

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION 1  
CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON STATE AND FEDERAL  
LEGISLATION

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December 14, 2023

Start: 1:08 p.m.

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Rita C. Joseph, Chairperson  
Committee on Education

Shaun Abreu, Chairperson Committee  
on State and Federal Legislation

COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION:

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Carmen N. De La Rosa  
James F. Gennaro  
Jennifer Gutiérrez  
Shahana Hanif  
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Julie Menin  
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COUNCIL MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON STATE AND  
FEDERAL LEGISLATION:

Shaun Abreu  
Christopher Marte  
Carlina Rivera

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH  
COMMITTEE ON STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION 3

A P P E A R A N C E S

David Banks, Chancellor of New York City Schools

Carolyn Quintana, Deputy Chancellor for Teaching  
and Learning

Kara Ahmed, Deputy Chancellor for Early Childhood  
Education

Danika Rux, Deputy Chancellor for School  
Leadership

Barbara Foorman

Jo Anne Simon, New York State District 52  
Assembly Member

Mary Vaccaro, Vice President of Education for the  
United Federation of Teachers and Executive  
Director of the Teacher Center

Sarah Part, Senior Policy Analyst at Advocates  
for Children of New York

Debbie Meyer, consultant for the Dyslexia  
Alliance for Black Children, serves on the  
Literacy Advisory Council for New York City  
Public Schools, and consultant on the Dyslexia  
and Literacy Program at the Ralph Bunch PS 125  
School

Callie Higgins, legal fellow at the New York  
Legal Assistance Group

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH  
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Lasana Tunica-El, Senior Deputy Director at  
Educators for Excellence New York

Teresa Ranieri, educator in District 9 and member  
Educators for Excellence New York

Robert Murtfeld, PTA Advocacy Committee at an  
East Village school

Dr. Daniella Maglione, Pearson

Emily Hellstrom, co-founder of Literacy Academy  
Collective

Jeannine Kiely, co-founder of Literacy Academy  
Collective

Naomi Peña, co-founder of Literacy Academy  
Collective

Yemi Semiglazova

Alex Estes

Paulette Healy

Charlene Parker

1  
2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Today's hearing is on  
3 the Committee on Education being recorded in the  
4 Chambers by Keith Polite. Today's date is December  
5 14, 2023.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon and  
7 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for  
8 the Committee on Education jointly with State and  
9 Federal Legislature.

10 At this time, we ask that you please  
11 silence all cell phones and electronic devices to  
12 minimize disruptions throughout the hearing.

13 If you have testimony you wish to submit  
14 for the record you may do so via email at  
15 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Once again, that is  
16 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

17 At any time throughout the hearing, do  
18 not approach the dais.

19 We thank you for your cooperation.

20 Chairs, we are ready to begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: [GAVEL] Good  
22 afternoon, and welcome to today's Joint Committee on  
23 Education, Committee on State and Federal Legislation  
24 oversight hearing on the New Phonics Based Curriculum  
25

2 and Dyslexia Screening in New York City Public  
3 Schools.

4 I'm Rita Joseph, Chair of the Education  
5 Committee. Thank you to the State and Federal  
6 Legislation Committee, Chair Shaun Abreu, for joining  
7 us, and thank you to everyone who's planning to  
8 testify today. We are very much looking forward to  
9 hearing your testimony.

10 Over the past several decades, reading  
11 instructions in the United States had largely  
12 alternated between phonics-based and whole language  
13 methodologies. The whole language methodology is a  
14 top-down approach that teaches students to memorize  
15 sight words and use context and picture cues to guess  
16 words. Meanwhile, the phonics-based is a bottom-up  
17 approach that explicitly teaches the relationship  
18 between letters and sounds that form words. In 1997,  
19 the U.S. Congress convened a National Reading Panel  
20 with the mandate to study all available scientific  
21 research to determine the most effective methodology  
22 to teach students how to read. In 2000, the panel  
23 released its report which concluded that since  
24 thematic phonics, not whole language, is the most  
25 effective methodology for teaching new readers and

1 that children are best taught while in kindergarten  
2 or first grade.

3  
4 This new system, phonics-based approach,  
5 which has come to be known as the science of reading,  
6 incorporates the following five components.

7 Phonemic awareness, which is the ability  
8 to identify and play with individual sounds in spoken  
9 words.

10 Two, phonics, which is reading  
11 instruction on how letters and groups of letters link  
12 to form letter sound relationships and spelling  
13 patterns.

14 Three, fluency, which is the ability to  
15 read words, phrases, sentences, and stories correctly  
16 with enough speed and expression.

17 Vocabulary, which is knowing what words  
18 mean, how to say them correctly.

19 Five, comprehension, which is the ability  
20 to understand what you are reading.

21 Yet prior to the school year, most  
22 elementary school utilize a so-called balanced  
23 literacy approach, which resulted in about half of  
24 students in grade three through eight achieving  
25 proficiency in reading. In May 2023, the City

1 announced a 35-million-dollar investment for a new  
2 NYC Reads initiative, which is to be phased in over  
3 two years starting during the 2023 to 2024 school  
4 year. The initiative is a standardized reading  
5 approach designed to provide all students with access  
6 to compatible research-backed instructions. For  
7 students with disabilities, the New York City Public  
8 Schools Special Education Office offer curricular  
9 support with adapted learning materials, while its  
10 division of multilingual learners provide support to  
11 teachers of English language learners.  
12

13           A year later, in May 2023, the City  
14 announced the largest, most comprehensive approach to  
15 supporting public school students with dyslexia. In  
16 the U. S., dyslexia, a language-based learning  
17 disorder that stems from individuals' differences in  
18 areas of the brain that process language, is one of  
19 the most common learning disabilities affecting an  
20 estimated 15 to 20 percent of the population. Yet,  
21 historically, people with dyslexia have been  
22 underdiagnosed and untreated, which have been  
23 devastating consequences including social and  
24 emotional problems, the constant confusion,  
25 frustrating experience by those with dyslexia can



1 lead to anxiety, anger, poor self-image, and  
2 depression. Disturbingly, dyslexia also over  
3 represented among school dropouts, teen pregnancies,  
4 addiction, homeless, and suicides.

5  
6 Research findings also indicate that  
7 almost half of the people in prison are dyslexic. In  
8 fact, a couple of months ago, the Council passed Law  
9 Local 138 of 2023, which requires New York City  
10 Department of Corrections to screen and offer  
11 evidence-based interventions to individuals between  
12 18 and 21 years old in custody who self-reported that  
13 they do not have a high school diploma or equivalent  
14 for dyslexia to be screened for dyslexia immediately.  
15 According to the Mayor's press release, beginning in  
16 the fall of 2023, New York City public schools was  
17 set to set up two pilot programs at 80 elementary  
18 schools, 80 middle schools across the city to  
19 receive targeted support training to screen and  
20 identify students at risk of dyslexia and provided  
21 targeted interventions.

22 Early identification and treatment are  
23 key to helping students with dyslexia overcome  
24 obstacles to achievement in school and life.  
25 Together, NYC Reads and widespread dyslexia

1  
2 screenings have the potential to significantly  
3 improve literacy outcomes in New York City public  
4 schools. Moreover, they have the potential to create  
5 long-lasting positive outcomes for generations.

6 Thank you to the Committee Staff as well  
7 as my own Staff for all the work they put in into  
8 this hearing.

9 I would like to acknowledge my Colleagues  
10 that are present, Council Member Schulman, and, of  
11 course, Council Member Abreu is already here.

12 I will now turn it over to Chair Abreu  
13 for his opening statement.

14 CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Good afternoon,  
15 everyone. I'm Shaun Abreu, and I serve as Chair of  
16 the Committee on State and Federal Legislation.

17 I'd like to begin by thanking those of  
18 you joining us today, especially my Co-Chair, Council  
19 Member Joseph, for working with me on this hearing.  
20 By sitting next to her, my stock is rising.

21 I graduated from high school when I was  
22 19 years old. The reason that I started college and  
23 adulthood a year late is because I had to repeat the  
24 fourth grade. I was a struggling reader from a  
25 struggling Latino family, and I had a year shaved off

1 of my life as a consequence. I am not alone in this  
2 experience. Today, less than half of children in New  
3 York City public schools are reading at grade level  
4 by the end of grade three. This is a tragedy, but it  
5 is also a policy choice. Twenty years ago, this  
6 City's Chancellor and Mayor partnered with a  
7 professor named Lucy Calkins to announce that our  
8 schools would be adopting an approach to reading  
9 instruction known as balanced literacy. It was an  
10 approach that could be best described as  
11 pseudoscience and at worst, an outright gift, a  
12 money grab that banked on our excitement over what is  
13 new and novel over our commitment to what is tried  
14 and true. This choice was one of national  
15 consequence. New York City operates the country's  
16 largest public school system and drives a large  
17 market for educational materials. Our choices not  
18 only affect our own children, but those across the  
19 nation as schools are forced to select among the  
20 educational materials available to them. With our  
21 poor choices, a generation of children within and  
22 beyond New York City missed out on the single most  
23 important skill that our schools should provide, the  
24 ability to read. We see the consequences of our  
25

1 failure to teach our kids to read every day. We see  
2 it hold kids back from finishing high school and then  
3 hold them back from succeeding in a career. We see  
4 adults with dyslexia dramatically over-represented in  
5 our prisons and among our homeless populations. We  
6 see illiteracy prevent New Yorkers from being able to  
7 read the newspaper and be informed, engaged citizens.  
8 We see it prevent people from being able to write a  
9 note to someone they love or a letter to  
10 representatives that they should be able to hold  
11 accountable.  
12

13           The reason we're talking about this today  
14 is because we know how to teach children to read, and  
15 we've known for a long time. The science of reading  
16 is one of the most well-researched, well-established  
17 concepts in education, and this year, for the first  
18 time, we have a Chancellor who is willing to stand up  
19 for our kids and declare that we are going to teach  
20 you how to read. Chancellor Banks is an educator and  
21 he is someone who recognizes that the decisions he  
22 makes have real, lasting consequences in the lives of  
23 New Yorkers. His decision to invest in the science of  
24 reading and to strip out the disease of balanced  
25 literacy could be the most consequential policy

1 decision of our generation, and that is not an  
2 exaggeration. That's how important reading  
3 instruction is, and that's why it's so important that  
4 we finally get this right. I'll now turn it over to  
5 our Committee Staff.

6  
7 CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair  
8 Abreu. The Counsel may now administer the oath to the  
9 Administration.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. If you  
11 could all please raise your right hand, I'll read the  
12 affirmation and then I'll call on each of you  
13 individually to respond. For those of you who are  
14 only answering questions, you can raise your right  
15 hand as well. We'll do it all at the same time.

16 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
17 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this  
18 committee and to respond honestly to Council Member  
19 questions?

20 Chancellor David Banks.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Carlyne Quintana.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kara Ahmed.

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I do.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Danika Rux.

3 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: I do.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Christina Foti.

5 CHIEF FOTI: I do.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Kimberly Ramon.

7 PRINCIPAL RAMON: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. You may  
9 begin your testimony.

10 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Good afternoon, Chair  
11 Joseph and Chair Abreu, my Councilman, and Members of  
12 the New York City Council Education Committee and  
13 State and Federal Legislation Committees. I'm New  
14 York City Public Schools Chancellor David C. Banks,  
15 and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today  
16 about the science of reading and the tremendous work  
17 our school system is doing to align our literacy  
18 instruction to this proven approach to teaching  
19 reading. I'm joined today by Deputy Chancellor for  
20 Teaching and Learning, Carolyne Quintana, our Deputy  
21 Chancellor for Early Childhood Education, Dr. Kara  
22 Ahmed, and on the end our Deputy Chancellor for  
23 School Leadership, Dr. Danika Rux.

24 Before I begin, I would like to thank  
25 Speaker Adams, Chair Joseph, Chair Abreu, and the

1 entire City Council for your interest in our work  
2 around the science of reading and creating a culture  
3 of reading across the city. Our team assembled here  
4 today is leading incredibly transformative work to  
5 reimagine the way we teach reading. We are calling  
6 this body of work, NYC Reads, and, as I'll explain,  
7 it includes a comprehensive approach to literacy  
8 instruction including curriculum shifts, intensive  
9 professional learning and coaching, academic  
10 screening and intervention, and supports for students  
11 at risk for dyslexia. There is no more important work  
12 that we are doing than this.

14 We're implementing NYC Reads in two  
15 phases. Phase One launched this school year across  
16 nearly 94 percent of our early childhood portfolio  
17 and in grades K to five across nearly half of our  
18 community school districts. Phase Two will launch  
19 next school year, by which point NYC Reads will be  
20 active in all early childhood and K-5 classrooms  
21 across the entire city.

22 The need for dramatic action on literacy  
23 is glaring. A quick look at the data makes the case.  
24 At the start of this Administration, 51 percent of  
25 our students in grades three to eight, including 63

1 percent of our Latino students and 64 percent of our  
2 black students, were not proficient readers. While  
3 proficiency rates were slightly higher on the 2023  
4 State exams, signaling that we are headed in the  
5 right direction, our work is far from done. Our  
6 mission is to ensure that each student graduates on a  
7 pathway to a rewarding career and long-term economic  
8 security, equipped to be a positive force for change.  
9 We cannot fulfill that mission statement if our kids  
10 cannot read. The good news is that we know what needs  
11 to change. Our current reading results are not the  
12 fault of our teachers, our families, or our students.  
13 They are the result of a flawed approach. For too  
14 many years, there was no cohesive, comprehensive,  
15 citywide strategy for literacy, and schools were left  
16 to figure it out on their own. Many schools used  
17 balanced literacy, which involved techniques like  
18 asking children to use pictures to guess the words in  
19 a story. This was not grounded in research, and for  
20 some students, it simply did not work. Like many  
21 other academic skills, reading and comprehension must  
22 be explicitly taught. We can't expect students to  
23 just pick it up. That's why we are grounding our  
24 instruction in the science of reading, which is an  
25



1  
2 evidence-based approach that focuses on five strands  
3 of instruction that Chair Joseph already laid out,  
4 phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and  
5 comprehension, that together enable a student to read  
6 confidently and understand what they are reading. We  
7 know that our children can only love to read if they  
8 know how to read. So as the largest school system in  
9 the nation, we are proud to lead by example with this  
10 shift to the science of reading.

11           Today I will outline the various  
12 components of our comprehensive approach to  
13 transforming literacy instruction in our public  
14 schools. Both the early childhood and K to 5  
15 implementation of NYC Reads include changes to  
16 curriculum, yet we can't expect a curriculum to  
17 produce results if the teachers using it are not  
18 properly trained and supported so, in both early  
19 childhood and grades K to 5, we are pairing these new  
20 curriculum materials with intensive, unprecedented  
21 levels of professional learning and coaching for  
22 teachers and leaders.

23           Let me talk a little bit about early  
24 childhood. Early childhood classrooms in NYC Reads  
25 use a singular developmental screener, a

1  
2 developmentally appropriate curriculum, and an  
3 authentic child assessment system. These tools were  
4 selected because of their inclusion of our birth to  
5 five continuum and the sound alignment of all three  
6 tools grounded in the science of reading. All early  
7 childhood teaching teams and coaches in Phase One  
8 received 17 hours of professional learning in the  
9 spring with a multitude of professional learning  
10 options offered over the summer to support their  
11 individual needs. In addition to these 17 hours of  
12 professional learning, all school and program leaders  
13 received six hours of professional learning laser-  
14 focused on their role as an instructional leader.  
15 Over the course of this school year, early childhood  
16 teachers are receiving in-person coaching every other  
17 week tailored to their individual professional needs.  
18 At the same time, all leaders are also receiving  
19 coaching every other week to support them in  
20 implementing high-quality early childhood education  
21 for their program or school community. This has never  
22 happened before. In grades K to 5, when Mayor Adams  
23 officially appointed me, one of the first things we  
24 did as an administration was mandate that all K  
25 through 2 schools implement a phonics-based

1 curriculum including Hegarty and Foundations and that  
2 our teachers receive training and resources  
3 accordingly. We ensured each foundational literacy  
4 curriculum chosen by our school was vetted by our  
5 Central Literacy Team so NYC Reads can be seen as a  
6 continuation and expansion of this work. Community  
7 school districts participating in Phase One of NYC  
8 Reads have selected one of three curricular choices.  
9 HMH Into Reading which includes Ariba La Lectura for  
10 Spanish bilingual programs, Expeditionary Learning,  
11 their education curriculum, or Wit and Wisdom. They  
12 make one of these choices after a full-on engagement  
13 with their school community. Districts in Phase Two  
14 of our rollout will be choosing among these three  
15 options as well.  
16

17 For K to 5, professional learning  
18 sessions for Phase One educators began last spring  
19 and summer as an initial introduction to their  
20 district's chosen curriculum. As of this fall,  
21 teachers are also receiving job-embedded coaching,  
22 meaning they have experts working alongside them in  
23 the classroom to provide real-time support including  
24 demo lessons, side by side modeling, and more.  
25

1 So far, Phase One K to 5 schools received  
2 between 13 and 16 hours of training throughout the  
3 spring and summer and on average have received five  
4 coaching sessions this fall. By the end of the school  
5 year, they'll receive about 26 sessions. This has  
6 never happened before in our public schools.

7 Combined, our New York City READS professional  
8 learning and coaching ensures consistent  
9 implementation across schools and programs, it builds  
10 internal capacity to sustain this work, and  
11 ultimately results in more supported educators and  
12 stronger instruction for children.

13 At the central level, we will be  
14 monitoring the implementation of NYC Reads to adjust  
15 coaching plans and inform ongoing professional  
16 learning.

17 In addition to being evidence-based, we  
18 know that our reading instruction must reflect the  
19 lived experiences of our students and school  
20 communities. To that end, to ensure our instruction  
21 is culturally responsive, we are supplementing our  
22 NYC Reads curricular options with materials designed  
23 in New York City and representative of the diversity  
24 of our school system. Specifically, our Hidden Voices  
25

1 initiative spotlights histories and perspectives  
2 which are often overlooked, including series which  
3 are focused on the AAPI community, the LGBTQ+  
4 community, and the Global African diaspora, which we  
5 are announcing officially next month.  
6

7 In addition to culturally and  
8 linguistically responsive materials, the professional  
9 learning and supports provided through our Division  
10 of Multilingual Learners and our Division of Educator  
11 Development are also helping ensure that each child  
12 feels seen and heard.

13 As I mentioned earlier, NYC Reads is a  
14 comprehensive approach, one that also includes  
15 academic screening and supports for students showing  
16 signs of print-based learning disabilities. For  
17 grades K to 9, we conduct universal academic  
18 screening three times each year to help us monitor  
19 student progress and also identify students who may  
20 be at risk for dyslexia. Students who score in the  
21 bottom 16 percent in ELA on these screeners are given  
22 a secondary screener, after which they may be  
23 identified for intervention services, which are  
24 provided by centrally funded interventionists in 322  
25 schools and trained staff members in all other

1 schools. As part of the 322 schools, intensive  
2 reading interventionists are providing intervention  
3 services to 1,900 students in 111 of our K to 5 Phase  
4 One schools. Students are receiving intervention  
5 services four times per week with weekly progress  
6 monitoring to ensure that students are making  
7 progress towards grade level standards.  
8

9 Interventionists have received in-depth training in  
10 evidence-based practices for reading instruction  
11 through the International Dyslexia Association,  
12 accredited graduate level coursework, research-based  
13 interventions, data analysis, and progress  
14 monitoring. For students who are diagnosed with  
15 dyslexia, we are creating options for families that  
16 provide comprehensive supports including the newly  
17 opened South Bronx Literacy Academy and our iREAD  
18 programs.

19 Last year, we also piloted dyslexia  
20 programs at PS 125 in Manhattan, PS 161 in the Bronx,  
21 PS 295 and PS 107 in Brooklyn that included training  
22 educators in the Orton, Gillingham and Wilson  
23 methods. We're currently studying the impact of these  
24 models and pilots and thinking about how to most  
25 effectively scale this work.

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Additionally, New York City Public Schools increased the assessment tools and training for all school psychologists citywide including assessments needed to identify students with print-based disabilities such as dyslexia. Through the enhancement of our assessment tools and training, we provided our clinicians with the ability to investigate and understand the needs of each student assessed, decreasing reliance on private evaluators.

As part of our NYC Reads, we're also providing tailored supports for students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Centrally funded special education intervention teachers in 960 schools are trained in explicit, systematic reading intervention programs and effective assessment and instructional practices to accelerate students' progress and skills such as fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. 208 of these teachers in Phase One elementary schools and teachers in select secondary level cohorts also take the International Dyslexia Association accredited graduate level coursework that I just mentioned. We know all students, including our multilingual learners, must receive comprehensive instruction that includes all the components of

1 literacy, including language development, development  
2 of content knowledge, vocabulary, foundational skills  
3 for decoding, comprehension, and writing. With this  
4 in mind, we have developed resources for teachers to  
5 support their multilingual learners to assess and  
6 engage with the new curriculum and provided  
7 professional learning to teachers.  
8

9           We know that change isn't easy, and for  
10 many teachers, leaders, families the shift to the  
11 science of reading will require new mindsets and  
12 practices. We will only be successful if our internal  
13 and external stakeholders believe in and support NYC  
14 Reads and for that to happen, we must treat them as  
15 true partners in the design and the rollout of this  
16 work. To that end, Superintendent teams have been  
17 deeply engaging their families, schools and  
18 communities in choosing their NYC Reads curriculum.  
19 Centrally, we have hosted webinars and focus groups  
20 to share information and gather input and feedback,  
21 and we're also planning local literacy events and  
22 sharing of activities and resources with families  
23 across the city to bolster reading skills at home.  
24 This past summer, over 1,200 families joined us for  
25 an overview of the Early Childhood Developmental



1 Screener Curriculum and Assessment System, and these  
2 sessions are continuing throughout the school year.  
3 These sessions were offered to all early childhood  
4 families citywide and included what they should  
5 expect their child to experience while at school and  
6 the resources and support available to extend their  
7 child's learning at home. During the 2022 to 2023  
8 school year, we convened a diverse group of  
9 stakeholders to join the Literacy Advisory Council to  
10 help shape the direction of literacy in New York  
11 City. The Council meets monthly and includes local  
12 community members, experts in literacy, our public  
13 school staff, students, and parents. We also created  
14 internal planning teams to support each of the  
15 Literacy Advisory Council topics and subcouncils  
16 focused on the rollout of NYC Reads and other  
17 literacy initiatives across the city.  
18

19           Lastly, we are working with our  
20 organizational partners in the education space,  
21 including CBOs, higher education institutions, and  
22 others to ensure that they are also adopting the  
23 science of reading in their work with our children or  
24 the adults who teach our children.  
25

1  
2           Finally, we're now preparing to roll out  
3 Phase Two of NYC Reads, which will launch next school  
4 year and will include all remaining early childhood  
5 education programs and elementary schools. Beyond  
6 our birth to grade 5 students, we are also looking at  
7 our upper grades because the data tells us that many  
8 of our older students are also struggling to read.  
9 We are in the midst of a core curriculum review  
10 process for grades 6 through 12 including a rigorous  
11 review of all major vendors.

