

House Bill 64 Task Force  
November 26, 2016

Madame Chairperson *Drummond*  
Members of the HB 64 task force

Quote from Dr. Benjamin Carson...."Anybody finishing second grade in the 1800s was completely literate." In his latest book he cited some questions from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade exit exam from the 1800s and said he doubted if today's college students could pass it.

Thank you for allowing me to express my thoughts. I'm a veteran of 27 years of elementary teaching in the Anchorage School District, most of it within Northern Lights ABC and Birchwood ABC. I retired in 2007 and continue to tutor full-time. I'm currently on the board of the Alaska chapter of the International Dyslexia Association.

I loved teaching here in Anchorage and Eagle River. I graduated from University of Alaska Anchorage and did my student teaching in Homestead School in Eagle River.

Actually, I was the last position filled on their new staff of Northern Lights ABC. That first year I had a Senator's son who was working and trying his best. He seemed bright but had extremely low skills. I sat him close to me, put well performing students next to him, gave him extra attention, and sent extra work home. He made almost no progress. By the end of the year he was tested and qualified for special education.

That first summer, I took the Year 1 Slingerland class. It was recommended to me by another colleague, who told me it would be the hardest class I ever took, but would help me reach students that most could not. Three days into the class the master teachers, Mrs. Nancy King and Mrs. Sue Heinz shared a video that forever changed my life and Tyler's. It showed the characteristics of a dyslexic child, and samples of their work such as writing etc. That was Tyler! I immediately called the parents up and told them, "If you will let me give Tyler one more test...I can put a name to his condition.

That summer started my new career off with a bang and changed his life for the best; but I was a new college graduate. I had my reading instruction just the year before. Why did I not understand about reading or learning disabilities? Dyslexia deficits in the brain cause slow and poor neural networks. These students must expend huge efforts to decode and read. It is exhausting work. If they aren't supported, they begin to think they are the problem; that they must be dumb.

The following year Tyler was placed into Baxter's multi-sensory classes. I saw some of his work a few months later. He was making fantastic progress. With the correct instruction, he thrived.

Years after completing the third year of the Slingerland, an off-shoot of the Orton-Gillingham instruction I received an opportunity to take the Lindamood Bell 5 day summer workshop. It is another foundational tool that gives an extra dose of auditory and visual interaction. I often use the LIPs portion of it for those students who are more tactile learners and it works with how the sounds of the words "feel" in their mouths. It is yet another tool to reach those that may learn differently.

<sup>can</sup>  
**You never stop learning in this field.** Currently most of my work is with dyslexic children, but a new a larger segment is English as a second language students. I'm supporting 9 students. Good instruction raises everybody. The new science of reading is incredible! It now helps us to diagnose correctly, and apply the remedy needed. Some students need a bigger dose of the remedy as we do not always learn at the same rate. My new explorations are in the apps and software that helps and assists our students. Mindplay is a new software that offers so much interactive practice. Other apps can assist on the iPad. Now I'm learning from David Kilpatrick how to incorporate deeper levels of phoneme practice; and Science indicates it will rapidly aid struggling readers.

Our native bush districts need this instruction, too. With their distance from populated areas and their high turn-over of teachers, I think the new technology we have now will be a boon to reach them via the internet, whether it is for reading instruction, conferences with a Q and A, or class interaction, etc. I have heard that Mrs. Judy Eledge has had some experience in this area.

Recommendations:

- 1) Teachers graduating from our Universities should be able to pass a test that demonstrates they can teach reading ; such as the Massachusetts Foundations of Reading test. I could pass it now...I couldn't in college.
- 2) Current teachers should have Scientific-based Reading classes offered with a window of time to pass a Mastery in Reading Foundations quiz.
- 3) Early detection of struggling readers is urgent. We can screen our 3-5 year olds with rapid naming identifiers.

Thank you for your time,

Janet Donnelly  
947-0145  
jdnorthernlights@gmail.com