

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6016

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Education

**Title:** An act relating to training for educators to identify students with dyslexia.

**Brief Description:** Regarding educator training to enhance skills of students with dyslexia.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Benton, McAuliffe, Swecker, McDermott, Roach, Delvin, Stevens, Honeyford, McCaslin, Morton and Shin).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Education: 3/24/09, 3/25/09 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill  
(As Amended by House)**

- Tasks the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), within available resources, with developing an educator training program to enhance the reading, writing, and spelling skills of students with dyslexia and a dyslexia handbook and posting both the training program and the handbook on its website.
- Provides that the training program may be regionally delivered through the educational service districts (ESDs), and permits the ESDs to seek assistance from an international nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting efforts to provide appropriate identification of and instruction for individuals with dyslexia.
- Requires ESDs to report to the OSPI, and the OSPI to report to the Legislature, regarding the number of individuals who participate in the training.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Probst, Vice Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Hope, Assistant Ranking

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Minority Member; Cox, Dammeier, Hunt, Johnson, Liias, Maxwell, Orwall, Santos and Sullivan.

**Staff:** Cece Clynch (786-7195)

**Background:**

Dyslexia, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) which is one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is a brain-based type of learning disability that specifically impairs a person's ability to read. These individuals typically read at levels significantly lower than expected despite having normal intelligence. Although the disorder varies from person to person, common characteristics among people with dyslexia are difficulty with spelling, phonological processing (the manipulation of sounds), and/or rapid visual-verbal responding. It can be inherited in some families, and studies have identified a number of genes that may predispose an individual to developing dyslexia.

The usual course of treatment is to modify teaching methods and the educational environment to meet the specific needs of the individual with dyslexia. According to NINDS, the prognosis is generally good for individuals whose dyslexia is identified early, who have supportive family and friends and a strong self-image, and who are involved in a proper remediation program.

In 2005 the Legislature created and provided funds during the 2005-2007 biennium for the Lorraine Wojahn Dyslexia Pilot Reading Program. Funding was continued in the 2007-2009 biennium. The purpose was threefold:

1. to provide financial support to four schools in the state to implement effective intervention programs for students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia;
2. to provide professional development in the area of dyslexia and training on effective intervention programs; and
3. to build capacity and sustainability among leadership and teaching staff within a three-tiered school system.

The Bremerton, Mt. Adams, Tacoma, and Tumwater school districts received grant funds in 2005-2007. In 2007-2009 Bremerton, East Valley, Hoquiam, and Walla Walla school districts received grant funds. A December 2008 report by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to the Legislature indicates that, of the students who received services in 2007-2008, approximately 40 percent met standard on the Reading WASL in 2008, whereas approximately 17 percent of the same students met standard on the Reading WASL in 2007.

The report included several recommendations and next steps:

- provide five full-day professional development sessions on the topic of dyslexia and intervention implementation to K-12 schools;
- collaborate with and train educational service district (ESD) reading specialists on the topic of dyslexia and effective practice so that ESD reading specialists may offer professional development;
- develop a dyslexia handbook for the state;
- update and maintain the OSPI website in order to provide resources;

- offer full-day dyslexia summits and conferences in collaboration with the Washington Branch of the International Dyslexia Association and invite renowned researchers in the field to participate; and
  - support part-time dyslexia specialist/program manager and support staff within the OSPI.
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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

The Legislature intends to sustain the work of the dyslexia pilot projects and expand the implementation to a level of statewide support by developing and providing information and training, including a handbook to continue to improve the skills of students with dyslexia.

Within available resources, the OSPI must develop an educator training program to enhance the academic skills of students with dyslexia by implementing the findings of the dyslexia pilot program. The training program must be posted on the website of the OSPI and may be regionally delivered through the ESDs. Beginning September 1, 2009, the ESDs must annually report to the OSPI the number of individuals who participate in the ESD training. The OSPI must report that information to the legislative education committees.

The OSPI must develop a dyslexia handbook to be used as a reference for teachers and parents of students with dyslexia. The handbook must be modeled after other state dyslexia handbooks. The OSPI must post the handbook on its website.

When developing the educator training program and the handbook, the OSPI must consult the school districts that participated in the dyslexia pilot programs and an international non-profit organization dedicated to supporting identification of and instruction for individuals with dyslexia. The ESDs may seek assistance from the international non-profit organization to deliver the training.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The amended bill substitutes more respectful language in one place, changing a reference to "students who are dyslexic" to "students with dyslexia."

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Research by the NIH has shown that these programs are effective. Students with dyslexia are found in every classroom. It is estimated that one in five children have dyslexia or signs and symptoms of dyslexia. Many people do not know how to recognize the signs and symptoms of dyslexia. It is extremely important that dyslexia be identified early instead of "waiting to fail" as in the old days. In addition to training teachers and educators about the symptoms, they need to know what instruction methods should be used to improve students' reading. School districts need guidance in this area as well as trained teachers and specialists. The pilot project should be continued. At the same time, the handbook and the training are important. Dyslexia is an inherited condition and won't just go away. The cost to society of not helping students with dyslexia is high, as it is frequently these students that drop out of school or end up in prisons. National data shows a 60 percent drop-out rate. There is concern with the clause in the bill which imposes requirements but specifies tasks that are to be done "within available resources." Students who participated in the pilot project showed substantial gains. With the exception of third graders, all of the students outperformed their peers on phonological tests. It is a myth to think that one is taught to read in kindergarten through second grade and then reads to learn after that. Some students in later grades need to be taught to read. Another myth is that there is no such thing as dyslexia. Dyslexia is sensory deprivation which can be mapped on a Magnetic Resonance Image scan. Schools that participated in the pilot project learned a tremendous amount and some are looking at district-wide training so as to continue and grow the great results which were seen. Students with characteristics of dyslexia don't need individualized education programs, they just need a boost with reading. After they get that boost, they do well in school. Many of them are, in fact, gifted. One hundred hours of additional instruction is needed for rewiring. Gains of as much as 25 words per minute in reading have been seen following additional, appropriate instruction. Appropriate instruction can also keep the achievement gap from widening and keep students from being inappropriately labeled for special education. Students with dyslexia who receive appropriate instruction like to read whereas they did not like to read before the instruction. Training of teachers and administrators is critically important to success, and funding for such training is extremely important. Ultimately, the state will see a cost savings.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Cheryl Anthony, International Dyslexia Association; Bob Butts and Cheryl Young, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Sigrid Brannan, East Valley (Spokane) School District; and Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.