12           As you can see, we're taking a thoughtful  
13 and very comprehensive approach to NYC Reads because  
14 we believe that teaching students to read is the  
15 greatest and most fundamental responsibility of any  
16 school system. I want to thank you all for taking the  
17 time to dive into the subject today, and when our  
18 students are strong readers, we all win, students,  
19 families, teachers, and the entire City of New York.  
20 Thank you.

21           CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,  
22 Chancellor Banks.

23           I'd like to acknowledge Council Member  
24 Hanif, Narcisse, Marte, Krishnan, Gennaro, and  
25 Aviles.

2 Thank you, Chancellor Banks, for your  
3 testimony. I also was part of the Reading Advisory as  
4 well, and I sat in on a lot of the sessions.

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: My first question  
7 for you is any curriculum is only as good as its  
8 implementation and teachers need ongoing support and  
9 training to be able to use materials and teaching  
10 strategies effectively with students in front of  
11 them. What is New York City Public Schools doing to  
12 ensure teachers have it at the elbow, support they  
13 need, particularly given the elimination of universal  
14 literacy coaches and the fact that many teachers were  
15 not trained in science of reading in their pre-  
16 service preparation programs. Before we dive into  
17 that, also keep in mind, are we also working with  
18 universities to make sure their curriculum aligns  
19 with yours because we're putting out teachers that  
20 are not trained on reading.

21 CHANCELLOR BANKS: That's right. So let me  
22 just answer the second part first, and I think each  
23 one of our Deputies has a word to offer as relates to  
24 what this training looks like in real time. I  
25 recently convened the Deans of the Schools of

1 Education, across the city and some who are outside  
2 of the city. We did an analysis of all the schools of  
3 education where we essentially get all of our  
4 teachers from and we brought them all in and we made  
5 it very clear, it was not just a convening, it was  
6 not just an open conversation, we made them clear  
7 that NYC Reads and our ability to teach our kids to  
8 read is the most important thing that we are focused  
9 on in this Administration and that we need every  
10 teacher who's coming into our schools to be well-  
11 versed in the science of reading. It's not a request,  
12 it's not a it would be nice if you would do it. We  
13 said we are looking for the partners who want to work  
14 with us, and if you decide that that doesn't fit the  
15 philosophy of your school, that's fine, but we  
16 certainly won't be looking to take any of the  
17 teaching candidates that are coming for your school.  
18 They can work in other places but not here. That  
19 message was delivered in a very, very strong tone,  
20 and they got it, and it's going to take them a little  
21 while as well just like it is all of us. This is a  
22 sea change for everybody, but they understood where  
23 we are, what we're trying to do. When we announced  
24 NYC Reads, the biggest ovation was when I announced  
25

1  
2 the schools of education and responsibility that they  
3 have and you heard a roar from everybody. Our schools  
4 of education have not been preparing the teachers  
5 that we are receiving in our schools to be well-  
6 versed in the science of reading. Once they do that,  
7 coupled with everything that we're doing, we will be  
8 able to move at levels that the school system has  
9 never seen before. That's where we're going. That's  
10 the message that we have sent.

11 But as it relates to this level of  
12 training and what we're actually doing in our  
13 schools, I don't know who wants to start first. Why  
14 don't we start with early childhood and then work our  
15 way from there?

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Sure. Hi, good  
17 afternoon. Thank you. It's a really important  
18 question and it absolutely is one of the most  
19 critical pieces of the work and, as you heard the  
20 Chancellor describe, NYC Reads is about adding in new  
21 or different curricula, but it is also so much more  
22 about the professional learning and the coaching that  
23 we're implementing to ensure a truly comprehensive  
24 approach, and that is beginning with our youngest  
25 learners, and so it is beginning with our educators

1  
2 and our leaders that are teaching those young  
3 children. In early childhood, you'll see many  
4 parallels even through K to 5, but specifically in  
5 early childhood, there is an intentional drive to  
6 ensuring that there is ongoing professional  
7 development so long gone are the days of a one-shot  
8 deal, a one-shot webinar, a one-shot PD session, but  
9 that there is ongoing spaces for both teachers,  
10 teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, and all of our  
11 school and program leaders to really engage in  
12 professional learning that's going to help us to go  
13 deeper into the work, not just wider, wider, wider,  
14 and that is being coupled with building really strong  
15 internal capacity around coaching. From our  
16 instructional coordinators that are supporting our  
17 teachers directly, as you heard the Chancellor share  
18 in biweekly coaching sessions, to our leadership  
19 coaches that are coaching directly with our program  
20 and school leaders, we're looking to build a true  
21 ripple effect, right, so that if we can build the  
22 capacity and empower our school and program leaders  
23 so that they feel that they're at their best to lead  
24 their school and program communities through NYC  
25 Reads, through curriculum, through screening, through

1  
2 assessment, they in turn will be the best coach for  
3 their teachers, and, in turn, our teachers will be  
4 the best coach for our children and their families.  
5 There's an array of things that are happening on that  
6 professional learning and coaching front, but I think  
7 the key pieces and the key ingredients there is that  
8 it's ongoing, it's frequent, right, so it's not,  
9 again, that one-shot deal to really build scalability  
10 and sustainability.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: I want to point before  
12 we go to you, Dr. Rux, and then we're going to come  
13 over to you to wrap up what's actually happening in  
14 the classrooms. I think it's important, please, for  
15 every Council Member to fully appreciate the early  
16 childhood sector has never gotten this kind of  
17 professional development. As we have visited the  
18 schools, they are overjoyed, they are overjoyed  
19 because it is a level of intense PD that is going to  
20 marry them to everything that's happening in K-5.  
21 We've often said, imagine what it would be like if  
22 kids are coming out of pre-K already knowing how to  
23 read. That will enable us to take the school system  
24 to much greater heights than we've ever done before  
25 so it's really important that you see this as a birth

1 through process. It's not starting in kindergarten,  
2 starting much earlier than that, and the rollout and  
3 what's happening with our school leaders. Dr. Rux.

4  
5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: It's a pleasure to  
6 be here today to talk about such an important topic.  
7 I want to lift one thing, I've been in the New York  
8 City public school system for almost 29 years, and  
9 one thing that I've often noticed is when there's a  
10 rollout of new curriculum, the training starts over  
11 the summer and that is it. The professional  
12 development, the curriculum provider does a one-hour  
13 professional development session and that is it, you  
14 go into your school in September and you have to  
15 figure it out with your school community. What makes  
16 New York City Reads different is that even before we  
17 launched, even before teachers, principals, school  
18 district leaders had the curriculum in hand, there  
19 was professional development that was setting them up  
20 for success, and we started that in the spring with  
21 all of our Phase One districts, and that is 16  
22 superintendent districts. The professional  
23 development continued throughout the summer, and we  
24 partnered with UFT, and UFT provided in-person  
25 professional development. We had the professional



1  
2 development that was online, and we had  
3 superintendents who partnered with curriculum  
4 developers to provide additional professional  
5 development sessions for the curriculum. That is  
6 unique. That has never happened. During the  
7 professional development sessions, one of the  
8 mandates that we had was that every single teacher  
9 would have access to the first unit before the first  
10 day of school. Again, never has that happened. While  
11 you're unpacking the boxes and getting all of the  
12 curriculum material in the school, you're trying to  
13 figure out, you're laughing, you're trying to figure  
14 out, how am I going to teach this first unit? That  
15 did not happen this year because we were intentional  
16 in ensuring that when you came into school, you were  
17 ready to go, you were ready to teach. In the fall,  
18 what was also unique is job-embedded coaching. That  
19 also has historically never happened. You have  
20 someone there in the classroom with you, giving you  
21 some tidbits, hey, do this, ask this question, you  
22 might want to try this out. That historically has not  
23 happened, and we're going to continue on with the  
24 professional development throughout the rest of this  
25 year.

1  
2           Now, I also want to point out that the  
3 superintendent's team has expanded tremendously as  
4 you all know, and we were intentional in identifying  
5 two additional staff members on the superintendent's  
6 team that are just solely responsible for the  
7 implementation and the professional development.

8           Through a partnership with UFT, we have  
9 teacher centers in every single district that is  
10 rolling out in Phase One, and we also have an  
11 implementation center specialist who is on the  
12 superintendent's team in classrooms monitoring what's  
13 going on, providing us with feedback so that we can  
14 make adjustments in what is going on to ensure that  
15 we're pivoting and making real time adjustments  
16 that's going to yield us the results that we're  
17 looking for.

18           CHANCELLOR BANKS: Before we go to Deputy  
19 Chancellor Quintana, I just want to also add, I want  
20 to emphasize our partnership with the UFT is critical  
21 here, and our partnership with CSA as well. They are  
22 both on board, but Michael Mulgrew got this from day  
23 one, and his team and several of his members of his  
24 leadership team are here today. They have worked with  
25 us hand in glove on this from the very beginning, and

1  
2 the reason why I think that is so critically  
3 important is because when you want to actually move  
4 things in a system this large, if you've got the  
5 union and you've got administration at loggerheads  
6 with each with each other, you can only move the  
7 system but so far, but when you see this level of  
8 alignment that we have here, this is the perfect  
9 marriage of the union and the administration working  
10 together for what makes all the sense in the world to  
11 everybody, and we'll only get where we're trying to  
12 go if we're working really, really closely together,  
13 and so that's been one of my proudest moments of  
14 being Chancellor on this NYC Reads and our extreme  
15 engagement with the UFT in particular as well as the  
16 CSA.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Good  
18 afternoon, and thank you, Council, for having us for  
19 this important topic. While you're on the  
20 conversation about our partnership with our labor  
21 partners, I just want to add that part of what makes  
22 this successful is that we are emphasizing the  
23 training under the science of reading every day,  
24 every leader, every superintendent, every principal,  
25 and the UFT has been a big part of making sure, even

1  
2 crafting their own sessions of science of reading,  
3 modules so that we could participate broadly across  
4 the city.

5           You had asked very specifically, though,  
6 about higher education, and for higher education, we  
7 have actually found partners, and so with CUNY, for  
8 example, we will this spring begin launching training  
9 that we are offering to the professors at CUNY so  
10 that they are receiving access to the curriculum that  
11 we are administering and facilitating throughout our  
12 schools, but they also receive training in the  
13 methodology so they understand what it is that we are  
14 doing in our schools and the professors can train  
15 their teacher candidates accordingly. We're working  
16 alongside our university partners so that we can make  
17 sure that the folks that we get that come to us come  
18 with an understanding and some skills in place  
19 already. For the folks that are already here though,  
20 we need to make sure that we are training and so we  
21 also have university partners who are working with us  
22 to launch micro-credentials and other opportunities  
23 for training through the university that are a foot  
24 in the door for added hours and degrees for our  
25 teachers as well so it's a symbiotic relationship and

1  
2 it really works for all of us to make sure that we're  
3 moving in the same direction together. Aside from  
4 those pieces with the university, though, and I know  
5 that we talked a little bit about the UFT district  
6 teacher center reps. At the district, we've placed  
7 people who are supporting our teachers in their  
8 development so we have the implementation  
9 specialists. Last year, we also placed academic  
10 intervention specialists, and those were our former  
11 coaches who are now working in these very specific  
12 roles to help ensure that we're implementing the  
13 curriculum with fidelity, that folks understand the  
14 transition to this type of teaching of reading, and  
15 that they have support in their schools every day.  
16 Many of those folks also went on to become  
17 interventionists. Not only did you hear about the 960  
18 centrally funded special education interventionists,  
19 we also have over 100 interventionists that have been  
20 placed across our Phase One schools who are helping  
21 to develop internal interventionists because we want  
22 to create a system that is sustainable. We want to  
23 create a systemic shift that remains beyond any of  
24 the supports that we provide right now, and so those  
25 interventionists are with Phase One schools, making

1  
2 sure that schools are developing the capacity from  
3 within, and in the meantime, also supporting with  
4 secondary screeners and other type of intensive  
5 intervention supports.

6           You heard the Chancellor talk about all  
7 iREAD staff continue to receive training in OG and  
8 other types of methodologies. We have a train-the-  
9 trainer model that we'll be rolling out as well,  
10 again taking advantage of the training folks have  
11 already received. Some will be fast tracked, some  
12 will go through the process with our partners like  
13 the AIM Institute, making sure that folks know what  
14 it means to facilitate that kind of learning. We've  
15 already seen some really fantastic examples. A  
16 centrally funded interventionist at one of their  
17 schools who was actually providing the intervention  
18 was able to train an additional five teachers at  
19 their school, and now they're all happy to provide  
20 those intensive interventions for the kids across the  
21 school, and so we want to build capacity from within  
22 and that will continue to happen. We're visiting  
23 model sites. Superintendents actually started going  
24 on their own, principals are visiting one another,  
25 and so we really are building this culture of

1  
2 learning as well as this culture of reading, and we  
3 wouldn't have been able to do this if we didn't have  
4 consistency, right? If we didn't have not only the  
5 same methodology but commonality with those  
6 curricular choices, and that creates commonality in  
7 the language, commonality in the outcomes, and so our  
8 folks can actually work together on that, and the  
9 last piece is we have actually built modules which  
10 we'll be launching in January. We'll be focusing on K  
11 through 5 in January and then again in late spring,  
12 and we'll be focusing on secondary in September, and  
13 those modules will give a complete recap overview of  
14 the science of reading starting with what is  
15 comprehension because we're starting with the end in  
16 mind. We want to make sure that folks are exposed to  
17 that, and we'll continue to provide as my colleagues  
18 have said professional learning throughout.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Well, thank you.  
20 When I was in the classroom, I had a drive-by PD for  
21 my reading, it was a drive-by, get it during the  
22 summertime, and that was it.

23 I'd like to recognize Council Members De  
24 La Rosa, Sanchez, Lee. Thank you for joining us.

25

1  
2 I was about to ask you about the coaches,  
3 but the coaches were repurposed for implementational  
4 specialists instead, the literacy coaches that you  
5 used to have in the system for K to 2?

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: They were  
7 given priority to apply for the interventionist  
8 positions, the AIS coordinator positions at the  
9 district, and the implementation specialist positions  
10 at the district so we've re appropriated many of  
11 those, and for folks who went back to the classroom,  
12 those are many of the folks that we'll be able to  
13 fast track through some of this train-the-trainer  
14 model.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Good. How is DOE  
16 learning from experiences of other jurisdictions? You  
17 wanted to add on something?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: Yeah, I just  
19 wanted to add that that was really important to us  
20 because they had the training that was necessary to  
21 engage in this work right away so they were  
22 prioritized in our hiring.

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay, good. Are  
24 you learning from any other jurisdiction or  
25 experiences? Are you calling other states and finding



1  
2 out what they're doing? Talk to us a little bit about  
3 that.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: There were two states  
5 in particular that really served as a little bit of  
6 an inspiration for us here as well. Tennessee was  
7 like the first one that we really engaged and and  
8 Mississippi. Interestingly enough, the state of  
9 Mississippi for decades has had the worst reading  
10 results in the nation. Every other state that was  
11 doing poorly would always say, at least we're not as  
12 bad as Mississippi. Mississippi has leaped over  
13 almost all the states across the nation, and it is  
14 because they locked into this. They were doing what  
15 we were doing before. They had a lot of balanced  
16 literacy. They had a lot of allowing every school  
17 district to do what they thought worked well because  
18 you know your kids best. You figure it out. All of  
19 these answers should come closer to the local  
20 community. So what you have were dozens of different  
21 approaches and, as an entire state, it did not work,  
22 and they continued to languish and it was when they  
23 made a decision that we're going to create a focus  
24 around the science of reading, we're going to  
25 eliminate all these choices, we're going to vet the

1  
2 system, we're going to pick the stuff that works best  
3 for us, that's already proven, and we're going to  
4 ensure that everybody gets the level of professional  
5 development and support together with working with  
6 the unions, they refer to it as the Mississippi  
7 Miracle, how much they have improved, and Tennessee,  
8 similar kinds of results so we've been engaged. We've  
9 spoken to their commissioners of education and those  
10 who are really driving this work. We've been in  
11 conversation with them as well as others in this  
12 space. Is there is something that you wanted to add  
13 on that too?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I'll actually  
15 let Deputy Commissioner Rux talk a little bit about  
16 our partnership with the states in part because she  
17 was actually able to invite folks to come in and  
18 speak to the superintendents directly so I'll let her  
19 talk a little bit about that.

20 What I did want to mention is we're also  
21 learning from institutions around us, local districts  
22 and what they're doing, but also visiting some of the  
23 private organizations and schools, right, to find the  
24 practices, as you just heard Chancellor say, what  
25 works and what doesn't so that we can learn from

1 that. We know that people pay attention to New York  
2 City. It's important for us to get this right. With  
3 the size of our district, we can't afford not to do  
4 the right thing. We also know that each of our  
5 districts are incredibly different, and we want to  
6 make sure we're providing the right supports across  
7 the variety and the diversity of student bodies that  
8 we have in each of our boroughs, and we want to make  
9 sure that we have the right types of supports in  
10 place. For example, we took a group of  
11 superintendents and their teams to the AIM Institute  
12 in Philadelphia, and we're able to see many of those  
13 practices integrated into the content areas so that  
14 you don't have to separate learning of reading  
15 through the explicit and systematic processes from  
16 really building content knowledge and still having  
17 the opportunity to have an inquiry based classroom  
18 where you're really building experiences and schema  
19 that instead those things can actually be connected  
20 and combined, and so we want to be able to create  
21 spaces that look like that as well and so we're  
22 partnering with different kinds of organizations so  
23 taking a look at wherever we can learn about what to  
24

2 do and what not to do. Danika, if you want to talk  
3 about this.

4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: Yes, most notable  
5 to share, we had Penny Schwinn from Tennessee join  
6 one of our superintendent meetings and she live-  
7 streamed in, and it was an amazing opportunity for  
8 our superintendents to ask some real poignant  
9 questions around the change management, and she  
10 shared great resources with us as well, She provided  
11 us with some model tools that they used, and we were  
12 able to use those to help us and guide us with the  
13 work. We're always looking for models of where this  
14 work has happened so that we can adjust what we're  
15 doing to ensure that we're impactful.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'd  
17 like to recognize Council Member Gutiérrez.

18 I wanted to find out earlier, you  
19 mentioned you had 100 interventionists. What happens  
20 when one of them leaves the school? What's the plan?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Sorry, I had  
22 to figure out the mic there. Part of that was what I  
23 had mentioned, that we're asking the schools actually  
24 to build the capacity from within so we have those  
25 960 centrally funded interventionists that are across

1  
2 our schools. We also have the just over 100  
3 interventionists that we have right now in those  
4 Phase One schools. Many schools already have  
5 identified interventionists so they have speech  
6 teachers, they have different types of coordinators  
7 that they've identified, and I've even seen models  
8 when we visited schools where the schools have  
9 actually allocated intervention and enrichment during  
10 a period, and so every teacher becomes an  
11 interventionist through one of their programs that  
12 they're using, so Spire, Rewards, Starry, right, and  
13 so they're actually creating a system where every  
14 teacher does this work. Part of that is just about  
15 training. We were actually able to do much of that  
16 through what the City Council had funded through  
17 MSQI, and we've learned a lot about what it means to  
18 create those intervention blocks in that way and  
19 continue to to build those resources, but it's really  
20 important for us, particularly because we don't know  
21 the future of our budgets, to build the capacity from  
22 within and because we don't want this to be an  
23 initiative. This needs to be a systemic shift. As you  
24 heard Chair Abreu say, right, we made a shift a long  
25 time ago that actually had negative impact on many

1 students and so we need to make sure that we're  
2 breaking those behaviors, we're building new ones,  
3 and this means a systemic shift in the way that we  
4 structure our schools, our school days, our staffing,  
5 and we ensure that we're building sustainability from  
6 within.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You mentioned  
9 Spire. I like Spire. I was trained on it.

10 Please provide an update on the status of  
11 districts under Phase One of the initiative. How  
12 often do teachers receive coaching support? I know  
13 you talked about that, but you can just repeat it for  
14 me, and how are you collecting feedback from  
15 teachers, administrators about the new curriculum? If  
16 so, what are some of the feedbacks you're hearing and  
17 how do you plan on addressing any concerns?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: So, Phase One is  
19 running very smoothly at this point, and it is  
20 because of the feedback loops that we have. We meet  
21 with our superintendents on a weekly basis in Phase  
22 One. We have a 30-minute call with them. We talk  
23 about what's working, what's not working. We're  
24 making adjustments to what's not working. We're  
25 providing them also with opportunities to see the

1  
2 practice in action. We've organized our  
3 superintendent meetings so that we are going out,  
4 I'll give you a concrete example. We recently went  
5 out to District 24 and District 30. We broke up our  
6 superintendents into small groups, they went into  
7 classrooms to see the work in action, and then to  
8 come back and to debrief because it's really  
9 important for us that we're norming the work and  
10 we're making adjustments as we go. When we came back  
11 together, we all shared the feedback and we gave the  
12 superintendent some next steps about the work that  
13 they are engaged in with their district. That is  
14 professional development on the ground, working,  
15 we're ensuring our superintendents are getting that.

