

# Beyond Dyslexia Legislation

## Implementing the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards in the Teacher Education Programs at Ohio's Colleges and Universities

by Charlotte G. Andrist and Ronald Yoshimoto

From 2002 to 2007, a number of legislative efforts for dyslexia were initiated across Ohio by one or another of Ohio's three branches of the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). These proposed dyslexia legislative initiatives were modeled after the seminal dyslexia legislation that had been passed in the State of Texas during the mid-1980s. None of these dyslexia bills, however, made it out of either the Ohio House of Representatives Education or the Ohio Senate Education Committees, respectively, and onto the floor of either branch of the Ohio General Assembly. Dyslexia activists in Ohio became frustrated and discouraged. They realized that they needed to be more organized and did not have the first idea of how to begin to get dyslexia legislation passed. They met with different lobbyists and got plenty of suggestions, but following up on most of this advice would require not only significant funding but also the need to work with someone who had legal expertise. By 2007, most dyslexia activists in Ohio had given up on ever passing dyslexia legislation in the state. Then, at a luncheon meeting at the IDA Conference in Dallas, a group of board members from the three IDA Ohio branches attended an inspiring speech by Tincy Miller, the force behind the seminal Texas dyslexia legislation. After the luncheon presentation, this core IDA Ohio group, inspired and encouraged by Ms. Miller's words, met and decided to band together to take up the challenge to pass dyslexia legislation in Ohio.

And so began countless hours of discussion and planning at many meetings in Columbus. As a result of those meetings, a strong dyslexia legislative network was formed across Ohio. Information was posted on IDA branch websites and in the Ohio IDA newsletter that contained information on how to contact legislators and included legislative district maps and sample letters. Social media helped to spread the word: follow-up Tweets and Facebook messages linking to the legislative information were sent to hundreds of dyslexia activists across Ohio. Dyslexia rallies were organized on the steps of the Ohio Statehouse in downtown Columbus complete with dyslexia simulations, music from a dyslexia vocalist, testimonial booths to record stories, button-making tables, dyslexia t-shirts for sale, postcards ready to fill in and send to legislators, and dyslexia petitions to sign in support of dyslexia legislation. Speakers included sponsors of the dyslexia legislation from both political parties, Central Ohio business leaders who supported the legislation, passionate individuals with dyslexia and their families, and members of the Ohio IDA Dyslexia Legislative Group. Crowds of passionate parents, school children, and many other members of the Ohio dyslexia community attended. As a direct result of our advocacy efforts, hundreds of people crammed the hearing rooms in support of those testifying before the Ohio House and Senate Education Committees.

Accordingly, two dyslexia bills were passed out of their respective legislative committees with unanimous assent and onto the floor of both the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate: HB 96 created a pilot project for the early identification and effective instruction of students at-risk for dyslexia (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3323.25>), while HB 157 identified guidelines for teacher in-service in dyslexia and defined the characteristics of a qualified instructor (<http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/3319.80>). Both pieces of legislation incorporated the IDA definition of dyslexia. Both bills were passed by the legislature. Then, in December 2011, members of Ohio IDA witnessed both bills being signed into law by Governor John Kasich. It was an emotional experience for everyone who had worked so hard to get the legislation passed.

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From its very inception, members of the Ohio IDA Executive Committee had many discussions about how to change teacher education in Ohio so that it included evidence-based, explicit, systematic, multisensory reading instruction that would address the needs of all struggling readers, including those with dyslexia. But because of budget problems in the state, and advice from lobbyists, business leaders and legislators suggested that dyslexia legislation requiring significant funding support would never make it through the legislative process, a comprehensive teacher education reform bill was not proposed. It is also important to note that Ohio is the birthplace of Reading Recovery and that Reading Recovery has the strongest education lobby in the state of Ohio. Reading Recovery is the antithesis of evidence-based, explicit, systematic instruction (Turner, Chapman, Greaney, Prochnow & Arrow, 2013).

