

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY,
ALCOHOLISM, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND DISABILITY
SERVICES

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April 19, 2016
Start: 01:17 p.m.
Recess: 06:00 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E:

DANIEL DROMM
Chairperson

ANDREW COHEN
Co-Chairperson

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ANDY L. KING
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Deputy Chancellor
New York City Department of Education

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Senior Director of Literacy and Intervention
NYCDOE: Division of Specialized Instruction and
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Samson Balligan [sp?]
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Victoria Barrett [sp?]
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Carmen Alvarez
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Dyslexia (Plus) in Public Schools Task Force

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Families First

Johanna Garcia
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City College Partnership at CUNY

Mary Erina Driscoll
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City College of New York

Laura Cavalleri [sp?]
Dyslexic Friendly School Public Environment

Patara Japay [sp?]

Ximena Atbara [sp?]
Mother

Maggie Moroff
Special Education Policy Coordinator
Advocates for Children

Wendy Ramos
Founder/Executive Director
Wishes of Literacy

Noel Tortore [sp?]

Kristen Berger
Council Member
Community Education Council 3

Doctor John Russell
Head of School
Windward School

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Doctor David Salsberg
Clinical Neuropsychologist
Pediatric Assessment Learning and Support

Doctor Scott Gaynor
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Katherine Garnett
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Barbara Vivolo
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Carolyn Strom
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James Wesley [sp?]
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Desiree Jones [sp?]
Mother

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Rose Kerr
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Christine Reuterskiold
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NYU Department of Communicative Sciences and
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Elizabeth Hendrix
Certified Academic Language Therapist

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Susan Crawford
Director
The Right to Read Project

Victoria TaccoIm [sp?]
Mother

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Good afternoon. My
name is Daniel Dromm and I'm the chair of the
Education Committee. It's great to be here with
everyone today. I see the former chair of the
Education Committee Robert Jackson is here with us
today. Thank you Council Member Robert Jackson for
joining us. And it's a great pleasure to be able to
chair this committee behind all the tremendous work
that you did when you were chairperson. And I
applaud you and admire you very much for the work
that you've done in regards to education. Thank you
for joining us here today. I'd also like to thank
my staff Asia Schaumburg [sp?] Senior Counsel, Jan
Atwell Senior Policy Analyst, Joan Povolny Senior
Policy Analyst, and Elizabeth Hoffman Principal
Financial Analyst for this committee before we
begin for the hard work that they did in terms of
preparing for today's hearing on dyslexia. And let
me just start off by saying good afternoon and
welcome to today's oversight hearing on addressing
the needs of students with dyslexia and related
language based learning disabilities jointly
sponsored by the education and mental health

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2 committees. We will also hear testimony on two
3 resolutions today; Resolution 1027 sponsored by
4 Council Members Cabrera and Cohen and Resolution
5 number 375 sponsored by Council Member
6 Constantinides. I'll talk more about these
7 resolutions shortly after some opening remarks and
8 then we'll move on to hear from my co-chairs and
9 sponsors of the resolutions. Dyslexia is a language
10 based learning disability which results in
11 difficulties with reading and other language
12 processing skills such as spelling, writing, and
13 pronouncing words. Learning disabilities are caused
14 by a difference in brain structure that is usually
15 present at birth and is often hereditary. However,
16 learning disabilities are not intellectual
17 disabilities. Generally speaking, people with
18 learning disabilities are of average or above
19 average intelligence. According to most experts
20 approximately 20 percent of the population or one
21 in five people is thought to have dyslexia or
22 related language based learning disability.
23 However, only about five percent of our nation's
24 school aged population have been formally
25 identified as learning disabled or LD. That means

1 that an additional 15 percent or three quarters of
2 all LD students struggle due to unidentified and
3 unaddressed learning and attention issues. Many
4 aren't identified as dyslexic or LD until they are
5 adults and some have never been diagnosed. Often,
6 individuals identified as LD suffer from low self-
7 esteem and behavior problems, struggle with
8 underachievement and underemployment, and appear to
9 end up in trouble more frequently than their non-LD
10 peers. In fact, some researchers have found a high
11 incidence of dyslexia in prison populations such as
12 48 percent of inmates in one Texas prison. Parents
13 and advocates report that having dyslexia can lead
14 to feelings of frustration, inadequacy, and shame
15 in students. As a matter of fact, I recently spoke
16 at a conference and mentioned that we were planning
17 to hold a hearing of dyslexia. Afterwards I was
18 approached by an Assistant Principal in the
19 audience who thanked me for holding a hearing on
20 dyslexia and confided in me that he was dyslexic
21 and was too ashamed to even tell his principal or
22 anyone else of his condition. Early identification
23 and intervention is key to helping individuals with
24 dyslexia and related learning disabilities succeed
25

1 in school. Research shows that students who are
2 reading proficiently by third grade are less likely
3 to graduate from high school on time and more
4 likely to drop out than their peers. Most students
5 with dyslexia need help from someone specially
6 trained in using a multi-sensory structured
7 language approach such as Orton-Gillingham or
8 Wilson that involves hearing, seeing, and touching
9 at the same time. Schools can also provide academic
10 accommodations to help students with dyslexia
11 succeed such as extra time to complete tasks, help
12 with taking notes, books on tape, assistive
13 technology, and alternative means of assessment.
14 One major obstacle to appropriate identification
15 and intervention of dyslexic students cited by
16 advocates is the failure to specify dyslexia as the
17 underlying condition and evaluations and on a
18 student's individualized education program or IEP.
19 That is because the federal Individuals with
20 Disabilities and Education Act or IDEA list a
21 number of disability classifications including one
22 called specific learning disabilities which
23 includes dyslexia and other related language based
24 disabilities. For that reason, districts across the
25

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1 nation including the New York City Department of
2 Education use the more general term learning
3 disabled for all students in this category. In
4 response to advocates' concerns the United States
5 Department of Education issued a guidance letter in
6 October 2015 which made clear to districts that
7 there is nothing in the IDEA that would prohibit
8 the use of the terms dyslexia, dyscalculia...
9 dyscalculia and dysgraphia in IDEA evaluation,
10 eligibility determinations, or IEP documents. In
11 New York City 40 percent of students with IEPs were
12 in the LD category in 2014/15 according to the
13 DOE's recent report on special education. The DOE
14 has begun some initiatives that should help this
15 vulnerable population. In September 2015 Mayor de
16 Blasio announced key reforms to achieve the quality
17 and excellence across all New York City public
18 schools including an effort to get all second
19 graders reading at grade level. The goal of this
20 universal second grade literacy initiative is for
21 100 percent of 2nd grade students to be able to
22 read with fluency by 2026. The mayor's announcement
23 stated that every elementary school would receive
24 support from a dedicated reading specialist with
25

1 approximately 700 reading specialists in place
2 across elementary schools by Fall 2018. Further
3 English Language Learners and students with
4 disabilities are supposed to receive additional
5 supports to ensure that they are on track with
6 their peers. DOE issued a press release in February
7 2016 announcing progress on the mayor's reforms in
8 which the term dedicated reading specialist was
9 replaced with dedicated reading coach but it is
10 unclear what that change means. Regarding progress
11 made the DOE stated that this spring the first
12 cohort of reading coaches would be identified and
13 schools would begin preparatory work. The new
14 reading coaches are supposed to receive intensive
15 training this summer. And in September they will be
16 assigned to over 100 elementary schools in four
17 high needs districts; District 9 and 10 in the
18 Bronx and Districts 17 and 32 in Brooklyn. The
19 reading coaches will initially focus their work on
20 second grade teachers at these schools to be... to
21 begin closing the literacy gap. We have also seen
22 press reports stating that the DOE is allocating
23 3.2 million dollars over five years for a new
24 partnership with Manhattanville College to train
25

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1 teachers how to help dyslexic students. However,
2 advocates say much more must be done including
3 development of a comprehensive plan for meeting the
4 literacy needs of all students including students
5 with disabilities and building literacy, expertise
6 in every school from elementary to high schools. In
7 addition to DOE post-secondary teacher training
8 institutions must do more to prepare educators to
9 help identify and support LD students at an early
10 age. It is also important to say that many parents
11 and advocates prefer to use the term learning
12 difference rather than disability to describe
13 dyslexic students. They point out that neurological
14 differences that making reading difficult might
15 also help dyslexics excel in other areas such as
16 big picture thinking, creativity, special
17 relationships, and design which can be... which can
18 be an advantage in the fields of science,
19 technology, engineering, and mathematics among
20 others. Successful dyslexics include scientists and
21 inventors such as Albert Einstein and Thomas
22 Edison, political leaders such as Woodrow Wilson
23 and Winston Churchill, business leaders such as
24 Henry Ford and Richard Branson, writers such as F.