16           At the school level, it's working out in  
17 a number of different ways, but what we have ensured  
18 is that from September to now every school has had  
19 5.5 days of professional development coaching at the  
20 school level. By the end of the year, they'll have a  
21 minimum of 17 days of professional development  
22 coaching at the school level. We're ensuring that  
23 it's ongoing, it's not just a one and done, that we  
24 have multiple paths of professional development and  
25 enrichment for our teachers. We're continuing to

1 receive feedback from CSA. We meet with them monthly  
2 to ensure, because we don't hear it all the time from  
3 the superintendents. We need to triangulate the  
4 information as it comes in, which I often say, and so  
5 we are listening to what they're saying and we're  
6 taking that into consideration.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Slightly  
9 different for, for early childhood, but all the same  
10 good stuff. As you heard the Chancellor mention, the  
11 majority of the early childhood portfolio is part of  
12 what we would call Phase One so it's been an  
13 absolutely wonderful launch to this work. Even those  
14 that are not technically part of Phase One, they've  
15 been part of every single piece of professional  
16 learning, coaching, materials so that as we  
17 transition into Phase Two for next year, everyone  
18 feels very well-prepared and very well-equipped to  
19 make that move. You had mentioned, Chair Joseph, what  
20 does coaching look like, and I know we've all talked  
21 a little bit about it, but I would say that as we  
22 talk about our labor partners and the significant  
23 role that they've played in this work in shaping  
24 professional learning for our educators, we'd be  
25 remiss if we didn't talk about the wonderful role



1 that they've played, incredible role in really  
2 shaping the work that's happening with our coaches,  
3 right, so when we think about that significance of a  
4 coach with both our teachers and with our leaders, I  
5 personally have just had an absolutely, just  
6 privileged opportunity to work closely with the UFT  
7 in shaping what that looks like for our instructional  
8 coordinators, right, and so Karen Alford has been,  
9 I'll give her a shoutout, just absolutely amazing. I  
10 know Mary's here. Mary, you have been amazing for K  
11 to 5, and with the CSA, Rosie Sinclair has been just  
12 an incredible thought partner, and so when we think  
13 about like, what does that feedback look like, we are  
14 adjusting in real time. Children don't get a do over,  
15 you know, as Council Member Abreu has said, right,  
16 the impact that this work has on children in real  
17 time. You don't get a second chance of being 2. You  
18 don't get a second chance of being 3, 4 or 8 so we  
19 owe it to our kids to get it right, and so we can't  
20 wait a year from now and figure out if it's really  
21 working. As things are happening in real time, we are  
22 adjusting, and so that feedback comes both from UFT  
23 and CSA. It comes from weekly meetings that are  
24 happening with our coaches, with their own coach, so  
25

1 that they're feeling supported, and then it's coming  
2 from all of the professional learning and coaching  
3 that's happening. Our educators, our leaders, have an  
4 opportunity to give feedback, and we use that to  
5 really inform policy practice and systems that are in  
6 place. Chair Joseph, thank you for attending our  
7 first ever Leadership Summit over the summer. People  
8 are still talking about your presence there. I think  
9 the Chancellor might be a little jealous because they  
10 talk about you being there more than him, but it was  
11 the first ever, and this is what's important, you've  
12 heard the Chancellor say this a few times, the first  
13 ever time that we've brought together all leaders  
14 across early childhood, principals and assistant  
15 principals, our program leaders from our CBOs and our  
16 non-public schools because we're serving the same  
17 children, and so when you hear the Chancellor talk  
18 about that cohesion, that coherence, we want to  
19 ensure that no matter where that child is, no matter  
20 what zip code they're in, no matter what borough  
21 they're in, no matter what program they're in, that  
22 they're getting the same high quality, and so all of  
23 that plays a part in the feedback and the support so  
24 thank you again.  
25

2 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Deputy Chancellor  
3 didn't tell you this is her last day. We want to  
4 thank you for...

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you for your  
6 service, right?

7 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: We've had  
8 that experience with Chair Joseph at our visits too.  
9 They're more excited about her being there than about  
10 the visits.

11 CHANCELLOR BANKS: She's amazing. Chair  
12 Joseph is absolutely amazing.

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: We're going  
14 to have to invite you, Chair Abreu.

15 I also wanted to add, so we collected a  
16 survey of data in the spring after our teachers were  
17 trained and our leaders were trained, and much of  
18 that information helped us structure the coaching and  
19 make decisions about partnership allocations and  
20 supports. A little bit like using an exit ticket at  
21 the end of a lesson, right, where you figure out what  
22 you're going to do next, and we just actually sent  
23 out another survey so we just sent out a survey to  
24 ask about coaching and professional learning so that  
25 we can find out what we need to do a little bit

1  
2 differently, not only with the folks who are in Phase  
3 One but also as we're about to launch Phase Two, and  
4 so it gives us the information that we need to tweak.  
5 We're also collecting information though through many  
6 forms of other data so we're looking at screener  
7 data, and that actually gives the teacher information  
8 about how well they are following the curriculum and  
9 whether or not students are progressing along  
10 different skills that they need to be learning. It  
11 tells the principal what kind of support a teacher  
12 may need, and so we look at that. With screeners,  
13 we're actually looking at other information, like in  
14 year one of the screeners, we had an 89 percent  
15 completion rate, year two, 92 percent completion  
16 rate, and this year 92%, but that's only because  
17 District 24 is doing a pilot for us where they're  
18 actually piloting a screener that is in both Spanish  
19 and English, and so their numbers don't count, but  
20 those numbers are 98 percent completion rate, and so  
21 every year we increase in the number of folks who are  
22 actually using the screeners which is a testament to  
23 how important that information is for us to do things  
24 like provide intervention supports. We collect  
25 information through our visits, and I think that's

1  
2 the most important way. You get lots of fantastic  
3 stories, but you also get to see when folks are  
4 making meaning. Are they actually shifting what their  
5 classroom libraries look like to be about genre or to  
6 create context for knowledge building instead of  
7 levels? Do they now have different things on the  
8 walls so instead of word walls that focus on letters,  
9 are they actually focusing on sounds where you have  
10 phonemes and graphemes up on the walls? So through  
11 the visits, we get to see whether or not folks have  
12 made meaning and how they are progressing through the  
13 curriculum and whether or not they have the right  
14 resources up so that kids are building those  
15 practices and skills along the way too, and so we  
16 collect that and we bring it here. There are also  
17 folks in the room that don't hesitate to give us  
18 feedback. We have partners who we call for feedback  
19 and others who just give it to us anyway. It's  
20 really, really important though that we use that  
21 information, and I think you've been part of the  
22 Literacy Advisory Council is one of those bodies that  
23 actually collects information for us very  
24 deliberately, and the Literacy Advisory Council has  
25 many subcouncils so we get to hear about data

1 collection, we get to hear about parental  
2 involvement, we get to hear about secondary supports,  
3 about dyslexia, through these subcouncils, and they  
4 feed us that information so we know what's working,  
5 what's not, what questions are coming up, and  
6 actually because this Literacy Advisory Council is  
7 made up of experts, teachers, students, parents, just  
8 a wide range of folks who are invested in or know  
9 about literacy, we actually have resources built in,  
10 and so it's, it's been really helpful to be, I think,  
11 learners in this space and to be humble about such a  
12 big shift because we have to be willing to be  
13 flexible and make sure we get it right, and I think  
14 that we've taken the right stance.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We've messed up  
17 reading for so long, we can't mess it up now.  
18 Question is, D75, are they included in this training  
19 for the educators? It's very important we do not  
20 leave our students with disabilities out of this  
21 conversation so can you tell me what type of training  
22 are you providing for D75 educators?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: The same training  
24 that we're providing for all of our other leaders and  
25 teachers we're providing to District 75. We have high

1  
2 expectations for our students in District 75, just  
3 like all of our students, and so we were very  
4 intentional in ensuring that they're getting the same  
5 quality of professional development that we have for  
6 everyone else. It's also important to note that we  
7 have 22 schools in District 75 that are part of Phase  
8 One 1 as well, and we will expand that in Phase Two.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: That was my next  
10 question, but thank you.

11 Please provide an update on status of  
12 districts under Phase Two initiatives. How many Phase  
13 Two districts have made the curriculum purchase  
14 already? If you can, please provide the list of those  
15 districts. How many Phase Two districts have  
16 identified a model classroom in each school to  
17 receive professional learning? Please provide a list  
18 of those districts and the name of the school serving  
19 as models.

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: We are at the tail  
21 end of the engagement process for Phase Two, and what  
22 that means is by January 1st, we will know what their  
23 selection has been. That is important because we gave  
24 them additional time to engage their community  
25 adequately, and that engagement looked very different

1 across many districts. Some had town halls, ongoing  
2 town halls, some had curriculum experts come in and  
3 share the different curriculum options with them.  
4 They went and they visited different districts with  
5 their teachers, with their principals, with families  
6 so it was very important to us that they had adequate  
7 time to make a decision in collaboration with school  
8 communities. The selection will be made by January  
9 1st and at that point they will start to receive  
10 samples of the curriculum that they can then launch  
11 in their districts, and then we will begin  
12 professional development in the spring, similar to  
13 what we did with our Phase One and the cycle will  
14 continue; summer professional development, continuing  
15 to engage, ensuring that they get all of their  
16 materials before the start of the school year, just  
17 as we did with Phase One and ensuring that the  
18 professional development continues in the fall of  
19 2024 so we are knee deep in that right now, ensuring  
20 that we have the right systems and structures and  
21 support, more importantly, for our Phase Two  
22 districts.

23  
24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We'll provide you the  
25 list, and if there's anything on the model classrooms



1  
2 that we want to speak to, but it's been exciting for  
3 me to see the superintendents all visiting each other  
4 across the city, all taking a deeper look and  
5 bringing teams with them as well as they've been  
6 doing their due diligence on making this selection as  
7 part of this process, very exciting for the whole  
8 school system.

9           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: You asked about  
10 the model classrooms. In district one, I have to  
11 shout out district one, superintendent Chan, Dr.  
12 Chan, she is Phase Two and she did something really  
13 amazing in her district. She brought the entire  
14 community together to norm. What are the practices  
15 that we want to see in classrooms? Because as she  
16 begins to launch, she wants to be able to have model  
17 classrooms in her district, and so she wanted to set  
18 a clear expectation about what she wants to see in  
19 her classrooms and that is an exemplary model that we  
20 shared with all of our superintendents who are in  
21 Phase Two as a best practice. It's looking different  
22 in every district, but we are providing them with  
23 sample best practices that they can scale across  
24 their district.

1  
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I'm going to ask  
3 the hard question for Chancellor. This all sounds  
4 amazing. With budget cuts, how is this going to look?

5 CHANCELLOR BANKS: This is our priority,  
6 all right, and so as we are reviewing all of these  
7 potential things that have to be cut, we are making  
8 this our number one priority so tough choices have to  
9 be made, but this is the legacy work for this  
10 Administration and we're going to ensure that the  
11 supports that are needed for kids to read is going to  
12 be there because as far as I'm concerned, there are  
13 lots of other programs that we have that are  
14 wonderful and amazing programs and it breaks my heart  
15 to have to look at cutting anything, but if kids  
16 can't read, none of the rest of the stuff really  
17 matters and so I want to make sure that we are fully  
18 locked in on NYC Reads. It is the Chancellors' number  
19 one priority, and so this is what we will fight the  
20 hardest to protect.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: But at the same  
22 token, I'm going to be Miss Joseph right now, social  
23 safety nets are also important.

24 CHANCELLOR BANKS: There are a lot of  
25 things that are important.

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We can't teach  
3 reading to an empty building so we got to keep in  
4 mind as we're building this out, the things that make  
5 New York City kids come to school, that some of them  
6 are also in place, that they're in place to make them  
7 come to the building. As much as we, you and I, may  
8 love reading, we want everybody reading, but remember  
9 the safety nets have to be in place for New York City  
10 kids to be able to come and read or no one is going  
11 to be reading the curriculum.

12 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Well, that's why we  
13 need the Council to fight for these cuts for us. I'm  
14 not instituting any cuts.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: (INAUDIBLE) it's  
16 the Mayor, it's not me, it's your boss.

17 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You all work together  
18 to negotiate a budget and so I work with the budget  
19 that I'm given and with the budget that I'm given,  
20 I'm just letting you know publicly, a priority for me  
21 will be the reading, and it doesn't mean that's the  
22 only thing that we're going to do, read and go home.  
23 No, there's a lot of stuff that we have to do, but we  
24 do know, as you all know, right, that we got some  
25 major challenges in front of us, major challenges,

1  
2 financial challenges. There are so many programs that  
3 we've done that have been so important. I think  
4 Summer Rising was amazing. We saw the impacts of  
5 that. Our ability to be able to do 110,000 students  
6 next year like we just did? We could have done  
7 150,000. That's what the demand was. Are we going to  
8 have the funding in place to be able to do that? I  
9 don't think we will, but I'm anxious to see as you  
10 all engage in this process as well what the ultimate  
11 budget will be that New York City Public Schools is  
12 going to be given to work with, and then we'll make  
13 do as best we can from there.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: One last question  
15 before I pass it on. A recent New York University  
16 report found that an HMH curriculum currently used by  
17 13 out of the 15 Phase One district is culturally  
18 destructive as it perpetuates stereotypes. Did the  
19 2021/2022 formal review of curriculum relieve any  
20 issues regarding the curriculum lack of cultural  
21 responsiveness and how are you working with HMH to  
22 address this issue?

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Yeah, that's a great  
24 question. You know, we looked very, very closely at  
25 that review. We didn't fully agree with that review

1 given what we saw, but we have worked very closely  
2 with HMH to fill in some of those gaps. I certainly  
3 am not going to stand as a Chancellor providing  
4 curricular options for our kids that are just wholly  
5 culturally unresponsive. That goes against the grain  
6 of everything that I'm all about so we've worked very  
7 closely with HMH. We think they're doing a greater  
8 job because we've got this magnificent team here that  
9 are holding their feet to the fire, but I think it's  
10 important to know, and I want everybody to know, even  
11 those that are not here from the Council, the  
12 curriculum itself is a tool, the magic is not in the  
13 curriculum. The curriculum is a basic foundation for  
14 us. The magic is in the training and how we're  
15 showing up, and we will continue to add to the  
16 curriculum and build on it. It's one of the reasons I  
17 mentioned some of the things, particularly a lot of  
18 this work that Deputy Chancellor Quintana is leading,  
19 we're adding stuff all the time so it's not one thing  
20 in a bottle and it's like, wow, this one curriculum  
21 doesn't have, there's no curriculum that has  
22 everything that you're looking for. The answer is in  
23 our connectedness to each other and making sure that  
24 we're hearing the voices from across the entire city  
25

2 because there are curricula that has been called  
3 culturally responsive and then when you do the  
4 analysis, it's culturally responsive to certain  
5 cultures.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

7 CHANCELLOR BANKS: We live in the most  
8 diverse city in the world and, if you want every  
9 child to be seen and to be affirmed, that's a huge  
10 body of work, but that's a body of work we need to be  
11 committed to, and you will never find that in any one  
12 canned program. It comes through the magic of the  
13 people who bring culture to life and take anything  
14 that's on paper and said now let's make it really  
15 matter, and that's why the training for our adults is  
16 critically important. We're looking at a Middle East  
17 crisis that's happening right now that has visited  
18 itself and its impact in all of our New York City  
19 communities and certainly in our schools, and I'm  
20 dealing with those issues every single day. Issues of  
21 anti-Semitism, issues of Islamophobia, which are  
22 wholly unacceptable, but I can say it's unacceptable.  
23 The way that you address it is how you teach the  
24 kids, but when you're relying on the adults to teach  
25 the kids, who's teaching the adults who bring their

1  
2 own biases, very often? We have a lot of work to do,  
3 but I do believe that we can get there, but it needs  
4 the right kind of leadership, the right kind of  
5 support, and people need to know that they should  
6 believe and trust in the leadership and our ability  
7 to work together, and that's what we're trying to do.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely. Thank  
9 you.

10 I wanted to acknowledge Council Member  
11 Hanks, and now I'm going to pass it over to my Co-  
12 Chair.

13 CHANCELLOR BANKS: And I would just say  
14 this. I'm sorry. I think we had shared that I was  
15 going to have a hard stop. I've got to get up to the  
16 Bronx, but you're in better hands with the Deputies  
17 who are driving this work each and every day. There's  
18 not one question that you would ask that I would know  
19 any better than they would know, but I would just  
20 like to just say in closing I very much appreciate  
21 the leadership of this Council at large, and I  
22 certainly appreciate my Councilman, Abreu, and I want  
23 to thank you very much for even pushing to make this  
24 session happen today, this hearing, and I know how  
25 personal it is to you, and I want you to know that we

1  
2 are fighting on behalf of all the Sean Abreus all  
3 across this system, that they don't get held back,  
4 that they get what they're supposed to get, and we're  
5 going to do everything that we possibly can, and we  
6 think this is like the best place that we can start  
7 by ensuring that by third grade, if every Shaun Abreu  
8 in the whole City of New York learns how to read,  
9 just think about the possibilities of what they can  
10 do from there. And Chair Joseph, who is just my  
11 ultimate partner, she's with us everywhere. I think  
12 she's the only Council Member, I think probably in  
13 history, who's ever gone directly from a classroom to  
14 Chair the Education Committee for the City Council.  
15 That is historic, but what it is is she brings a lens  
16 of what it really means to be in these schools and  
17 that matters to us. Even as you ask the tough  
18 questions to us, it makes all the difference in the  
19 world, right, and so we appreciate all of you.

20 (INAUDIBLE)

21 Did he go straight from the classroom?

22 UNKNOWN: Yes.

23 CHANCELLOR BANKS: You're the first woman  
24 to go straight from the classroom.

25



2 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: See, he knows, he  
3 knows, he knows, he knows.

4 CHANCELLOR BANKS: Thank you so much,  
5 Chairs. Thank you so much all the Members of the  
6 Committee, and I appreciate all of you, thank you so  
7 much.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you,  
9 Chancellor Banks.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,  
11 Chancellor.

12 Well, thank you, Chair. Joseph. I have a  
13 question with regard to the Mississippi Miracle and  
14 figuring out things that worked there and things that  
15 may have been different in terms of its  
16 implementation here in New York City. Starting in  
17 2013, the state passed a series of bills to overhaul  
18 their teaching methods in Mississippi. At the outset  
19 of its transformation, Mississippi funded coaches for  
20 each of the state's poorest performing schools,  
21 helping teachers apply lessons from the Letters  
22 training. The coaches provided monthly reports on  
23 their work to keep principals and state officials  
24 informed. They also provided professional development  
25 and online learning for schools without coaches. As a

1 result of these efforts, Mississippi was the only  
2 state that improved fourth grade reading scores on  
3 the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress.  
4 They went from 21 percent of fourth grade students  
5 scoring as proficient in reading in 2013 to 32  
6 percent in 2019. This has been dubbed as the  
7 Mississippi Miracle. What lessons has the  
8 Administration taken from this and incorporated into  
9 your own program but have done differently as well?  
10

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I'll take a  
12 stab at that one. I appreciate the scope of  
13 everything they did. One thing I do want to point  
14 out, and you all know this, New York City is huge,  
15 right? We're bigger than the whole state of  
16 Mississippi, and so thinking about the way that we  
17 roll this initiative out, we have to be really  
18 careful about scale, and we have to be really careful  
19 in terms of the relationship that, that we have with  
20 the state, with our partners, with the universities  
21 that exist here, but we did take a page from their  
22 book, right? We made sure that all of our leaders  
23 received the training, actually through Letters very  
24 specifically, but we also offered other forms of  
25 science of reading inductions, right? We wanted to

1  
2 make sure that folks had an understanding of what  
3 shift we were about to make before we actually made  
4 the curricular shift and the pedagogical shift so  
5 that they could have a sense of what it was that we  
6 were going to do. As you mentioned, coaching was a  
7 really big part of their success. They were able to  
8 get that support from the state. It would be  
9 fantastic to actually have funding from our city,  
10 from our state, from wherever it is to be able to  
11 afford coaches for everyone, but what we've done is  
12 build from within, right, and so we were able to one,  
13 bring in third-party vendors because we don't have  
14 enough people, and then we took what we did have and  
15 put it in places that are really strategic for us so  
16 I had mentioned the interventionist, the  
17 implementation specialist, the academic intervention  
18 support folks, and so we've placed the people who had  
19 that kind of capacity already in very strategic  
20 positions to support us at the district level and at  
21 the school level so that we can actually have that  
22 breadth of support across we're talking about 16  
23 districts that already are probably the size of their  
24 entire state, right, and so what does it mean to be  
25 able to provide that? We also are looking at our data

1  
2 and are seeing that through intervention, which is  
3 where we're really focusing in, we're going to have  
4 results like this. We're going to close the gap of  
5 the students that are being identified. We've already  
6 actually seen that. Students identified as at risk,  
7 who may have been thought to have a dyslexic profile,  
8 have actually been able to move out of that at-risk  
9 category already through intervention alone. We've  
10 seen examples and have heard stories at schools where  
11 students who were in a 12 to 1 to 1 setting through  
12 intensive intervention have now been recommended for  
13 ICT, where a student who was considered, right,  
14 exactly, thank you, that is worth clapping for, who  
15 may have needed or would have needed to be put in a  
16 different sort of program for that kind of intensive  
17 support was able to receive intensive support over  
18 time, and we're talking about the difference of  
19 students who need 10 times the support and students  
20 who need 30 times the support. We're able to build  
21 that sort of tiered model across our schools, and  
22 we're trying different things in different spaces  
23 because we also have a much larger population of  
24 English language learners, and we need to be really  
25 thoughtful about the kids that we have in our schools

1  
2 and the kind of support that they need so we're  
3 learning from states like Mississippi and we're also  
4 taking into consideration what we have available here  
5 and what we can build, and our teams fortunately are  
6 working very well together because we can't do it  
7 without the superintendents investing, we can't do it  
8 without making sure that our labor partners are  
9 involved right, which is actually that's another  
10 first that, that our central office is working so  
11 well together and really breaking down silos so that  
12 each of us are playing a role in making sure that  
13 this NYC Reads isn't just an initiative, it is a  
14 change to our system as a whole.

