

April 22, 2021

Dear Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

I am writing to you as a literacy advocate. I was trained decades ago as an elementary and special ed teacher yet I was never educated about how to teach reading. It is a dirty and unbelievable secret, that many educators graduate from their teacher prep programs, ill-prepared to teach the most foundational of all skills: reading.

Please consider the data. In Oregon, only 50% of all children are reading proficiently. For BIPOC learners, the percentage is even worse – only 30% are meeting third grade benchmarks. I ask you to consider if insufficient teacher preparation could be a contributing factor?

Additionally, there are 80,000 teachers – 80,0000 - who follow a Facebook page, titled: The Science of Reading: What I **Should** Have Learned in College. While it is **wonderful** that so many teachers have come together to help strategize about best practices for teaching reading, I ask: would teachers choose to spend their time in this way, if they had been sufficiently prepared to teach reading?

Lastly, Portland Public Schools has recently offered its educators, a comprehensive professional development course called: Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading & Spelling. This coursework, also known as LETRS, is what many universities have neglected and omitted from their prep programs. Content such as: linguistics, phonology, morphology, etymology, syntax: the science of reading!

While this professional development training has been optional, more than **200** educators are participating in this foundational coursework and there are more than 150 educators on the waitlist. The demand has been **overwhelming**. Again, I ask, if teachers had been trained with evidence-aligned practices in reading, would so many teachers be taking on additional graduate level coursework during a pandemic?

My request is that the Oregon legislature, approve funding to train all K-5 educators for Oregon's lowest performing schools (TSI and CSI), in the LETRS professional development coursework, that PPS has made available to its teachers. Funding teacher education would be a meaningful investment. After all, teachers teach children, the curricula does not. Curricula is disposable and becomes

obsolete. Teacher training will last for the lifetime of every teacher. Thank you for considering this recommendation.

Sincerely,

Lisa Lyon
Portland, OR