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Department of Education

Report to Colorado General Assembly: House Bill 08-1223

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Introduction

H.B. 08-1223 requires the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), as part of its responsibility for supporting literacy instruction, to provide support and training to educators regarding students with literacy challenges, including dyslexia. These services are a part of the department's technical assistance to school districts, administrative units, residential treatment facilities, youth services facilities, and local education agencies in a coordinated effort with teacher preparation programs at institutions of higher education. S*ee* section 22-2-133, C.R.S. The statute also requires the department to annually report its activities and status of technical assistance and training to the Joint House and Senate Education Committee and the State Board of Education.

Literacy Technical Assistance

Overview

The department's support for literacy mainly occurs through two units at CDE: the Teaching and Learning Unit (TLU) and the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU). The areas of focus for the department's literacy work in the 2024-25 school year have been supporting districts with their implementation of READ Act assessments that include dyslexia screeners as well as providing training for teachers, principals and administrators in evidence-based practices in literacy. CDE has continued implementation of the Colorado READ Act (H.B. 12-1238 and S.B. 19-199) and literacy training for teachers who serve students with disabilities. In addition, the department has continued to support the Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) since the conclusion of the dyslexia pilot program, authorized by H.B. 19-1134. The final year of the dyslexia pilot program was completed in May 2023. While the department produces a separate annual report regarding the Dyslexia Working Group, a high-level overview of the DWG's work is provided in this report due to its relevance.

Dyslexia Working Group

During the 2019 legislative session, the Colorado General Assembly passed H.B. 19-1134 which initiated a Dyslexia Working Group (DWG) and authorized the department to support a dyslexia pilot program, see section 22-20.5-103, C.R.S. The DWG has seven responsibilities outlined in statute:

- Analyze current national and statewide data related to students identified as having dyslexia, including but not limited to identification rates and achievement rates;
- Analyze the implementation and demonstrated effectiveness in other states of statewide legislation for dyslexia screening, educator training, and other dyslexia related laws;
- Identify and recommend appropriate dyslexia screening tools and processes as well as comprehensive assessments that address the recognized challenges of dyslexia, including phonological processing, phonemic awareness, and decoding and encoding skills;
- Identify and recommend a statewide plan for supporting students who are identified as having dyslexia, including specific intervention structures and their components, which must include evidence-based interventions, progress-monitoring systems, and data collection systems;
- Identify and recommend components of dyslexia awareness training for Colorado educators, including the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost;

- Identify and recommend educator training for in-state approved programs of preparation for teacher and alternative teacher programs and recommended training for current educators, based on effective practices in other states, as well as recommendations from state and national organizations focusing on literacy. The recommendations concerning educator training may include the content, target audience, time frame for training, and projected cost; and
- Provide recommendations to CDE concerning the design and implementation of the dyslexia pilot program.

The DWG completed its sixth year of work during the 2024-25 school year. The DWG recommendations from the year 6 report include the following:

Recommendation #1: Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Monitor the READ Act

The DWG recommends that LEAs monitor the READ Act designation status (in compliance with S.B. 19-199 and S.B. 22-004) of instructional staff to ensure that the most highly trained staff provide instruction and intervention for the most struggling readers (i.e., students identified with significant reading deficiencies). This recommendation would apply to:

- Secondary classroom teachers;
- Grades 4-5 in elementary settings;
- Special Educators; and
- Anyone working with students on READ plans who receive tutoring or intervention services.

CDE Update on Recommendation #1:

The current READ Act statute requires training for K-3 teachers, 4-12 instructional specialists, and K-3 administrators/principals, 22-7-1208(6) C.R.S., who are providing direct literacy instruction. In addition, local education providers must report on these requirements to the department annually certifying compliance.

Recommendation #2: Identification of Resources

The DWG recommends the identification of resources for a wider variety of stakeholders (e.g., parents of children newly identified for services, teachers, stakeholders in remote locations). These resources can extend what is already required for districts to provide (i.e., pursuant to statutes and rules). To this end, the DWG recommends that CDE: a) update the CDE Dyslexia Handbook to include resources for administration, teachers, families, and the community taken from the CDE-provided online READ Act training resources available through the coursework for the READ Act training designation; and b) create a vetting protocol with stakeholder groups (e.g., ALTA, IDA, The Reading League Colorado).