15           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Yeah, I would  
16 just add we are standing on the shoulders of many  
17 different people that have come before us and doing  
18 this work. To Deputy Chancellor Quintana's point, we  
19 are definitely taking those lessons learned, but also  
20 they're real promising practices that have proven to  
21 be effective. I think what makes us unique and  
22 different is that when the Chancellor made this  
23 commitment to grounding our work in the body of  
24 research called the science of reading we also made a  
25 very clear commitment very early on that this was

1  
2 also going to be inclusive of our youngest, youngest  
3 children, which does separate us from the norm and  
4 really inject a very healthy dose of difference that  
5 you may not see elsewhere, but that's also because we  
6 have this grand opportunity here in New York City to  
7 begin with our youngest learners and recognizing that  
8 we cannot build a house starting on the second floor.  
9 It begins with young children. If we do this, and we  
10 do this well very early on, we will not be playing  
11 catch up in third grade, right? We will not be  
12 looking for quick fixes and fast interventions, doing  
13 a sprint to get some maybe immediate results, but not  
14 necessarily sustainable results to really build  
15 confident and competent readers and lifelong readers,  
16 and so that is also something that's very unique,  
17 that we're adding on to the lessons that we're  
18 learning from states like Mississippi. They were able  
19 to, for many different reasons, not necessarily  
20 because of lack of will, but maybe just because of  
21 their own resources of providing coaches to low-  
22 performing districts, in early childhood, every  
23 single teacher, every single leader, so we're talking  
24 over 8,000 classrooms, we're talking hundreds and  
25 hundreds of elementary schools, thousands of our

1 contracted programs has access to a coach, right?

2 That's huge, and we believe, right, I think part of  
3 our own philosophical stance is that coaching isn't  
4 just for those that are not doing well. Coaching is  
5 for all of us to continue stretching and growing our  
6 own professional work so that we can do the best  
7 possible for every single child that stands in front  
8 of us.

9  
10 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. One  
11 thing that was present with the Mississippi Miracle  
12 was a dedicated state budget for this. What budgetary  
13 assistance from the state especially could help  
14 further the implementation and support for students  
15 with learning disabilities, and is the absence of  
16 that resource hampering your ability to implement  
17 your program?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: That's not a  
19 question I'm prepared to answer, but I do want to say  
20 that at this time I don't feel that we're hampered,  
21 right? We're three months in. We're really doing what  
22 we can with what we have. I think that we're already  
23 seeing success. We're seeing a shift in teacher  
24 practice. We're seeing a shift in the way that  
25 principals actually talk about instruction. This NYC

1 Reads is directly aligned to our citywide  
2 instructional priority of making sure that every  
3 student has a high-quality academic experience that  
4 leads to deeper learning where students are taught to  
5 think critically and solve complex problems and that  
6 they are taught in a space, Chair Joseph, as you  
7 suggested, of belonging and inclusivity, and that's  
8 happening across the board. When we hear principals  
9 and teachers ask us for additional ways to do this  
10 work that really meets the needs of their specific  
11 populations, we know they're being thoughtful about  
12 it and I would say that that's success, and we  
13 continue to evolve. I think that's really, really  
14 important. I sat actually in an arts function earlier  
15 today where I heard Commissioner Curry actually talk,  
16 not Commissioner Curry, sorry, no, but I'll remember  
17 in a second because it was arts, but we talked about  
18 needing to evolve, right, how important it is to  
19 evolve as a system and that's what's happening. We're  
20 seeing that already. We're seeing that across the  
21 board. We're seeing that with all of our schools.  
22 We're seeing that at the central office, the way that  
23 we're talking about teaching and learning as a whole.  
24 A school system is never going to say no to  
25



1  
2 additional support, but I think that given what  
3 resources we have and what we know we're absolutely  
4 making it happen.

5           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: And I just want to  
6 add that we can't do this work without our parents as  
7 well and so that was something else that we learned,  
8 engaging our families in this process was really  
9 critically important to us as well. Again, I'm going  
10 to give you another example because I'm all about  
11 going to see the best practices, but we have in  
12 District 25 where they have Welcome Wednesdays, and  
13 they're part of Phase One, where their families come  
14 into the school and actually see lessons in action  
15 and then following observing the lesson, they go into  
16 the auditorium with the principal and they debrief  
17 and talk about what did you see and what can the  
18 extensions be for at home. Again, you know, that is a  
19 best practice that we lifted from Mississippi, and we  
20 are collecting all of those types of best practices  
21 to ensure that we can leverage them for our Phase Two  
22 districts.

23           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Commissioner  
24 Cumbo, Cultural Affairs.

1  
2 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I have one last  
3 question before I pass it back over to Chair Joseph.

4 There are various bills at the state  
5 level currently in committee that are in relation to  
6 screening for learning disabilities, particularly  
7 dyslexia and dysgraphia. Some require longer  
8 continuous screening such as the New York Individuals  
9 with Dyslexia Act, which requires annual screenings  
10 for all students in grades K through 5. Others only  
11 require annual screenings up until the second grade.  
12 Do you know of any advantages or disadvantages to  
13 longer continuous testing?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: The question  
15 is about screening for dyslexia, right?

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, longer  
17 continuous testing.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: The way that  
19 the screeners work is once we've had students who've  
20 gone through a round of screening, we provide them  
21 with intervention. If we don't see that the student  
22 is making progress, then they'll receive a secondary  
23 screener, right, a more intensive screener. What's  
24 important there actually becomes both the intensity  
25 of the intervention and the continuous monitoring,

1  
2 and so what that looks like is the interventionist  
3 really paying attention to whether or not the child  
4 is making progress on those particular skills. If  
5 that's what you're talking about in terms of the  
6 length of screening that happens, we're talking about  
7 students who in this case I had mentioned earlier may  
8 need 30 times the type of intensity in terms of  
9 intervention, and so there are students who will  
10 necessarily have more attention paid to what they're  
11 doing, and that monitoring looks like additional  
12 assessing that happens along the way.

13 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Of course.

15 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member

16 Narcisse and then followed by Council Member

17 Gutierrez.

18 Also acknowledging Council Member Menin.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: one of the  
20 things that I was about to ask, you answered that for  
21 me too, is about parents' engagement. We have to keep  
22 in mind, that's a little statement here, that some  
23 folks really don't have the education to support  
24 their own children. That's why we and the Chair of  
25 Education are always pushing for libraries, for

1  
2 different things. That's when culture come in to  
3 understand all that so I'm so appreciative and the  
4 collaboration, I'm so appreciative of that. I could  
5 have danced for this because I'm a mother of four  
6 children, and I know for a fact, yes, I went back  
7 four times, it's a fact that kids need, I see more  
8 parents here than I have four, that look, yes, we  
9 have a lot of children here. Education is everything,  
10 and I am so grateful. One of my questions are what  
11 metrics, I know you kind of allured to it definitely,  
12 so I want to ask you, what metric system that you're  
13 using to measure the progress of this curriculum?  
14 It's a great curriculum, by the way. I'm not judging  
15 you, but I want to know how you're going to know it's  
16 working.

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: We're  
18 actually collecting data through a number of ways. We  
19 have a tool that's been put together that will help  
20 us actually go in and look at the curricular  
21 implementation in a very developmental way, and so  
22 that's just about making sure that the resources that  
23 we have and the strategies that we need are happening  
24 across our classrooms. We're also, though, collecting  
25 data in terms of the screeners, and those screeners

1  
2 give us information about whether or not, those are  
3 very specific classroom data, that gives us  
4 information about whether or not the teacher is  
5 progressing through the curriculum and through the  
6 building of skills the way they need to, and it lets  
7 the principal know if the teacher needs additional  
8 support to help the kids make progress through those  
9 skills. Those screeners then give us information too  
10 about groupings for intervention, both in Tier 1, so  
11 in the general classroom, and for Tier 2  
12 interventions. Those interventions generate data, and  
13 we're collecting that information as well, and that's  
14 actually some of that information that I had  
15 mentioned where we're seeing children who've been  
16 recommended either out of certain settings in terms  
17 of placement for special education, or they were  
18 considered severely at risk, and were able to get out  
19 of that category because they advanced through  
20 whatever would be the foundational level of literacy,  
21 and that's the kind of information that we want to  
22 see, that kids are making progress to close, mostly  
23 it's that gap, right, when we want to make progress  
24 on, for example, the state assessments, which we will  
25 look at as well, but that's lagging data. Usually,

1  
2 what we want to do is close the number of students  
3 who are scoring level one and increase the number of  
4 students, obviously, who are scoring at proficiency  
5 level, but first, you need to close that gap of  
6 students who are scoring at level one. We're doing  
7 that already with the interventions. We're closing  
8 the number of students who are coming up as at risk,  
9 and that's already in three months, tremendous  
10 efforts, and so that kind of data that we're  
11 collecting, we're collecting qualitative data as  
12 well. I mentioned that we put out a survey in the  
13 spring. We just administered a survey actually, just  
14 got put out, I think this week, is that right, so  
15 just this week for teachers and leaders to give us  
16 feedback on professional learning and coaching and  
17 how their sense of self-efficacy in terms of the  
18 curriculum so we're looking at it from a number of  
19 ways, and then we also have a whole team, actually,  
20 that does policy and analysis of data and some of the  
21 funders who are funding our partners have also  
22 invested in having some research done so we're  
23 looking at case studies and we'll also have some  
24 information about implementation so a range of

1  
2 different ways because we need to make sure that  
3 implementation is leading to...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: It seems like my  
5 question is taking all my time, one question, but I  
6 have others. I think I'm getting to where you're  
7 going. What role would parents play, which we asked,  
8 but you told me that parents are going to be engaged  
9 throughout, right, and I'm hoping that every train  
10 that I get on in New York City, I'm going to see  
11 parents reading, I'm going to see the children  
12 reading. What does your budget look like for  
13 marketing, promoting this curriculum?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I can't speak  
15 to the budget, but I can tell you a little bit about  
16 the ways that we're involving parents, and that looks  
17 like a number of different resources, activities, and  
18 opportunities. The family and community engagement  
19 team has put together resources for parents to be  
20 able to engage in this process with the schools. They  
21 also, this past summer for example, did the Summer  
22 Streets where they had a bus go out or it was a  
23 minivan that actually provided books and did read  
24 alouds and things like that for parents to engage  
25 them. We're inviting parents into different functions

1  
2 to learn about the curriculum. The curricula all come  
3 with information that goes out to parents and with  
4 online resources as well, and our team put together  
5 resources for schools to know how to work alongside  
6 parents. I don't know if you want to add something.

7           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: If I may. I  
8 really appreciate your question around the ways in  
9 which we're engaging families, partnering with  
10 families, but also recognizing that all families are  
11 also entering our school system at all different  
12 levels and all different levels of being comfortable  
13 in the ways that they're engaging around their  
14 children's education, and that's our job, is to  
15 figure that out and to be able to respond to that,  
16 right, and so when we think about families and as a  
17 former teacher, a former principal, and interacting  
18 with countless families across the years, and knowing  
19 that all families don't enter this school system in  
20 the same way that others may, right, in reading and  
21 feeling comfortable in reading, or English as their  
22 first language, there are so many ways that families  
23 can engage with their child that are outside of just  
24 reading a book in order to build their literacy, in  
25 order to help literacy development for their own



1 child so we really want to make sure that families  
2 also understand this is a big piece of our work. One  
3 of the reasons in early childhood we selected the  
4 curriculum that we did in order because it had a huge  
5 family engagement component and a two-way  
6 communication system and mechanism already set up and  
7 built into it and a number of resources that are  
8 absolutely free to families to understand that  
9 reading is one way to build children's literacy, but  
10 oral language development is one of the biggest  
11 predictors of children's reading skills in the later  
12 years, and so, families, it's important for families  
13 to know, and especially those that may not be  
14 comfortable reading or that are learning to read  
15 themselves, that just talking with your child, right,  
16 especially in the early years, is huge. Talking with  
17 your child while you're walking to the bus or to the  
18 subway, what you're seeing on the way to the park,  
19 and in your home language. Really, really huge,  
20 right, and very, very important. Building that  
21 language proficiency in a child's primary language  
22 will help them build proficiency in another language.  
23 Writing with your child is also a huge piece to  
24 building literacy development so, you know, making a  
25

1  
2 list of what we're going to do on the weekend, making  
3 that food shopping list together, writing to a loved  
4 one. All of those pieces combined are really, really  
5 important. Families are children's first teacher and  
6 they are their forever teacher.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: That's right.

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: it doesn't  
9 matter where their literacy is, and you can't tell my  
10 mother different. She is still my teacher at this  
11 age.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I'm so happy  
13 because we live in a diverse city, diverse  
14 linguistics background so I'm hoping that all that  
15 can incorporate and then we can lead by example so I  
16 thank you. Thank you, Chair. Thank you.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Council  
18 Member Gutiérrez.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you,  
20 Chair. Good to see everyone this morning.

21 I have a couple of questions. I also  
22 agree. I think this initiative is really incredible.  
23 I really appreciate the effort, the comprehensiveness  
24 of how important it is. I did also have a question on  
25 engagement and just a little bit more specific, and I

1 think you alluded to this, Deputy Chancellor, about,  
2 like my experience where my parents immigrated here,  
3 my mom got a fifth grade education and my dad had an  
4 eighth grade education so the engagement part is yes,  
5 engaging with parents and like making sure that they  
6 understand like the curriculum is different and their  
7 children will be taught a little differently, but I  
8 guess for non-English-speaking parents, right, and I  
9 hear a mix in my community where they get home really  
10 late and it's a lot of work for them to kind of do  
11 that supportive work at home, but especially for  
12 those parents where English is not their first  
13 language, kind of where is the distinction of support  
14 for them? I'm going to read through my questions so  
15 that I can respect the time so would love to if you  
16 can answer that or if you can get that to us.

18           The second question is related to how you  
19 are all thinking about PD, and Chair Joseph and I had  
20 a joint hearing a couple months ago related to AI in  
21 our schools, and I'm really curious if this is a tool  
22 that you are all thinking about or already doing,

23           but I think the consensus from our  
24 hearing, both Chair Joseph and I think this is like a

1 really good opportunity and if you can speak to that,  
2 that would be wonderful.

3  
4           The last two questions. The Chancellor  
5 alluded to this in his statement about integrating  
6 CBOs. Is there any specifics that you can share,  
7 specifically our CBOs that are partnering with our  
8 schools and community school scenarios, for example,  
9 how are they being trained or integrated into this  
10 program.

11           The last question is related to City's  
12 First Readers, which is a wonderful initiative that  
13 the Council has funded and continues to fund, and it  
14 really speaks to, I think, some of the goals in this  
15 program, which is really tackling literacy from zero  
16 to five, and I am very lucky in my own community, I  
17 was able to work with a City's First Reader partner  
18 when my child was first born and so curious if you  
19 are all working with the coalition of City's First  
20 Readers and what are some takeaways, what are some of  
21 their feedback, because they've been funding, the  
22 Council has been supporting them for a long time? I  
23 hope to continue to support them, but they've been  
24 speaking about this for a long time too so would love  
25 to know how you guys are working together.

1  
2                   That's it. Thank you.

3                   DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you.

4                   That's a lot of questions. Do you want to start?

5                   COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Four questions.

6                   It's four questions.

7                   DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: No, they're  
8                   great. I'm excited actually about these questions.

9                   DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: Four really good  
10                  questions. We've got them written down and I think  
11                  we're ready to roll.

12                  Thinking about supporting families and  
13                  the resources that are available in different  
14                  languages, right, so through the early childhood  
15                  curriculum, there are a number of resources that are  
16                  available to family, and each of those resources are  
17                  available in English, in Spanish, Arabic, in a number  
18                  of different languages, I think over seven or nine  
19                  languages for the Modeled Moment videos, which again  
20                  are really supporting families in understanding how  
21                  to extend that learning outside of school so seeing  
22                  experiences that actually happen in the classroom,  
23                  the ways those can happen in the park, on the bus, or  
24                  at home, but in multiple languages so that it's  
25                  accessible for families. The same goes to all of the

1 digital books that are available to families, again,  
2 through our curriculum and assessment, available in  
3 multiple languages. Again, another reason why these  
4 tools were actually selected so that they had full-on  
5 access available and readily available in multiple  
6 languages for families so that they could also be  
7 part of that work. If you want to speak a little to  
8 the K to 5 piece.  
9

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Sure. For  
11 parents, not very different, right, we have  
12 translated materials, the resources are available in  
13 different languages and if parents are coming into  
14 the school to speak with or to be part of open school  
15 nights and things like that, the interpretation  
16 that's available across the city is standard, right?

17 In addition to that, though, something  
18 that Deputy Chancellor Ahmed said earlier we  
19 encourage parents to speak their heritage language to  
20 the students throughout. If they are readers in their  
21 heritage language, to do that as well, and a lot of  
22 what reading is, and I know that we joke that kids  
23 are going to leave age 3 or 3K reading. Really what  
24 kids are going to leave 3K doing developmentally  
25 appropriately, most kids, is having reading

1 behaviors, and that's what we want, right, and so  
2 parents can practice those reading behaviors  
3 regardless of language. Not only are we building  
4 sound fluency through practicing the speaking but  
5 also practicing turning pages, practicing actually  
6 reading aloud in their heritage language, and so we  
7 want parents to continue to do that and to feel  
8 confident that that is going to contribute to the  
9 child's literacy development and their biliteracy,  
10 which is incredibly important. For those of you who  
11 are bilingual and biliterate, you know that that  
12 actually is really good for your brain and your  
13 development so we want that to continue to happen  
14 across our schools and to really honor and value what  
15 our kids bring as their strengths already.

17           Aside from that, you had asked about  
18 community schools and whether or not the community  
19 schools are part of the Phase One districts or of the  
20 early childhood districts continue to be part of that  
21 as well, and they've been funded to have very  
22 specific support for core content area development,  
23 and so I had mentioned earlier, our citywide  
24 instructional priority, the first lever in that  
25 citywide instructional priority that leads to deeper

1  
2 learning is to make sure that every school and every  
3 teacher has strong content knowledge, and that  
4 doesn't just mean I know math; it means I know how to  
5 teach math. In this case, not just that I know  
6 reading, I know how to teach reading to every child  
7 in front of me so that I can anticipate where that  
8 child is going to struggle and I can make sure that I  
9 have the right resources in place and I can adjust  
10 the curriculum where needed to meet the needs of the  
11 students in front of me.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Can I just  
13 clarify that? Thank you. It was just on the CBO piece  
14 specifically.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Oh, okay. I'm  
16 sorry. CBOs actually are a huge part of this work for  
17 us, so super exciting not only in terms of supporting  
18 but they're also very anxious to receive training in  
19 terms of NYC Reads. We've been working with them  
20 through our tutoring programs, including them in part  
21 of that work to develop those literacy skills, not so  
22 that they become literacy teachers, but so they're  
23 aware of what kids are learning and they can continue  
24 to foster that when they're there.

25



1  
2           The one part that I also wanted to  
3 respond to, and then I'll turn it over to you,  
4 Danika, is AI because it falls under my team as well,  
5 and it's a really, really exciting part of the work  
6 that we're doing. We just launched an AI policy lab,  
7 which is a national initiative, and through the AI  
8 policy lab, we will be able to collect both guidance  
9 at the local and at the national level and tools and  
10 resources so that we're creating a toolkit for  
11 leaders and educators, and part of what that also  
12 means for us is the development of resources that  
13 include inclusive technologies as a whole, AI and  
14 generative AI being part of that, and so we are  
15 already building a tool that works to help students  
16 engage more closely in math, and we're now in talks  
17 with the university and we'll start the work very  
18 soon, not announced yet, to do the same for literacy,  
19 and so we're really, really excited about how we're  
20 using the technologies, and we already know that  
21 those technologies allow our students entry  
22 regardless of where they are in terms of language, in  
23 terms of literacy, and so we already have many  
24 schools using a range of technologies to give kids  
25 opportunities to practice, to build fluency, or to

1  
2 give them ways to engage in the class when they don't  
3 have the capacity to do so yet on their own so  
4 really, really exciting.

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: I took copious  
6 notes of your questions so we're saying if Deputy  
7 Chancellor Rux wanted to mention anything else about  
8 the integration of CBOs, but I think Deputy  
9 Chancellor Quintana covered it.

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Oh, and we  
11 have CBOs in our Literacy Advisory Council as well.  
12 They're a big part of that, and the Reading Alliance  
13 also provides after school support and foundational  
14 skills so something else just to keep in mind that we  
15 have a range of ways. We can't do it alone, and so  
16 we're taking advantage of anyone who wants to help in  
17 that process who's aligned in our thinking.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Wonderful. Thank  
19 you so much. Some educators have expressed concern  
20 that the curriculum options are too rigid and  
21 incorporate difficult text but are not  
22 differentiated, especially impacting ELLs and SWDs.  
23 Is New York City Public Schools concerned about this  
24 issue? If so, how does the New York City Public  
25 Schools plan to address it?

