

Task Force appointed to study a dyslexia education program

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Leonardtown, MD – Governor Larry Hogan recently appointed Lisa Blottenberger and Laura Schultz, State Leaders for Decoding Dyslexia, Maryland, to the Dyslexia Education Task Force charged with developing a Dyslexia Education Program and pilot for a Maryland public school district.

The Task Force also includes State Senator Joan Carter Conway; Representative Ann Kaiser; Marcella Franczkowski, the designee of the State Superintendent of Schools; Theresa Milio-Birge, representative from the Maryland Association of Boards of Education; Scott Smith, Superintendent of St. Mary's public schools, who represents the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland; Robin Szymanski, representative of Maryland State Education Association; Dr. Valerie Wilder, Kent County Schools, representative of Maryland School Psychologists' Association.

Governor Hogan designated Dr. Joan A. Mele-McCarthy, CCC-SLP, Chair of the Task Force. Dr. Mele-McCarthy is the Executive Director of The Summit School in Edgewater. Members also appointed by the Governor include: Mr. Ben Shifrin, Head of Jemicy School; Ms. Marty Sweeney, Head of Odyssey School; Amy Siracusano, Calvert County Public School Teacher; and Lavaunda Roundtree, Educational Support Services, LLC and Anne Arundel County Public School Teacher.

The Task Force requirements are:

- (1) to determine current practices for identifying and treating dyslexia in students in Maryland public schools;
- (2) to determine current practices for identifying and treating dyslexia in other states;
- (3) to determine the appropriate structure for establishing a dyslexia education program and make recommendations on:
 - (i) the feasibility of funding a dyslexia education program through the State Department of Education or alternative funding mechanisms and sources or both;
 - (ii) the methodologies that should be used to test students and identify dyslexia and pre-dyslexia tendencies in students;
 - (iii) the appropriate age to begin testing for dyslexia and pre-dyslexia tendencies; and
 - (iv) the best practices for treating and educating students identified as having dyslexia or pre-dyslexia tendencies; and
- (4) to develop a pilot program to initiate the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force in an appropriately limited geographical area.

The Maryland Task Force convened its work on September 17, 2015 – Maryland joins a number of other states including New Jersey, Connecticut and Virginia, working to improve literacy for students who are capable of learning to read and write, but who continue to struggle with these tasks in school.

Members of the public are invited to attend and provide input. Please contact Carmen Brown at 410-767-7197 or via email at carmen.brown1@maryland.gov at least 24 hours prior to the meeting to register to speak. Registration will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Speakers are encouraged to provide multiple written copies of their comments or any other documents supporting their oral comments.

Meeting Dates and Times:

September 17, 2015 - 10:00 – 1:00 p.m.
September 24, 2015 - 10:00 – 1:00 p.m.
October 8, 2015 - 10:00 – 1:00 p.m.
October 23, 2015 - 10:00 – 1:00 p.m.
November 6, 2015 - 10:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Location:

Center for Technology in Education
6740 Alexander Bell Drive
Columbia Maryland 21045