The DWG also continues to recommend the identification and dissemination of a list of venues/trusted partnerships that make vetted resources available to their stakeholders to broaden their reach and increase the access to reliable resources for stakeholders (e.g., parents with children newly identified for services; teachers working with parents of children receiving services; school personnel; children receiving services; and, including all stakeholders in underserved areas).

CDE Update on Recommendation #2:

The CDE Dyslexia Handbook is updated regularly and contains resources for key stakeholders throughout.

The CDE formed a Literacy Leadership team to analyze the quality, quantity, and appropriateness of external dyslexia resources linked on the CDE website. This work resulted in a redesign and reorganization of CDE dyslexia resources on the CDE dyslexia webpage and a communication plan on disseminating external dyslexia related resources.

The CDE dyslexia webpage was restructured and redesigned to make resources more accessible to a variety of stakeholders. This reorganization included creating one page to hold dyslexia information, internal and external links related to dyslexia, and the dyslexia working group information on one page. Additionally, resources are now consolidated and organized by user groups.

Recommendation #3: Screening Process

S.B. 25-200 was signed into law by Governor Polis in May 2025. The READ Act was amended to include a requirement that all K-3 students undergo an additional dyslexia screener. Universal dyslexia screening begins in the 2027-28 school year, beginning with kindergarten. The DWG recommends adding the next grade level in each additional school year and screening all students who have not previously been screened until all students in grades K-3 have been screened.

The dyslexia screener shall comprehensively evaluate the following components of literacy:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Letter Identification
- Grapheme-phoneme Correspondence
- Encoding
- Fluency
- Oral Language
- Rapid Automatized Naming

The DWG also recommends that local education providers begin this screening process before the 2027-28 school year, to lessen the lasting impact of dyslexia on unidentified students.

Additionally, the DWG recommends that local education providers prepare and create a clear structure and protocol before the implementation of a screener to train teachers, interventionists, and Special Educator providers to:

- Read and interpret data;
- Provide instruction and intervention that is multi-sensory, structured, direct, explicit, sequential, cumulative, evidence-based, with a systematic scope and sequence based on the Science of Reading;

- Monitor progress and implementation of instruction and intervention to improve the outcomes for students.

CDE Update on Recommendation #3:

The CDE published guidance detailing the timeline of implementation of 25-200. Additional guidance, technical assistance, and action from the CDE will follow the READ Act Assessment Review, SBE approval of recommended assessments, and any Rule making approved by SBE.

Recommendation #4: Working Group to Integrate the Component of the Science of Reading within RANDA

The DWG continues to recommend that CDE form a group (working group, task force, or other committee) of essential stakeholders (CDE licensure representatives, administrators, teachers, RANDA developers, CDE DWG, CALT, post-secondary education representatives, etc.) to integrate the component of the Science of Reading within evaluation performance criteria (RANDA) for all staff professional evaluations. The group should support the integration of the science of reading into teacher evaluation rubrics. Teacher evaluation rubrics are housed in district-selected platforms, and while many districts use RANDA, not all do. Any integration of the Science of Reading should therefore apply broadly to teacher evaluation rubrics, regardless of platform.

CDE Update on Recommendation #4:

The CDE provides several principal evaluation walk-through rubrics/tools focused on teaching the five components of literacy and oral language. These tools are connected to turnkey literacy trainings Local Education Providers can utilize for job-embedded professional development and evaluation.

Additionally, the CDE has responded to the Dyslexia Working Group's requests this year to further explore educator evaluation requirements, endorsements, and requiring specific qualifications of personnel. An individual from the CDE Educator Preparation Office is scheduled to present to this year's Dyslexia Working Group in order to build background and to answer questions specific to this recommendation.