1  
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: That's a  
3 really important question because it's one that  
4 speaks to the importance of making meaning. When  
5 folks don't actually understand the shift that we're  
6 making, when they don't have the instructional  
7 strategies needed to actually read into grade level  
8 text and to help students access grade level text,  
9 that's the response. This is too hard. My kids can't,  
10 and that actually ends up, unfortunately, whether  
11 intentionally or not, being about low expectations.  
12 We've used, again, research, right? There was a RAND  
13 report that showed us that when teachers were  
14 trained, that mindset shifted. When they actually had  
15 the resources to be able to do that, that mindset  
16 shifted. PS 125 actually received the support of the  
17 Council, thank you very much. I was able to visit  
18 them last year a few times. I had many meetings with  
19 their teachers, their union folks, their families,  
20 and then went back again this year, and the shift was  
21 incredible. I know I've talked to you a little bit  
22 about it before, and you've been there with me, but  
23 the shift in that particular school, to use as an  
24 example, teachers were afraid of what it meant,  
25 right, they had been trained in a very different way,

1 they were experts in what they knew, and they didn't  
2 know that the kids could actually access those texts.  
3 We saw a shift in their practices. Now if you walk  
4 into their classrooms, they'll actually pull you in  
5 to show you how exciting it is, and what their bins  
6 look like, and what their classrooms look like, and  
7 what they're doing, and one of the teachers actually  
8 said, I couldn't get the kids to read, now I actually  
9 have to pull the books away because they want to be  
10 part of the reading, right? It's easier to get them  
11 into those texts now. The texts are also exciting.  
12 The topics the kids really are engaged with. When we  
13 visited a school last week, the teacher said, you  
14 know I found that some of the topics really engage my  
15 boys who would have been reluctant, and some of the  
16 topics really engage my girls in different ways, and  
17 not that we should genderfy anything like that, but  
18 they're noticing that there are topics that engage  
19 the kids differently, and I think that that's  
20 incredibly important, that these books are exciting,  
21 the kids want to read into them, and the teachers now  
22 have the strategies to do it so we don't want to make  
23 things more simplified because we're afraid that the  
24 kids can't access it. We need to be able to provide  
25

1  
2 adequate supports for the students to be able to  
3 access, and that means for our English language  
4 learners, that our teachers have those supports in  
5 front of them, and that they know how to modify for  
6 the kids to meet, and for our students with  
7 disabilities that we're thinking about things like  
8 pacing and the right sort of materials in front of  
9 them to help support as well the technologies that we  
10 asked about earlier, and, when necessary, we will  
11 absolutely and have already spoken with the vendors  
12 because we want to make sure, New York City is a big  
13 city. We're on a big platform. We need to hold the  
14 vendors accountable as well and so when necessary,  
15 we're having those conversations there too.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. one  
17 quick question. Do you keep data on your  
18 interventionists? If you do, would you be able to  
19 share that data with the Council?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: What do you  
21 mean by data on the interventionists, on the results  
22 of the interventions?

23 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Correct.

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: We are  
25 collecting data on the results of the interventions.

1 We have some of that data already to demonstrate  
2 growth. I'm not sure actually if that's data that we  
3 can share, so I can get back to you on that but let  
4 me get back to you on that one.  
5

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Okay. Thank you.  
7 I'd like to recognize Council Member Stevens,  
8 Restler, and Rivera. Thank you.

9 My next question will be on Dyslexia  
10 Screening and Intervention. The term Dyslexia  
11 Screening has been used somewhat interchangeably to  
12 refer to universal screening of all students for  
13 reading challenges using tools like Abesia (phonetic)  
14 as well as more in-depth secondary screening done as  
15 followup to initial assessment. Can you confirm that  
16 all schools are now conducting universal screening  
17 across all grade levels? If not, which school and  
18 which grade levels are conducting universal  
19 screening?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you.  
21 Yes. So those numbers actually, the screeners, as I  
22 mentioned, we have a 92 percent completion rate for  
23 screeners for ELA, but that rate actually doesn't  
24 include the District 24 who are piloting Amplify  
25 (INAUDIBLE) class screener in Spanish and English.

1  
2 For that group of students who are piloting that,  
3 that are over 11,000 students, we have a 98 percent  
4 completion rate for them so we're pretty happy with  
5 the completion rate in terms of screeners. As far as  
6 interventions, last year we actually piloted  
7 intensive interventions and so the number was much  
8 smaller, but this year we have over 300 schools that  
9 receive intensive intervention support so students  
10 have access to that.

11 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm  
12 passing it on to Council Member Avilés.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you so much,  
14 Chair, and thank you all for being here and the work  
15 that you do. I'm sorry if I'm asking a question that  
16 you may have already answered, but can you talk to me  
17 a little bit about what specific training happens for  
18 co-occurring learning disorders, particularly in the  
19 context of the dyslexia intervention? What kind of  
20 training are folks receiving for that?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you.  
22 The training looks like a number of different things.  
23 Most of the training that we're providing to teachers  
24 who work with students, for example, in our iREAD  
25 program or who are working at any of our structured

1 literacy sites is OG training so Orton Gillingham  
2 through Edwards OG. Also many of them have Wilson  
3 training, and so we're really looking at teachers to  
4 have the skills to provide that kind of explicit  
5 instruction, and they're being trained on intensive  
6 interventions as well so that they can administer  
7 intensive intervention support, and that's the  
8 interventionists that we have have been trained so we  
9 have over 100 interventionists that are part of the  
10 literacy team, and then we have over 900  
11 interventionists that are part of the centrally  
12 funded special education interventionists, and  
13 they've all received training that is through the  
14 International Dyslexia Association so they have not  
15 only intensive training that is recognized  
16 internationally but nationally, but they also have  
17 consistency across the practices, and that's what's  
18 really important to us. Dr. Ahmed talked earlier  
19 about coherence, and we want to make sure that our  
20 practices are consistent across the board.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: it sounds like  
23 really large numbers, 100, 900, but, of course, where  
24 we have a system of almost a million students. How  
25



1 many interventionists do you think we need to have in  
2 the system to fully be able to cover.

3  
4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Every school  
5 should have an interventionist, absolutely, and  
6 depending on the population of a school, some schools  
7 even have more, but right now what we're doing is  
8 using those over 100 interventionists that are at the  
9 central level plus the 960 to develop capacity from  
10 within. Part of what's happening is those  
11 interventionists are going into Phase One schools  
12 that have demonstrated need, and the idea is those  
13 Phase One schools should have identified someone who  
14 will be developed from within so that that is  
15 sustainable. That's what's most important. This can't  
16 be seen as an initiative that is temporary and only  
17 while the resources are there. This has to be a  
18 systemic change that includes building capacity from  
19 within so we'll continue to do that. Last year, we  
20 also piloted intensive intervention across 80  
21 schools, and so we continue to build, right, and I  
22 think that's part of it is that we're growing those  
23 numbers, and then I mentioned a story earlier before  
24 you arrived that is actually an example of what's  
25 really exciting, right? A teacher who is a centrally

1  
2 funded interventionist trained on SPIRE was able to  
3 train five additional teachers at her school to use  
4 SPIRE so now you have a cadre of six at one school  
5 because we had a teacher who was an expert. That's  
6 what we want to continue to do is to build that  
7 capacity, and more and more folks are seeing  
8 themselves as part of that process.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah. One of the  
10 things we've talked about in the past in the context  
11 of the screenings around dyslexia is multi-language  
12 learners and how the challenges that are presented  
13 because they present differently, and those students  
14 are facing different challenges so to speak. Is that  
15 also included in these trainings? Obviously we have  
16 co-occurring and then we have also speaking multiple  
17 languages.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes, yes, and  
19 incredibly important for us. So there are two  
20 different ways that our English language learners  
21 experience school, and that may be in a bilingual  
22 program, which is either a transitional bilingual or  
23 dual language or in one of our ENL classes. In ENL  
24 classes, they'll receive instruction in English, and  
25 in our bilingual classes in their heritage language

1  
2 as well so in those bilingual classes that are  
3 Spanish-speaking, which is the majority of our  
4 programs, we are currently piloting both screeners  
5 that are available in Spanish and English, and we  
6 have schools that have selected or districts that  
7 have selected as their Spanish language, Arriba la  
8 Lectura, and so they're able to use that. For the  
9 foundational reading curriculum, they use Estrejita,  
10 and so they actually have access to materials in both  
11 Spanish and English, which other teachers have found  
12 incredibly helpful. So not just the teachers who are  
13 in the dual language or bilingual programs but  
14 teachers across the content areas have found really  
15 helpful to have the materials or teachers across the  
16 programs, the materials in both Spanish and English,  
17 because then they can actually use the language to  
18 support their students who are in ENL classes as  
19 well, not having to look for resources or not having  
20 to find translations. They already have access to  
21 those resources to support too. We know that our  
22 multilingual learners need explicit instruction in  
23 phonics. We know that they need vocabulary  
24 comprehension, and that's part of what's happening

1 through this initiative anyway, and so they're  
2 receiving the support that they need.

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right. Chair, if I  
5 may just for a wrap-up question. Actually, two quick  
6 questions.

7 Does the task force include  
8 multilanguage, like does it include folks who speak  
9 Spanish or Mandarin or Arabic?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: The Literacy  
11 Advisory Council?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yes.

13 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Part of what  
16 we're looking at is in what ways are we supporting  
17 English language learners?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Fantastic. The  
19 last thing I just wanted to touch on was around  
20 speech language pathology assistance. It's obvious  
21 that we need additional speech language professionals  
22 to service our communities and our children. Speech  
23 language pathology assistants, in particular, we know  
24 exists in states like California, Florida, and Texas  
25 and in fact, many low-income communities that are

1  
2 experiencing severe post-COVID shortage of language,  
3 speech language intervention services. I'm curious, I  
4 cannot understand why we have not utilized speech  
5 language pathology assistants in New York to help us  
6 with Dyslexia Intervention Initiative and the  
7 shortages that we're experiencing.

8           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yep. We do  
9 have speech teachers, not the same thing, but we do  
10 have speech teachers as part of our related services,  
11 and those speech teachers have been trained as  
12 interventionists at schools.

13           COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Right, but there's  
14 not enough of them.

15           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yep.

16           COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Do you think the  
17 City should be pursuing the use of speech language  
18 pathologist assistants to expand the capacity to be  
19 able to meet this need?

20           DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes and no,  
21 right? Part of it is, many of the students who  
22 receive speech services, receive speech services  
23 because of their needs in literacy, and much of what  
24 we're doing is through the intensive intervention  
25 supports that they're receiving through whether it's

1 the centrally funded intervention teacher, the speech  
2 teacher, or some combination of those. We're able to  
3 provide them with the supports, the early and  
4 intensive intervention that they need to be able to  
5 move out of that as well. Part of this is needing to  
6 connect with the state to explore further.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Without question,  
9 but I guess what I'm getting at here is we have a  
10 capacity issue.

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Obviously we are  
13 making a great effort to expand this, and this is a  
14 mechanism through which we could expand our capacity,  
15 and so what I would like to see is our City  
16 counterparts fully advocating for an expansion,  
17 particularly getting more assistants on board so what  
18 I'm asking you directly is, will the New York City  
19 Department of Education vigorously advocate at the  
20 state level for assistance to be added?

21 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: We will  
22 explore. We'll connect with the state to explore  
23 further. We need whatever services are available for  
24 our students to be able to be successful in school.  
25 We understand that this initiative is a lever for

1  
2 change, and we need it to be as such, and so we'll  
3 connect with the state to..

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great, to be  
5 continued. Thank you.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member  
7 Menin.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Great. Thank you so  
9 much, Chair. I had a question about the literacy  
10 instruction. Back in 2016, I launched a program  
11 called NYC Kids Rise, which we launched in Queens in  
12 District 30. We piloted it with 13,000 children. It's  
13 a program that seeds every kindergartner with a  
14 college savings account, and one of the things that  
15 we were really focused on at the time was financial  
16 literacy and trying to embed in the curriculum  
17 financial literacy skills even at ages as young as  
18 kindergarten. My question is are you doing anything  
19 around that piece regarding literacy instruction?

20 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes, great  
21 question. I was at the event where we launched that,  
22 and it's really, really exciting that students have a  
23 foot in the door in terms of really being able to  
24 build out their long-term financial security in that  
25 way.

1  
2           Financial literacy is something that we  
3 are in the process of building as a standalone  
4 curriculum and also integrated K through 12. We want  
5 to make sure that it is not something that you only  
6 take as an elective in high school or that it is a  
7 unit as part of your econ in 12th grade, but instead  
8 that we are teaching kids from very early on what it  
9 means to be financially literate and financially  
10 savvy and that we think about the different  
11 components of that. I'm glad that you bring that  
12 question up though, because it's also an opportunity  
13 to talk about many literacies and just how important  
14 it is to absolutely focus on the teaching of reading,  
15 but to make sure that our students are data literate,  
16 financially literate, that they are digitally  
17 literate, right, and that we're focusing on all of  
18 those other pieces as well. To your point earlier,  
19 Chair Joseph, this is incredibly important and it is  
20 at the heart of everything that we do, and there's so  
21 much more that goes into this comprehensive piece.

22           COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Okay. That's great  
23 to hear. NYC Kids Rise, as you know, we've got all  
24 sorts of resources, we're now in every school so



1 hopefully those resources are now being utilized in  
2 each school and each kindergarten class.

3  
4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes. Thank  
5 you. Thank you for that for that.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Council Member  
7 Rivera.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much,  
9 and thank you for being here, to your whole team.  
10 you've mentioned that current reading results aren't  
11 anyone's fault which I appreciate in your testimony,  
12 it's the result of a flawed approach, and that you're  
13 really trying to rectify that with some of the  
14 programming. I know I've spoken to some of my  
15 schools, the leadership and the parents and they know  
16 that every school district is different. As you  
17 mentioned, every child learns differently. With  
18 programs being implemented and set to launch, is the  
19 new standardization and enforcement for new  
20 curriculum really set to this timeline this year and  
21 next year? Are you going to really hold to that? Are  
22 you going to adapt to different districts and their  
23 needs?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR RUX: We are looking at  
25 each individual district and their needs. The

1  
2 superintendent is really leading this work, and they  
3 know their districts best, and so they've been  
4 engaging with different stakeholders in their  
5 district to make the best decision for their  
6 district, for their schools so yes, we are, and we're  
7 going to continue to monitor that and see how it goes  
8 but as of right now, yes, we are.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. I appreciate  
10 that. We have great superintendents in my District,  
11 so I look forward to working with them closely.

12 Data was mentioned and you said there  
13 might be some data that you cannot share. Can you  
14 tell us what data is being collected and how are  
15 agencies communicating with teachers to understand  
16 the effectiveness of these new curriculums?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I'm actually  
18 just not sure what we can share publicly. We're just  
19 now collecting data so I don't know whether or not,  
20 but we are collecting screener data, we're collecting  
21 data about intervention results, and then we're  
22 collecting a range of qualitative data as well and,  
23 whatever we can make available to the Council, we  
24 absolutely will. We need this to be public and  
25 accessible and where we can celebrate that we're

1 making great progress we want to and where we know  
2 that there's room for growth, we absolutely want to  
3 be able to dig into that as well so all of our teams  
4 are actually sitting behind us and so we'll  
5 absolutely make sure that we take note of this and  
6 what we can share we will.  
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. Dyslexia  
9 screenings were mentioned. What initiatives are in  
10 place to address the needs of older students with  
11 dyslexia, so students who are in middle school and  
12 high school, and I would also like to know how does  
13 dyslexia affect graduation rates? I guess  
14 alternatively are students with dyslexia who are not  
15 given the proper individualized education plan  
16 graduating at a lower rate?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I don't have  
18 that data as far as the graduation rates. I think  
19 that's a really interesting topic to dig into a  
20 little bit more. We know that necessarily dyslexia  
21 has an impact on a student's well-being as a whole,  
22 health and mental health and their ability to engage  
23 in learning, right? You hear stories of folks who  
24 struggled throughout school. Many of our students who  
25 have dyslexia learn a range of strategies that they

1 can use to progress through with difficulty and many,  
2 many long hours and a heavy cognitive load, but it'd  
3 be interesting to take a look at that specifically.  
4

5           As far as programming and training for  
6 secondary school, we in January are launching  
7 literacy hubs for middle school and high school that  
8 are going to be something like learning sites. We'll  
9 have intensive intervention supports, we'll have  
10 specific programming, the teachers will receive  
11 training in OG and other strategies and we want to  
12 make sure that these are integrated into the school  
13 space and so we already have schools that we've  
14 identified with the help of the Division of School  
15 Leadership where they will get that kind of intensive  
16 support, and we will collect information, data from  
17 what works there and also open up those sites for  
18 learning for other schools who want to take any of  
19 those practices and build them into their own schools  
20 as well so that launches in January, and we have a  
21 range of training that we have already been offering  
22 to our secondary school teachers. We'll also launch  
23 modules in September for secondary to review the  
24 science of reading and we'll continue to build the  
25 capacity because we know that there are many

2 secondary students who still need to have their needs  
3 met and we want to make sure that we're doing it  
4 within our school system.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. Well, thank  
6 you. I look forward to the partnership. I have a very  
7 interesting District, School District One and Two,  
8 very progressive schools as well that are proud of  
9 what they've been able to accomplish and achieve and  
10 look forward to all of us at the table. Thank you to  
11 the Chairs for the time and thank you.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you, Council  
13 Member. This one is going to be dedicated to Council  
14 Member Rivera. In November of 2022, in an op ed  
15 published in the Village Sun, Mayor Adams announced  
16 for the first time we'll be testing everyone who  
17 comes to Rikers Island for dyslexia and providing  
18 support to those who need it. However, nearly a year  
19 later, the Administration testified at City Council  
20 hearing that they missed the targeted start date in  
21 September to screen incarcerated individuals at  
22 Rikers Island for dyslexia. Has dyslexia testing at  
23 Rikers Island begun?

24 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you. We  
25 are training leads at each of the schools at East

1  
2 River Academy and at Passages on administering  
3 dyslexia screeners. Those are eight staff members who  
4 are being trained. Dyslexia screeners, it's a pilot  
5 so we're administering screeners to adults ages 18 to  
6 21 at East River Academy and students at Passages. In  
7 the event that a student is screened and identified  
8 to have traits of dyslexia that would require  
9 additional assessment, we've organized instructional  
10 programming to provide that and to make sure that  
11 they get access to that. We already have trained some  
12 of the teachers, and some of those teachers in D79  
13 have been trained in Orton Gillingham and are already  
14 providing training on Wilson and Rewards, another  
15 intervention that I think you're familiar with, so  
16 all structured literacy programs to help students who  
17 struggle with reading, but it's important for us  
18 because these are students who are also part of our  
19 system, young people, and we can change their life  
20 opportunities.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So have we begun?

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: We've started  
23 the training, yes.

24 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: How about  
25 screening the incarcerated individuals?

1  
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I don't think  
3 we've started screening yet.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: And what's the  
5 timeline to start?

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: January.  
7 Thank you.

8 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: January. I'm sure  
9 Council Member Rivera will appreciate that. Any  
10 followup, Council Member for the dyslexia on East  
11 River Academy.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: That was my  
13 question, whether testing had actually started, but I  
14 see you're on your way.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Okay. We'll  
17 certainly follow up.

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Yes, thank  
19 you.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: All right, thank  
21 you so much, Administration, and we'll send over some  
22 questions for you.

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: Thank you.  
24  
25

2 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're welcome.  
3 You look surprised. Was this a little too short? We  
4 could stay in that on a couple more hours.

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR QUINTANA: I did look  
6 surprised. I brought snacks just in case.

7 On behalf of my colleagues, just thank  
8 you. This matters incredibly. It's something that New  
9 York City has taken on in a really big way and, as  
10 you mentioned, it's a national effort, and anything  
11 that we can do to help others learn as we have  
12 learned from other states and cities, I think is  
13 incredibly important, and this also helps ensure that  
14 our public has information that they may not have had  
15 before so thank you for this opportunity.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR AHMED: And thank you  
17 for the critical role you play in all of this. We  
18 really do appreciate it.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You're very  
20 welcome. As you mentioned, two year olds only get to  
21 be two year olds one time so if we build a strong  
22 foundation, you'll have a strong top so the early  
23 childhood is very important.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to  
25 the Administration.



2 We will now turn to public testimony. We  
3 will be limiting public testimony today to three  
4 minutes each. For in-person panelists, please come up  
5 to the table once your name has been called.

6 For virtual panelists, once your name is  
7 called, a Member of the Staff will unmute you and the  
8 Sergeant-at-Arms will set the timer and give you the  
9 go ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to  
10 announce that you may begin before delivering your  
11 testimony. Our first panelist will be virtual, and  
12 then we will hear from in-person panelists.

13 Barbara Foorman on Zoom, you may begin  
14 your testimony.

15 BARBARA FOORMAN: Thank you. I hope you  
16 can hear me. It's wonderful to be Zooming into this  
17 meeting. I really thought that the New York City  
18 Public School staff did an outstanding job, and it's  
19 like you've confirmed my whole 40 years of work in  
20 the United States on helping kids learn to read.

21 So If you don't know me, I am how to  
22 describe it. I've been involved in learning to read  
23 because of my undergraduate interest in Japanese,  
24 doing cross linguistic work. My first academic  
25 appointment was in Texas where I worked with

1  
2 bilingual programs across the state, and then spent a  
3 year in Washington, D.C. as the first Commissioner of  
4 the Grant Program at the IES, Institute for Education  
5 Sciences then went to Florida. where I was a  
6 distinguished professor, Director of Florida Center  
7 for Reading Research, and then the Director of the  
8 Regional Educational Lab Southeast and as the REL  
9 Southeast was intimately involved in the Mississippi  
10 Miracle, we did the evaluation, which showed the  
11 gains in teacher knowledge on Letters actually showed  
12 up in the classroom with an observation tool that I  
13 developed. It's in the appendix. So all of these REL  
14 materials are free for you to use. Those observations  
15 of Letters implementation and high student engagement  
16 were associated with student progress in grades K to  
17 2 on reading and then you have the, the NAEP  
18 significant gains in subsequent years. Carey Wright  
19 partnering was brought in by the Barksdale Reading  
20 Institute, a private foundation which I worked with  
21 the State Board of Education, the legislature,  
22 everything was aligned to make this a long-term  
23 reading success program. You are correct, Mississippi  
24 is tiny compared to New York City, but there are some  
25 key things that are important about how it worked,

1 and that is you really need to have an evaluation.  
2 You need to videotape your high implementers and use  
3 them to mentor teachers. It sounds like maybe you're  
4 going to be doing that by creating these model  
5 classrooms. You need to have a fidelity observation  
6 checklist that's aligned with the HMH curriculum.  
7 It's not punitive. It's just good feedback for  
8 whoever is observing the teacher to talk about what  
9 might be done differently. If HMH hasn't developed  
10 that, they should do that for you. You need to get  
11 HMH to be clear about what assessments, they have a  
12 whole page of assessments..  
13

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Dr. Foorman.