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1 Scott Fitzgerald and Agatha Christy, others in the
2 creative arts including Pablo Picasso, Walt Disney,
3 Steven Spielberg, John Lennon, and many others. At
4 today's hearing the committees will examine DOE's
5 current efforts to address the specific needs of
6 students with dyslexia and related learning based
7 disabilities. The committees will... the committee
8 will also look forward to hearing testimony from
9 parents, students, educators, advocates, unions,
10 and others regarding their recommendations for
11 other measures that the DOE could take to support
12 this vulnerable student population. As I stated
13 earlier we will also hear testimony and Resolution
14 1027 and Resolution 375 today. Resolution 1027
15 calls on the New York State Legislature to pass and
16 the governor to sign Assembly 4330 and Senate 5439;
17 legislation regarding the certification or training
18 of teachers, administrators, and instructors in the
19 area of dyslexia and related disorders. Resolution
20 375 calls on the New York state Department of
21 Education to include lessons on climate change in K
22 to 12 schools' curriculum. I would like to remind
23 everyone who is here today that you must fill out a
24 witness slip which is located on the desk of the
25

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1 Sergeant at Arms near the entrance of this room. If
2 you wish to testify on 1027 or 375 please indicate
3 on the witness slip whether you are here to testify
4 in favor or in opposition to the resolutions in
5 question. I also want to point out that we will not
6 be voting on Resolution 1027 today but we will be
7 voting on Resolution 375. To allow as many people
8 as possible to testify testimony will be limited to
9 three minutes per person. And also I do swear in
10 everybody who comes before this committee so I just
11 want people to be aware of that. And now I'm going
12 to turn the floor over to my colleague Andrew Cohen
13 for his remarks. Council Member Cohen.

15 CM COHEN: Thank you Chair Dromm. I have
16 good news for the audience. Council Member Dromm
17 said a lot of the things that I was going to say
18 and I've been cutting away as... as he was speaking.
19 So first I want to say good afternoon to everybody.
20 I'm Council Member Andrew Cohen, Chair of the
21 Committee on Mental Health, Developmental
22 Disabilities, Alcoholism, Substance Abuse, and
23 Disability Services. I want to thank everybody for
24 turning out today to this... substantial audience for
25 this hearing on addressing the needs of students

1 with dyslexia and related language based
2 disabilities. I want to thank Council Member Dromm
3 and the members of the Education Committee for
4 inviting the Mental Health Committee to co-chair
5 and participate in this very important hearing.
6 Dyslexia is the most common and well recognized
7 learning disability. Early identification and
8 intervention is key for a child with dyslexia or
9 other learning disorders. Since most children learn
10 to read in school in the early grades K through 2
11 and are expected to reach proficient reading skills
12 by third grade it is more critical than ever to
13 reach them at the beginning of their education
14 therefore identifying any reading issues and
15 intervening with one on one health to enable those
16 students who struggle to move forward at their own
17 pace is essential for a child with dyslexia...
18 education. The problem is not that students with
19 disabilities are incapable of learning to read it
20 is that we are failing to teach them effectively.
21 To be clear learning disabilities are not
22 intellectual disabilities. In fact, the majority of
23 people with learning disabilities are of average to
24 above average intelligence. The neurological

1 differences that make reading difficult may also
2 allow dyslexics to excel in other areas as Council
3 Member Dromm stated in the big picture thinking in
4 the creative... creativity, special relationships,
5 and design. While people with dyslexia may tend to
6 miss details in their environment that require an
7 additional focus they are better at noticing things
8 that are distributed more broadly. To put it
9 another way while typical readers may tend to miss
10 the forest because its view is blocked by all the
11 trees people with dyslexia may miss the trees but
12 see the forest. In September 2015 Mayor de Blasio
13 laid out a new education reform to achieve equality
14 and excellence across all New York City public
15 schools. Among those introduced was an effort to
16 get all second grade readers... second graders
17 reading at grade level dub universal second grade
18 literacy. Stated goals of this initiative specified
19 that at least two-thirds of students will be able
20 to read with fluency by the end of second grade
21 within six years with a target of 100 percent
22 literacy by 2026. Every elementary school will be
23 assigned a dedicated reading specialist with
24 approximately 700 reading specialists placed in
25

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1 schools across the city by the fall of 2018. School
2 district 10 in the Bronx which I represent is one
3 of four high need districts identified and
4 prioritized to receive extra reading support
5 services this September. In February 2016 as a
6 result of local law 27 of 2015 we received the
7 DOE's report on special education. It stated that
8 more than 40 percent of students with IEPs that is
9 75,766 out of 187,672 were in the learning
10 disability category in 2014/2015. It was
11 disconcerting to learn that among students with
12 IEPs contain recommendations for special education
13 services only 60 percent were fully receiving the
14 recommended services. 35 percent were partially
15 receiving the services. And five percent were
16 categories as not receiving services. Another small
17 but important demographic of the... of students is
18 the 16 percent of school age special education
19 students attending non-public schools in the
20 2014/2015 school year. We should discuss... we should
21 still discuss these students with the Department
22 of... with the Department because the Department is
23 spending more than 200 million annually on private
24 school tuition in cases where judges have found
25

1 that public schools had not met the students'
2 needs. We must work together to ensure that all
3 students requiring and entitled to extra assistance
4 are receiving it so that we can help them graduate
5 and become productive adults. I am eager to hear
6 from the administration about what is being done to
7 ensure that every child has the best education. I
8 am also looking forward to hearing from advocates
9 and other student experts in the field on what more
10 can be done in... to support our students. And I
11 think I'm looking forward to hearing from students
12 today too. Lastly, just a word in support of Reso
13 1027 sponsored by my colleague Council Member
14 Cabrera of which I'm a co-sponsor... Reso 1027 calls
15 upon the New York state legislature to pass and the
16 governor to sign Assembly Bill three... 4330 and
17 senate bill 5439, legislation regarding the
18 certification or training of teachers,
19 administrators, and instructors in the area of
20 dyslexia and related disorders. I support this
21 resolution [phonetic]... resolution and the
22 corresponding assembly and senate bills because we
23 must do more to ensure students with dyslexia and
24 other learning disabilities have access to
25

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1 additional support and that their teachers are
2 supported as well through training and
3 certification. I just want to acknowledge that
4 we've been joined by Council Member Crowley,
5 Council Member Vallone, Council Member Grodenchik
6 from the Mental Health Committee. And lastly I want
7 to thank the committee staff for all of their
8 assistance in preparing for today's hearing; our
9 Legislative Analyst Nicole Abene, Michael Benjamin..
10 you're a counsel aren't you? Oh next week, next
11 week she'll be admitted so.. then she'll be counsel.
12 And I saw our Finance Analyst Jeanette Merrill. And
13 I also want to thank Kate Diabold [sp?], my
14 Legislative Director for her assistance today. I'm
15 going to turn it back over to Council Member Dromm.
16 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
19 And let me acknowledge members of the Education
20 Committee and others who are here with us as well.
21 Council Member Inez Barron from Brooklyn is here.
22 Council Member Mark Treyger from Brooklyn, Council
23 Member Mark Levine from Manhattan, Council Member
24 Ben Kallos from Manhattan, Council Member and Chair
25 of the Committee on Nonpublic Schools Chaim Deutsch

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1 is here from Brooklyn. Council Member Alan Maisel
2 from Brooklyn, Council Member Costa Constantinides,
3 Council Member Barry Grodenchik, Council Member
4 Margaret Chin, Council Member Debbie Rose is also
5 here. And with that I'm going to turn it over to
6 Council Member Constantinides to make some comments
7 on Resolution 375.
8