Then, during the spring of 2010 Branch Council session in Baltimore, Dr. Louisa Cook Moats presented the newly adopted International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (IDA Standards; Moats et al., 2010) to the IDA Branch presidents. Dr. Moats was inspiring. She urged the Branch presidents to take the IDA Standards back to their states and find a way to implement them, insuring that all teachers of reading would have the knowledge and skills that they needed to teach all students to read. Members of the Ohio IDA Executive Committee had been discussing this very idea. Now they had a tool that would help them reach their goal.

Two executive-level state agencies oversee the educational institutions in Ohio: the Ohio Department of Education has authority over P-12 educational institutions; the Ohio Board of Regents (or OBR, recently renamed the Ohio Department of

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Higher Education) has authority over Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs; colleges and universities). In an effort to avoid the funding restrictions of laws mandating educational change and the powerful Reading Recovery lobby, a decision was made to approach the Chancellor of the OBR to discuss implementing the new IDA Standards in Ohio. A cordial meeting was held with the chancellor, but he did not see the importance of including the newly developed IDA Standards in the curricula of Ohio's colleges and universities.

After the fall election of 2010, a new governor was elected, and a new Chancellor of the OBR was subsequently appointed the following spring in 2011. The coordinator of the Ohio IDA Executive Committee immediately scheduled a meeting with the new chancellor to discuss incorporating the IDA Standards into the curriculum of Ohio's colleges and universities. This time, the meeting was preceded by an introduction from another member of the Ohio IDA Executive Committee, Stephanie Gordon, the former tutor for the chancellor's son who is dyslexic. The chancellor had only been in his position for a few weeks when the meeting occurred. It took place in the chancellor's office, stacked with unpacked boxes from his recent move. The newly appointed chancellor, Jim Petro, was very receptive. He listened intently to the presentation that included the definition and characteristics of dyslexia, basic research on dyslexia, and the type of instruction needed to teach students with dyslexia and other students at risk for reading failure to read. He was surprised to learn that very few of Ohio's colleges and universities were training teachers to use these effective, research-based methods. Then, when the request was made to incorporate the new IDA Standards into Ohio's teacher education programs, he turned to Associate Vice Chancellor, Dr. Tom Bordenkircher, and asked, "Can we do this?" Dr. Bordenkircher replied, "The chancellor has authority over the program approval requirements of all institutions of higher education in the state of Ohio." The chancellor then handed him the packet of material from the presentation and said, "Make it happen!"

### **The Ohio Task Force for Pre-Service Teacher Education in Dyslexia**

Initial planning meetings between the Ohio IDA Executive Committee and the OBR staff contact, Dr. Thomas Bordenkircher, began in the spring of 2011. Dr. Charlotte G. Andrist was selected as the Chair of the OBR Dyslexia Task Force and liaison between OBR and the Ohio IDA Executive Committee. The Task Force charge was formulated as follows:

In partnership with Ohio Board of Regents (OBR), the Task Force for Pre-Service Teacher Education in Dyslexia will work with the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (Moats et al., 2010) to develop guidelines for pre-service teacher education programs in Ohio. The resulting new pre-service guidelines will be based on the specific knowledge and skills needed to identify, assess, provide appropriate

instruction for and monitor the progress of individuals with dyslexia as designated in the IDA standards.

Fifteen individuals were selected to serve on the OBR Task Force for Pre-service Teacher Education in Dyslexia. Members were chosen from across Ohio's five geographic areas. Task Force membership was balanced between public versus private educational institutions and P-12 institutions versus IHEs. A parent representative was also appointed to the Task Force. Regional representation was proportional to the population in each of the five geographical regions of Ohio. Task Force members were selected during the summer of 2011 from across the State of Ohio according to the criteria described above. For the Task Force charge and the selection details, and a list of Task Force members, please see the Dyslexia Guidance and Requirement Document for Ohio Educator Preparation Programs found at <https://www.ohiohighered.org/education-programs/standards-requirements>.

