

Camas teacher offers hope for dyslexic students

□ Kelly Steinke receives \$1,500 grant to purchase specialized reading and spelling system

By Danielle Frost
Post-Record staff

Kelly Steinke was frustrated.

The Dorothy Fox Elementary School teacher was seeing several students who were having trouble with reading, but she couldn't put her finger on what was going on.

"I was pulling in reading specialists and doing tests and didn't know what was wrong," she said.

By chance, Steinke, who is nationally board certified to work with special education students, was talking with a parent one evening about her child's progress.

"She mentioned that he was dyslexic, and had a private tutor and I was jotting down notes," Steinke said. "I asked

my student about it the next day and he was very excited about what he was learning."

The child was using the Barton Reading and Spelling System, a Orton-Gillingham based, multi-sensory program designed specifically for dyslexic kids. Steinke contacted his tutor and learned more about it and dyslexia.

"I realized that this was exactly what many of my students needed," she said. "Most kids with dyslexia usually go undiagnosed, or are grouped into a general reading disability."

She said approximately 80 to 90 percent of the students she works with display some telltale signs of the disability.

Dyslexia affects a students' reading fluency, accuracy, spelling and can affect verbal expression, word use and the ability to remember certain facts.

"I have taught in three states and in 10 different schools and have never seen a school with specialized programming

Dyslexia Quick Facts

- Dyslexia is hereditary. Children with a dyslexic parent have a 50 percent chance of inheriting the disability.
- Dyslexia affects one in every five people in America.
- Reading disabilities are estimated to compromise 80 percent of all learning disabilities.
- Forty-percent of those with dyslexia have a secondary condition, such as Attention Deficit Disorder.
- Children are usually not identified as having a reading disability until the third or fourth grade.
- Children with dyslexia can be identified as early as 5 years old.

Source: www.readlearnservices.com

for students with dyslexia," Steinke said. "Most teachers know very little about it, yet it is the largest form of reading disability present in schools, and requires multi-sensory

instruction to train the brain to decode new words."

Steinke wanted to purchase the Barton system for her students, but lacked the funding to do so. Then, she

heard about the Camas Educational Foundation's mini-grant program, which awards money to teachers, community members and students who are pursuing projects to further learning.

Steinke applied for and received a \$1,500 mini-grant to purchase the Barton curriculum.

"She made a very convincing argument in her application and presentation to the grant committee, that the Barton Reading System will fill a gap in the tools she has available to help her elementary aged-students who have reading difficulties, such as dyslexia," said Patty Carlson-Kuhta, CEF mini-grant co-chair. "Since reading is so fundamental to achievement in all subjects, it is important to address these reading problems at a young age, before the students fall behind in their learning."

Steinke was very excited when she found out she'd gotten the grant.

"I think I had tears in my eyes,"

she said. "I want to say thanks to the Camas Educational Foundation for funding this program and offering students with dyslexia and reading disabilities hope. Students who haven't learned to read through traditional methods now have the opportunity to close the gap between their academic performance and grade level expectations."

Steinke selected three students to start using the program.

"I can't work with more than two or three at a time, but I'm hoping this will be a grassroots thing and we'll have volunteers come in to help," she said.

So far, the students have responded well to the multi-sensory program, which targets reading accuracy, fluency, spelling and writing skills.

"Students with dyslexia can be taught to read up to grade level," Steinke said. "This translates to increased student confidence and academic gains in all subjects that require reading."