9 CM CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you Chairman
10 Dromm for your continued leadership of this
11 Education Committee and thank you Chairman Cohen
12 for your great work as well with Mental Health
13 Committee. I am Council Member Costa Constantinides
14 and here to address Resolution 375. Climate change
15 is one of the most serious issues facing New
16 Yorkers today. 15 of the hottest 16 years on record
17 have occurred after the year 2000. And no one born
18 after February of 1985 has ever known a full month
19 of below average global climate. As the global
20 temperature rises our winters and summer become
21 longer and more extreme. Hurricanes and tornados
22 become more powerful and higher sea levels will
23 quite possibly swallow up coastal homes and towns.
24 The overwhelming consensus of climate scientists
25 tell us that the planet is warming, that this is

1 higher temperature, will cause extreme and
2 dangerous weather and that climate change is caused
3 by human activity. President Obama has said and
4 I've quoted him before that we are the first
5 generation to feel the effects of climate change
6 and we will be the last generation that will be
7 able to do anything about it. That is why education
8 is so critical here. We must ensure that everyone
9 understands that climate change impacts all areas
10 of human life. One example can be seen in the
11 recent California drought. A report by the
12 University of California estimates that the cost to
13 the state will be about 2.7 billion dollars
14 including to the lucrative almond and wine making
15 industries. That's a serious blow to the... our
16 largest state's economy. It's also an issue of
17 political stability and even national security. My
18 bill resolution 375 calls on the New York state
19 Department of Education to remedy the issue of
20 education by making climate change K through 12
21 curriculum available to all students. While I'm
22 encouraged to see that they're working to adopt new
23 generation science standards which covered climate
24 change far more than the previous science
25

2 curriculum did it still doesn't address the
3 underlying problem of treating issue as a bullet
4 point in a science text book rather than a dynamic
5 problem that has come to... our existence in the 21st
6 century. Knowledge is power. And if we can pass
7 onto our children a full understanding... what
8 happening in their world they'll be that much more
9 prepared to fight for a sustainable future for all
10 New Yorkers. And I want to thank all the young
11 people who are here today from Global Kids. We're
12 not allowed to clap here but we go like this in New
13 York City Council, kind of a jazz hands. But I want
14 to thank all the young people that are here today
15 who brought this to my attention, who are here
16 today to ensure that their voice is heard and that
17 their colleagues in school will get this climate
18 change education. It's your activism that is the
19 genesis of this resolution. It's your activism
20 that's going to have this resolution passed today
21 because you're working so hard. So I want to
22 congratulate you. You're making government work. So
23 thank you all. I want to then thank our chairperson
24 of... of the Education Committee Danny Dromm and
25 again all one... everyone at Global Kids, Alliance

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1 for Climate Education and I asked them.. I.. I you
2 know humbly asked my colleagues in the Education
3 Committee though I'm not a member to support
4 resolution 375. Thank you.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Council
7 Member Constantinides and let me also thank global
8 kids because they came to my Christmas party, they
9 wrote me emails, they call me on the phone, every
10 time they saw me they wanted to get this piece of
11 legislation at least to a hearing and hopefully
12 today to passing in this committee as well. So you
13 did it the right way. Thank you Global Kids. And we
14 will be talking a little bit more about that
15 resolution as we move along. Right now it's my duty
16 to swear in our witnesses. So I'm going to ask them
17 if they would please raise your right hand. We are
18 joined today by Philip Weinberg the Deputy
19 Chancellor for the New York City Department of
20 Education, Esther Friedman from the New York City
21 Department of Education, and Jason Borges from the
22 New York City Department of Education as well. Do
23 you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole
24 truth, and nothing but the truth and to answer
25

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council member questions honestly? Okay. Deputy
Chancellor would you like to begin?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: good

afternoon Chairs Dromm and Cohen and members of the
Committees on Education and Mental Health. My name
is Phil Weinberg and I am the Deputy Chancellor for
the Division of Teaching and Learning at the New
York City Department of Education. I'm joined by
Esther Friedman Executive Director of the Office of
Literacy and Academic Intervention Services within
our division and Jason Borges Senior Director of
Literacy and Intervention with the DOE's Division
of Specialized Instruction and Student Support.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the DOE's
work to support students with dyslexia and related
language based disorders. The DOE's committed to
ensuring that all students have access to a strong
comprehensive core literacy programs and a multi-
tiered system of interventions designed to meet
their needs including students who struggle with
literacy acquisition. While our focus on literacy
and literacy interventions addresses Kindergarten
through Grade 12 we recognize that there's more
work to do. That's why Mayor de Blasio and

1
2 Chancellor Farina announced the equity and
3 excellence agenda earlier this school year
4 introducing our new universal literacy initiative
5 that will boost literacy in the early grades by
6 ensuring every elementary school receives support
7 from a dedicated reading coach. Universal... universal
8 literacy will ensure all students are reading on
9 grade level by the end of grade two. Our goal is
10 that by 2022 at least two-thirds of our students
11 will be able to read with fluency by the end of the
12 second grade and ultimately 100 percent will
13 achieve fluency by 2026. We want all city students
14 to have the strongest possible academic foundation
15 to prepare them to succeed in college and careers.
16 Currently all students benefit from explicit and
17 systematic instruction in the foundational skills
18 of reading acquisition. Students who struggle with
19 print based disabilities experience primary
20 difficulties in phonological awareness including
21 phonemic awareness and manipulation, single word
22 reading, reading fluency, and spelling. It is
23 important that these students receive targeted
24 instruction in these areas in order to prevent
25 academic failure and that they gained access to the

1 curriculum and ultimately learned to enjoy reading.

2 This requires professional learning opportunities
3 that continually develop instructional expertise in
4 evidence based methodologies for our teachers. When
5 teachers are provided with professional development
6 opportunities it improves their ability to help
7 students with language based disabilities learn to
8 read and write successfully. Structured intensive
9 multi-sensory reading instruction is the most
10 widely recognized evidence based approach to
11 supporting students who present with dyslexia. This
12 model of support occurs within student school where
13 all children regardless of differences have the
14 opportunity to learn with and from each other.

15 Removal from one school to a school where every
16 child presents with a disability provides limited
17 opportunity for students to engage with and learn
18 within the natural diversity of their school.

19 Students who exhibit difficulties... difficulties
20 with reading should be afforded the opportunity to
21 remain with their peers and receive additional
22 support when needed to accelerate their development
23 towards reading and writing proficiency. The

24 Division of Teaching and Learning and DSISS
25

1 spearhead the DOE's work to support students with
2 language based disabilities with the division of
3 teaching and learning primarily focusing on general
4 education and DSISS on special education. I will
5 now ask esker... Esther Friedman followed by Jason
6 Borges to discuss their work to ensure that schools
7 are providing all students with literacy supports
8 and interventions. We'll be happy to answer your
9 questions after our testimony.
10

11 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Good after... Good
12 afternoon. Oh got you. Good afternoon Chairs Dromm
13 and Cohen and members of the Committees on Special
14 Education and Mental Health. I'm Esther Friedman,
15 Executive Director of the Office of Literacy and
16 Academic Intervention Services within the Division
17 of Teaching and Learning. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify today. As Deputy Chancellor
19 Weinberg mentioned for New York City students with
20 dyslexia and related learning disorders there are
21 practices within our core literacy instruction and
22 literacy interventions that are designed to benefit
23 students who struggle in achieving fluent grade
24 level reading. We know from a large body of
25 research and teaching reading to students with

1
2 dyslexia that a comprehensive program in literacy
3 particularly the foundational skills most high to
4 print specifically phonetic awareness and phonics
5 is critical. We believe this instruction must
6 utilize a specific methodology. One is that is
7 influenced by Orton-Gillingham offering a
8 sequential multi-sensory explicit approach and must
9 come as early as possible in the child's school
10 life ideally starting in pre-k or even earlier. For
11 this reason, we offer a large number of training
12 options and various phonics programs targeting
13 elementary and secondary level students. We offer
14 options so that students have programs that are
15 matched to their individual needs and teachers who
16 are appropriately trained. The Office of Literacy
17 and Academic Intervention Services provides not
18 only citywide professional development
19 opportunities designed to build the capacity of
20 educators to use innovative and research based
21 instructional practices but also high quality
22 resources on these practices. Our aim is to equip
23 educators with tools, training, and skills
24 necessary to provide all students with high quality
25 instruction. This school year alone we have

delivered a total of 188 professional training
events we will have delivered 188 professional
training events in reading and writing supports for
all readers; 93 of these in academic intervention
and 95 in core literacy serving approximately 10,51
participants. Educators who attend these events
develop their classroom practices in very specific
areas including assessment, phonemic awareness,
phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
The latter five referred to as the five pillars of
reading as well as writing. We also provide
extensive professional development in ways to
enhance and enrich the core curriculum.
Participants also learn methods to support students
with executive function challenges which can
include difficulty with starting and completing
tasks, memory, organization, and time management.
Typically, 20 to 30 percent of the participants in
our professional development events serve students
with individualized education plans known as IEPs
largely representing students with a learning
disability. However, the majority of workshop
participants serve students who are struggling with
various aspects of reading acquisition especially

