



SAN MARCOS CIVIC FOUNDATION

July 30, 2010

Senator Robert F. Deuell, M.D.
Committee Members
Interim Committee on Dyslexia

Dear Sir and Madam:

The San Marcos Civic Foundation has as its focus teacher training for dyslexia. For 17 years the Foundation has assisted school districts in Central Texas by providing funds for Texas teachers to be taught the most effective methods in working with children with learning disabilities.

Currently, in Central Texas, we support 17 school districts providing approximately \$300,000 a year for these school districts to send teachers to professional high level trainings. The trainings attended by the teachers can be as short as a day or the commitment can last as long as two years.

The results of this type of support have enabled these districts to provide focused teacher intervention to the student with dyslexia. A side result has been that many of these teachers have obtained confidence and taken on management in districts to ensure that all children receive the highest quality of reading intervention.

Texas has a mandate which states that children with dyslexia must receive intervention however; there are no funds in most districts for teacher training or for identification of these students. The San Marcos Civic Foundation has for 17 years funded an unfunded mandate.

In many of the districts we support, the district has been able to create a model of identification and intervention strategies which ensure that no child suffers the effects of not being able to read. These districts have programs in place which ensure that every child is assessed and quickly move in to meet their needs. Another benefit to these district's is that reading scores increase and referrals to special education decrease.

The SMCF has an ardent desire that every student receive the type of services which research has proven work with a child with dyslexia. We have learned that well-trained professionals can address the needs of the child and also, relieve the homeroom teacher of the pain of a child in class he/she cannot teach.

Another avenue of our support has been to reach the student teacher graduating from Texas universities. For 5 years, we have provided instruction in Phonology to any elementary directed student teacher at Texas State University. Generally the response from these young teachers is "Why is the university not providing this information in our classes?" This is a question the SMCF has asked repeatedly over the years. Essentially, the universities in Texas are sending young teachers into the classrooms unprepared to provide reading instruction---to any child.



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SMCF supports many different instruction strategies. Our only guideline is that the training be research based systematic instruction.

Over the years, TEA Region 13 and TEA Region 10 have instituted and maintained excellent support for districts with workshops directed to addressing the various issues of dyslexia. Once again, there is very limited funding and the SMCF has assisted with funds to ensure the health of these initiatives.

We believe that the barriers to addressing the issue are:

1. Lack of precise, clear guidelines and information in the type of instruction which is critical for a child with dyslexia.
2. Limited or NO funds to train teachers in the methods which work.
3. Inadequate preparation of teachers at the university level.

Thank you for addressing this issue.

Sincerely,

Mary B. Davis
Trustees

Susan Hinton

Timothy M. Price

San Marcos Civic Foundation