Recommendation #5: Dyslexia Therapist/Specialist Endorsement

The DWG continues to recommend that a dyslexia therapist/specialist endorsement, license, or designation (pool of specialists) through accredited college, university or national accreditation/certification such as ALTA-CALT, CALT-QI, or OGA Fellow, be established through the Colorado Department of Education.

CDE Update on Recommendation #5:

CDE staff from the Educator Talent division oversee the licensing and educator preparation endorsement standards process. Staff will meet with the Dyslexia Working Group in March 2026 to discuss the need for and requirements of a new endorsement area in relation to the current endorsements that have detailed reading standards. Updates to current endorsement standards, as well as a potential new endorsement, would be considered through a stakeholder process including K-12 leaders, practitioners, advocacy groups, educator preparation leaders, and CDE content experts. If a need is determined for updating an existing endorsement area's standards or the creation of a new endorsement area, that process could happen and then a recommendation for rule revisions would be taken to the State Board of Education for adoption.

Recommendation #6: Criteria for Dyslexia Screeners

The Dyslexia Working Group wants to emphasize that the vendor rubric for dyslexia screening criteria included in approved READ Act interim assessments - developed by CDE - must specifically include the following elements, and that any vendor's universal dyslexia screener must meet these criteria before being considered for outside evaluation.

- In the identification of students who are at risk of reading difficulties:
    - Accurately and reliably identify students who are at risk of reading failure or reading disorders; and
    - Directly measure reading competency skills, including, but not limited to:
        - Phonological and phonemic awareness;
        - The alphabetic principle;
        - Encoding and word-decoding skills;
        - Letter naming;
        - Oral reading fluency; and
        - Rapid automatized naming.
- Meet established validity and reliability standards.

In addition, the rubric must ensure that there are clear grade-level guidelines related to characteristics of dyslexia for the available screening measures included in the READ Act interim assessments.

CDE Update on Recommendations #6:

The Elementary Literacy and School Readiness Office are conducting reviews of READ Act assessments in 2026. The review of assessments will include the criteria for universal dyslexia screening outlined in SB25-200. The State Board of Education will take action in the fall of 2026 to approve READ Act assessments.

Recommendation #7: Quality Literacy Instruction

The DWG strongly recommends that special education paraprofessionals should not be primarily responsible for delivering literacy instruction to our highest-need students. Instead, the DWG advocates that special education teachers or the most qualified literacy teacher in the building be responsible for delivering multisensory, explicit, structured, systematic, sequential, direct instruction, while the paraprofessional be trained to help the student practice and receive immediate automatic feedback of already taught content. Current outcomes highlight this urgency: in 2023–2024, only 13.3% of third graders, 11.3% of fourth graders, and 11.6% of fifth graders on IEPs met or exceeded expectations on the CMAS ELA, with a declining trend across grades. In 2024-25, 14.4% of third graders, 12.1% of fourth graders, and 11.8% of fifth graders who have IEPs met or exceeded expectations on the CMAS ELA.

CDE Update on Recommendation #7:

Statute requires teachers employed to teach reading to grades K-3 and reading interventionists for grades 4-12 to successfully complete evidence-based training. Districts determine which educators must complete the training based on function and duties of the position related to providing reading instruction. Local Education

Providers can elect to ensure their paraprofessionals who are supporting teachers with reading instruction take the READ Act reading training and/or additional training to support reading instruction.

Recommendation #8: Compulsory Kindergarten Attendance

The DWG recommends that attendance in kindergarten should be made compulsory for all students before entering first grade.

CDE Update on Recommendation #8:

Although compulsory attendance is outlined in C.R.S. 22-33-104, identifying students aged six years on or before August 1 as the mandatory age, attendance in kindergarten is not compulsory unless the student is age six. This recommendation requires a legislated change.

Recommendation #9: Guidance for Implementing a Mandatory Reading Skills Course

The DWG recommends that CDE provide guidance for implementing a mandatory reading skills course grounded in the Science of Reading - explicit, structured, cumulative, multisensory, evidence-based, and sequential. This course should supplement the standard ELA curriculum for secondary students identified as at risk.