1
2 print challenges with or without an IEP. Our... our
3 events are offered in three major strands;
4 developing classroom practice, exposing educators
5 to key speakers and thinkers in the field of
6 literacy, and introducing teachers and
7 administrators to hands on... to hands on tools for
8 both assessment and instruction in the targeted
9 areas mentioned earlier. In addition to these
10 intensive professional development opportunities we
11 have developed a popular vocabulary instruction
12 manual Word Work and Word Play and other resource
13 tools for educators. The vocabulary manual
14 addresses a critical issue in literacy. We know
15 from research in this area that high poverty
16 students come to school with a significant gap in
17 the number of words heard in the home. This is a
18 critical area of need for all students who
19 struggle. Thee vocabulary manual provides research
20 based strategies to address this need and all of
21 our resources are disseminated to all schools. New
22 York state regulations and practices for delivering
23 support in academic and literacy interventions
24 stress a multi-tiered approach to intervention.
25 Referred to as response to intervention or RTI it

1 seeks to ensure that all students who struggled
2 received targeted research based interventions
3 especially in the early grades. Most researchers
4 and RTIs stress the importance of early
5 intervention and consider it prevention at these
6 early stages. We believe that the strongest RTI
7 model is one that ensures all students receive
8 strong instruction in all five pillars in the core
9 literacy program and that the foundational skills
10 are robustly addressed. For students who struggle
11 more intensive supports and instruction are
12 offered. For example, a strong core program
13 provides fluency instruction through various
14 delivery models including the use of shared reading
15 of big books, readers theatre, and other methods of
16 repeated reading including one to one instruction
17 you... using fluency building programs such as the
18 Great Leaps! reading program. Our office provides
19 ongoing training for this program to ensure that as
20 many schools as possible can utilize this
21 methodology. Furthermore, our universal literacy
22 initiative is being designed to fit the RTI mandate
23 especially in ensuring that the core program
24 contains all components of a comprehensive reading
25

2 program. This includes components... the components
3 such as phonemic awareness, explicit instruction
4 and phonics, and fluency building which we believe
5 to be critical to all readers, especially those
6 challenged in reading acquisition including
7 students with dyslexia. Our focus will be on high
8 quality training for our reading coaches who will
9 deliver this content to second grade teachers
10 initially and ultimately to teachers in
11 kindergarten and first grade. The Universal
12 Literacy Initiative is rolling this out in three
13 cohorts starting with four high needs districts
14 mentioned a few minutes ago. These districts
15 initially and impacting an additional 14 districts
16 in year two and the remaining 14 districts in year
17 three. Our office works to ensure that we address
18 both the provision of the strong core program and
19 strong interventions for all students. In fact,
20 starting with several staff members a few months
21 ago and recently expanding to include my whole team
22 my entire office has completed an institute on
23 dyslexia offered to an organization, everyone
24 reading, this organization... an organization that
25 promotes staff development and literacy for

1 individuals with dyslexia and related learning
2 disorders. This will better inform our creation of
3 the training syllabus for the universal literacy
4 three week kickoff institute this summer. In
5 addition to the work of my office other literacy
6 initiatives within the Division of Teaching and
7 learning include New York City Reads 365 and the
8 Middle School Quality Initiative referred to as
9 MSQI, a program funded by the city council. Last
10 November we launched New York City Reads 365 which
11 annually provides age appropriate reading lists of
12 new books from pre-k through 12 as well as supports
13 and trainings for school staff and parents focused
14 on strengthening reading skills and encouraging the
15 love of reading. MSQI is a key part of our strategy
16 to support all students in literacy by helping
17 teachers develop their craft and creating robust
18 assessments and tools to improve students' literacy
19 skills. There are currently 108 middle schools that
20 have joined MSQI and are receiving additional
21 supports such as literacy based coaching, workshops
22 for school staff, and interschool visits. Over 400
23 teachers and all MSQI principals receive literacy
24 based professional development throughout the year
25

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and all participating MSQI schools receive frequent
site based literacy coaching support. MSQI students
who were identified as dyslexic or in need of
foundational skills received the Wilson Reading
System. Each school... each school MSQI offers the
initial Wilson Reading System; Professional
Development, materials, and curriculum as well as
ongoing training and site based coaching to
teachers and administrators. In addition to basic
training MSQI allows returning successful teachers,
Wilson teachers, the opportunity to become Wilson
Level 1 certified. We are pleased with the results
we are seeing from students at these participating
schools, particularly struggling students. Thank
you again for the opportunity to be here today. My
colleague Jason Borges will now discuss our work to
support students with IEPs.

JASON BORGES: Good afternoon Chairs
Dromm and Cohen and members of the Committees on
Education and Mental Health. I am Jason Borges,
Senior Director of Literacy and intervention within
the Department of Education's Division of
Specialized Instruction and Student Support.
Aligned to the Division of Teaching and Learning

1
2 our work is rooted in the Chancellor's vision to
3 ensure that all students are reading on grade level
4 by the end of second grade. Our division stance on
5 print based disabilities are in alignment with the
6 International Dyslexia Association's definition of
7 dyslexia. Dyslexia is a neurologically based
8 disorder which interferes with the acquisition and
9 processing of language varying in degrees of
10 severity it is manifested by difficulties in
11 receptive and expressive language including
12 phonological processing in reading, writing,
13 spelling, hand writing, and sometimes in
14 arithmetic. We know that some students require more
15 intensive reading intervention. Some of these
16 readers may live with a print or language based
17 disability or a combination of both. Some students
18 struggle in the early grades while others may not
19 struggle until the later grades. The Division of
20 Specialized Instruction has developed partnerships
21 with nationally recognized professional
22 organizations to offer training to teachers in
23 structural support staff throughout the Department
24 of Education. We partner with three Orton-
25 Gillingham based organizations that offer

1 structured literacy intervention trainings for
2 teachers in Kindergarten through High School. We
3 also partner with reading reform and Manhattanville
4 College in the training of grades K through 2
5 teachers in seven schools throughout the five
6 boroughs in the Spalding Method. The Spalding
7 Method is a whole-class research based approach to
8 teaching phonics. Each teacher received coursework
9 in the content and methodology of Spalding coupled
10 with on-site coaching from a mentor. As the schools
11 reach full capacity in the Spalding Method next
12 year each school will serve as a lab site in a
13 2016/17 school year to showcase their learning to
14 other schools who want to expand their development
15 of this approach to teaching phonics in their own
16 schools. We recognize the value that the Wilson
17 Reading System can provide for teachers when
18 students in grades 2 through 12 struggle with word
19 recognition and reading fluency. To parallel our
20 colleagues' work in MSQI we have continued to
21 sponsor three day Wilson reading systems overview
22 sessions a school year so that special educators
23 can begin implementation of Wilson Reading Systems
24 in their classrooms. Because we understand that
25

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1 schools may need expertise to implement and deepen
2 Wilson reading systems we hired a central staff
3 member to oversee the completion of the district
4 level training requirements for this program which
5 would include supporting teachers in level one
6 training in Wilson Reading Systems. So far this
7 school year we have provided 59 Orton-Gillingham
8 based trainings with 903 teachers and other school
9 based staff in attendance. There are another 38
10 Orton-Gillingham based trainings remaining this
11 school year. We work with super intendants in
12 borough field support centers to communicate with
13 schools and share opportunities. By the end of this
14 school year at least 91 percent of schools in
15 Staten Island will have a teacher trained in Orton-
16 Gillingham. We also offer trainings for
17 paraprofessionals at a research proven fluency
18 intervention at the Great Leaps Reading Program.
19 This intervention is organized, easy to implement,
20 and yields immediate data on a student's growth and
21 reading fluency. In collaboration with the Division
22 of Teaching and Learning we are currently training
23 50 classroom paraprofessionals who work with
24 teachers who receive training from the Division of
25

