



# Ohio

## Dyslexia Pilot Project Years 1 and 2

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DECEMBER 2014

Dyslexia Pilot Project (House Bill 53), Year 1 and 2 Evaluation and Recommendations

Ohio law established Ohio's Dyslexia Pilot Project in December 2011. The pilot's primary goal was to evaluate the effectiveness of early screening and reading assistance programs for children at risk for reading failure—including those showing risk factors associated with dyslexia. A secondary goal of the pilot project was to determine if early screening and reading assistance programs can help reduce the costs of providing special education.

Enclosed is the executive summary of a report on the pilot project, due to the Ohio General Assembly by Dec. 31, 2014. Below are my findings and recommendations based on a review of the report.

1. **Finding:** High-quality professional development for teachers is critical to success for students who are at risk of reading failure.

**Recommendation:** Implement foundational, evidence-based reading instruction; multi-sensory language instruction (language instruction engaging multiple physical senses) and specific reading intervention programs tailored to the kinds of support each child needs. Bolster teachers' skills and knowledge through comprehensive, ongoing professional learning opportunities rather than occasional one-day workshops.

2. **Finding:** School districts were more successful in establishing systems that can support the needs of every student when district leaders championed the initiative.

**Recommendation:** Districts should develop a system of tailored instruction and intervention that can serve the diverse needs of their students. Such a system will feature screening for every child. It also will feature ongoing monitoring to identify students at risk for reading failure and address their literacy needs proactively.

3. **Finding:** The Dyslexia Pilot is in its third year of implementation. The pilot has not been implemented long enough to determine the impact on special education costs.

**Recommendation:** Ohio needs to continue the Dyslexia Pilot Project, basing it on what we know has succeeded with students in the first pilot. A future Dyslexia Pilot Project should have a more clearly defined model for teacher professional development. These teacher learning opportunities must be based on multi-sensory language instruction; foundational, evidence-based reading instruction and specific reading intervention programs within a system that can provide support for every student. The next Dyslexia Pilot Project should develop a statewide network of qualified trainers to provide on-site teacher professional learning opportunities, particularly in school districts outside Ohio's urban regions.

Respectfully submitted,

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## Evaluation of the Dyslexia Pilot Project (House Bill 96): Years 1-2

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Submitted by:

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Ohio's Dyslexia Pilot Project was established by House Bill 96 and signed by Governor Kasich in December 2011. The primary goal of the Dyslexia Pilot Project was to evaluate the effectiveness of early screening and reading assistance programs for children at risk for reading failure including those students exhibiting risk factors associated with dyslexia. A secondary goal of the Pilot Project was to evaluate whether effective early screening and reading assistance programs could reduce future special education costs.

To enable school districts to have a strategic plan in place to meet the needs of children at risk for reading failure, the Ohio Department of Education selected eight school districts to participate in the Dyslexia Pilot Project based on the merit of their proposals. Participating school districts were required to make a three-year commitment (2012-13, 2013-14, and 2014-15) to design and implement a tiered model of reading instructional support that utilized a multi-sensory structured language approach to instruction. School districts were required to select and administer technically adequate (i.e., reliable, valid, useful) assessments of phonological processing and rapid naming skills for the purposes of screening, intervention planning based on student's skills, and progress monitoring. Screening, early intervention, and progress monitoring activities were expected to focus on kindergarteners in Year 1 (2012-13), kindergarteners and first graders in Year 2 (2013-14), and kindergarteners, first, and second graders in Year 3 (2014-15).

As part of the Dyslexia Pilot Project, school districts were also required to provide professional development in evidence-based reading instruction and multi-sensory structured language instruction to teachers (general education and intervention specialists) serving students in kindergarten through second grade. School districts were also required to communicate to parents: (a) their child is eligible for reading intervention services through the Pilot Project, (b) the district's process to obtain parental consent for the student's participation in the Pilot Project, and (c) information about dyslexia, recommended multi-sensory structured language supports and possible services under state and federal law.