CDE Update on Recommendation #9

Mandating additional training or courses would require legislative action. However, CDE provides several optional courses available to PK-12 educators, including:

- Online training and facilitator guides for “Building a Strong Foundation for Life Long Literacy Success” by Public Consulting Group;
- The Science of Literacy Series training, and
- The Biliteracy Professional Development Series.

Each is available for building instructional capacity and honing instructional skills that are scientifically and evidence based in teaching reading PK-12.

Teaching and Learning Unit Initiatives

The Elementary Literacy and School Readiness (ELSR) team at CDE provides support to Colorado districts, schools, and educators in effective reading assessment, instruction, and intervention through direct technical assistance and training as well as through online resources. This work includes supporting districts with the goals of the READ Act: early identification of and effective intervention for reading challenges for children in grades K-3. During the 2023-24 school year, the literacy team in the ELSR Office continued to provide professional development for teachers in their acquisition of scientifically or evidence-based practices in reading pursuant to changes to the READ Act prompted by the passage of S.B. 19-199.

K-3 Evidence-Based Teacher Training

The ELSR team continues the work related to the evidence-based training in teaching reading required by S.B. 19-199 for all K-3rd grade teachers who provide literacy instruction. In addition, an amendment to the READ Act, per S.B. 22-004, required that grades 4-12 reading interventionists who provide literacy instruction and K-3 school administrators (including principals) must complete training to meet the requirements of the READ Act

with reporting starting in 2023-24. CDE provides both an asynchronous online training course and a synchronous virtual-live training course at no cost to districts. The content for the online training course was developed by Public Consulting Group (PCG) in partnership with CDE staff, and the virtual-live course was developed by Keys to Literacy and is delivered by the ELSR team. The CDE ELSR team ensured that both courses align with the requirements of the READ Act and State Board of Education rules, as well as that the courses include a dyslexia component.

As of Fall 2025, over 28,000 individuals met the teacher training requirement and over 3,000 individuals met the K-3 school administrator training requirement. Moreover, 179 districts, 100% of districts, met the READ Act training requirements by the beginning of the 2025-26 school year. Of these, 53 districts, 30% of districts) met this requirement with state board-approved good cause extensions. Districts determine which individuals are required to complete the training requirements based on the job duties and functions of their roles.

In addition to providing two training options at no cost, the ELSR team developed an advisory list of six training options that meet the READ Act training requirements. The advisory list of training options provide similar content to the CDE-provided online reading training to meet the requirements of the READ Act. The courses include explicit instruction in scientifically and evidence-based reading instruction and address the literacy content required in the Colorado Elementary Education Preparation Standards. The ELSR team also developed an application process for districts and educator preparation programs to submit courses to be reviewed and approved to meet the READ Act training requirements.

More information about the READ Act training requirements can be found at READ Act Teacher & Administrator Training.

Professional Development Related to Early Literacy, Birth to Kindergarten

The Early Learning Language and Literacy Sequences, available through the Colorado Shines Professional Development Information System, are self-paced, online courses that provide teachers with background information on evidence-based strategies to promote language and literacy development, prevent future reading problems, identify potential reading difficulties early, and support struggling learners. These courses are available to Colorado teachers free of charge. The courses were hosted by the Colorado Department of Education beginning in the fall of 2014. When the Colorado Department of Early Childhood was created, hosting of the courses was transferred to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood. Over 24,800 early childhood educators have participated in this professional development opportunity since it began in the fall of 2014.

Technical Assistance Related to K-3 Literacy

The department's ELSR Office, through regional literacy consultants, provided ongoing literacy support and technical assistance to schools and districts across the state. The technical assistance consisted of support for data analysis, coaching, consulting, and professional development sessions as requested by schools, districts, and Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES).

- The department has updated the READ Act webpage, which now includes a newly developed Biliteracy Professional Development Series. This is a four-part course designed to provide participants with evidence-based strategies for teaching students in English and Spanish while working towards bilingualism and biliteracy. It is an open-source format designed to be accessible to anyone interested in learning more about best practices for providing biliteracy instruction in

Spanish and English. A note catcher corresponds to each course component for participants to capture their learning. Additionally, support documents and online resources are included to further participant learning. This self-paced course culminates with an optional assessment, providing two hours of CDE approved professional development. At this time, 63 educators have completed the assessment for the course to receive professional development hours. More information can be found at the Colorado READ Act webpage.