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1 Teaching and Learning. These classrooms will have
2 double the capacity to support students in becoming
3 fluent readers. We are currently researching
4 assessment practices for students with print based
5 disabilities and other school districts and are
6 working with an outside expert at assessments of
7 phonological processing and rapid.. rapid naming
8 skills for the purposes of screening, intervention,
9 planning based on student skills, and progress
10 monitoring. These assessments will be used to help
11 schools identify reading deficits and plans
12 systematic interventions to support these readers.
13 We know that every K through 2 teacher is a teacher
14 of reading. Many teachers are using an informal
15 assessment such as running records as part of
16 routine practice. These quick and efficient check-
17 ins allow a teacher to observe and record a
18 student's oral reading behaviors and flag any
19 concerns related to word recognition. Sometimes a
20 classroom teacher will need more specific
21 information to best plan instruction. At this point
22 the classroom teacher should administer a norms
23 reading assessment to provide data to support
24 appropriate interventions. An example of a wildly
25

1 used Norms assessment is the Gates-MacGinitie
2 Reading Test. The results of this assessment in
3 conjunction with teachers' observations should
4 inform more targeted intervention and skill based
5 instruction. If over a period of time the teacher
6 has evidence that a student is not making progress
7 the student could be initially referred for special
8 education which includes an evaluation by a school
9 psychologist. This evaluation will be used to
10 determine if a student presents a print based
11 disability. Then the team can determine what level
12 of supports are needed for a student to achieve the
13 targeted annual goals for her/his IEP. Next year we
14 will enter our third year of work in the evidence
15 based practice of self-regulated strategy
16 development and writing. We will also focus our
17 training on a model that provides each borough
18 field support center with a pilot school and a
19 field based staff member trained in this highly
20 effective approach and explicit writing
21 instruction. Over a three-year trajectory all
22 teachers in this great three through five pilot
23 will be trained and their classrooms will become
24 lab sites to showcase their SRSD practice for other
25

1 schools. As part of our collective work to better
2 understand print based disabilities District 75
3 would service its students with a wide range of
4 academic and intellectual abilities has also been
5 engaged in professional development to better
6 understand the complexity of print based
7 disabilities in the population they serve. Since a
8 reading disability can often be a coexisting
9 condition to other cognitive challenges district 75
10 is recognizing the need for better diagnostics
11 based on neuropsychological factors to inform
12 appropriate intervention practices that can address
13 all students' learning processing needs. District
14 75 has been implementing Structured Methods in
15 Language Education, often referred to as SMILE, a
16 beginning reading program developed specifically
17 for students with the most significant language
18 learning communication and literacy needs including
19 students with intellectual disabilities, autism
20 spectrum disorders, hearing impairments, and
21 traumatic brain injuries. Any student who is able
22 to attend to instruction who has mastered fewer
23 than 10 phonemes is a candidate for SMILE's
24 methodology. SMILE was first piloted with students
25

1 with autism and limited verbal skills in 10
2 District 75 schools during the 2008/2009 school
3 year. Currently there are over 1,000 District 75
4 staff members training in... and implementing SMILE
5 with kindergarten through 12th grade students and
6 across various populations including non-verbal
7 students. It is our goal that staff at all
8 Department of Education schools receive training to
9 deepen their literacy knowledge to better support
10 our students in their development. All of our
11 students deserve high quality literacy instruction.
12 While we know we have more work to do we are
13 confident that we are heading in the right
14 direction. Thank you again for the opportunity to
15 testify today. We will be happy to answer any
16 questions you may have.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
19 for your testimony. And we're going to go to
20 council member questions now and let me start off a
21 little bit. We've been aware that most school
22 districts across the nation including New York City
23 have not historically used the term dyslexia on
24 students' IEPs because it's not listed as a
25 separate disability classification in the

1 individuals with disabilities education act.

2
3 Instead it is included under the classification of
4 specific learning disability. However, the October
5 23rd '15 guidance letter from the US Department of
6 Education's Office of Special Education and
7 Rehabilitative Services or OSERS I think clarified
8 that there is nothing in the IDEA that would
9 prohibit the use of the term dyslexia, dyscalculia,
10 and dysgraphia in the IDEA evaluation eligibility
11 determinations or IEP documents. So my question is
12 do you track those students? And if so can you tell
13 us how many students there are in city's... in city
14 public schools?

15 JASON BORGES: In terms of students...

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Classified with a
17 dyslexic learning disability.

18 JASON BORGES: We... we... we don't... any...
19 any student would fall under a learning disability
20 classification.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So one of the... one
22 of the frustrations that I had as a teacher looking
23 at a student's IEP for example I don't believe that
24 dyslexia was listed on an IEP. It would be just
25 learning disability. If it was broken down to

1 include dyslexia I think I would know better how to
2 approach the learning disability. Is that still the
3 case? Do we not list it in the IEP? And then how do
4 we work with teachers on ensuring that they know
5 dyslexic... ways to deal with dyslexia?

7 JASON BORGES: So in terms of the... the...
8 the classification of a learning disability versus
9 a classification if it were to be dyslexia
10 something to take into account is that... what's
11 really important is that it's... it... there's more to
12 the... there's more underlying under the... under the
13 label in that in the present levels of performance
14 in a student's IEP we can get more a descriptive
15 nature of how the child learns and an individual
16 reading profile because we know that every reader
17 it's going to... every reader's a phenomenon to
18 themselves and that we can actually have a better
19 sense of the complexity of their... their reading
20 profile and how... and how to instructionally...
21 instructional implications and to support them.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: And Jason
23 if I'm correct we record on an IEP but we can't
24 report an aggregate number to you...

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry you're...

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: ...record
3 some of this information on an IEP but an aggregate
4 number isn't available to us.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay so... so there's
6 no calculation in terms of number of students who
7 are diagnosed with dyslexia?

8 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: No.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But a teacher could
10 look at the IEP and see the word dyslexia in there?

11 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And is that a change
13 from previous policy?

14 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: It's...

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because to be honest
16 with you when I would look... and as a matter of fact
17 when I would refer to the Committee on Special
18 Education I was told not to use the term dyslexia.
19 And I was told one because they said that I should..
20 I should not diagnose in the classroom which I get
21 but even to say I suspect that the child might be
22 dyslexic was not acceptable and then often times
23 when I would see letter reversal or symptoms of
24 being dyslexic in the classroom I had no way of
25 confirming whether my suspicions about the learning

1 disability were related to dyslexia. So I think
2 really this is at the core of the argument or the
3 disagreement that we have with the... with the DOE is
4 that we need a way to be able to identify those
5 children so that teachers can work with specific
6 methods to address those issues in the classroom.

8 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So if I may... so I... I
9 just want to respond to that. So whether we have
10 the word dyslexia attached to the student or not
11 what's very very important to know about a student
12 is whether they have challenges with print or
13 what's called challenges at the word level. And so
14 that is much more important than any level. Because
15 even if there were a label of dyslexia there is a
16 range of ability within that. And... and so what's
17 very important is the diagnostic information that a
18 teacher would find doing assessments such as those
19 that we train people to do. So you know we're in a...
20 in continuous process of roll out, of assessment
21 for all teachers and for administrators so that
22 there is an understanding that we have to get to
23 the bottom of it. And so even if someone were
24 labeled as dyslexic that... that does not give you
25 the whole picture. So for example we first...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No but it does give
you partial picture.

ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Pardon me?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And... and to be
honest with you that would be very useful
information to me as a teacher if I had some
indication as to what the perceived disability is.
I... I agree that it doesn't give you the whole
picture and... and there are varying degrees of
dyslexia but I feel that it would have given me a
better feeling for what I could do to help that
student.

ESTHER FRIEDMAN: What... what I'm saying
is that it's more important to know that this
individual has a print based... challenges with print
meaning that the issue is print and what those
issues are specifically. Because even saying that...
so for example a child making reversals is not a
diagnosis of dyslexia.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm.

