

I am a parent of a child with dyslexia in Beaverton School District. I am writing to ask legislators to allocate funds to train teachers to teach students with dyslexia and the other 45% of learners who need direct, explicit, systematic instruction to learn to read. Based on the 2018-2019 district report card, in Beaverton School District only 62% of 3rd graders are reading at grade level. The literacy rate for students of color and in disadvantaged populations is significantly worse; with Black students at 34%, Hispanic students at 36%, Ever English Learners at 33%, and students with disabilities at 37%. Something must change in the way we are approaching literacy instruction in this state. Our state consistently ranks at the bottom of the list for education in this country. Teachers are not being trained in their teacher prep programs about the science of reading. They are not being equipped with the tools they need to adequately teach reading, especially to students, like my daughter, who need explicit, systematic instruction. Our schools do not have the resources to provide the instruction that is needed for students who struggle to read. As a result, families like ours, must seek support outside of school or send their kids to private school to receive the appropriate instruction that our children need. We estimate we have spent close to \$20,000 over the last seven years providing our daughter the explicit, systematic instruction. This has been a huge sacrifice for our family, although it was necessary. This type of instruction works, and as a 6th grader, she is now able to read at grade level. If her school had appropriately identified her needs in kindergarten and provided her with the support she needed from the start, our family could have avoided much of the stress and heartache that we have endured over the years. Instead, she was left to struggle for two and a half years before we took her for an assessment outside of the school. It wasn't until the middle of second grade when we started tutoring with a tutor that used an explicit, systematic approach when we saw improvements.

I am not advocating for my own daughter, I am advocating for the children whose families are not able to make sacrifices like ours to pay for private tutoring. These families are reliant on the schools for that education and we are leaving these kids behind because teachers do not have the training or resources to support these students.

In 2019, the state of Mississippi was the only state in the country to show an improvement in reading scores, according to the NAEP. The state allocated funding which trained all K-3 teachers with the LETRS program. It includes content in the five essential components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Much of this content is omitted from many of the teacher prep programs in Oregon. Portland Public School District is shifting the way they are approaching reading instruction, moving away from the balanced literacy approach, to a more structured approach in reading instruction. They are currently retraining a cohort of teachers with this program to fill in the gaps which are missing from teacher prep programs in this state. The demand is high with more than 150 teachers on the waitlist for the program in PPS. PPS is a leader in the state and sees the ability to read as a civil right.

If our state wants to rise in the ranks for education and improve the literacy rates, we must shift in the way we are approaching reading instruction. What we are currently doing is clearly not working and changes must be made. There is a shift nationwide as more districts and states are recognizing the true science behind how we learn to read, yet our colleges are still instructing our future teachers approaches which have been proven to fail. We must allocate money to ensure our teachers are being appropriately trained in science based reading instruction.

Pete Culligan