

Presentation on Resolution 4 IASB 2020 Delegate Assembly


Submitted by Avoca School District 37
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IASB Resolution- Video Presentation to IL School Boards

We have a reading crisis in Illinois. Two-thirds of our elementary school children are below proficient in reading. The science of reading has long been settled. It is past time for Illinois to act. Your vote for Resolution 4 is needed to support changes in teacher licensing requirements in our State.

Hello. My name is Louise Dechovitz and I am the Vice President of Avoca School District 37.



In Illinois
66% of 4th graders
65% of 8th graders

ARE NOT PROFICIENT IN READING

Source: NAEP 2019, www.nationsreportcard.gov

The literacy crisis in Illinois is unnecessary and fixable. In 2019, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, also known as “The Nation’s Report Card”, found that 25% of fourth graders in the United States are “below basic” in their reading skills. Two-thirds of this number are Black and Hispanic children. The NAEP also reported that in Illinois, 66% of our fourth graders and 65% of our eighth graders are BELOW proficient in reading. In addition, there has been no improvement in reading scores in Illinois in the last 10 years. Scores have actually dropped since 2017.



National Council on Teacher Quality

- Illinois ranked **32nd** in alignment to reading science
- **43%** of the State's university reading programs earned a grade of **"D" or "F"**

Source: NCTQ 2020 Teacher Prep Review, www.nctq.org

There is a science-based approach to fixing this problem, as dozens of other states have realized: incorporate what we know about evidence-based reading instruction into the training of teachers. However, Illinois is one of the few states NOT to have adopted this common-sense step.

Six decades of research by the National Institutes of Health has firmly settled how children learn to read. Yet, twenty years after achieving scientific consensus, most teacher preparation programs in Illinois rely on scientifically debunked instructional practices. Illinois ranks 32nd in the country for alignment to reading science, according to the National Council on Teacher Quality. Forty three percent of our state's reading programs earned a D or F for their coverage of the key components of the science of reading. This is inexcusable.



Teachers should be certified in the science of reading



Teachers must be empowered with an understanding of how children learn to read, why some students struggle, how to identify these children, and what can be done to change a child's literacy trajectory. We know how to fix the problem. Illinois can and must do better to improve its literacy rates.

We call upon the IASB to advocate for pre-service elementary, pre-K and special education candidates to take coursework in and pass a test on the science of reading. In order to do so, the IASB must support:



Literacy is an essential matter of educational justice



All children deserve to learn to read



All teachers deserve the proper training to fulfill this promise to our children



1. Knowledge-building in all teacher preparation programs, ensuring that aspiring teachers are well-versed in the scientifically supported methods of teaching reading, and
2. Anchoring reading instruction in the well-established scientific evidence base of the five essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

The coursework, validated by a passing score on Pearson's Foundations of Reading exam, will establish an undeniable credential that says our teachers are ready to close the reading gap and prepare our children for a prosperous future.

Providing teachers with the knowledge base to ensure their students become literate is an essential matter of educational justice. All children deserve to learn to read and all teachers deserve the proper training to fulfill this promise to our children.

What is more important in the fight for equity, access and opportunity, than to ensure that all children are taught to read?



In April 2020, the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that children have a constitutional right to learn to read. By sending teachers into classrooms without guaranteeing they have sufficient expertise in reading instruction, we are failing to live up to this constitutional right nationally, and in Illinois.

What is more important in the fight for equity, access and opportunity, than to ensure that all children are taught to read? With two-thirds of Illinois children testing below proficient in reading, we must acknowledge that our existing approach fails them. It is unfair to teachers to provide them with ineffective training. It is insufficient and unrealistic to expect school districts to compensate for a lack of training through professional development sessions.

Resolution Committee Concerns: Impact on state teachers' shortage



Teachers deserve the necessary instruction to equip their students for success

Lowering standards when it comes to early literacy costs us all much more later

The IASB Resolution Committee has three main concerns with our proposed resolution, which we would like to address directly.

First, the Committee is concerned that increasing standards to obtain a Professional Educator License will worsen the State's current teacher shortage. We recognize that the teacher shortage is a stark challenge in Illinois; but we believe that lowering the teacher licensure standards does not solve the teacher shortage. Rather than solving this problem, we risk devaluing the teaching profession, and jeopardizing the educational outcomes of our children. We believe that elementary and special education teachers enter the profession because they are passionate about creating lifelong readers. Teachers deserve the necessary instruction to equip their students for success. Lowering the standards is the not answer.

Resolution Committee Concerns: Imposes mandates on universities



This requirement does not increase costs to universities

It does not impose new college coursework, just scientifically supported college coursework

It saves districts and communities money in the long run

The Committee's second concern is in regard to taking a position on education programs at universities. Our resolution does not require any university to change its educational programming. However, if its graduates are to be licensed to teach in Illinois, those graduates must demonstrate that they know how to teach children to read. No one would dispute that teaching children to read is the most essential responsibility of an elementary school teacher. Without the assurance of a baseline level of teacher expertise, individual school districts face an enormous burden. They must operate a training cycle that is inefficient and costly, and they must assume the responsibility of providing professional development in reading methodology and pedagogy for every teacher hired, year after year after year.

Resolution Committee Concerns: Counters IASB's position on mandates



Engaging at the state level ensures equity because some districts can less afford to train teachers on the science of reading, causing inequitable outcomes which disproportionately affects those students who can least afford to be overlooked

The third concern of the Resolution Committee is that IASB prefers local flexibility over the premise of a mandate. Local flexibility is important with many issues, such as choosing which curriculum to adopt for a district. However, standards of licensing must be decided at the state level, as they are in other professions. In addition, engaging at the state level ensures equity because some districts can less afford to train teachers on the science of reading, causing inequitable outcomes which disproportionately affects those students who can least afford to be overlooked.

Any questions for Louise Dechovitz
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Esteemed school board members, we must not wait to safeguard our children's future and the future of our State. We urge you to support our resolution on behalf of the children of the state of Illinois and the teachers who serve them.

If you have any questions, please contact me at dechovitzl@avoca37.org

Thank you