ESTHER FRIEDMAN: It means that he
doesn't know those letters. I mean that's really
what it means. He doesn't know what the sound is to
go with the letter that he... that he is doing. So

1
2 you know the reversals are typically with similar
3 looking letters but not a diagnosis at all of
4 dyslexia because many students might make
5 reversals. So what I'm saying is that the more
6 critical information is to know that there is print
7 based disability and then to look even further to
8 see what else... other implications that are usually
9 comorbid with that... with that problem, with that
10 challenge.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So the... the... the
12 specific methods that you identified for use with
13 students with learning disabilities in your
14 testimony today... are they specific to dyslexia or
15 are they specific to learning disabilities in
16 general?

17 JASON BORGES: They're... they're specific
18 to students who... who could... on two levels. So one...
19 one is you know earlier... earlier on in a child's
20 development we know that say in K1 K2 that explicit
21 phonics instruction is... is a really good... good
22 approach to use with students. And also it could be
23 used as a preventative measure for... for students
24 who could later on without that... without receiving
25 that instruction is being identified with having

1 some type of struggle with reading.. with print. And
2 it's also these methodologies are research proven
3 to support students who live with print based
4 disabilities that includes dyslexia. So they could
5 be used as a whole class level to small group as
6 well as at a one to one level with student.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But my understanding
9 is that in the classroom today at the Chancellor's
10 insistence.. I'm not opposed to it, but that we use
11 the balance literacy approach. These more
12 structured approaches especially to whole classes
13 seems to contradict the balanced literacy approach.
14 Am I right or wrong on that?

15 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So I'm... I'm going to
16 take that. So you know balanced literacy is a very
17 loaded term. And it's interpreted.. so if we asked
18 you know ten educators that you lock in a room you..
19 you would get quite different responses. When the
20 chancellor is talking about balanced literacy using
21 that term it is not the same term that you might
22 have heard 15 years ago or starting in 1988 let's
23 say. She is absolutely very explicitly talking
24 about the inclusion of phonics in an overall
25 comprehensive core program. So what we know in.. in

1 a core program, so let's say in the early grades
2 but really in any grade, is that if you include all
3 components including phonics, including phonemic
4 awareness as... as something that you would do to
5 support phonics and teach explicitly that for
6 students who still do not respond to a really rock
7 solid truly balanced program.. and I call it a
8 comprehensive literacy program but even that.. you
9 know what.. what does that mean, it means it
10 includes all the components of reading that have
11 been delineated in the research. So for students
12 that do not respond to that instruction New York
13 state has regulations that suggest a multi-tiered..
14 they don't suggest, they demand a multi-tiered
15 approach. So if the child does not respond to core
16 there is a more intensive provision of service
17 still targeting the five pillars in question for
18 that child. That's why it's very important to have
19 the diagnostic information. And if it... that second
20 tier of no response or insufficient response or not
21 expected response been more intensive intervention.
22 All... all sort of stemming from rock solid
23 comprehensive truly balanced instruction. So when
24 people use that term it's very important to ask
25

2 what they mean by it. And.. and I can tell you that
3 the chancellor has very explicitly in writing and
4 public documents said you must include phonics and
5 phonemic awareness explicitly and with a program,
6 not just incidentally but.. but really
7 comprehensively.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I appreciate the..
9 the.. the chancellor's insistence on phonemic
10 awareness. But the one thing that concerned me was
11 when I was teaching was the provision of services
12 to individual students when you're using a balanced
13 literacy approach and when to use it for.. and for
14 students that were labeled as learning disabled who
15 were probably in a sense receiving set services how
16 does it actually happen in a classroom where a
17 teacher gets to use some of these other methods
18 when they're doing balanced literacy.

19 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So again I think we..
20 you know we may be using the balanced literacy term
21 a little bit differently. So in.. in a core program
22 in K to 3 on the common core learning standards it
23 very explicitly calls out the full balance which
24 includes phonics and phonemic awareness. So.. and
25 it's.. it's written very explicitly along with

1 everything else, foundational skills. So that would
2 be included and then you would see that reflected
3 also in the professional development that's offered
4 for both core and for interventions meaning if it
5 doesn't happen... success does not happen in the
6 developmentally expected way meaning K, 1, 2, or 3
7 at that point it becomes intervention. And in fact
8 there were interventions even in those early grades
9 but they're typically referred to as... as a
10 prevention model. So when you say balanced literacy
11 you'll be including everything that you're talking
12 about not only because we do include that but
13 because that is mandated through... we are a common
14 core state and city and it's... it's spelled out very
15 very clearly there.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So can you just also
18 walk me through a little bit what does a... a writing
19 program look like for a dyslexic student?

20 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So a writing program
21 for dyslexics and all students who struggle with
22 that is going to include some multi-sensory
23 features that are sort of connected, not sort of,
24 they are connected to things in the reading
25 program, specifically the phonics... specifically the

1 phonics but the writing program would be explicit.
2
3 There would be a sequence to it. So typically when
4 you think in terms of students with learning
5 differences, learning disorders typically they do
6 respond to explicit instruction. The research says
7 that's the direct way to go, direct instruction
8 it's referred to... it's referred to in that way at
9 times and sequential format, corrective feedback...
10 So it would look that way. I mean it would have all
11 of the elements. You still have to have all of the
12 elements that are described in the common core. So
13 exposure to genre of writing... you know all of the
14 high level but is... but also the skills that would
15 support that sort of work.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do we correct
17 spelling?

18 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Absolutely. We even
19 teach spelling. Because if you have phonics...
20 [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We teach spelling
22 now?

23 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: We teach spelling in
24 the... if you...
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Because for a while
3 I know we weren't supposed to teach spelling.

4 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: We... we... we must teach
5 spelling. And absolutely I'm hiring people and I... I
6 usually don't like to hire people that don't spell
7 well so yes. The way that we teach spelling
8 ideally... so if you think of maybe the spelling
9 program that you might have had as a child,
10 spelling is toward... [cross-talk]

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No but look I only
12 left the system in 2009 and I know what the DOE was
13 saying at that time. This does seem to be somewhat
14 different from when I left the system and I'm
15 appreciative of that fact. So I'm asking genuinely.
16 I'm not trying to... to...

17 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Yeah. So... so I just
18 want to make clear that spelling is taught... good
19 spelling is taught in patterns, ideally in a multi-
20 sensory way. So suddenly it's starting to sound
21 like the phonics program. And good phonics programs
22 teach phonics including spelling meaning there's a
23 decoding and encoding involved. So in fact your
24 phonics program is your spelling program. So if
25 there is a phonics program there is a spelling

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1 program. And it's absolutely expected that... that
2 that will be taught. Again on... on the common core
3 but also in our practice.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So we're getting
6 into real education stuff here but I want to give
7 my colleagues a chance to ask some questions too
8 but do we use closed technique or do we use content
9 clues for example to work with dyslexic students?

10 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So we would use... well
11 you're asking about two separate things. So closed
12 fill in the blank, we use it... it's the... the
13 original close with the degrees of reading power
14 which started out as a readability formula and
15 extended into actually the New York state
16 assessment for a while. It's still a strategy
17 that's used. MSQY uses that assessment, the DRP
18 now.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is... is that part of
20 Wilson.

21 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No, okay.

23 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: It is not. It's... it's...
24 it's an assessment tool right now and it's also a
25 strategy... it's a format, it's not a strategy. For

1 students who are dyslexic and have other reading
2 challenges certainly for comprehension the use of
3 context clues would be one little piece of.. of a
4 very broad range of skills and strategies in
5 comprehension and vocabulary instruction. They
6 would not be about the phonics but instruction.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay Council Member
9 Cohen.

10 CM COHEN: Thank you Chair. I like
11 showing off all that I don't know in front of a
12 large crowd and on TV. So.. and I.. and I.. do not
13 claim to be an expert in this area. But I.. one, I
14 just wanted to follow-up on a question that Council
15 Member Dromm asked about the terminology. You think
16 it's better it sounded like sort of.. to describe it
17 more broader terms about word learning issues as
18 opposed to using.. but I mean is there any reason
19 why we wouldn't use both? I mean it sort of a
20 general term and a specific term where there.. I
21 mean do you think there's no value in the term at
22 all in terms of diagnosing or giving guidance to
23 teachers about what the status is of the student?

24 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: You're talking about
25 the term dyslexia?