School districts were renewed for funding on an annual basis contingent on their implementation of the core components of the Pilot Project. Six of the eight school districts provided evidence of implementation sufficient to earn them a second year of funding. The six participating school districts in Years 2 and 3 (2013-14 & 2014-15) included Cincinnati Public Schools (Hamilton County), Edison Local School Districts (Jefferson County), Indian Creek Local School District (Jefferson County), Medina City School District (Medina County), Shawnee Local School District (Allen County), and Trimble Local School District (Athens County).

Findings from the annual evaluations of implementation and outcomes for Years 1 and 2 were positive and point to many successes in screening and serving students at risk for reading failure. The Dyslexia Pilot Project met four of its objectives of having participating school districts: (a) choose technically adequate standardized curriculum-based measurement assessments for the purposes of screening, intervention planning, and progress monitoring; (b) implement universal screening using curriculum-based measurement assessments for benchmarking for the selection of students for intervention at the kindergarten level in Year 2 (2013-14); (c) communicate effectively to parents all aspects of the district's Pilot Project; and (d) provide professional development to K-2 teachers (general education teachers and intervention specialists) in the implementation of core evidence-based reading instruction, multi-sensory structured language instruction, and specific reading intervention programs within a tiered system of supports. The Dyslexia Pilot Project partially met its objective of having participating school districts demonstrate accelerated rates of student learning in response to evidence-based, multisensory-structured language instruction and increasingly intensive interventions. With each of these objectives, implementation practices varied among the six school districts in the Pilot Project. Student outcomes were more positive among the school districts with the strongest implementation of screening, core instruction and intervention support for students, and professional

development for teachers. Findings and recommendations for improving implementation in each school district are presented in the evaluation report.

The degree to which the Dyslexia Pilot Project lead to reductions in future special education costs will be evaluated in Year 3 of the Pilot Project when the impact of screening and intervention in kindergarten (Year 1) and kindergarten and first grade (Year 2) will be more likely to be detected in terms of special education eligibility rates.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As a pilot project, House Bill 96 created an opportunity for select school districts in Ohio to build their capacity to meet the needs of children at risk for reading failure including those students exhibiting risk factors associated with dyslexia. Findings from the annual evaluation of the Dyslexia Pilot Project inform future efforts in Ohio, as outlined in the following recommendations:

1. High quality professional development for teachers was critical to successful outcomes for students at risk of reading failure. It is recommended that the implementation of core evidence-based reading instruction, multi-sensory structured language instruction, and specific reading intervention programs within a tiered system of supports be bolstered through effective, comprehensive, and sustained professional learning opportunities for teachers (i.e., not a one-day workshop). The results of the Dyslexia Pilot Project indicate that a model for professional development should incorporate on-site (classroom-based) coaching in the implementation of multi-sensory structured language instruction to strengthen the core reading program along with professional development in multi-tiered systems of support.
2. A multi-tiered system of instructional and intervention supports featuring universal screening and ongoing progress monitoring was also key to identifying students at risk for reading failure and addressing their literacy needs proactively. It is recommended that school districts build their capacity to provide multi-tiered systems of support to provide early intervention matched to students' needs. The results of the Dyslexia Pilot Project indicate that school districts were more successful in their efforts to establish effective multi-tiered systems of support for students when the initiative was championed by the district leadership.
3. The current Pilot Project yielded valuable information regarding the essential components of a project designed to meet the needs of students at risk for reading failure in Ohio's schools. It is recommended that another iteration of the Dyslexia Pilot Project be initiated based on the factors shown to contribute to successful outcomes for students. A future Dyslexia Pilot Project would feature a more prescriptive model for the provision of comprehensive and embedded teacher professional learning opportunities for multi-sensory structured language instruction, core evidence-based reading instruction, and specific reading intervention programs within a tiered system of supports. A future Dyslexia Pilot Project would also further efforts to develop the capacity for a state-wide network of qualified trainers to provide on-site teacher professional learning opportunities, particularly in school districts outside of Ohio's urban regions.

To see the entire the report go to:

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Students-with-Disabilities/Specific-Learning-Disability/Dyslexia-Pilot-Project>