Then, in the fall of 2011, task force members began meeting in Columbus once a month on Fridays for an intense 6-hour session. After an initial overview and orientation, which included background information on why the Task Force was formed and a description of the charge, members went to work. The initial project given to the Task Force was to map the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession (OSTP) to the IDA Standards. An overview of this task was given to the task force in the first session, and the project was completed in the second session. The next step for the Task Force was to decide how they were going to complete their charge and develop the tools needed for its implementation. OBR directed members of the Task Force to develop multiple options for Ohio's colleges and universities to choose from so that they could choose how they would demonstrate that their programs were in compliance with the tenants of the IDA Standards.

This dedicated, hard-working group of individuals from diverse backgrounds across the state continued to meet monthly in Columbus to complete their charge. Much to the surprise of the staff at OBR, the Dyslexia Task Force completed their work by the proposed deadline in the spring of 2012. Outcomes included three options for Ohio's IHEs to choose from to demonstrate that they were in compliance with the new program guidelines for dyslexia and had included the components of the IDA Standards in their teacher education programs for all licensed teachers in the state of Ohio. The choices were as follows:

1. A program rating checklist containing the criteria for evaluating the alignment of educator preparation programs to the IDA Standards. This checklist is a modified version of the IDA program rating tool used by IDA review teams to review higher education and independent programs for possible IDA accreditation.
2. An alternative phonics course that systematically and explicitly teaches the principals of research-based reading instruction that were missing from the Ohio 12-hour Reading Core requirements.

3. A Knowledge and Practice Examination that systematically covers the principles of the IDA Standards (available, 2016).

For a more detailed description of the three options available to colleges and universities to demonstrate that their programs were aligned with the IDA Standards and the actual tools available for programs to use, please see the link cited above.

The preliminary recommendations and work products of the Dyslexia Task Force for Pre-Service Teacher Education were approved by the Chancellor of the OBR in the summer of 2012. Preliminary presentations to explain the proposed recommendations of the Dyslexia Task Force and to gather feedback began in the fall. These were joint presentations by OBR staff and the Task Force Leadership. The first presentation was to the council of State University Education Deans (SUED). Then presentations were scheduled at the two largest statewide education conferences in Ohio: the Special Education Leadership Conference and the Ohio Confederation of Teacher Education Organizations (OCTEO) Conference. Feedback from the presentations was extremely positive; important insights and information were gathered.

The initial recommendation of the Task Force only included one program rating checklist. As a result of the feedback from these preliminary presentations, the Task Force modified their recommendations to include an alternative checklist for teachers obtaining multi-age, adolescent to young adult, and career-technical educator preparation programs. As a result of the suggestion of the education deans on SUED, a checklist was developed to include two separate sets of criteria, each to be used depending on the level of the program being evaluated for licensing as follows:

- a. Level I: Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, and Specialist Educator Preparation Programs
- b. Level II: Multi-Age, Adolescent to Young Adult, and Career-Technical Educator Preparation Programs

Level I of the program rating checklist assumed a higher level of training for the teachers who were obtaining licenses in early childhood, middle childhood, and special education. The Task Force recommended that the program approval criteria for these three teacher licensure programs meet the complete guidelines as set forth in the IDA Standards. The Task Force unanimously decided that these teachers needed the ability to provide differentiated instruction to all students, including students with dyslexia and to have the knowledge and skills described in the IDA Standards so that they could teach them to read at grade level across the curriculum. The criteria for programs in Level II, including Multi-Age, Adolescent to Young Adult, and Career-Technical Educator Preparation Programs, assume less direct knowledge of how to teach basic reading skills but still include an awareness of the IDA definition of dyslexia, how to identify and refer struggling readers, and how to incorporate higher level skills for students with dyslexia into the curriculum through the use of morphology and writing.

