

Good Afternoon,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you about early identification and intervention.

My son, Justin, is a student identified as dyslexic. We made numerous requests for support, but the school system did not provide what our son needed. We finally took him for an independent evaluation in fifth grade and he was diagnosed with dyslexia. Once Justin was identified, my husband and I advocated for structured literacy and our son was provided the appropriate intervention services that he needed to make progress in the area of reading.

But I cannot help but wonder, what if?

What if he would have been identified earlier? Would he be more engaged in school, more motivated? More confident? Would he be reading closer to grade level? Would his spelling be better? These are questions that I think every parent in my shoes has asked. My hope is the passage of this bill will prevent the parents of other young children from going through the same journey we did. They will not have to ask, "What if?"

Early identification and intervention is a must. Reading is one of the most researched topics in education. This research has indicated that through assessment we have the ability to identify students at risk of being struggling readers as early as preschool. Research also indicates that if educators do not intervene early enough, the gap does not close, in fact it sometimes only widens. This is disheartening for struggling readers and their families, especially when they advocate for support and it is not provided in a timely manner.

As a parent, educated in another country, I trusted that my son's teachers were made aware of dyslexia in their preservice teacher training. I trusted that they knew what to look for and at what age. I was devastated to learn my trust was misplaced. The teachers worked hard and tried to help, but they were not prepared to recognize the signs of dyslexia or provide what my son needed.

This bill has the potential to be life changing for many students. After learning more about dyslexia because of my son, I understand how important early intervention is for dyslexic students. With early identification and appropriate instruction, many students will not remain behind their peers in reading skills.

My son has made gains in reading, but he is still not reading at grade level. He is reading at approximately a 5th grade reading level in the 10th grade. His confidence has grown, but it is not at a level that I would like it to be. So still I wonder, "What if?"

Thank you  
Nicole Jackson