

Good evening.

My name is Shahnaz Sahnou, and I am an elementary reading specialist at a Title I school in Corvallis. I'm here tonight to talk about the critical need for training teachers in the science of reading.

NAEP data shows 36% of Oregon 4th graders are not proficient in reading. Let me also point out that forecasting for prison beds is based on 3rd grade reading proficiency. What's more...Oregon's literacy data shows little improvement over the past 25 years.

Let me be clear that this is not due to teachers who don't care or don't work hard. Teachers care more and work harder than you can fathom. But we are not equipping teachers with the right tool for reaching and teaching ALL of their students. I am talking specifically about training teachers in the science of reading.

During the same decades in which we as an education system were unable to effect large improvements in literacy rates, what was happening in the neuroscience world was incredible advancements in understanding how the brain works, and the application of this knowledge to the world of teaching reading is life-changing for students learning to read. Based on the neuroscience of reading, we know that structured literacy is essential for some, and beneficial to ALL.

This is also a racial and economic equity issue. Ensuring that teachers are trained in the science of reading is a critical component of dismantling systems that disproportionately negatively affect our Black, Indigenous, and students of color as well as students navigating poverty. When teachers and schools aren't equipped to teach reading in a way that reaches all students, what happens is those students from well-resourced families turn to help from outside the school, often paying up to \$100/hour for private tutoring. Compare that to what our marginalized students have access to. By not ensuring that all of our teachers are trained to teach reading based on the science of reading, our own education system is further exacerbating the gap between well-resourced students and students who are under-served.

Using the American Rescue Plan Act to fund training for K-12 teachers in the science of reading will rescue tens of thousands of Oregonian students from reading failure, which will have a lasting impact for generations to come.

Maya Angelou famously said, "Do the best that you can until you know better. When you know better, do better." It would be negligent of us as a system to know that there is a way of teaching reading that reaches ALL students but not ensure that our teachers learn it. Teachers are doing the very best they can. It is time to give them the tool that will allow them to know better and do better. I ask that you fund training for all Oregon teachers in the science of reading.