15 BARBARA FOORMAN: Yes.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sorry. Since your  
17 time came up, I'm going to ask you a few questions.

18 BARBARA FOORMAN: Okay, sure.

19 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: My apologies for  
20 the interruption.

21 BARBARA FOORMAN: No, it's fine.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I have a question.

23 If the science of reading is so well-established and  
24 something we've known about for so long, why are we  
25 still debating it?

2 BARBARA FOORMAN: Yes, yes. I submitted my  
3 testimony to you about this. It's an issue of  
4 differing truth systems, epistemologies seem to lie  
5 at the heart of the debate. For example, you could  
6 imagine a group of people, we'll call them Group A,  
7 typically prioritizes deductive methods that embed  
8 hypothesis testing, precise operationalization of  
9 constructs, and efforts to decouple the researcher's  
10 beliefs from their own interpretation and  
11 generalization of empirical evidence. Then imagine  
12 another group, we'll call it Group B, prioritizes  
13 inductive methods such as phenomenological,  
14 ethnographic, and grounded theory approaches that  
15 embed focus on the meaning and understanding that  
16 comes through a person's lived experience, and relies  
17 on the researcher's own observations to shape meaning  
18 and principles. So Group A says look at the mountain  
19 of evidence. How can you believe it? How can you not  
20 believe it? Whereas Group B says, it doesn't make  
21 sense. It doesn't match up with our experiences. Why  
22 should we value your knowledge above our own?

23 This really lies at the basis of the  
24 disagreements in the great debate on reading, whether  
25

2 you believe in evidence and the scientific method or  
3 not.

4 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: What does the  
5 science of reading say about how children learn to  
6 read?

7 BARBARA FOORMAN: Yeah, so in my testimony  
8 I gave you just one paragraph because it could go on  
9 for, I also gave you a book chapter on the topic, but  
10 basically, the basic key points on how children learn  
11 to read and then what we know about instructional  
12 practices that promote reading are that these are  
13 learned activities and they reside on a foundation of  
14 linguistic skills that are supportive so we decode  
15 from written letters to oral or silent language to  
16 comprehend word meaning. We encode from spoken  
17 language to letters to express meaning. And through  
18 explicit instruction, explicit and systematic,  
19 systematic means the scope and sequence of these  
20 sound letter patterns needs to be clear, and the  
21 assessment needs to be aligned to that scope and  
22 sequence so the instruction in the decoding and  
23 encoding of words is what we call the alphabetic  
24 principle. English speakers have an alphabet, most  
25 European languages do. I've worked in Florida, of

2 course, with Haitian Creole, there are Creole  
3 versions, there are different orthographies, but  
4 mostly we're talking here today about English and  
5 Spanish and other alphabetic languages, and so these  
6 letters and sounds relate intentionally and  
7 conventionally in a written language, in the  
8 orthography, that's the written language. So in  
9 English, this orthographic mapping extends beyond the  
10 letter sound patterns to include learning frequent  
11 irregular words like of, said, morphemic elements,  
12 like inflectional endings, plurals, affixes, and  
13 reliable syllable patterns like closed syllables,  
14 such as the word insect so mastering the depth and  
15 the structure of English orthography is essential if  
16 students are to recognize words accurately and  
17 efficiently, thereby freeing cognitive resources to  
18 activate the linguistic devices and the world  
19 knowledge critical for making text cohesive and  
20 therefore comprehensible so I list a lot of  
21 references in my testimony.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Thank  
23 you so much, Dr. Foorman. We really appreciate it. We  
24 have your testimony. We'll make sure to review it  
25 and, again, we really appreciate your time.

2 BARBARA FOORMAN: Okay. Thank you.

3 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

4 BARBARA FOORMAN: Bye. Good luck.

5 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Appreciate you so  
6 much.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Our first in-person  
8 panel, the Honorable Jo Anne Simon and Mary Vaccaro.  
9 Please make your way to the front desk.

10 Jo Anne Simon, you may begin your  
11 testimony.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Can I just say a  
13 special welcome to the Assemblywoman and thank you  
14 for being here.

15 JO ANNE SIMON: Thank you. Thank you. It's  
16 an honor.

17 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: My fellow  
18 educator.

19 JO ANNE SIMON: Yeah. I will attempt to be  
20 as brief as I can. You know, that's hard for me, but  
21 especially about this topic. So those of you who've  
22 had to listen to me talk about it in the past, you  
23 know.

24 Chair Joseph, Chair Abreu, I really want  
25 to thank you for this opportunity to testify today

1 about the science of reading, the curriculum effort  
2 that the City is doing and the issue of dyslexia  
3 screening. I will tell you that my first reaction to  
4 the news was hallelujah because we have needed to do  
5 this for so very long and this approach that the City  
6 is taking will not be smooth. We have a big system,  
7 right, but it is so incredibly critical, and you know  
8 these changes are needed because our city and our  
9 state have not been teaching enough of our students  
10 to read accurately and fluently. Too many of our  
11 educators have been taught about reading, but not  
12 enough about how to teach it and, where they have  
13 been taught about teaching, they haven't been taught  
14 in a way that aligns with the brain science because  
15 the brain is how we process written language. As many  
16 of you may know, I'm a former teacher of the deaf,  
17 and the biggest challenge for prelingually deaf  
18 children is reading and language, right, and for deaf  
19 children of deaf parents, they often have much better  
20 language. Why? Because they have language right from  
21 the beginning so it is language, so all of the  
22 testimony you heard previously about bathing your  
23 children in words and in language and let's make a  
24 list, let's go to the store, we're writing it down.  
25



1 All of that is stuff you really need to do, and the  
2 more we are able to bathe our children in language,  
3 the more they will learn that language, but then we  
4 have to translate that to the written form, right,  
5 and so language, as you know, is based in the brain,  
6 and so I come to this proposition with a lot of  
7 background in language and cognition, which I think  
8 has been one of the issues that hasn't been something  
9 we've addressed really when it comes to teacher  
10 education. I'm also a former board member and  
11 president of the New York branch of the International  
12 Dyslexia Association, which is now called Everyone  
13 Reading. We have an annual conference every year that  
14 really draws from the region, and we, in fact, we, I  
15 still say we, it's been 10 years since I left, train  
16 a lot of New York City school teachers. Just another  
17 point, again, just in terms of context you know, I've  
18 been a disability civil rights attorney for three  
19 decades, and I tried the seminal case on dyslexia and  
20 access to standardized tests, and it did take us to  
21 the Supreme Court. We won, by the way. But what you  
22 find when you do that is that people aren't paying  
23 attention necessarily. Let me just say that I passed  
24 a bill on dyslexia that requires that you're allowed  
25

1 to use dyslexia in an IEP or an IEP eligibility  
2 document. Parents have been told for 45 years that's  
3 not allowed. That is not true. Governor Cuomo signed  
4 that bill in 2007. The two takeaways from the  
5 stakeholder group that we did that was part of the  
6 mandate from the bill was that early screening was  
7 needed and teacher training so we need to prime the  
8 pump in higher education, make sure our teachers  
9 enter our schools knowing something about how to  
10 teach reading in a way that the brain processes  
11 reading. This goes back to why Johnny can't read, I'm  
12 not going to go into great detail, but one of the  
13 things that I will just sort of cut to the chase a  
14 bit is that New York has started an initiative called  
15 the Path Forward. We're doing it in connection with  
16 the Hunt Institute and the Literacy Academy  
17 Collective, and what is so critical about this,  
18 because I have a bill for three credits of science of  
19 reading for our teachers, I have a bill to screen in  
20 the state prisons, I've passed it in the Assembly  
21 several times, but has not yet passed the Senate, and  
22 I have a universal screening bill, but the reality is  
23 what you want to do is make sure that everybody's on  
24 the same page, and the effort for the Path Forward is  
25

1 really all of the institutions that matter for  
2 changing the picture in New York are working  
3 together. The Regents, State Education Department,  
4 SUNY, CUNY, Independent Colleges and Universities,  
5 the Governor's Office, the Legislature, I'm the  
6 Legislature's Designee to the Steering Committee. It  
7 is so important that the State of New York is saying  
8 our kids are worth it, our kids need to learn how to  
9 read, and we are going to ensure that we actually  
10 teach them, and we will change all of those things  
11 that have been happening in our state that are not  
12 working and change them into things that are working,  
13 and we have everybody at the table working together  
14 in partnership to make sure that happens so that  
15 dovetails very nicely. The City is also at the table  
16 with this. It is the largest school district in the  
17 state, but they are on the right track. I just want  
18 to just say again how happy I am to be here and I'm  
19 certainly happy to answer any of your questions.  
20 Thank you, and I appreciate that I've gone over the  
21 three minutes, but you know that happens.

22  
23 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: So when I visit  
24 Albany, I can go over the three minutes.

25

1  
2 MARY VACCARO: Good afternoon, everyone. I  
3 think you know me, Mary Vaccaro, Vice President of  
4 Education for the UFT and Executive Director of the  
5 Teacher Center. Thank you for having me on behalf of  
6 190,000 members.

7 Learning is fundamental. One of the basic  
8 premises is understanding how to read, being able to  
9 comprehend what you're reading, and being fluent in  
10 your reading. I'm not going to go through all that I  
11 had for you, all of the things that were already said  
12 but, to make sure this important effort succeeds,  
13 it's essential that the DOE provide educators with  
14 appropriate and ongoing professional development  
15 opportunities to not only support them this year but  
16 next year as well. Michael Mulgrew has been going  
17 over this as the initiative was launched, and he has  
18 spoken seriously about the need to drive instruction  
19 and training for classroom teachers. At the union's  
20 urging, the UFT Teacher Center is playing an integral  
21 role in the training to make sure teachers get the  
22 support they need adapted to the students they teach.  
23 To kick things off, the UFT Teacher Center designed  
24 and offered courses this summer as you heard about in  
25 the earlier testimony down in Shanker Hall at the

1  
2 UFT. The title of the course, as our Assemblywoman  
3 would tell you, is Reading for All, the Science of  
4 Reading Across All the Curriculum Areas, because  
5 that's vital. The course had hundreds of participants  
6 that came for both in-person and virtual, and I know,  
7 Chair Joseph, you came to visit us there.  
8 Participants also found out about digital resources,  
9 learning strategies to address their social emotional  
10 needs of all of the students in the classroom within  
11 the context of reading, and received guidance on how  
12 to use these curricula with diverse groups of  
13 learners, MLL learners, SWD Learners as well. We  
14 found that teachers are energetic and open to  
15 changing their classroom practices in response to  
16 high-quality professional learning. They understand  
17 why they're in that learning that will translate  
18 right into the classroom. We had a teacher that I  
19 want to quote here, Michelle Grant, a teacher from PS  
20 280 in Jackson Heights, who said the training gave  
21 her a tool kit and resources she could use to help  
22 her English language learners, and she told us after  
23 the first session, "at first I felt overwhelmed, but  
24 now I'm starting to feel more confident and at ease  
25 about how I can support my students in the 23-24

1 school year." As the rollout of each of these  
2 programs moves forward, the DOE must ensure that all  
3 educators using the new curricula have the help they  
4 need to make a successful transition into this  
5 curricula. The UFT Teacher Center is committed to  
6 doing everything it can do to support them. We have  
7 15 new Teacher Center district coaches who will  
8 provide regular assistance around the literacy work  
9 to educators in the 15 community school districts. I  
10 know before you questioned about District 75. We have  
11 one coach there that's supporting them as well. The  
12 Teacher Center, I'll finish this sentence, the  
13 Teacher Center will work hard and offer literacy  
14 workshops and office hours throughout the year so I  
15 think that's key to you knowing these office hours  
16 have been integral to the work that we're doing.  
17 Teachers are getting online with our teacher center  
18 coaches between 4 and 8 o'clock at night on their own  
19 time, getting the support that they need, and you  
20 have my testimony.

22 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you to you  
23 both.

24 Assembly Member, I have a question. Bill  
25 S7003 is currently a bill in the committee at the

1  
2 state level. While the bill would require all school  
3 districts to screen all students for dyslexia and  
4 dysgraphia, it also gives parents and guardians the  
5 right to have their children opt out of these  
6 screenings. Though parents and guardians have the  
7 right to make decisions on their child's education,  
8 some may have beliefs surrounding stigmas associated  
9 with learning disabilities and therefore may choose  
10 to opt out and feel that should their child be  
11 diagnosed with a learning disability, they may be  
12 treated differently, bullied, or put in a different  
13 class. Given this background, should the opt out  
14 portion remain even with the risks it would  
15 negatively impact a child's educational path?

16 JO ANNE SIMON: I'm just looking up the  
17 bill. It's easier for me if I had the Assembly  
18 number. No offense. So it's Brad's. Okay. So let's  
19 see, yeah, so the challenge is that there is a very  
20 strong parent choice movement and, of course, parents  
21 ultimately have the decision to make about their  
22 children's education. One of the early, early Supreme  
23 Court cases was around whether a parent had a right  
24 because the teachers, somebody was teaching German,  
25 it's like 1920s kind of thing, right, and the parents

1  
2 didn't want that, and whether or not a child had a  
3 fundamental right to an education, and in fact that  
4 right is encoded under the law so it's really the  
5 parents' rights until a child reaches the age of  
6 majority so I think that that is probably a provision  
7 that might be constitutionally required. I'm not as  
8 familiar with that bill. It's not a bill that I'm  
9 carrying in the Assembly. I think I'm on the bill in  
10 the Assembly. I think one of the issues is that when  
11 it comes to how you educate your children, there are  
12 certain things that we can't mandate, and of course  
13 mandates these days are not very popular in many  
14 respects for a whole host of reasons whether the  
15 mandate is in fact a good one or not and so I can't  
16 really speak to that more than that. It's not my  
17 bill, so I don't really know what Senator Hoylman's  
18 thinking was in that, but I do think that one of the  
19 ways that we will get around some of these issues is  
20 if we help parents, if we educate parents, if we  
21 educate our teachers, if we provide that at-the-elbow  
22 support once they've had some training, a weekend of  
23 Wilson is not enough. We need to empower our parents,  
24 and we need to find lots of different ways that we  
25 can help students, whether it's in school or out of



2 school so a lot of after school programs. We can  
3 actually embed the science of reading in a lot of  
4 after school programs. Teach for America is now  
5 getting interested in science of reading. That's  
6 really important, and so parents will start  
7 understanding this stuff better and addressing this  
8 in a more constructive way once they understand it  
9 better.

10           And let's face it, we know a lot of the  
11 parents in our school system were themselves not  
12 given a very good education by the New York City  
13 Public Schools or other schools, right? The  
14 prevailing method of Dick and Jane was word  
15 memorization, it's whole language, actually isn't  
16 very good, it doesn't teach you how to break down a  
17 word or to address words that are new to you. It's  
18 only what you've memorized, right? Now, according to  
19 results, roughly 35 percent of our kids are going to  
20 learn to read no matter what you do to them, and,  
21 unfortunately, we've been training teachers to teach  
22 the 35 percent. We need to really look at the 65  
23 percent that we haven't been addressing, and I think  
24 that there are lots of ways that we can embed that  
25 and lots of ways that I know we will be coming

1 forward with a state action plan by June that I am  
2 sure will address a lot of those issues with regard  
3 to supports, professional development, staff  
4 development. The people who teach our folks who are  
5 incarcerated. They're not with the UFT, they're with  
6 another union, right? So I've been working with them  
7 on our bill in the state for state prisons, for  
8 example so we can address those issues in a variety  
9 of ways.  
10

11 One of the challenges at the state level  
12 is legislation because whatever smacks of curriculum  
13 is depending on your interpretation of the State  
14 Constitution, something you really can't do, and  
15 that's part of the reason why I think this Path  
16 Forward idea will be successful, is because it is a  
17 partnership. Nobody's blaming anybody, nobody's  
18 pointing fingers. What we want to do is take this  
19 ball and run with it and change the way, and we will  
20 change our kids' futures if we teach them to read.

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Absolutely.  
22 Earlier, I'm not sure if you were here, and that was  
23 one of the questions I asked the Chancellor, what is  
24 the partnership with the universities because they're  
25 creating the pipelines that's providing our teachers.

1 He did say that he met with CUNY and SUNY and other  
2 higher ed institutions to make sure the pipeline.  
3

4 JO ANNE SIMON: Yeah, I mean one of the  
5 things is we know that for example, there was a  
6 report issued last year, well actually June 2023 that  
7 really pointed to the fact that we have five pillars  
8 of reading according to the national reading panel,  
9 and 25 percent of our schools were teaching any of  
10 the pillars, 25 percent weren't teaching any at all,  
11 some were teaching a pillar here, a pillar there, the  
12 cart before the horse pillar, that sort of thing, but  
13 we need to progress. We need it to be systematic. We  
14 need to be direct instruction. We need it to be  
15 explicit instruction. For years we were doing  
16 discovery stuff like the new math. It really didn't  
17 teach anybody anything. If you weren't wired for  
18 math, you didn't learn anything. That's me. We need  
19 explicit instruction, and we've learned over time  
20 that in fact children need explicit instruction, and  
21 so most of our children need that. Kids who are  
22 dyslexic need much more intensity and much more  
23 direct instruction on a more intensive basis, more  
24 specific interventions for particular areas that they  
25 have difficulty in, but the reality is 65 percent of

1  
2 our kids are not dyslexic, right? We know that, but  
3 we're missing the boat with an awful lot of our kids.  
4 We can stop missing that boat. We want them all on  
5 the boat.

6 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: I second that. I  
7 want all of them on the boat as well.

8 UFT, one of the questions I know I get a  
9 lot is how are we leveraging also our  
10 paraprofessionals that are in the classroom that work  
11 one-on-one with these students on a daily basis. Are  
12 they included in this conversation as well?

13 MARY VACCARO: They are included in the  
14 conversation. They're part of all the training that  
15 we give through the Teacher Center. The Teacher  
16 Center does, even though we call it the Teacher  
17 Center, probably should have renamed at some point  
18 because it's all educators that are in the school, so  
19 we have social workers coming to the workshops, we  
20 have school psychologists, we even have secretaries  
21 showing up at our workshops so everyone that's in the  
22 school is coming. Paraprofessionals in particular,  
23 some of the focus we have done with them is more than  
24 on the reading on the math, on the new algebra ninth  
25 grade curriculum. We have been having our

1  
2 paraprofessionals because it's a different style of  
3 teaching math, getting support on the actual math  
4 itself, so we've been doing a lot of that work after  
5 school hours, and I'm happy to say full classes, all  
6 coming, so that's been great.

7 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. Chair  
8 Abreu.

9 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Chair.  
10 Assemblywoman, I'm really excited to see everything  
11 you're doing in Albany. Curious to know, what's the  
12 appetite among your colleagues to get this done, and  
13 I specifically asked the Administration earlier about  
14 the Dyslexia Education Act. Can you speak to A7101?  
15 It's a bill that would establish statewide standards  
16 for screening of students in grades kindergarten  
17 through five for dyslexia for the interventions  
18 required for students with dyslexia.

19 JO ANNE SIMON: What's the number again?

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: 7101.

21 JO ANNE SIMON: Okay, so that's Assembly  
22 Member Carroll's bill. One of the things you'll  
23 notice is that a bunch of us have bills that are very  
24 similar, right? So I have a similar bill, he has  
25 similar bills, Senator Jackson and I have other bills

1 so I think there's support there, for sure, right? We  
2 have passed bills in the Assembly. When I passed the  
3 Dyslexia Bill in 2017, we had almost unanimous  
4 support for that bill. We passed a Dyslexia Task  
5 Force Bill a couple of times. It was unanimous, if  
6 not, maybe missing one person. The challenge really  
7 has been, is it funded, right? That's an issue. The  
8 Governor has vetoed a number of things that were task  
9 forces, commissions, etc. because there's no money  
10 there. It costs money to run a good task force. It  
11 costs money to run a commission. So that's a  
12 challenge. The other thing I think is right now I  
13 think the State's focus is on the collaborative  
14 effort right now, which is new, right? We launched in  
15 October, but there's a tremendous amount of support.  
16 When I started Dyslexia Awareness Day in 2016, we had  
17 a few people who came, we had young people come up.  
18 That's been growing every year. Every year for the  
19 last five or six years, the Commissioner has  
20 attended. She attended when she was Chancellor. She  
21 attends as Commissioner. We have parents, we have  
22 kids come up. We have kids speak about their issues.  
23 We always have a panel of consumers, usually adults  
24 and one teenager, who themselves have dyslexia. We've  
25

2 had Legislators with dyslexia. We have had former  
3 Legislators with dyslexia, principals, kids who were  
4 just applying to college, etc. Each year, we have  
5 more and more people supporting that. Each year, we  
6 have more and more Legislators who want to come and  
7 address the group and talk to the kids, and so  
8 there's a tremendous amount of support for doing this  
9 work. The challenge has been legislatively or doing  
10 it another way, and State Ed does know that they need  
11 to make these changes. They've known it since we did  
12 the Dyslexia Stakeholder Group. The challenge has  
13 been how to go about doing that, and that's why I  
14 have so much confidence in the initiative that we're  
15 embarking on now.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much,  
17 Assemblywoman. Really excited for your work here, and  
18 thank you so much for leading on this.

19 JO ANNE SIMON: I'm very excited. I've  
20 been waiting for this for a very long time.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to  
22 both panelists.

23 Our next panel, Sarah Part, Debbie Meyer,  
24 Callie Higgins, Losana Tunica, and Teresa Ranieri.  
25 Please make your way to the front table.