- The Early Literacy Assessment Tool (ELAT) Project, annually funded through the School Finance Act, included 145 districts and the Charter School Institute in the 2024-25 school year. The project annually funds licenses for a subset of approved READ Act assessments for districts and professional development on data analysis, data-driven instruction, mapping student assessment results to early literacy foundational skills, and effective progress monitoring. The ELAT project provides assessment licenses for Amplify's mCLASS DIBELS 8 and mCLASS Lectura. Participants also had the opportunity to access professional development offered through both in-person training and virtual webinars, which provided easier access for teachers in rural Colorado school districts. CDE worked with the Early Literacy Assessment Tool project vendor to develop guidance on the use of the additional screening measures available to support screening for indicators of risk, including dyslexia.
    - During the 2024-2025 school year, Amplify provided 280 professional development sessions at no cost to participating schools.
    - As a result, 70% of kindergarten through 3rd-grade students in ELAT participating schools achieved scores at or above benchmark on end-of-year assessments. This represented an increase of 22 percentage points from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, which is 15 percentage points higher than the national average. More information can be found on the Early Literacy Assessment Tool webpage.
- The Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant (ELG), established through the READ Act, provides competitive funding to local education providers to strengthen evidence-based K–3 literacy instruction and systems aligned to READ Act requirements. The grant supports districts and schools in implementing comprehensive early literacy plans, including high-quality instructional materials, professional development, literacy coaching, data-informed instruction, and implementation support. ELG is designed as a four-year grant, allowing grantees to build sustainable literacy systems over time while receiving differentiated technical assistance and monitoring from CDE.
    - Over the course of the four-year ELG cycle, Cohort 5 schools demonstrated a substantial reduction in the percentage of students identified with a Significant Reading Deficiency, decreasing from 38.6% in Year 1 to 24.2% in the final year of implementation, representing a 14.4 percentage point decrease. Additional information about the Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant is available on the CDE website.

Strengthening Public Awareness Around Early Literacy

The department's public information campaign, *Read. Learn. Lead. is* designed to raise awareness in both English and Spanish about the crucial role educators, parents, and communities have in supporting children to read by providing school and home environments that promote reading. Read. Learn. Lead's primary audience includes parents and caregivers of children ages 0-8, with a secondary focus on parents and caregivers of children ages 9-18.

Working with a Denver-owned marketing agency, CDE's *Read. Learn. Lead.* campaign included:

- A campaign website located at www.readlearnleadco.org that provides guidance and resources for parents and toolkits for schools, school districts, and community partners.
- Paid media efforts using social media, text messaging, digital advertising, and place-based media with materials at 173 sites and libraries across the State of Colorado.
- As of Jan. 16, 2026, 23 school districts have requested 25,000+ flyers, posters, and information cards to share with parents and families.

The targeted paid media effort generated over 11 million impressions in six weeks, yielding above-average click-through rates and email open rates exceeding 17%. Notably, the Spanish website garnered 85% of the more than 7,000 total website visits, highlighting strong engagement within Spanish-speaking communities.

Exceptional Student Services Unit Initiatives - Office of Special Education

The Office of Special Education (OSE) at CDE provided numerous professional learning opportunities for parents, general and special education teachers, special service providers, and other school professionals with responsibilities for addressing the needs of students with disabilities who demonstrate literacy challenges, including dyslexia. The OSE works closely with CDE's literacy team to ensure alignment with READ Act implementation efforts. These opportunities included workshops, online courses, webinars, seminars, and institutes developed to address the specific literacy needs of students with disabilities. The following section lists some key literacy activities provided by the OSE during the latter part of the 2024-25 school year and the beginning of the 2025-26 school year.

