

Lexington has worked diligently over the past 7 years to provide quality Professional development to teachers who serve students with dyslexia with limited costs to the district. Our district goal is to build independent readers who are competent at or above grade level. Through this commitment We are putting systems into place that help all learners and give teachers evidence based structures to use within their classroom, small groups, or one on one settings. In order to meet these goals for students, we start with teachers first, by providing them with learning environments to gain these skills and competencies.

As a Dyslexia Therapist, Wilson Credentialed Trainer, and one who was an early childhood struggling reader, I understand first hand the struggle of learning how to read. As an Intervention Specialist and Principal, I see the daily struggles of students trying to break the code to learn how to read and educators grasping at straws to try to assist the students they so passionately care about. Therefore, I came to Lexington 7 years ago to help change the outcomes for teachers and students who truly want to learn to read and provide evidence based practices through a methodology of structured literacy for all students. Hence, through this process and to the very end, My goal is to ensure that every teacher in our district can look straight into the eyes of their students with dyslexia and say with confidence, "I know how to help you."

As our district began this journey we asked the question, "Do we want students to be well schooled or well educated?" Of course, our answer was to be well educated and this means that We knew that at any cost we needed to ensure that each student needed to be well educated for whatever came next in their life. We started looking at general reading instruction and incorporated a structured literacy reading program to grades PK-2 so that all students were invited to the table of the structured literacy experience. Teachers received year long training through a credentialed structured literacy Facilitator and spent time training through in service, coaching, and workshops to prepare for understanding the structures of structured literacy and how to teach the components with the proper procedures.

This year, a staff member is being trained to be a structured literacy facilitator for PK-3 so we can continue to coach teachers in the instructional practices, hold ongoing workshops, and in the upcoming years, train one Facilitator per grade level for ongoing sustainability.

After we reviewed our reading practices, we focused on emergent reading skills and how to screen for early signs of dyslexia tendencies and how to remediate immediately. Each student who enters kindergarten is given an assessment on phonology. We know that all emergent readers must have a strong grasp of phonology in order to lay a firm foundation in their reading skills. If students show deficit skill in this area then they receive remediation through small group or one on one instruction with continued data collection.

Through these training we have evaluated our progress of initial instruction and we have seen a decrease in the number of students needing specialized education in this area. I believe this is due to teacher knowledge and understanding of how to enhance current instruction to be more conducive to building phonology in all students starting at the preschool years.

Lastly, The district has focused on intensive structured literacy training for teachers that focuses on students in grades 2-12 who are dyslexic. The district trained an in district Wilson Credentialed Trainer who can certify Level I structured literacy specialist and Dyslexia Practitioners. This ensures sustainability in the district and allow us to continue to train and certify teachers annually. It would also ensure rigor and practice through on going training and refresher courses for all Level I certified staff.

With this layer of support over the past two years Lexington, our small village school, has trained and certified 10 Level I staff members and will add four more certified staff members by the end of this year. Therefore, Lexington will have 15 certified structured Literacy Specialist which includes an in district credentialed trainer, Dyslexia Therapist, and Facilitator. This was completed with no additional budgetary increases.

Through this journey the focus has been on quality curriculum and instruction that benefits all learners but we are constantly reminded that if we do not have strong professional development and supports we will continue to get mediocre results and quality will continue to be lacking in our curriculum.

I support House Bill 436 and this Bill can assist many other districts to accomplish what our district has already done by reallocating funds with no extra cost to the district and making quality professional development and early screening a priority.