The final new program rating checklist with two sets of criteria was approved by the Chancellor in the winter of 2012.

Eight regional meetings to share the outcomes of the OBR Task Force for Pre-Service Teacher Education in Dyslexia were scheduled to begin the following year. The meetings began in January 2013 at the Ohio State University in Columbus and rotated through the five geographic regions before ending in April, 2013. Two regional meetings were scheduled for each of the largest geographical regions, Central and Northeast Ohio. A final regional meeting was held in Columbus in May 2013. A joint conference presentation between OBR staff and the chair of the Dyslexia Task Force was also given at the spring OCTEO conference to explain the final approved OBR program requirements related to pre-service teacher training in dyslexia and the implementation timeline. The session was very well attended and important questions were addressed. Attendees at the session voiced their support for the Task Force recommendations; many were pleased about Ohio's move toward teaching structured literacy across the curriculum. The OBR Task Force for Pre-Service Teacher Education in Dyslexia (Ohio Dyslexia Task Force) recommendations became part of the program review process for all IHE teacher education programs in Ohio in 2014. All IHE programs come up for review on a rotating seven-year program review cycle.

### **Implementation: Training University and College Faculty in Structured Language Teaching**

To help Ohio colleges and universities comply with the guidelines set out by the Ohio Dyslexia Task Force, college faculty were invited to join the Orton-Gillingham (OG) trainings held in Columbus, Ohio, led by Ronald Yoshimoto, a Fellow of the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (F/AOGPE). The higher education faculty that participated possessed a comprehensive understanding of the theories of reading and of the Big Five components recommended by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000). However, there was a need to enhance practical application of this knowledge to the classroom settings. With this goal in mind, the professors were invited to take a week-long OG Basic course to learn how to teach structured literacy in their undergraduate and graduate teacher education classes; many also took the advanced OG morphology course. To date, 25 higher education faculty members from 11 colleges and universities across Ohio have taken the week-long course along with classroom teachers from private and public schools. Faculty were told in advance that the focus of the course would not be on reading theories but on learning "how" to teach an OG reading lesson.

Faculty were intermixed with the classroom teachers and learned the following in this intense, hands-on OG Basic course:

1. Multisensory strategies for teaching decoding, spelling, writing, and phonological awareness;
2. A structured phonetic approach with a specific scope and sequence for teaching consonants, vowels, digraphs, vowel teams, and the rules/position inherent with these sounds;

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3. Blending for reading and spelling;
4. Phonological awareness activities: rhyming, phoneme and syllable counting, initial/medial/final sounds in words, blending, phonemic segmentation, and phonemic manipulation;
5. Integrating grammar, analogies, vocabulary, listening skills, and thinking skills in daily word reading;
6. Fluency strategies;
7. Vocabulary strategies via morphology;
8. The impact of general information, vocabulary, fluency and decoding, on reading comprehension;
9. The importance of correction procedures in OG; and
10. How to teach learned or “red” words (irregular words that do not follow the rules of English spelling) and their importance for reading and spelling.

During the training classes, the higher education faculty and classroom teachers developed lesson plans together. Next, each faculty member was paired with a classroom teacher to implement their lessons together. Together they taught all of the components of an OG Lesson together, including: the card drill, words to read, auditory (sounds), auditory (spelling), handwriting, grammar, review and introduction of a new phonogram, review and introduction of a spelling rule (e.g., the FLOSS rule—double ‘f’, ‘l’ and ‘s’ at the end of a short word after a short vowel, review of learned words and introduction of a new learned word, syllabication (syllable type and/or division pattern), dictation along with other components. These practice lesson simulations were important for both the classroom teachers and professors to learn to apply what they had learned relative to procedures for each section and correction procedures when errors occur.