2 CM COHEN: Yes.

3 [background comments]

4 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So my feeling is that
5 what is very critical is to know what it is that
6 the problem is. That is much more critical than to
7 say somebody has a... You know everybody now is
8 grappling is it a learning difference, is it a
9 learning disorder, is it a learning disability. I...
10 I've been asking many... you know NCLD... many
11 different people... folks have very different takes
12 on it. It doesn't matter if you use that term,
13 dyslexia, but you don't know what to do about it.
14 You don't know how to look at the specific kinds of
15 diagnostic targets that you... you have to know in
16 order to do the treatment protocols that the child
17 is likely to respond to. So to me it's more
18 important to know well what does that really mean
19 and what does it mean for that individual student
20 because it's not going to be just one thing... one
21 you know monolithic thing.

22 CM COHEN: I... I understand your answer
23 but I'm... like in some... you... you might do both, sort
24 of belt and suspenders. Do you think that there's

25

1 sort of a counterproductive element to maybe the
2 label? I just...

3
4 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: I... I think that when
5 you say learning disability should set off a lot of
6 bells and whistles to say let me look much more
7 diagnostically although we encourage everyone to
8 look diagnostically... teachers to look
9 diagnostically at every child who... who shows
10 struggle. But to me that is the key is that if you
11 have a term learning disorder, learning disability
12 it sets off... it should set off some kind of a
13 little alarm to say let's... let's dig a little bit
14 deeper in terms of diagnosing.

15 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: It's... it's
16 not a problem with having the term on an IEP. What
17 we want to get to is as clear a understanding of
18 what we need to do next as we possibly can. We
19 don't want to limit ourselves to a series of terms
20 that will actually drive us to less understanding.
21 We want to describe as clearly as we possibly can
22 what we can do to make sure students can learn
23 best.

24 CM COHEN: And again I'm totally asking
25 out of ignorance but I... I guess it's driving sort

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2 of a more individualized approach so that we'e not..
3 we're not just sticking a label on the problem and
4 sort of you get services.. you want to be.. [cross-
5 talk]

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Exactly.

7 CM COHEN: Okay I understand. I'm
8 curious about self contained classes versus ICTs.
9 What... what drive... what drives that? When is... when
10 appropriate and when the other appropriate and how
11 are those determinations made?

12 JASON BORGES: I... in terms of... you know
13 I... when a... when a student is referred for an ICT
14 class which could be 60 percent students without an
15 IEP and say 40 percent of students with an IEP you
16 know usually those are learning differences that
17 could be addressed within that setting. And we want
18 to be more inclusive as... as possible to have... to
19 have these kind of... you know learning environments
20 so to speak. But in... in relation to students who
21 are given you know self contained classes those
22 are... those are you know very complex learning
23 challenges that need to be addressed in that... in
24 that environment.

25

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1
2 CM COHEN: I... I'm just curious... in... in
3 terms of like... I mean obviously we all want the
4 best outcome...

5 JASON BORGES: Mm-hmm.

6 CM COHEN: And I guess you're trying to
7 strike a balance between sort of the... the social
8 element of being in school. I mean is a... can... is
9 there a circumstance where self... in terms of
10 getting kids to read better or to deal... and take on
11 the challenges is... is a self... are there benefits to
12 a self-contained class or... that might you know get
13 the results in terms of reading on grade level that
14 you're looking for or is... or being in ICT is that
15 better in terms of achieving the goal of... of
16 getting reading level?

17 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: And I think
18 the intensity report has to be based on the
19 intensity of need. And so we have different
20 settings for students so we can provide more
21 targeted, more intense service when needed but we
22 want our students to be in the least restrictive
23 environment possible whenever possible.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And... and just to
25 clarify there's federal law that says that students

1
2 are supposed to be placed in the least restrictive
3 environment so that's the decision that DOE makes
4 when they make these decisions whether to place a
5 child in a regular classroom or to segregate them
6 out.

7 CM COHEN: Yeah I'm just curious... that's
8 exactly I think what I'm trying to get to the heart
9 of is how is that balance struck or what are the
10 criteria you know in terms of learning disability
11 when... when someone would be in a... in a group
12 setting or versus an ICD setting?

13 JASON BORGES: The higher reading
14 levels... the... we want students to be educated where
15 they can be challenged the most and be successful.
16 And so the intensity of support, the focus of the
17 classroom, the smaller setting where... can help us
18 where we need to provide a more intense support
19 area. But our goal is to have everyone in as
20 diverse and has language rich environment as
21 possible in every setting, in every opportunity
22 that we can.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. And
24 now questions from Council Member Mark Treyger.

1
2 CM TREYGER: Thank you to Chair Dromm
3 and thank you Council Member Cohen for holding this
4 very important... critically important hearing. I
5 just have a quick question about the... the personnel
6 that are actually charged with the responsibility
7 to make sure that the needs are being met and
8 addressed and making sure that the people who are
9 conducting this... this diagnostic work are actually
10 trained and skilled in conducting the diagnostic
11 work. Can you speak to that? Can anyone speak to
12 that?

13 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Alright so... so... so
14 what we do is we have... so hopefully some of that
15 happens in preservice for designated teachers
16 because there are many different kinds of teachers
17 that serve the needs of students with learning
18 disabilities but we do have a very broad... very
19 broad base of topic including diagnostic...
20 diagnostic prescriptive set of assessment
21 protocols, plural protocols, as well as... because
22 you can't just assess and then know and then of
23 course you... you want to know what to do. So to go
24 with that treatment protocols, instructional
25 treatment. And so... so we have across many offices...

1 many offices including the ones represented here
2 today and mentioned in the testimony a huge amount
3 of professional development, very specifically
4 building teacher capacity in... in exactly what
5 you're asking about. Because assessment is a very
6 complex process and treatment for what you find in
7 the assessment meaning the diagnostic prescriptive
8 approach that would be the approach I would say
9 that we are using whether we use those terms all
10 the time or not that is for... for kids who struggle
11 that is the approach that we use.

13 CM COHEN: Now there was a report
14 recently that the education department continued
15 to... is continuing to basically outsource or hire
16 private companies to provide special education
17 intervention services. And my concern... and I'll
18 tell you my issue with this is that you know I went
19 to school to get my educator license. I went to
20 school to Brooklyn College to get my license to be
21 an administrator. And there are people who have to
22 follow government mandates to get credentialed to
23 work in the school system. And also it's your
24 licensing and years of experience that help dictate
25 you know your next steps and... and your rise in the

1
2 DOE. How do we know what credentials or what
3 expertise, what licenses these people have in these
4 private companies when they work with our children?
5 And rather than outsource those types of positions
6 why can't we do more in the DOE to hire additional
7 paraprofessionals, guidance counsellors, social
8 workers, support staff within the schools rather
9 than contract out with private companies?

10 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: So the goal
11 isn't to outsource. We ensuring that providers
12 when... when we don't have providers within our own
13 capacity but we do not want to... we do not outsource
14 where we do have the capacity.

15 CM COHEN: So the DOE is not hiring
16 outside companies to provide special education
17 intervention services?

18 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: In... in
19 shortage areas where we don't have providers on
20 staff.

21 CM COHEN: And why don't you have
22 providers on staff?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: For every
24 potential need that would arise.

CM COHEN: Well see my response is that you know the chancellor lifted the freeze on hiring staff I think over a year or two years ago. I think that there are many capable people who have gone through the diligent work of obtaining licensing credentials which the state mandates. And I think that we should be hiring within the DOE within our schools to provide additional support staff to meet the needs of... of kids. The last point I... I... I want to raise is that I think in extraordinary... in extraordinary amount of time goes into trying to diagnose you know student weaknesses. What do we do to make sure that we diagnose student strength and build a... you know really build an education plan or an IEP around that? Because you know a child might have an issue in one area but might be incredibly talented and gifted in another area. And this I saw from my own experience being a teacher. But too many times we just focus so much on... on one issue when we started the bigger picture. And so how are schools and educators encouraged to also identify student strengths and build curriculums and build lessons around that.

1
2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: And I think
3 you... you're identifying as a teacher what... what we
4 ask the bulk of our talented educators to do
5 through the city which is to make sure we meet the
6 students where they are, build on their strengths,
7 identify the areas where they could use our
8 support, make sure we provide that to them, and
9 move along as quickly as we can. You want to add to
10 that?