- **Autism Literacy Institute.** 13,564 (11.28%) students, ages 3 -21, are identified with autism spectrum disorder in Colorado school districts. 12,582 of those students are between 5-21 years old. An area of need for many students with Autism is literacy outcomes, particularly comprehension. This statewide institute was conducted by nationally recognized experts on literacy and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Dr. Christi Carnahan and Dr. Pam Williamson. The institute's content focused on an approach to literacy that included instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. Each aspect of literacy is linked to the unique cognitive, social, and communication issues inherent in ASD. Forty school-based providers participated in the Autism Literacy Institute in December 2025.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Online Webinars.** Two online webinars are available on the CDE Professional Development website that address the cognitive profiles common in ASD and their influence on reading comprehension, a total of 41 certificates were issued during 2025. One online webinar titled "Supporting Literacy in Individuals with Autism Through the use of Assistive Technologies" issued 100 certificates in 2025.
- **Braille Competency.** The OSE continues to support the state requirement for all new Colorado's public-school teachers of students with visual impairment to demonstrate braille competency within their first instructional year. Mentor support is offered to support the knowledge and skill set of reading and writing using the Unified English Braille Code. Over 20 individuals are impacted by braille competency initial and renewal requirements each fiscal year.

- **Communication and Emergent/Conventional Literacy of Students with Blindness/Low Vision**. Monthly virtual 90-minute sessions called Sound Bites were held in January-April and October - December 2025 Topics that addressed literacy for learners with visual impairment, including blindness, were: Understanding Field Loss in Children (April); READ Act: The Differentiated Pathway for Learners with Blindness/Low Vision (October); and the Low Hanging Fruit of Accessible Technology (December). Over 200 personnel have participated in these training events.
- **State Conference on Blindness/Low Vision.** The State Conference on Blindness/Low Vision was held on October 23-24, 2025, on the topic of Functional Low Vision Assessment and Strategies. Specific literacy assessment and specially designed instructional strategies were highlighted for learners with low vision. Over 80 Colorado teachers of students with visual impairments attended.
- **Perkins' Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Protocol.** A full day, in person training was held on November 13, 2025, on the Perkin's CVI Protocol with over 70 attendees. CVI is the leading cause of pediatric visual impairment in the USA and in Colorado. The new protocol is inclusive of literacy assessment specific to how best to provide text, photos, and visual images to learners with cortical / cerebral visual impairment.
- **Communication and Emergent/Conventional Literacy of Students with Deaf-Blindness.** The topic of the June 2025 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs was *After the Matrix: Assessment to Implementation for Students with Complex Communication Needs*. There were 13 early intervention/school district teams representing a child with symbolic language challenges. There have been follow-up sessions in November and December 2025 with four teams to check-in on the progress of these learners specific to their communication/emergent literacy knowledge and skill acquisition.
- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Hearing Impairments, Including Deafness.** The (OSE) implemented a comprehensive, customized approach to strengthening literacy outcomes for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH). This work included the launch of a new process for identifying Deaf students with significant reading deficiencies, paired with ongoing coaching to support effective intervention and progress monitoring. OSE also sustained a regional training and mentorship model designed to support Teachers of the Deaf in the use of evidence-based assessment practices and literacy instruction aligned with the science of reading. To further address accessibility and literacy-specific needs, OSE offered Online Deaf Education Office Hours focused on instructional access, assessment considerations, and the unique needs of students with limited auditory access. In addition, three follow-up Zoom sessions that supported an in-person training held in June of 2025, were provided to deepen implementation of a multisensory approach to literacy aligned with the science of reading, supporting 74 D/HH professionals working with students across 23 districts statewide. OSE also hosted a three-day Visual Phonics course for 39 D/HH professionals representing 25 districts, specifically designed to support literacy instruction for students with no auditory access.
- **Customized Technical Assistance Specific to the Literacy of Students with Significant Support Needs:** Staff from Dynamic Learning Maps provided a two-day training in September 2024 on the topic of *Using Data to Make Instructional Decisions for Students with the Most Significant Support Needs*. The training was designed for teachers and administrators who instruct students on the alternate achievement standards and have alternate test results from the previous year(s). This

session focused on the different types of data available to guide reading instruction and how to use data to develop and implement instructional plans utilizing DLM's mini maps. Twenty-five teachers participated in this training and follow-up coaching sessions will be provided in the Spring of 2025.

