

Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions Committee
“Developmental Perspective on Testing for Dyslexia”
October 13, 2015, 10:00AM
New Orleans, LA

Testimony of Mr. JJ Buquet
President
Buquet Distributing Co.
Houma, LA

Members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by thanking you for this opportunity to address you today and to share with you my experience with the learning disability we know of today as Dyslexia.

My name is JJ Buquet and I am the son of Jimmy and Glenn Lee Buquet of Houma La. My mother was a teacher in her early years and therefore had a background in the field of education. She knew what to look for and could sense when something wasn't right as my sisters and I proceeded through our formative educational years. When I was about 8 years old, my parents recognized that there was something wrong. They knew my sisters and I were doing our homework, were attending class, were behaving and participating. And yet, we were struggling. This was around 1974, 1975. My mother found a testing facility in Lafayette that was associated with Dr. Charles Shedd and his research with learning disabilities. It was then that my older sister, Andree, and I were both diagnosed with Dyslexia.

I wasn't quite sure what to make of all this at the age of 8 but I recall feeling a little relieved in knowing that my academic struggles were not simply the result of being “stupid”. Your self-esteem can be greatly affected in the classroom as other kids are whizzing through books and math problems and you can't seem to get past the first 3 sentences. So this revelation was a little comforting at first.

The problem was that the k-12 world, both public and private, had not really recognized the existence of learning disabilities in general much less something called Dyslexia. There were no accommodations in existence. Teachers had no understanding as to the nature of the problem much less as to how to help a child with Dyslexia. The school administrators had no understanding or appreciation for the problem and were quite frankly frustrated at the thought of having to deal with kids who fell outside of what they considered to be the normal educational process.

Needless to say, my parents, who were very involved in our educational formation, had to fight very hard and advocate strenuously on our behalf. But fight they did. They began to discuss this discovery of Dyslexia with other parents and quickly found out that many other parents were having similar struggles with their kids. Those parents had their kids tested. And soon, there was a small community of folks who all found themselves in the same situation. As I look back – they took a two pronged approach.

The first was to work within the educational systems to advocate for various accommodations. As you might expect, some administrators were more willing than others to help. I was fortunate. I was given extra time on tests, provided special meal plans, and given some in the classroom remedial training.

The second thing my parents did was to start a Saturday school program. Every single Saturday, from 8 to 12 – for 4 years, we all went to a site and were given intensive remedial training. But this was different from anything that you normally found in a regular classroom. The program utilized extensive multi-sensory methodologies. There was multiple one on one sessions running 30 to 45 minutes each.

I must tell you that it was this intensive remediation that made all the difference in the world. I believe that had it not been for the efforts and sacrifices of my parents and the others like them; I would not have gone on to college much less achieve an MBA from Tulane University.

The one thing I would really like for you to walk away with today is an appreciation for the fact that those with Dyslexia can and in deed do learn. We just learn differently. The cookie cutter, assembly line method of education simply does not work for a kid with Dyslexia. A system or methodology is needed that will not only recognize the existence of dyslexia, but provide for a set of accommodations and remediation that will allow for the child to realize their full potential.

I would like to again thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be here today and to thank you for taking the time to consider the academic needs of those with dyslexia and other related learning disabilities. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

JJ Buquet
President
Buquet Dist Company
Houma, La.