Upon completion of the course, the higher education faculty could choose to go on to become Certified Master Trainers—Institutional Level with Orton-Gillingham, International (OGI), LLC. Requirements to become a Certified Master Trainer are as follows:

1. Complete an OG Practicum including teaching an OG lesson with a child twice a week for eight months. The director of the program felt that this requirement was critical. Although higher education faculty may have a strong theoretical background in evidence-based reading instruction, they do not generally work directly with remedial students. In order to help insure that faculty were able to implement the OGI program with fidelity, the director of the program observed them using the approach in a clinical or classroom setting.
2. Be observed by a Fellow a minimum of five times. The Fellow would offer feedback on the lesson, including suggestions and support during this practicum period.

3. Attend the OG course a second time to observe more from a teaching perspective how to teach OG to a group of pre-service or classroom teachers.

Issues to consider for such training:

- a. Materials (primary card and regular card decks, red word deck, etc.)
- b. Handouts on dyslexia, OG, Syllabication, Phonemic Awareness;
- c. Procedure Cards;
- d. Demonstration lessons;
- e. Writing lesson plans;
- f. Implementation of lesson plans in simulation—partners taking turns implementing the lesson; and
- g. Consultations in pairs.

4. Required readings included *The Gillingham Manual* (Gillingham & Stillman, 1997), *Speech to Print* (Moats, 2010), *Basic Facts About Dyslexia* (Moats & Dakin, 2007), *Overcoming Dyslexia* (Shaywitz, 2003), and additional articles and handouts as provided by the instructor. If faculty were not familiar with the *Report of the National Reading Panel* (NICHD, 2000), they were required to read it.

The professors who took the Basic OG courses worked diligently in class and remained open to understanding reading from a different perspective. Their interaction with the teachers was positive and fruitful—each learned a great deal from the other. And, today they remain committed to making a difference in reading instruction at the university or college level. To date, three Ohio professors have completed their OG training, including the practicum, and are Certified Master Trainers—Institution Level with Orton-Gillingham International (OGI); six more IHE faculty members are in the process of completing the requirements to become a Certified Master Trainer at the Institution Level with OGI, and all are using what they learned to train teachers and future teachers about the structure of the English language in their respective university or college classes. As a result, three of the four colleges and universities that have been accredited by IDA have had faculty trained under this program. In addition, four Ohio IHEs whose faculty have taken the OGI coursework have applied for accreditation in 2016 with four more Ohio IHEs with trained faculty considering future IDA accreditation.

### **Advocacy Lessons Learned**

As others begin their journey to pass dyslexia legislation in their states, it is critical to build on the lessons of others. Just as the Ohio IDA Dyslexia Legislative Group first learned from Tincy Miller more than eight years ago, there is tremendous power in numbers. Efforts to pass dyslexia legislation in Ohio were not successful until activists organized their efforts across

the state. The state Decoding Dyslexia Groups are a strong example of this lesson today.

Here are some of the most important take-home lessons about developing dyslexia legislation that can be learned from the Ohio experience:

1. Never assume that knowledge is common—start with the basic facts;
2. Do your homework—know the research;
3. Be clear about what you want to accomplish;
4. Form a strong network;
5. Understand how the political and educational systems work in your state;
6. Know your supporters and opponents;
7. Find a champion “on the inside;”
8. Tell your story—make it personal;
9. Be tenacious;
10. Be prepared for set-backs;
11. Celebrate your achievements; and
12. Be ready to take the next step.

And remember, the story does not end when legislation is passed; it is only the beginning. Think about how many states have passed legislation that just stays “on the books” because there is no political will behind it. Also, remember that legislation does not always have to be the answer. Be mindful of the politics in your state and understand how the educational system works in your state. Look for powerful options outside of legislation that can be used to strengthen the dyslexia identification services and teacher training options in your state. Get to know the players and find an inside champion. Remember, if approximately 15% percent of the population is dyslexic, you have many hidden champions in critical positions who can help you. Your job is to find them.

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