1 Sarah Part, you may begin your testimony.

2 SARAH PART: Thank you for the opportunity  
3 to testify. My name is Sarah Part, and I am the  
4 Senior Policy Analyst at Advocates for Children of  
5 New York. For more than 50 years, Advocates for  
6 Children has worked to ensure a high-quality  
7 education for New York students who face barriers to  
8 academic success, focusing on students from low-  
9 income backgrounds. Every year, we help thousands of  
10 families navigate the school system, including many  
11 families whose children are struggling with reading.  
12 We routinely work with middle and high school  
13 students who are still non-readers, not because they  
14 lack the motivation or the cognitive capacity to  
15 learn to read, but because the public schools fail to  
16 provide evidence-based instruction and intervention.  
17 AFC has long advocated for New York City Public  
18 Schools to institute guardrails around English  
19 language arts curricula. There's an enormous body of  
20 research on how children learn to read, but leaving  
21 the choice of curriculum up to individual schools  
22 resulted in tremendous inconsistency and widespread  
23 use of programs grounded in discredited theories of  
24

25



1 reading development rather than in the scientific  
2 evidence.

3  
4           At AFC, we've seen the consequences.  
5 Students who are unable to read menus and job  
6 applications, let alone their academic textbooks,  
7 whose self-esteem and mental health suffers, and  
8 whose understandable frustrations with reading  
9 manifest in disruptive behavior and disengagement  
10 from school. That's why we're supportive of the  
11 effort New York City Public Schools is making to  
12 shift away from balanced literacy and towards  
13 curricula that align with the science of reading. By  
14 improving core instruction, we can prevent many  
15 reading difficulties before they occur, but there  
16 will always be some students who need extra support  
17 and so New York City also needs a robust literacy  
18 safety net that identifies such students and matches  
19 them with intensive intervention. While universal  
20 screening is one component of such a safety net, it  
21 should be a means to an end, not an end in itself.  
22 The point of identifying students who are struggling  
23 with reading or who have language-based learning  
24 disabilities like dyslexia is to ensure that those  
25 students receive the targeted help they need to

2 become strong readers. New York City Public Schools  
3 must ensure that schools, all schools, have the  
4 training, the personnel, and the infrastructure  
5 necessary to use screening data to inform instruction  
6 and to provide timely, evidence-based, small group,  
7 or one-on-one intervention to all students who need  
8 it.

9           Finally, we'd just like to emphasize that  
10 shifting what happens in thousands of individual  
11 classrooms on a day-to-day basis is going to take  
12 time. There are no silver bullets in public  
13 education, and when it comes to the science of  
14 reading, New York City is just getting started. We  
15 want to ensure that current budgetary pressures and  
16 the understandable desire to see results quickly do  
17 not lead to policymakers abandoning the current  
18 effort before it even has a chance to succeed.

19           We urge the Council to remain steadfast  
20 in the commitment to ensuring that all schools are  
21 using reading curricula with proven effectiveness and  
22 to push the school system to provide all students,  
23 including those who have disabilities like dyslexia,  
24 with the intervention and support they need. Thank  
25

1  
2 you for the opportunity to speak with you. I'm happy  
3 to answer any questions.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much  
5 Debbie Meyer.

6 DEBBIE MEYER: Thank you very much. I was  
7 here in 2016 testifying to Council Member Dromm, I  
8 testified in front of Council Member Mark Treyger, so  
9 today is exciting. We've really come a long way.  
10 Again, my name is Debbie Meyer. I consult for the  
11 Dyslexia Alliance for Black Children, I serve on the  
12 Literacy Advisory Council for New York City Public  
13 Schools, and I consult on the Dyslexia and Literacy  
14 Program at the Ralph Bunch PS 125 School, but, most  
15 importantly, I'm the mother and wife of dyslexic  
16 people. I've rewritten my testimony as I've listened  
17 today. I want to talk about the importance of a true  
18 diagnosis. I wanted to talk to Council Member Abreu  
19 about state and federal issues, but I'll just say  
20 that for the record and, if there's time, I'll tell  
21 you about what's happening at PS 125.

22 The importance of a true diagnosis.  
23 Dyslexia is a lifelong issue. It doesn't end in high  
24 school. It doesn't end when you learn to read. We  
25 need a true diagnosis, and kids need to learn how to

2 advocate for themselves during their middle school  
3 and high school so they can do so at college.

4 Dyslexia and a true diagnosis will also protect you  
5 at a career. If you have a career shelving stock and

6 something happens and you're asked to write a memo

7 and you can't, your dyslexia diagnosis will protect

8 you. You can't get fired for that. So we need our

9 dyslexic kids to be identified past screening, but

10 with true diagnoses that they can carry on through

11 their whole lives. My son uses his in college. His

12 disability advisor talked to him three times before

13 he started with his college career. It was absolutely

14 amazing. He also has a lifelong pass to all national

15 parks and all federal lands. He can camp on any

16 federal land for free because he has a disability. We

17 really need to identify these kids and make sure they

18 have all the tools they need to succeed.

19 For teaching colleges, could this

20 Committee do a joint hearing with the Committee on

21 Higher Education and support what the DOE is doing

22 and bug the colleges more? I'd be happy to testify

23 there as well.

24 The biggest state issue I think we really

25 need to get to and you could help with is teacher

1  
2 licensing. The Hunt Institute program is trying to  
3 get to that, but we need to get there quicker because  
4 that's what will make teaching colleges respond.

5 Federal issues. There is a bill, it may  
6 not go anywhere, but Senator Cassidy really wants to  
7 put dyslexia higher in the IDEA, and that would be  
8 great if he had a reasonable definition of dyslexia,  
9 but he's using a really outdated definition from  
10 1896, and we know what the country was like in 1896.  
11 Sarah Carr just wrote a long article about it.

12 Finally, PS 125, do you want to hear  
13 about it? Okay. If you had gone there in May of 2022,  
14 you would have seen kids rolling around in the  
15 hallway and the paras frustrated, you would have seen  
16 kids on the floor, paras frustrated but, when we  
17 asked PS 125 if they wanted to do this, Principal  
18 Leopold got her community on board. So September  
19 2023, the teachers dismantled their Fontas and  
20 Pennell classrooms and created content libraries.  
21 Some of them did this with their children and had  
22 their children resort the books. They removed the  
23 word walls and replaced them with sound walls. They  
24 added decodable readers to the phonics program that  
25 they're using. They have Geodes and Foundations. Then

1 from late November to February, K to 3 teachers,  
2 interventionists, and SLPs participated together in  
3 30 to 60 hours of Orton Gillingham training so they  
4 had a common language and a common training, and  
5 they're using this to implement Foundations well. So  
6 if you walk through in 2023, it's a totally different  
7 picture. Every student was engaged. The  
8 paraprofessionals were bored. They need something  
9 else to do because these kids were just totally  
10 engaged. The teachers were incredibly energized. Year  
11 over year, I looked at some of the statistics. At the  
12 end of 2022, less than half of the kindergarteners  
13 were at grade level. After just a few months of good  
14 phonics instruction and good engagement, 60 percent  
15 of the same exact kids were at or above grade level.  
16 First graders in 2022, barely one third of them were  
17 reading, but two thirds by the time they finished  
18 second grade. They really started flipping this  
19 around with only a few months of training. It started  
20 mid-year, the good engagement just started  
21 thereafter, but they are also using inquiry-based  
22 knowledge building for all their social studies and  
23 science in the classroom, and that's really good too,  
24 and to understand that you can have a progressive  
25

1  
2 approach for content and a direct approach for  
3 reading and writing and direction giving in math  
4 really works in this school. They invite any teacher  
5 and any of you to come see what's happening in the  
6 school, and I really think you should.

7 Thank you. I have Christmas gifts or  
8 Hanukkah gifts or December gifts for everybody too,  
9 but I can't walk up there so we'll get them to you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.

11 Callie Higgins?

12 CALLIE HIGGINS: Chairs, Council Members,  
13 and Staff, thank you for this opportunity to speak.  
14 My name is Callie Higgins, and I am a legal fellow at  
15 the New York Legal Assistance Group, or NILAG. For  
16 more than 20 years, NILAG's Special Education Unit  
17 has advocated on behalf of low-income children with  
18 disabilities. I appreciate the opportunity to offer  
19 the following comments, and I have also provided  
20 detailed written testimony.

21 My fellowship at NILAG focuses on  
22 ensuring that students with dyslexia have access to  
23 evidence-based reading interventions. The transition  
24 by New York City Public Schools towards a phonics-  
25 based reading curriculum in elementary schools is an

1 important step that acknowledges the growing  
2 consensus around the science of reading. Yet, there  
3 is an important gap between the literacy instruction  
4 the next generation of New York City Public School  
5 students will receive and the instruction current  
6 middle and high school students received as younger  
7 students. Our clients with dyslexia at NILAG reflect  
8 this reality. They are intelligent middle and high  
9 school students who were not given the tools to learn  
10 to read as elementary school students, and this lack  
11 of evidence-based reading instruction harms them to  
12 this day. Additionally, our older clients frequently  
13 do not have evidence-based reading services  
14 recommended on their IEPs because IEP teams know  
15 these services are unlikely to be available in a  
16 middle or high school setting. Not only is this a  
17 clear violation of federal law, it is also a  
18 deprivation of the only service scientifically proven  
19 to benefit students with dyslexia. We know that  
20 dyslexia develops equally across all races and  
21 genders, but access to meaningful reading  
22 interventions in New York City is not equal across  
23 demographics. Our clients are low income and  
24 overwhelmingly students of color, and we see them  
25



1 receive disproportionate access to evidence-based  
2 reading approaches. They are less likely to be  
3 accurately diagnosed with dyslexia and have worse  
4 reading outcomes than their white peers. For example,  
5 my fellowship focuses on serving the communities of  
6 East New York and Brownsville. These two communities  
7 serve predominantly Black and Hispanic students, and  
8 only 10 percent of their special education population  
9 is reading proficiently. Access to evidence-based  
10 reading approaches is not just a disability rights  
11 issue, it is also a racial justice issue. We ask that  
12 as you continue to invest in evidence-based literacy  
13 policies, you consider the needs of older students in  
14 historically underserved communities. This can be  
15 done by requiring every middle and high school to  
16 have access to reading specialists, by including a  
17 section on IEPs to target the historic lack of  
18 phonics instruction, and by investing in more schools  
19 like the South Bronx Literacy Academy that  
20 exclusively serve students with dyslexia.

21  
22 We thank the Committees on State and  
23 Federal legislation and Education for the work they  
24 have done in supporting evidence-based phonics

1 instruction and for holding this hearing. We hope  
2 NYLAG can be a resource for you going forward.

3  
4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
5 testimony, Lasana Tunica.

6 LASANA TUNICA: Good afternoon. My name is  
7 Lasana Tunica-El, and I'm the Senior Deputy Director  
8 at Educators for Excellence New York. Educators for  
9 Excellence is a non-profit organization that's  
10 committed to building teacher power to ensure that  
11 teachers have direct input into the policies that  
12 impact their classrooms, and our secondary mission is  
13 to raise the prestige of the teaching profession.

14 It's almost been a year ago that over 100  
15 of our members met with Chancellor Banks and Deputy  
16 Chancellor Quintana and presented them with a set of  
17 recommendations around ensuring that there was a  
18 streamlined set of high-quality curriculum options  
19 for New York City public schools that were culturally  
20 relevant and that there was embedded PD aligned  
21 throughout the year to implement said curriculums.  
22 So, as you can imagine, we were ecstatic when NYC  
23 Reads was rolled out, and, upon the implementation,  
24 we immediately began mechanisms to continuously have  
25 that feedback loop from educators so that NYCPS would

1  
2 be informed through our network what educators were  
3 saying on the ground. We facilitated four different  
4 town halls starting in the summer, and most recently  
5 about a week ago. Two of those included Phase One and  
6 Phase Two educators who shared their experiences who  
7 had experience in the three curriculums as well as  
8 vendors, experts, PL practitioners also presented,  
9 and there were Q and A sessions from that. We also  
10 facilitated and partnered with two district  
11 superintendents as part of their gaining feedback  
12 from teachers to get feedback in what curriculums  
13 they would like to see so those were awesome  
14 sessions. Comparatively speaking, I guess we spoke to  
15 over 500 teachers in those four town halls. We also  
16 put out surveys that they shared. Some of their  
17 feedback that was glows and grows expressed around  
18 the different curriculums, it was billed as straight  
19 talk. We also had teachers from various parts of the  
20 country who were well-versed in the three curriculum,  
21 Baltimore, Oakland, that shared with New York City  
22 teachers their experiences in implementing these  
23 curriculums as well. From our survey results, we'll  
24 find that teachers' concern is that they received the  
25 PL throughout the year. That's common. That's what we

1  
2 hear constantly and repetitively is the PL, PL, PL as  
3 well as the tailoring to unique student populations  
4 through the curriculum as well, and they would like  
5 to see those models of real in-classroom teaching and  
6 implementation of these curriculums. We've also  
7 collected about 300 or so petitions around this PL so  
8 that's the major piece of this thing that we will  
9 continue to contribute to as a way of sharing the  
10 feedback from our educators and continue to partner  
11 effectively with New York City Public Schools to make  
12 sure that this thing is rolled out successfully.  
13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
15 testimony. Teresa Ranieri.

16 TERESA RANIERI: Hi, I'm Teresa Ranieri.  
17 Thank you for having me. I've had the privilege of  
18 being an educator in District 9 located in the Bronx  
19 for 27 years. I'm also a member of E4E. I was a  
20 kindergarten, first, and second grade teacher for the  
21 majority of my career. As a classroom teacher, I was  
22 considered highly effective, so much so that I was  
23 asked to be a literacy coach in a teacher's college  
24 reading and writing project school. Using the premise  
25 that 15 to 20 percent of students in a classroom are

1 impacted by dyslexia, I am personally responsible for  
2 approximately 55 students not learning how to read  
3 while in my classroom. As a project school literacy  
4 coach, I contributed to approximately 525 students  
5 not receiving the instruction needed. My students  
6 that I loved fiercely, had undefined learning  
7 differences, were being taught by an untrained  
8 teacher using curriculum and assessments that were  
9 unproven and at times harmful, and as they grew, they  
10 had a greater chance for decreased school engagement  
11 and a much more likely chance not to finish school.  
12 I contributed to the school-to-prison pipeline. I am  
13 partially responsible for the inequities for our  
14 black and brown students that are disproportionately  
15 impacted by the negative effects of dyslexia. Knowing  
16 there was something wrong, I began my own journey to  
17 learn more and, once I knew better, I wanted to right  
18 my wrongs. Fortunately, in 2017, I was hired as a  
19 universal literacy coach under Andrew Fletcher. I was  
20 placed at the Family School in District 9. The  
21 Principal, Ms. Penn, a math guru, was willing to  
22 listen and learn and invested in developing teacher  
23 content knowledge. Before it was common or trendy, we  
24 discontinued those unproven, ineffective curriculum  
25

1 and assessments. Teachers were trained in Orton  
2 Gillingham, Letters, and the Writing Revolution and  
3 have learned to provide research-based instruction,  
4 but we still do not have a dyslexia screener. While  
5 children at the Family School make significant  
6 progress based on Acadience and have the highest  
7 growth in the district as measured by MAP reading  
8 growth assessment, we still have students' needs not  
9 being met due to unidentified dyslexia. Yet, less  
10 than 10 miles from our school, Mayor Adams has stated  
11 there's an estimated 30 to 40 percent of inmates at  
12 Rikers have dyslexia. For years, rather than invest  
13 in a dyslexia screener and provide needed  
14 instruction, more money is spent on special education  
15 services and incarceration. How did that make any  
16 sense? I look forward to a change, and I hope budget  
17 cuts do not interfere. That's where y'all come in.  
18 Thank you so much for New York City Reads. It's year  
19 one curriculum. Again, the Family School has been  
20 very successful. This is our third year because  
21 teachers became knowledgeable on children, how  
22 children learn to build knowledge, read and write. As  
23 a school-based literacy coach supporting schools, we  
24 use Edwards OG letters, the Writing Revolution,  
25

1 Learning Ally, the Reading League, and Achieve the  
2 Core, that's aligned. This is my huge concern. There  
3 are schools, not Phase One, that are still today, and  
4 I saw it last week, using consultants with DOE  
5 contracts that are still encouraging Running Record's  
6 level text. I saw on Friday a kindergarten classroom  
7 where they had to read, I have a grandfather, and she  
8 said, I have a grandpa, and the teacher accepted it  
9 because these consultants aren't as trained as the  
10 people you heard speak earlier. I am a volunteer with  
11 HMH Into Reading so I provide in the evening support,  
12 live video calls, Facebook Live, for those teachers  
13 who I hear. The second concern is Teach Hub. The  
14 youngest students cannot access these wonderful  
15 curriculum resources through Clever. Kindergarteners  
16 are expected to go to a website, type in an email,  
17 and type in a password so they don't have the  
18 resources that we spent all the money for and also we  
19 can't link it to our Google Classroom. This is not  
20 the chancellor, but DIIT does not want to hear from  
21 me anymore. I've done all I can. So as you're having  
22 these conversations, especially in budget cuts, why  
23 do we have consultants that are ineffective, and why  
24  
25

1 aren't we using all the resources that we've paid  
2 for? On behalf of my children, thank you so much.

3  
4 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you. I'm so  
5 happy Deputy Chancellor Quintana is here so she can  
6 hear. She's taking notes to bring it back to  
7 leadership so you never have to sit here and say you  
8 were part of the problem. Next time I see you, you'll  
9 be part of the solution.

10 TERESA RANIERI: I'm very happy to say we  
11 are now fourth in District 9. We went from under 20  
12 percent reading proficiently to fourth in the  
13 district. It's a tale of two schools. We're one  
14 building with two schools. If you make a right and  
15 come to our school, you have a 60 percent chance of  
16 learning to read. If you make a left, you have less  
17 than a 20 percent chance.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: We need to change  
19 the two tales of the city in the same building.  
20 Access and equity has always been one of my things.  
21 Thank you.

22 I wanted to ask you real quick. You also  
23 talked about TeachHub. It is very hard to navigate.  
24 Is there a plan to make DoITT, at DoITT, is there a  
25 plan to make that website a little bit more user



1 friendly because if you're not tech savvy, some of  
2 our parents are not, and we know that, I've always  
3 talked about that, how can we make it user friendly  
4 for our parents to be able to access it?  
5

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINTANA: TeachHub  
7 won't give parents access.

8 TERESA RANIERI: So the rest of the  
9 country, kindergartners access with a QR code through  
10 something like Clever.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINTANA: Right.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Right, I have  
13 Clever because I have a public school kid too.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER QUINTANA: We are  
15 exploring other options for how to get our resources  
16 available, especially through the AI policy lab, but  
17 we can talk more about.

18 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: You heard it here.  
19 I'm happy you're here to hear it. What were your  
20 experiences with the teachers? Are they on board with  
21 this program and what areas of improvement would they  
22 like to see?

23 LASANA TUNICA-EL: Yes, they're definitely  
24 on board. Again, there's anxiety about the PL,  
25 whether or not they receive it all year, but we were

1  
2 very inspired by particularly the models in the  
3 districts where the superintendents were engaging  
4 their districts around having input during the  
5 selection process, and some of the things that  
6 teachers were doing was very exciting and tailoring  
7 and scaffold into their unique populations using  
8 various create creative ways. I remember one anecdote  
9 around bridging kids from where they are to teach  
10 Greek mythology and using a book with a character  
11 that they would recognize but using that to bridge  
12 them toward learning about this Greek mythology. So  
13 there was great enthusiasm. There was a lot of  
14 creativity and tailoring that we saw that was pretty  
15 exciting.

16 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I have one question  
17 for Sarah Part. Who spoke about PS125? Apologies.  
18 What's your name?

19 DEBBIE MEYER: Debbie.

20 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Debbie. PS 125 is  
21 in my District. Can you please talk about the program  
22 that's taking place there, its success, and how it's  
23 working?

24 DEBBIE MEYER: Sure. Thank you. I'm not  
25 sure if you heard everything before, but we got first

1 family and SLP and PA buy-in to it. I think that was  
2 really important. The second was a commitment to  
3 remain steeped in social justice and progressive  
4 education in content, but direct instruction where  
5 you need a direct explicit instruction in reading and  
6 in math and in writing and things like that. Last  
7 November, Orton Gillingham Instruction began, and it  
8 went through February, and we did an alignment, a  
9 horizontal alignment, so it was teachers,  
10 interventionists, and the SLPs all speaking the same  
11 language, all having the same training. They could  
12 talk to each other about it, and so when you walk  
13 through, you used to walk through and see kids  
14 hyperactive with a small h type of hyperactive, so  
15 just frustrated, rolling around on the floor, and now  
16 when you walk through, everyone's engaged. The ICT  
17 kindergarten class, you couldn't tell who was a  
18 special ed student and who was a general ed student.  
19 They were all engaged. And the paras were wanting to  
20 do something else because they didn't have to  
21 redirect any kids, and that meant the teacher could  
22 teach more effectively. The first grade classroom,  
23 not exactly the same because they had kids that  
24 didn't have great kindergarten instruction and some  
25

1 kids that had legacy missing school from COVID  
2 instruction, but most of the kids were with the gen  
3 ed teacher. Two kids were with interventionists, four  
4 kids with the ICT teacher, and then I spoke about the  
5 flip in the Acadience scores for that, and I can look  
6 at it again. Oh, they also got tons of coaching from  
7 both Edwards Orton Gillingham and from Foundation.  
8 There were coaches in their building twice a month so  
9 it was amazing training. At the end of 2022, the  
10 kindergartners, less than half were approaching grade  
11 level. A year later with only four months of really  
12 good instruction, 60 percent of the same kids were at  
13 grade level. The first graders in 2022, only a third  
14 were at grade level. A year later by the end of  
15 second grade, two thirds, so it's really flipping,  
16 but they knew before they could even attack dyslexia,  
17 they had to fix the Tier 1 instruction because you  
18 cannot find your dyslexic kids unless you have good  
19 Tier 1 instruction.  
20

21 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to  
23 everybody on this panel, and thank you so much to all  
24 of our in-person panelists.  
25

1  
2           If there's anyone else in the room who  
3 wishes to testify, please make your way to the  
4 Sergeant-at-Arms' desk in the back and fill out a  
5 witness slip.