- **Significant Support Needs (SSN) Network.** The Significant Support Needs (SSN) Network Team conducted two virtual book study opportunities (Spring and Fall 2024) highlighting the text *Comprehensive Literacy for ALL: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities to Read and Write*. The team provided 4 sessions with up to 12 teachers in each session. A total of 75 teachers completed the book study during the 2023-2024 school year.
- **Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conference.** Three ESSU presentations were provided at the Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) Conference on the following topics: (a) encouraging communication between school and home; (b) encouraging student communication and literacy; and (c) understanding the Expanded Evidence Outcomes (EEO) and their link to instruction, and how to incorporate them into literacy and math activities at home. The PEP Conferences were held in May and October 2025 with over 200 parents in attendance.
- **Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Professional Learning Specific to Literacy:** The Office of Special Education (OSE), in collaboration with the Office of Elementary Literacy and School Readiness (OELSR), provided 9 hours of professional learning to approximately 1,800 educators through one-hour virtual sessions. The learning focused on the appropriate use of academic and language proficiency data to inform instructional and programmatic decisions, culturally and linguistically appropriate multitiered systems of support, culturally sustaining literacy instruction, and high-quality evidence-based literacy instruction for multilingual learners.

  The Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Specialist delivered three 45-minute training sessions to approximately 30 educators in Durango on using like-peer comparative data and developing linguistic profiles to support multilingual learners, including those with disabilities, in accessing and benefiting from English reading instruction. The specialist also provided two two-hour sessions to NE BOCES focused on culturally and linguistically responsive data collection to ensure appropriate instruction for multilingual learners identified with or suspected of having educational disabilities.

  In June 2025, OSE, in collaboration with OELSR and Fort Lewis College, hosted the annual two-day conference *Multilingual Learners: A Collaborative Approach to Success* for approximately 130 educators statewide, with a focus on culturally responsive data collection and instruction for multilingual learners identified with or suspected of having specific learning disabilities
- **Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities: Technical Assistance Support.** The department's Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities Specialist provided technical assistance to 10 Administrative Units around best practices for literacy instruction to multilingual learners identified with and suspected of having Specific Learning Disabilities in reading and writing.
- **Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities: Linguistically Responsive Data-Based Instructional Decision-Making.** The OSE, in collaboration with the ELSR office, has provided 20 hours of professional development and consultation around the sound use of Like-Peer Comparative Data for appropriately interpreting literacy data for Multilingual Learners. This is an ongoing project

that also involves consultation with district leaders (approximately 20) and professional learning sessions offered at 6 statewide events, 10 separate AU events.

- **Specific Learning Disability Online Literacy Courses.** In August 2024 the courses Assessing, Preventing and Overcoming Reading Difficulties (APORD) and Equipped for Reading Success (ERS) were transitioned to an on-demand format for participants to access at any time. Participants who engaged in these courses were provided with a comprehensive learning experience encompassing research, critical elements of assessment, and intervention to remediate reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Over 200 certificates of completion have been issued since the courses were made available on demand.
- **Specific Learning Disability In-Person Training.** The Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Specialist delivered multiple trainings throughout the state, including District 49, Durango, Northeast BOCES, and Uncompahgre BOCES, totaling over 100 attendees. The training focused on the use of student reading data to make instructional and evaluative decisions, focusing on using rate of improvement to identify students at risk. The presentation included information about what data are most meaningful when evaluating a student's performance.
- **The Statewide Assistive Technology Augmentative Alternative Communication (SWAAAC) Program.** The SWAAAC program, which receives significant funding through CDE's Exceptional Student Services Unit's Office of Special Education, offered the following professional development opportunities addressing literacy:
    - **Que Pasa con Bilingual AAC for the Monolingual SLP?** Rui Hernandez and Ivonne Aguirre-Hernandez presented an overview to 57 participants in a live virtual webinar. They offered bilingual AAC options and strategies for personalizing AAC vocabularies, including literacy intervention with an AAC user. Attendees learned practical techniques for developing engaging, relevant, and fun lesson plans that foster AAC language skills in Spanish and English. The webinar covered how to identify AAC communication partners and cultural contexts that enhance effective implementation. The session was recorded and has been viewed an additional 68 times.
    - **Creating a Communication Ecosystem in Schools: Welcome to Our Jungle! Presenters.** Rachel Butler explored strategies for developing a collaborative, multimodal approach to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) implementation in educational settings. Fifty-three attendees learned about defining communication ecosystems, implementing classroom-based AAC supports, and addressing challenges like device abandonment and generalization. Through practical examples, case studies, and evidence-based practices, participants will gain actionable insights to foster inclusive communication environments that engage students, educators, and families.

