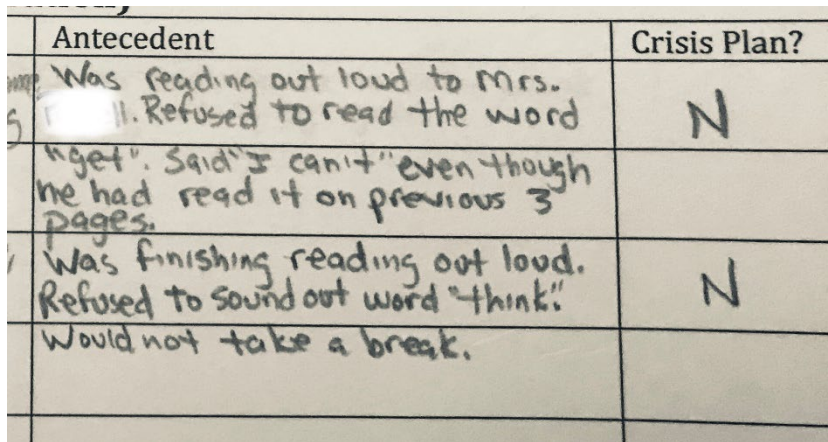


Chair Lehner, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to share our experiences with dyslexia identification.

During the 2015-2016 school year, my son, Oliver, was suspended for fifteen days from Buckeye Valley East Elementary.

He was in kindergarten.

In April of his kindergarten year, he was reading out loud to his teacher when he couldn't sound out a word. He protested, probably very frustrated and probably quite loudly, "I can't!" He was written up for defiance. I have included an image of the behavior report. It reads "Refused to read the word 'get'. Said "I can't" even though he had read it on previous 3 pages." After a break, he returned to reading out loud and was again written up for defiance: "Was finishing reading out loud. Refused to sound out word "think." Would not take a break."



Antecedent	Crisis Plan?
Was reading out loud to Mrs. [redacted]. Refused to read the word "get". Said "I can't" even though he had read it on previous 3 pages.	N
Was finishing reading out loud. Refused to sound out word "think". Would not take a break.	N

His classroom teacher, his educational aide, and even the school psychologist labeled him as defiant and immature. His first educational interventions were all strictly behavioral. The challenges he presented with were all common red flags: difficulty rhyming, difficulty sounding out words; difficulty with right from left; difficulty sequencing days of the week or months of the year. But, like many dyslexic students, Oliver has a knack for memorizing visual patterns, so he could memorize the readers they tested with.

During kindergarten and first grade, we received detailed daily reports outlining all the behaviors he exhibited. Before his sixth birthday, he had experienced suspension, restraint, transport, and seclusion at school. Besides speech therapy, the only interventions he received were punitive in nature and focused only on behavior. He was restrained on a near-daily basis. He was locked into a windowless room in the basement. His teachers called it a cool down room. He called it a mad-up room.

In the middle of first grade, the school assigned him to a pullout reading intervention program. The frequency of those meltdowns dropped dramatically. And in second grade, after two years that frustrated everybody, we pursued our own private testing. The results confirmed our suspicions of dyslexia.

Identifying students and providing early intervention gives students the supports they need: reading support, writing support, emotional support, confidence support, behavioral support. Oliver was removed from the classroom almost daily, nearly always during language arts. He missed instructional

time. He read below grade level. His peers witnessed meltdown after meltdown. He lost trust in nearly every adult at the school.

Identifying students and providing early intervention helps students' mental health. Students whose brains are locked into "fight or flight" mode aren't learning. Teachers who attribute reading difficulties to laziness or defiance can break a kid's spirit. Oliver is the bravest kid I know: every day, he returns to the same school that punished him for two years because he had undiagnosed dyslexia. He is one of the lucky kids who was diagnosed at a young enough age to make services effective – and to rescue him from the school to prison punitive intervention cycle.

Identifying students and providing early intervention is crucial for reasons beyond just reading. It saves kids. Unrecognized dyslexia played a significant role in Oliver's behavior. Oliver's story is one in a new documentary called "The Kids We Lose." It is a 90-minute film focusing on students with behavioral challenges, and the ways in which kids with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges are treated in schools. It is being shown at film festivals, community screenings, and on public television.

Testing children for dyslexia is not an exact science, particularly when they're five. But by identifying those students who are at risk and giving them appropriate, structured literacy services prophylactically, schools do more than teach kids how to read. I suggest that the legislation include language indicating the assessment should take place at the beginning of the school year: wasting a school year of instruction is not beneficial. I also suggest language that indicates young students may show they are *at risk of having* dyslexia instead of definitively *having* dyslexia.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.