



Letter to All Districts in British Columbia for the 2022 Election

Reading ability is the number one indicator for student success. For a dyslexic student or a student with any other learning disability to have equal access to education, it is imperative that they have access to instruction that meets their needs. **Structured literacy is based in science and meets the needs of not only dyslexic students, but ALL students.**

Recently in Ontario there was the “Right to Read” public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities/dyslexia. The report from the Right to Read inquiry was released in February 2022. It determined that structured literacy must be used in Ontario schools, so that more students get access to science-based instruction methods both in the general classroom and in remedial programs in Ontario schools. The inquiry proved that the schools in Ontario were using ineffective instruction and curriculum for reading. The ineffective instruction included different types of Balanced Literacy and Leveled/Three Queuing System

In British Columbia we also use an ineffective teaching method for reading that does not reach our most vulnerable readers. Using Balanced Literacy including Reading Recovery or the Three Queuing System to teach reading **misses approximately 40%** of our learners and has been proven by studies not to work for dyslexic learners.

Many families in BC pull their children out of the public system or move from one district to the next when their child has dyslexia or any other learning disability. The families are constantly searching for support and instruction that meets the learning needs for their kids. The significant costs to move districts or homeschooling is almost always **100% funded by parents** because we don’t use effective science-based instruction in public and private schools in BC.

In the United States over the last 7 years, over 42 states have made dyslexia laws that require teacher training specifically for dyslexia (including a requirement for Pro D each year to be specific to dyslexia), screening for dyslexia in kindergarten (with science-based screeners), using structured literacy, dyslexia experts in each district, actually saying the word dyslexia in districts, and providing access to technology. If you would like to learn more about the legislation in the US here is a list of the laws specific to dyslexia.

<https://www.dyslegia.com/state-dyslexia-laws/>

In some schools in BC, **parents are told that they can not use the term dyslexia**, even though it is a term that can be used to describe the way a learning disability presents and is in

the DSM-5. In BC we need to replace tired guessing strategies and leveled books with structured literacy and decodable books. We also need to make sure that universities are teaching structured literacy and have specific programs for teaching students with dyslexia. The only way there will be change is if ALL the education partners come together and start to change things.

The government and Ministry of Education and some of the other Ministries (like the Ministry of Child and Family Development) need to come together; to ensure there is no place for families and children to fall through the cracks of our education system. **Illiteracy is not just an education problem**, and learning to read is one of the most important life skills that our students need to learn while they are in our schools.

Illiteracy is a huge factor in poverty, homelessness, education failure, crime, poor mental health and drug addiction. Our most vulnerable communities including indigenous communities have higher rates of illiteracy and poor graduation rate.

We need to stop the 'School to Prison' pipeline. We need change in BC!

Not being able to read will put handcuffs on many children for the rest of their life. We are hoping you can help effect change so that BC can catch up to the US and some of the other provinces in the use of structured literacy.

For change we need:

- 1) Legislation to ensure children get screened in kindergarten.
- 2) Structured literacy to replace balanced literacy in schools, in the classroom and remediation programs. (Legislation to ensure this happens).
- 3) Access to diagnosis as early as possible. (Legislation to ensure this happens).
- 4) A funded special needs category for students that need support. Currently the learning disabilities category gets no supplemental funding. (Legislation to ensure this happens).
- 5) Screening centers for adults, so that they can gain access to support without paying for a full diagnosis.

Specific questions for Trustee Candidates:

1. What is your position on the science of reading (the use of structured literacy)?
2. How will you support and advocate for change in British Columbia to ensure our most vulnerable learners get access to the support they need?
3. What will you do to ensure there is change?
4. Can you ensure that dyslexia awareness campaigns are run in schools every year in the month of October, so that these students are assured that their needs are important?