

A4659

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY
MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION
submitted in accordance with Assembly Rule III, Sec 1(f)**

BILL NUMBER: A4659

SPONSOR: Simon (MS)

TITLE OF BILL:

An act to amend the education law, in relation to requiring the incorporation of structured, explicit, language-based approaches to literacy instruction into at least three credits of the six credits of literacy courses currently required for prospective teachers in accredited college of education programs.

PURPOSE OR GENERAL IDEA OF BILL:

This bill would require at least three credits of the required literacy classes for teachers to include structured, explicit, language-based approaches to teaching reading.

SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC PROVISIONS:

Section 1. Section 305 of the education law is amended by adding a new subdivision 57

JUSTIFICATION:

A lot happens in the brain as we learn to read. Brain studies over the last several decades have confirmed that the brain is not naturally "wired" for reading. According to renowned cognitive neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf, "Human beings were never born to read..." Rather, "Reading is a human invention that reflects how the brain rearranges itself to learn something new"(see *Proust and the Squid: the story and science of the reading brain*, 2007- New York: HarperCollins). Effective evidence-based approaches to teaching reading that are consistent with the brain science are well documented. Nevertheless, the most prevalent reading curricula (reflecting "whole language" or "balanced literacy" approaches) used in New York are based on the disproven assumption that children will naturally learn to read because their brains are wired for reading. Our consistently lackluster reading scores on standardized reading assessments demonstrate how this assumption has led to persistent reading failure and underachievement for decades. This is something we can and must change.

According to consistent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, only 38% of fourth graders read proficiently. This means that 62% are not. They do not all have dyslexia; they just need evidence based direct instruction in reading. Too many of the children we fail to teach to read proficiently fuel the school to prison pipeline, as studies from our prisons demonstrate.

However, reading does become an even more complicated and daunting task when letters, sounds and numbers become mixed up. Approximately 15% of children have dyslexia, a brain-based learning disability that makes word recognition, spelling and reading success a very difficult task. About 85% of children with learning disabilities have dyslexia making it the most prevalent

learning disability in children. Yet, most parents, teachers, and administrators have trouble recognizing its symptoms.

Nevertheless, we do have solutions to ensure that more students can learn to read, and it starts with how they are taught to read. Students without dyslexia need structured, evidence-based instruction in reading that is consistent with the science of reading - a structured, sequential, multisensory approach. Students with dyslexia and related learning disabilities need the same structured literacy approaches, but with more intensive multisensory, language based educational interventions in order to address their particular reading difficulties.

Every teacher needs to be a teacher of literacy. It is very important to include coursework for prospective and continuing teachers on the teaching of reading and writing. At least a 3 credit course should be devoted to the instructional techniques necessary for effective literacy instruction. All students benefit from structured, systematic, explicit, evidence-based instruction in reading. Prospective teachers need to be instructed on how to teach the components recommended by the National Reading Panel: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. They also need to know about language, all aspects of language, and the connections between oral language and written language. Teachers should also have instruction on how to explicitly teach writing. Prospective teachers need to be taught about assessment and instruction.

This bill does not require that any particular reading curriculum or textbook be adopted for use in colleges of education, but rather that teacher educators understand and be able to communicate that this is a perspective on the teaching of literacy that has been clearly proven effective for children of varying abilities from years of solid research and practice. Assessment for screening, instructional planning and progress monitoring should be an integral part of instruction and should be able to be performed by the classroom teacher as well as the reading specialist.

Entitlement decisions for special education purposes are, of course, made by an interdisciplinary team of professionals. When classroom teachers can assess and teach and see the relationships between their teaching and children's learning, they will better understand when and how children are having difficulty and any referrals that may be made to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team will be more fully developed and more helpful to the IEP team and the child.

Our teachers must be familiar with these best practices, structured literacy approaches in order to teach students to read, write and spell. Teachers need effective tools to do their jobs and unfortunately, our schools of education haven't been giving our teachers-in-training the tools they need to do this most important of jobs. According to the National Center on Teacher Quality, the vast majority of New York's colleges of education do not instruct their students in the science of reading or expose them to the five pillars of reading as set out by the National Reading Panel in 2000. See, <https://www.nctq.org/publications/2020-Teacher-Prep-Review:-Program-Performance-in-Early-Reading-Instruction>. In fact, in 2020, only 8 teacher education programs in New York were given an "A" rating. New York cannot allow this to continue.

The consequences of an inadequate education have a huge impact on our society. Children need strong foundational skills in reading and writing to become successful members of society. This legislation will improve school learning conditions so that all children can have an equal opportunity to learn and become college and career ready. In the long run, it will help save the state money and improve the lives of the students in our state, including students with dyslexia and related learning disabilities.