6           We will now move to virtual testimony,  
7 and, again, to all virtual panelists, please wait for  
8 the Sergeant to announce that you may begin before  
9 delivering your testimony.

10           Our first virtual panel, Robert Murtfeld,  
11 Daniella Maglione, Emily Hellstrom, and Jeannine  
12 Kiely.

13           Robert, you may begin your testimony.

14           SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

15           ROBERT MURTFELD: (INAUDIBLE) in Bushwick.

16 Can you hear me well? That's good. I have just two  
17 very brief comments that I wanted to contribute to  
18 this wonderful meeting that you, both Chairs who are  
19 still there, you, Chair Joseph as well organized.

20 Number one, it is the statement by Chancellor Banks  
21 today about the rollout of this reading initiative,  
22 vis à vis how families particularly were involved in  
23 the rollout and the choice of the curriculum. What I  
24 mean by this concretely is that you have three  
25 curriculums that have been chosen, and to my best

1 knowledge, even the Advisory Council to the  
2 Chancellor, the Literacy Advisory Council, did not  
3 know about the choice of these three curriculums. So  
4 why was, for instance, Amplify, which is a curriculum  
5 vendor from Brooklyn not chosen on the science of  
6 reading, and why was EL Education chosen and the two  
7 others? So that is number one.

9           Number two, the key point is we really  
10 need to get the opt-on from teachers. We cannot tell  
11 teachers that what they've been doing was wrong and  
12 here's something new and we just kind of plant it  
13 onto you, and there is a section on teacher autonomy  
14 on the DOE website regarding that matter, and I think  
15 that needs to be respected, and I was a bit  
16 disappointed by the Chancellor today saying that if  
17 you don't agree with our philosophy, you can go. I  
18 don't think that's the right approach, but his other  
19 staff was very good about this, and it was absolutely  
20 wonderful as well to see the testimonies from others,  
21 such as Jo Anne Simon who has been very good about  
22 that issue. So, my name is Robert Murtfeld, and I  
23 represent our PTA Advocacy Committee in the East  
24 Village at a progressive school. We are one of four

2 progressive schools in District 1, and that is my  
3 testimony to you today. Thank you so much.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
5 testimony.

6 Daniela Maglione.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

8 DANIELLA MAGLIONE: Okay. Thank you,  
9 everyone. My name is Dr. Daniella Maglione, and I  
10 work for Pearson. I want to thank you for the  
11 opportunity to continue to work with you all in this  
12 very important initiative. As you know, dyslexia is  
13 listed as a learning disability disorder under IDEA  
14 and, as you all know, we also have national and state  
15 support in place for dyslexia. As many of you know,  
16 and it has been discussed, dyslexia is  
17 neurobiological in nature, which means that it is  
18 caused by genetic or biological factors, not  
19 ineffective teaching. Depending on the source, as you  
20 know, it's estimated that one in every five students  
21 is affected with dyslexia, and I'm also a mother and  
22 a sister to individuals with dyslexia.

23 Now, I do have a slide deck that I sent  
24 you, and I wanted to show you some of the symptoms,  
25 causes, and risk factors for dyslexia, but I did want

1  
2 to note, as many of you have spoken about today, that  
3 symptoms of dyslexia can be observed even before a  
4 child begins to read as it is a language-based  
5 disorder so earlier intervention is essential for  
6 dyslexia. The impact of this disorder depends on the  
7 severity, the effectiveness, and the timing of the  
8 remediation, and research has shown that  
9 interventions provided to younger children are more  
10 effective and can prevent impacts to their social  
11 emotional well-being. For this reason, a  
12 comprehensive evaluation is essential in the process  
13 to co-occurring conditions with dyslexia, and those  
14 include ADHD, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and others.  
15 As many of you know, a screener is a brief and quick  
16 measure that sorts individuals into two groups, those  
17 that are at risk, and those that are not. There are  
18 two types. There are performance-based screeners as  
19 well as rating scales. Here at Pearson, we use the  
20 screen, assess, intervene, and progress monitor  
21 process. Much like a diagnosis of diabetes, when  
22 patients are diagnosed, doctors must monitor their  
23 progress to determine different treatment options and  
24 their effectiveness. Pearson does have a dyslexia  
25 toolkit that offers options for screening as well as



1 identification, intervention, and progress  
2 monitoring. In this model, everyone has a role,  
3 including general educators, special educators,  
4 school psychologists, speech language pathologists,  
5 educational diagnosticians, and of course, reading  
6 specialists. When choosing a screener, it is  
7 extremely important that its accuracy be reviewed.  
8 This includes data such as the area under the curve,  
9 often referred to as the AUC of the screener,  
10 sensitivity, specificity, and the clinical effect  
11 size. We will be submitting a written response as  
12 well.  
13

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
16 testimony.

17 Emily Hellstrom.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

19 EMILY HELLSTROM: I thank you so much for  
20 holding these hearings and hosting the public  
21 comment. My name is Emily Hellstrom, and I am a co-  
22 founder of an organization called Literacy Academy  
23 Collective, and we are the school support  
24 organization and advocates behind the new opening of  
25 South Bronx Literacy Academy, which is the first

1 district public school in the nation run by NYCPS  
2 that opened a school in the South Bronx, South Bronx  
3 Literacy Academy, that is specifically designed for  
4 students with dyslexia, language-based learning  
5 disabilities, and other struggling readers. At  
6 Literacy Academy Collective, we believe access to  
7 literacy is the most pressing civil rights issue in  
8 New York City, and it is our mission to build and  
9 support a full network of NYCPS schools to allow  
10 struggling readers to achieve academic success by  
11 bringing culturally relevant structured literacy to  
12 students at the intersection of race, poverty, and  
13 disability.  
14

15 I just wanted to say today we opened in  
16 September to 67 families in the South Bronx that  
17 actually come from all over the Bronx, and we have a  
18 few data points to share, and so I just wanted to  
19 read them into the testimony. We had a model  
20 classroom pilot last year at PS 161. At the beginning  
21 of the year, we had 30 students, 27 of whom were  
22 performing two to three years behind at a pre-K level  
23 even though they were in second and third grade, and  
24 by the end of the year, our students had gained an  
25 average of 3.7 words per week compared to an expected

1  
2 rate of 2.2 words gained per week. For this group of  
3 students, their average growth was equivalent to  
4 moving from the 16th percentile in the Acadience  
5 measure to the 68th percentile. These are students  
6 who had not experienced academic success in the  
7 entire three to four years of their formal education.

8           These are not just numbers. We have some  
9 feedback already from parents, and I just want to  
10 read it to you. One mom told us "at first my daughter  
11 was complaining about why we needed to do a lot of  
12 reading things every day." She said, "I'm not going  
13 to lie to you. I was happy when she said that because  
14 she's not used to it. She began spelling letters and  
15 learning their sounds. Currently, she's reading short  
16 words. For me, it is such an achievement. The things  
17 that she never learned in two years she learned in a  
18 few short months." Another mom said, "in the first  
19 two months of attending SBLA, I saw a drastic change  
20 in my son's ability to sound out words, read, and  
21 write. I was literally blown away when my son came  
22 home and started to sound out words and actually  
23 write letters."

24           SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

1  
2           EMILY HELLSTROM: Sorry. "His parents  
3 first teacher conference, his teacher was able to  
4 show me side by side work assignments showing his  
5 handwriting from September to October. I just  
6 couldn't believe it. It was the most fulfilling  
7 moment. I was so proud and I knew right away that I  
8 had made the best decision choosing SBLA. He went  
9 from drawing shapes and pictures to writing letters  
10 and words."

11           COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
12 your testimony.

13           Next panelist, Jeannine Kiely.

14           SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

15           JEANNINE KIELY: (INAUDIBLE) another co-  
16 founder of Literacy Academy Collective. I'm not going  
17 to go through the details of our programs because  
18 Emily did such a thorough job of that, but I do want  
19 to thank the City and DOE for its support and  
20 funding.

21           For me, this is personal. My youngest son  
22 was labeled a behavior problem at four. He failed  
23 spelling test, could not sound out simple words, and  
24 got up and down during library selecting books to  
25 impress his friends even if he couldn't read them. He

1 felt dumb, and he fell further and further behind in  
2 every subject. Instead of structured literacy  
3 intervention, his school suggested a feelings doctor.  
4 If our son were a black or brown boy, he would have  
5 had a higher chance of being labeled emotionally  
6 disturbed and recommended to a more restrictive  
7 educational setting, but we are a family with  
8 resources, and before fourth grade, which is very  
9 late, we paid for a private neuropsych exam that  
10 diagnosed him with dyslexia. We funded private  
11 tutoring twice a week, and our son finally learned to  
12 read, but he still suffers from low self-esteem and  
13 shame. If he were diagnosed and received structured  
14 literacy instruction earlier, he could have avoided  
15 five years of shame. Like my son, children who cannot  
16 read fall further and further behind each school  
17 year. Without intervention, they fall into the trauma  
18 trench of shame. They are at higher risk of suffering  
19 from depression, anxiety, and act out, breaking  
20 rules, engaging in risky behaviors, in the worst case  
21 fueling the dyslexia-to-prison pipeline. Avoiding  
22 these negative consequences will take money, and we  
23 hope save lots of money down the road.  
24  
25

1  
2 I want to ask the City Council for three  
3 things. We want funding for Literacy Academy  
4 Collective's second school in Brooklyn. We'd like to  
5 open up a second one, and more close to home, we  
6 would like to fund the Bleeker School. It's in  
7 Greenwich Village, a great location for middle school  
8 students with dyslexia who did not receive the  
9 instruction they needed in elementary school. Just as  
10 a side note, the City has an option to build a new  
11 school at an NYU-owned property, but the option must  
12 be executed by the end of the year or 65 million  
13 dollars of value transfers from New York City  
14 taxpayers to NYU. Third, we'd like the City to  
15 continue to fund literacy programs for teacher  
16 training and structured literacy instruction for  
17 students of all ages. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to  
19 everyone on the panel.

20 We will now move to our next virtual  
21 panel. Naomi Peña, Yana Semiglazova, Alex Estes  
22 (phonetic), Paulette Healy (phonetic), and Charlene.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.  
24  
25

1  
2           NAOMI PEÑA: Good evening and thank you  
3 for City Council for having us. I am actually also  
4 another co-founder of Literacy Academy Collective.

5           I'm not going to belabor the information  
6 that's been shared, but I will tell you a little bit  
7 of my story and how I got here. I am a mom to four  
8 dyslexic children, my oldest is 23, my youngest are  
9 14-year-old twins, and the reason I'm elevating that  
10 is because I am raising children of color, and 18  
11 years ago when I started having complaints about my  
12 son's behavior I was being told that he was lazy,  
13 that he didn't care about his education, and it  
14 wasn't until one day he came to me and said after  
15 getting in trouble from me and a teacher he literally  
16 told me, I don't know what's wrong with me, it's like  
17 my brain won't let me. I will tell you that his  
18 entire academic experience was marred by bad  
19 experiences from teachers not understanding how he  
20 learned to read or to process information to really  
21 feeling like he was incapable of being successful. He  
22 often called himself stupid and dumb. What ended up  
23 happening is, by the time high school hit, he  
24 completely felt deflated and not supported. He ended  
25 up going to a District 79 school so he can get his

1 GED, but as a boy of color, a young man of color at  
2 this point, he's still my baby, he does not have any  
3 desire to continue in higher education because of his  
4 marred experience his entire academic experience.  
5

6           On the flip side, 18 years later, I saw a  
7 repetition of how severe my son's dyslexia was with  
8 my younger son and his similar situation. He was held  
9 back twice. I was told to do all sorts of reading  
10 interventions, but by this time I knew there were  
11 options. I ended up taking my fifth grader out of a  
12 traditional public school and into a private school  
13 in the city specifically for students with dyslexia,  
14 and it turned out that he was not reading on grade  
15 level. He was reading on a first-grade reading level,  
16 and this is just a snapshot of my household of what  
17 happens across the city, and this is why we need to  
18 elevate these reading concerns because we know if we  
19 do structured literacy with Fidelity and across the  
20 board for everyone, 95 percent of all readers can  
21 read at level.

22           I will end it by saying I am here to  
23 fully extend the invitation to anyone on the City  
24 Council who wants to see this in practice because  
25 schools like SPLA and also the pilot in Harlem are



1  
2 getting those types of results because it's being  
3 done with Fidelity and with the proper teacher  
4 training and the students are flying and they feel  
5 successful and they feel empowered so full invitation  
6 to everyone who wants to come. Thank you.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to  
8 our panelist. Yana.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

10 YANA SEMIGLAZOVA: Hello, everyone. Thank  
11 you for the opportunity to speak.

12 My second-grade child is in a Phase Two  
13 school, and my child doesn't get to be a first and a  
14 second grader a second time like you mentioned. I'm  
15 just asking that the DOE trains principals as soon as  
16 possible. I find myself and I really had to search  
17 and find Debbie Meyer to provide more of the  
18 evidence-based information. I was constantly provided  
19 no information, misinformation by my child's school  
20 team, the principal, the assistant principal, the  
21 teachers, and the therapists. I had to get the  
22 diagnosis independently, I had to file for mediation,  
23 even after providing the prescribed intervention of  
24 the neuropsych. I called Include NYC and Advocates  
25 for Children multiple times for their help. There

1  
2 needs to be a better road map and better information  
3 provided by school staff to parents. New York City  
4 DOE needs to ensure that literacy interventions are  
5 appropriate at every school, whether they're in a  
6 Phase One or Phase Two. You need to also provide data  
7 on independent set certifications and trainings  
8 because I had to obtain Wilson-certified provider  
9 lists, I had to call the company myself and call each  
10 provider within my neighborhood to find out if they  
11 even receive DOE funds and are willing to work with  
12 my child. Honestly, it should not be this way. I am  
13 more educated and I was seeking out information, and  
14 I would also like to ask Literacy Academy and the  
15 Council to consider opening a school similar to the  
16 one in the Bronx in Queens. Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
18 testimony. Next up, Alex Estes.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

20 ALEX ESTES: Hello, thank you for having  
21 me and thank you, everyone, for participating. I hope  
22 I can be heard. I just picked my son up from school.  
23 My biggest concern I think around all this and I hate  
24 to be a wet blanket, this has been quite a  
25 cheerleading session for the science of reading, and

1 I am not against the science of reading. I'm  
2 concerned about the co-opting of that phrase because  
3 there is a science regarding reading, but to group an  
4 effectiveness together as a science of reading is a  
5 little grimace. Regardless, what I really would like  
6 to put forth here today is my biggest concern is the  
7 fact that this this Miracle of Mississippi thing that  
8 keeps going over and over and over again, if one were  
9 to look into it you can pull up, you can just type in  
10 Miracle of Mississippi science of reading, and  
11 there's an AP article, it's like the second thing  
12 that comes up and there's a chart in there of  
13 Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and the other Gulf  
14 state, maybe Texas, anyway, and Florida goes up  
15 starting in 2002, and the question of course becomes  
16 why did they do it so much earlier, and the law that  
17 they passed was just to implement simple teaching of  
18 phonics. I think what has happened is there's been a  
19 lot of curriculums that have gotten behind this idea  
20 of, well, how can we wrap up an entire curriculum  
21 just around phonics to be sold to schools? So my  
22 concern is that we are spending millions of dollars  
23 on something that could have been achieved by just  
24 the simple implementation of phonics.  
25

1  
2           Now, onto the Acadience screening, which  
3 I think is very important when it comes to locating  
4 the potential students that have dyslexia, but the  
5 implementation of it I feel like has been off a  
6 little bit. For instance, and there's no data, I  
7 can't access any data, it's not public record, for  
8 whatever reason. but even anonymized data would be  
9 nice, but, I'd be curious to know how many December  
10 babies is because these are being flagged for  
11 intervention because the Acadience screeners are  
12 grade based, and so we're screening all of the  
13 children, but our children are four months younger in  
14 each grade than the ages of everyone else who's being  
15 screened throughout the country because of the way  
16 that we use the calendar year to dictate our ages per  
17 grade in New York. Again, I'm worried about resources  
18 being used that don't need to be being used. We could  
19 have just put in a phonics program years ago when  
20 Florida did it. I can't believe as a New Yorker, I'm  
21 even saying we should have done something like  
22 Florida, but here I am, and so in 2002, when they did  
23 that, they saw their scores go up, their test scores,  
24 everyone did so well, and everyone just sat around,  
25 no one asked about it. Now it's being called the

1  
2 Miracle of Mississippi because the science of reading  
3 has been co-opted by these curriculum corporations  
4 which have a lot of things to sell. You can't sell  
5 phonics; you just teach it. For instance, my son's  
6 teacher teaches phonics and has for over 20 years..

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

8 ALEX ESTES: Thank you. Thank you for your  
9 time, everyone. That's enough.

10 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.

12 CO-CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so much.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Paulette Healy.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

15 PAULETTE HEALY: Hi, everyone. First, I  
16 just want to shout out the ladies of LAC. You guys  
17 are doing incredible work, and thank you so much for  
18 putting dyslexia in the forefront and being the  
19 wonderful moms that you are providing solutions  
20 because, Chair Joseph, as you know, when there's a  
21 problem, most likely a parent will have a solution.

22 I just wanted to kind of reiterate like  
23 with this particular universal launch behind the  
24 science of reading we are not talking about the  
25 importance of incorporating assistive technology into

1  
2 our approach. If we were to utilize some of the  
3 programs and philosophies that have perpetuated  
4 progress with the use of assistive technology and  
5 using it in a UDL type of format where it's used in  
6 the classroom so that all children, whether they have  
7 been identified or not, can benefit from it. It  
8 should go hand-in-hand when we're discussing literacy  
9 in our schools.

10 I also want to talk about the importance  
11 of paras. Chair Joseph, you and I have visited  
12 schools where we really couldn't tell in the  
13 classroom who was the teacher, who was the para, and  
14 that goes towards the collaborative efforts of a  
15 universal approach where everyone is invested in  
16 making sure every child in that classroom gets the  
17 support that they need. So it hurt my feelings a  
18 little bit when I was hearing previous panelists talk  
19 about like paras were standing around because they  
20 had nothing to do. Well, paras are not babysitters.  
21 They're actually quite intelligent and, given the  
22 opportunities like PDs and resources, they have the  
23 skills to help manage the classroom as effectively as  
24 any teacher with a degree.

1  
2           That being said, I want to acknowledge  
3 that before Into Reading became one of these three  
4 curriculums that the Chancellor was putting forward,  
5 Into Reading was being used in D75 schools, at the  
6 higher education level, in middle school and high  
7 schools so it's like when we're looking at like what  
8 are we going to do for our children who are not  
9 within those early intervention ages, that have not  
10 had any of these interventions that we're looking at  
11 now, it's not a matter of, oh, too bad, they're  
12 already lost to us in the system. D75 has been really  
13 perpetuating the advances when it comes to  
14 manipulating these particular canned curriculums to  
15 format to the various degrees of disabilities in a  
16 classroom. I'll give a big shoutout to 753K in  
17 Canarsie, which I think is in Council Member Mercedes  
18 Narcisse's District. They have been doing incredible  
19 work with Into Reading with their high school  
20 students, so much so that for their students that are  
21 under-credited but over age, they created a worksite  
22 program called Bridges to Books where they're  
23 actually going into elementary schools. These  
24 students, graduates from this D75 Into Reading  
25 program, are going into elementary schools...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

3 PAULETTE HEALY: To do reading with  
4 kindergarten and first grade children based off of  
5 the learning that they received as students.

6 I know I have to wrap up, so if you want  
7 more information about it, Chair Joseph, you know  
8 exactly where to find me, and the last thing I just  
9 want to say is that as City Council, we can't have  
10 this literacy conversation if we're talking about an  
11 austerity budget that's going to cut funding to our  
12 schools and libraries. What sense does it make to  
13 teach our kids to read when they have no books to  
14 access? So I urge you all City Council Members stand  
15 with us in making sure that there are no more  
16 austerity cuts to our to our schools and our  
17 families. Thank you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
19 testimony. Charlene Parker.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

21 CHARLENE PARKER: Hello. I have an eighth-  
22 grade son, my son is in the eighth grade. He was just  
23 recently diagnosed with dyslexia. However, my son had  
24 signs of dyslexia early on. I would say from the  
25 first grade, I brought these issues up. I brought my



1  
2 concerns up early on from when Ajani (phonetic), my  
3 son, was in the second grade but to no avail. It was  
4 never looked into. He was sent to have some kind of  
5 evaluation, but the evaluation through the Department  
6 of Education only showed that he needed speech  
7 therapy so for years my son was only receiving speech  
8 therapy. My son's IEP only said that he needed speech  
9 therapy, but for years I went back and forth with his  
10 school about the things that I was seeing, and every  
11 time I was dismissed. At every IEP meeting, I was  
12 dismissed. My concerns were dismissed. They were not  
13 looked into. Most recently I was sent to get my son  
14 reevaluated because of my continued concerns, and I  
15 went to have a private evaluation, which by the way,  
16 I was not told that I could have a private evaluation  
17 paid for by the DOE, and I did that and it came up  
18 that my son is dyslexic. So for seven years my son  
19 had dyslexia, and it wasn't addressed in the  
20 classroom. That resulted in having to take the DOE to  
21 court, and it's just a long drawn out process that  
22 could have been prevented if someone looked into my  
23 concerns more deeply and he received the services  
24 that he needed to receive early on. Again, I just  
25 want to kind of put everything in perspective. My son

1  
2 is an eighth-grade student. He's going to the ninth  
3 grade, but he's reading on a fifth-grade level. That  
4 is concerning to me. That's it. Thank you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much to  
6 all of our virtual panelists.

7 If the following panelists are logged on  
8 or if there's anyone else logged on that wishes to  
9 testify, please use the raise hand feature. Tanisha  
10 Grant, Sharon Roberts, Ophelia Morris, Nichole  
11 Sherry.

12 No hands.

13 That concludes our virtual testimony.

14 CO-CHAIRPERSON JOSEPH: This concludes our  
15 hearing. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 26, 2023