



## Legislation Plants Seeds of Change

**A**cross America we have a public school crisis. Too many students diagnosed with dyslexia cannot get an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If they do get an IEP, few teachers know how to teach a child with dyslexia to read. That is our problem. But within these simple statements lies a tragedy vast in dimension. Almost two million beginning readers will struggle to read in any proficient way. We all know the terrible consequences that follow.

The question is how do we fix this problem? Unfortunately, there is no easy solution. But the good news is that legislation at the state and national levels is beginning to plant the seeds of change.

In 2015, six states passed significant dyslexia legislation. Almost twenty other states have actively considered dyslexia legislation.

At the federal level, on December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that contains an important provision promoting evidence-based remediation for students who learn differently.

Compared to past years, this outpouring of activity is enormous and represents a historic opportunity to address the failure of our public schools to adequately serve students with dyslexia. Much of the credit goes to Decoding Dyslexia, a remarkable organization that has mobilized tens of thousands of parents who believe their children have a right to an effective education and know that their schools are not providing one.

Initially, this legislation focused on a range of issues—defining and recognizing dyslexia, screening, remediation, teacher training, and accommodations. Some legislation has included provisions for pilot programs to measure the success of screening and evidence-based remediation. While various proposals share similar components, almost no two are exactly alike.

Where legislation has been passed, a number of implementation issues have arisen. There is a shortage of educators who are adequately prepared to teach reading to children with dyslexia. Few of these laws have appropriated substantial funds to implement these reforms.

Our success will require strong partnerships and, at IDA, a recognition of the important role that Decoding Dyslexia has played in opening these new opportunities. Our IDA leaders need to understand that progress comes a step at a time. Perfect can be the enemy of good. So legislation that may not be ideal but improves conditions is legislation worth supporting.

We look forward to helping IDA play a stronger and more important role in accelerating the remarkable progress we are seeing. In doing so, we will strive to become better partners, not just with Decoding Dyslexia, but with our entire community of organizations that are working to give our children the gift of reading and the opportunities so crucial to a successful life.

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Chairman of the Board

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