Families,

Do you know what primary method of reading instruction is used in your school or district?

This is important information to ensure that ALL students, including those with dyslexia, receive the foundational reading instruction necessary to reach their academic potential. If your school or district has realigned instruction with “evidence-based practices” or the “science of reading”, they have likely committed to realigning teaching practices with current science. There are several districts in the state who have provided training for classroom teachers with impressive results, but sadly, most districts are still committed to outdated practices, like Balanced Literacy, that have been proven to be ineffective. Washington state is one of the last states to address reading curriculum and instructional practices aligned with science. 32 other states have mandated that districts realign teaching practice.

You can advocate for effective reading instruction for students in your district. Begin by asking questions and then following up with a letter to your school board.

* Ask your classroom teacher, building principal, or the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for your district, what curriculum is used as the primary method of reading instruction for elementary schools.
* If information is unavailable or unknown, that is a red flag. Total transparency with a commitment to teacher training and sharing of data regarding student progress is a positive sign. This letter only needs be sent to districts committed to balanced literacy, and those districts where you can’t determine the primary reading curriculum.
* Message us from facebook or email [decodingdyslexia.wa@gmail.com](mailto:decodingdyslexia.wa@gmail.com) with curriculum information or with any questions. We plan to create a statewide database to track curriculum realignment.
* Use the letter template below as a starting point and tailor it to your specific district needs. Include reading proficiency data for your district from the link attached.

Thank you for your commitment to bring effective evidence-based reading instruction to all Washington school districts.

Decoding Dyslexia Washington

Members of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_School Board,

I (We) am (are) a parent(s) with students in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ School District. The Covid pandemic has allowed many parents to get a close look at educational strategies to teach reading. For decades, states and districts have relied on instructional strategies that are based on a balanced literacy approach. This method has been proven ineffective, does not align with current reading science, and continues to fail our students. Unfortunately, our district is committed to this strategy. We are clearly in the midst of a decades-long literacy crisis, independent of the Covid dip.

* According to National Association of Educational Progress data, most states, including Washington, have not seen any appreciable growth in reading proficiency rates for more than two decades (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/nation/scores/?grade=4>).
* 2022-2023 OSPI data for Washington state shows that only **50.7%** of our 4th grade students met standard. (<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>).
* Our district data shows that **\_\_\_%** of our 4th grade students met standard. (Select your district from the link above, find “ELA met standard”, write in the number, and then, copy and paste the web address).

Proficient reading is foundational for all other subjects and content areas. It is an essential foundation to gain access to grade level content. Proficient reading for all students should be the primary goal for any school. Our graduation rates and testing data tell us it is time to realign our instruction with proven methods.

Structured literacy is an approach to reading instruction that is aligned with science and provides a solid foundation for reading while supporting continued growth. The large majority of our students require explicit, direct instruction to become proficient readers. Universal structured literacy in tier 1 is a proven strategy not only to increase reading proficiency, decrease the need for additional intervention or referrals to special education, but it is also an effective method to manage services and balance budgets. In fact, it prevents the social emotional cost of repeated failures for our struggling students. There are many innovative districts in Washington who have effectively implemented structured literacy, have impressive growth in reading, and are willing models to help develop realignment strategies.

Our district educators are asking for training in structured literacy. We need to ensure our educators are equipped with the knowledge and instructional strategies that align with current science. I (We) would like to see the district commit to this training and honor our dedicated educators to advance their teaching. This is a critical step to address educational inequity.

I (We) believe this literacy crisis requires immediate attention to evaluate our curriculum. I (We) hope to hear from you soon regarding actions the district will take to address this crisis.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent (s)