teaching.

- Practicum is engaged by certified educators pursuing *additional* certifications/endorsements and Student Teaching is engaged by candidates pursuing their first or initial certification.

HIGHER EDUCATION
MANDATES AND COMPLIANCE**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Amend Subsection (i) of section 10-145d of the Connecticut General Statutes to add “student teaching” so that the statute also applies to candidates seeking an initial certification in Special Education and reads as follows:

Special Education: (2) (A) *certified employee applying for a comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education endorsement, or (B) applicant for an initial, provisional or professional educator certificate and a comprehensive special education or integrated early childhood and special education endorsement shall have completed a program of study in the diagnosis and remediation of reading and language arts that includes **supervised practicum hours/student teaching** and instruction in the detection and recognition of, and evidence-based structured literacy interventions for, students with dyslexia, as defined in section 10-3d.*



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FINDINGK-3
SCREENING

- None of the assessments listed in either Section 1 or Section 2 of the Approved Menu measure the five abilities (phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and [reading] comprehension) for all grades K-3.
- The assessments listed in Section 2: Computer Adaptive Assessments of the Approved Menu do not meet criteria as a General Outcome Measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Task the CSDE to:

- reorganize and populate the *Approved Menu of Research-Based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments* (October, 2019) with a revised Menu as outlined in our report.
- include a note on the Approved Menu of Research-Based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (October, 2019) that districts should combine assessments when screening to meet statutory requirements and ensure all five areas are assessed at appropriate grades outlined in the revised menu to assist in identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for dyslexia, or other reading-related learning disabilities.
- Task the CSDE to include a footnote in the Menu that students who are being instructed in literacy in their native language with the ultimate goal of biliteracy, should be administered reading assessments in both English and their native language, if available

- Communicate and provide guidance on amendments to the Approved Menu of Research-Based Grades K–3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments to districts to ensure understanding and accountability.

K-3
SCREENING

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FINDINGK-3
SCREENING

- Connecticut General Statutes §10-14t is not explicitly aligned with the recommendations of the CSDE with respect to how often screening assessments should be performed. The CSDE recommends screening assessments to be administered 3x/year, which is consistent with “periodic formative assessment during the school year” in the statute, but “three times per year” is not explicitly stated within the legislation.
- The current menu provides some form of combined measure of risk status, though it may not necessarily be following the latest science.
- Current research indicates additional sub-components to be added, and grade level be modified to further assist and identify, in whole or in part, students at risk for dyslexia, or other reading-related learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Amend Connecticut General Statutes §10-14t to:

- replace “periodic formative assessment” with “three times per year (Fall, Winter, Spring)”
- Amend Connecticut General Statutes §10-14t to address proposed refinements outlined in Task Force Report.

K-3
SCREENING

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Louise Spear-Swerling

Devin Kearns

Jeannie Phillips



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CLOSING

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