

LONG VERSION: SPEAK UP FOR LITERACY

Good evening to you all; my name is _____ and I would like to talk about literacy instruction. Thank you all for taking on the responsibilities to improve student achievement and provide fiscal accountability for our school and taxpayers. What I have to say will interest you.

I will be referring to data from the New York State Department of Education and Education Consumers Foundation; you can find all of this in the brochure. But, first, the facts: did you know that illiteracy costs New York taxpayers around 3-billion dollars per year?

At our district _____ in 2019, _____% of third-graders were reading below grade level in total, and _____% were below basic (functionally illiterate).

Third-grade reading proficiency is the single most important indicator of a student's educational progress and the likelihood of academic success. Children who have not mastered reading by that point are educationally disadvantaged for a lifetime. Without remediation, they are unlikely to optimally benefit from their education or become all they could be in life.

Approximately _____ students from the 2019 third grade are predicted to drop out, and our district will have _____ unprepared graduates from that year, costing taxpayers an extra \$ _____ for healthcare, criminal justice, welfare and education over their lifetimes.

Yet, 95% (yes 95%) of ALL students with proper instruction have the capacity to become skilled readers and read at or above grade level.

In New York State in 2019, **55%** of 3rd to 8th-grade students read below grade level. In addition, **65%** of African American/Black students, **84%** of children in foster care, and **88%** of students with disabilities read below proficient (grade level) or were functionally illiterate.

This is Our Request: We respectfully demand that New York State discontinues funding for and dissemination of unproven and disproven teaching methodologies by publicly funded institutions. We respectfully demand the complete removal of balanced literacy, including but not limited to Reading Recovery, Leveled Literacy Intervention, Fountas & Pinnell, and Lucy Calkins Units of Study for all students from first to third grade. The scientific evidence shows that balanced literacy programs negatively impact our children.

We implore you to safeguard students' academic progress and the district's fiscal responsibility to taxpayers by investing in teacher training and mentoring. We ask for early screening and intervention and teacher training to ensure students at risk of dyslexia do not fall behind. Evidence confirms that 95% of ALL children can learn to read, WITH explicit, systematic, structured literacy to grade level and above. If we choose to continue using balanced literacy, we need to seriously ask ourselves how much of tax payer's money are we willing to misuse? How many lives are we willing to disenfranchise?

Thank you for your time.