- **Art for ALL! Inclusive by Design**. Heidi, an Occupational Therapist and Assistive Technology Specialist, presented this session to 50 attendees. She emphasized that authentic participation in art is essential to help students, including those with disabilities, develop skills in the areas of complex problem-solving, cognition, physical development, access methods, social skills, critical-thinking, agency, self-expression, and literacy to name a few. This session provided adaptive art projects that are inclusive in design and full of opportunities to practice emergent and conventional literacy skills, creative usage of AAC supports and switch access.
- **AAC All Day**. Supporting Communication for Students with Complex Needs. The presenter, Stephanie Ekis, introduced a classroom-based model to 75 attendees. The session was designed specifically to help school team members support students with complex communication needs to develop language, literacy, and social skills development using both low and high-tech solutions. Participants learned how to assess current communication skills, identify needs, select appropriate goals for the academic environment, recognize AAC implementation opportunities, and track progress over time.
- **Statewide Conference for Assistive Technology and Education.** In June 2025, the Statewide Conference for Assistive Technology and Education hosted 353 attendees with 149 representing Colorado School Districts, Administrative Units and BOCES. Breakout sessions included literacy related topics in the following sessions:
  - Joy Sparks Learning: Creating Student-Led AAC & Literacy Adventures.
  - The Write Stuff: Necessary Considerations for Successful Writing Instruction
  - Beyond Words: Integrating AAC to Support Speech, Language, and Literacy in Students with Speech Sound Disorders
  - AAC All Day: Supporting Communication for Students with Complex Needs
  - AAC Literacy: Accessible Books in Grid
  - From Breakfast to Bedtime: Building Literacy Skills All Day Long
  - Innovative Tools for Success: Using AI and Assistive Technology to Support Teens with Dyslexia and EF Challenges
  - Enhancing Learning and Accessibility with E Ink Devices
  - Teaching Families Shared Book Reading to Support AAC

- **Structured Literacy Project:** During the 2024-25 school year, the OSE continued implementation of the Structured Literacy Project. The project has long-standing goals focused on significantly increasing the number of students in kindergarten through third grade who reach grade-level proficiency.
  - As required, a subset of data from 255 first-grade students was reported to OSEP and showed a positive reduction in the number of students reading well below proficiency by the end of the school year.
  - The data shows a positive downward trend in the percentage of first graders identified as well below benchmark, dropping from 33% at EOY 2023/24 to 29% at EOY 2024/25.

- The project continues its focus on at-risk early readers and students with disabilities and continues to focus on professional learning, coaching, and leadership training for teachers and instructional leaders. Each participating school accesses a literacy coach who works directly with teachers and supports principals as each participating school implements daily Structured Literacy routines and evidence-based strategies across all tiers of instruction. The OSE devoted one literacy specialist and three literacy coaches to the project during the 2024-25 school year.

Conclusion

CDE, the Dyslexia Working Group, school districts, educators, and parents continue to hold reading, especially in the early grades, as a high priority. The department remains committed to supporting educators, school leaders, and district leaders to advance the success of their instructional and intervention programs so all Colorado children have the skills they need to succeed in school and life. CDE will continue to collaborate across units and with stakeholders to support the needs of students who have literacy challenges, including those with dyslexia.