11 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Yeah. I'll... I'll just
12 add that you know part of the... so... the least
13 restrictive environment was mentioned before. And
14 so children have the greatest opportunity to show
15 their strengths when they are exposed to the
16 complete curriculum. And so absolutely they need a
17 focus on their weaknesses because we want to build
18 those up. You know if you go to the doctor you're
19 just looking at something specific. On the other
20 hand, in the... in the total comprehensive core
21 curriculum, I'm talking about the whole thing, not
22 just literacy there are many opportunities for
23 students to shine including in areas in which they
24 struggle because hopefully they're making progress
25 and that they are seeing it. But certainly in the

1 overall program there's an assumption, and it's a
2 strong assumption and it... it absolutely is... we have
3 evidence of it every day that even children who
4 struggle let's say with print might have excellent
5 comprehension as long as there are accommodations
6 made for the print... for the print challenges.

8 CM COHEN: I would just close... and this
9 is my last point chair and I thank you for your
10 time is that I... I did teach ICT. But one of my
11 concerns was that... and... and fortunately I worked in
12 a school where I was on my school's staff
13 development team where we actually... we... through an
14 SBO we actually made common time for common
15 planning which is a responsible thing to do. But I
16 hear from some educators that when you pair a
17 general ed teacher with a special education teacher
18 sometimes they don't have common time to plan
19 because you have two teachers in the classroom and
20 they need to have time to modify that instruction
21 to meet the needs of all kids and time is of... time
22 is... is a critical... is a... is a big issue. So I think
23 that when we visit schools I think we need to do
24 more than just ask about test scores and ask about
25 assessments how... how are schools structuring their

1 day to make sure that educators have time to work
2 together to collaborate and plan together as well.

3
4 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: And we... we
5 couldn't agree more which is why the first contract
6 we created built in more time for teachers to
7 collaborate with each other. We think it's
8 essential way for us to move our school system
9 forward.

10 CM COHEN: Alright thank you. Thank you
11 Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And now
13 we have questions from Council Member Mark Levine.

14 CM LEVINE: Thank you to both our
15 chairs, panels... wonderful to see you. Often it's
16 the parents who identify learning differences in
17 their children and parents can be amazingly
18 effective advocates for their children. But there's
19 a wide variation of just how involved and capable
20 parents are based on socioeconomic levels. A parent
21 is juggling multiple jobs, might not have the time
22 to vote... to advocating for their child. Sometimes
23 it's a full time job just to get an IEP for your
24 child and get them the appropriate services. I'm
25 wondering whether therefore you see a variation in

1
2 how frequently dyslexia is diagnosed in middle and
3 upper income neighborhoods in the city versus some
4 of the more low income areas. If you were to pair..
5 compare district two to district five for example
6 are they both at about seven percent, which is the
7 citywide average, or do you see a variation in
8 diagnosis?

9 JASON BORGES: I think we'll have to get
10 back to you with that. We don't have that
11 information.

12 CM LEVINE: I think it's a question
13 worth.. worth exploring and.. it.. it'll be a measure
14 of the extent to which our in-school diagnosis
15 systems are working. Ideally it would equalize
16 those. Certainly you see with other conditions like
17 autism, surprising variation in the rate of
18 diagnosis. It's unlikely that there is a medical
19 explanation for that so something worth exploring.
20 There are cases that.. in which a child's dyslexia
21 is so severe that we conclude the schools can't
22 adequately serve them. Is that correct? And in such
23 cases the child will be directed to a nonpublic
24 setting? Or does dyslexia not rise to that level in
25 any case?

2 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Yeah. So... so we... we
3 feel that if the print based disabilities are
4 addressed there's no reason why they cannot be
5 addressed in the standard school setting where the
6 child is also going to get the full benefit of the
7 curriculum because that's a very very important
8 thing. So when you think in terms of print based
9 disability it's not just something that you fix,
10 it's fixable, and absolutely must be you know...
11 child must be put on track as far as print. But
12 then there's all the other aspects of reading
13 including the information that you build from
14 content area from... from doing reading but also from
15 learning the things that are in the standard
16 curriculum which for us is driven by the common
17 core although it varies, you know little... looks a
18 little different school to school. So the... the risk
19 when you remove a child from a standard school
20 setting is that that is going to be a piece that's
21 lacking and... and so that the... what you start to
22 accumulate is a deficit of information in that
23 child.

24 CM LEVINE: No I'm... I'm not advocating
25 for removing more kids. I understand that if we can

1 serve them with their peers in... in their local
2 school or another public school setting that's
3 great for a number of reasons also financially it's
4 preferable. But the... but there are thousands of
5 kids from... it's been determined that the schools
6 can't adequately serve them. Maybe not specifically
7 for dyslexia but for other learning differences.
8 And in that case the DOE pays for them to receive
9 services in a private school or other non-public
10 setting. And I'm wondering whether in any case is
11 it's dyslexia which is the condition that... that
12 leads to a determination that the kid... the child
13 can't be served in the schools or whether dyslexia
14 just never rises to that level of severity.

16 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: I'm not
17 sure we have that specific information available.
18 Certainly any level... any disability that rises to
19 the level where we can't serve the student we do
20 find a provider.

21 CM LEVINE: Right. And... and I'll just
22 conclude by noting that here again I had a
23 suspension that there is differential rates between
24 upper income and lower income families because
25 it's... it is really tough often to advocate for your

1 child to get approval for service outside of the
2 public schools can be a fight often parents hire
3 lawyers, etcetera. And it would be unfortunate if
4 the result of that was that kids from lower income
5 backgrounds just weren't as likely to get those
6 kind of services outside of the public school
7 system. I'll conclude there. Thank you very much.

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you Council
11 Member Levine. I'm going to ask a few more
12 questions. So what type of assistive technology is
13 available for LD students? And I think that I saw
14 recently something and in the newspapers that I
15 think an extra million or so was allocated to
16 provide iPads or cellphones. Is that part of the
17 technology that's needed for students with
18 dyslexia? Can it be used to work with them?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Those
20 technologies can be used to assist students with
21 print based disabilities or dyslexia particularly
22 text to speech software where students have access
23 to... to the text allowed to them.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So do you... are you
spending expense dollars on providing schools with
assistive technology devices?

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: I don't... I
don't have that information readily available right
now.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay because there's
been an issue with using capital dollars for that
purpose. And you know I've spoken to the controller
about that. But it's my understanding that some
smart schools bond act money could be used for that
purpose and I would really encourage you to look
into that and to see what might be available to
students because I think those assistive learning
devices are really important to students with
dyslexia. I think that... some of the cases that I've
seen it... it's really worked well with them. How are
the social emotional needs of students with
dyslexia met? Sometimes students are bullied
because they can't read or other students pick up
on the fact that you know they're not quite getting
what they read right.

DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: We Are... you
raise a point that is applicable to every single

1 student in our school system. We want to make sure
2 that we... all of our students where they are and
3 support them however best they can be. We have 1.1
4 million individual young people each of whom we
5 want to honor them as who they are and make sure
6 they are in a safe learning environment where they
7 feel comfortable enough to learn. And Danny it's...
8 it's... doesn't matter what the... what the issue is.
9 It's... that... this applies for all 1.1 million of our
10 students.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How are we doing
13 with speech teachers and reading specialists in
14 terms of support for students and also in terms of
15 the numbers? When I was teaching it was always very
16 difficult to get speech teachers or speech
17 pathologists into the schools. Does that still
18 remain an issue?

19 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: So we've
20 launched a pilot to improve collaboration on
21 phonics with classroom teachers.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry?

23 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: There's a
24 pilot... do you guys know this more deeply than I?

25 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

2 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Please?

3 JASON BORGES: In terms of the... the
4 speech language pathologists?

5 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Yes.

6 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Did you want me to...

7 JASON BORGES: Yeah...

8 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Alright so... so I'll
9 just talk a little bit about it. So the Chancellor
10 historically has felt that the speech person is a
11 very critical person especially in early reading
12 acquisition and particularly with the linguistic
13 elements... you know the... the language and
14 specifically what that means is phonemic awareness
15 and phonics. So there is... so we... we do have a... a
16 launch. It's not new. It's... this has been going on
17 for I think about two... two years right? Two years
18 where speech teachers are trained in a very
19 specific Orton-Gillingham derived phonics program
20 including phonemic awareness elements. And then
21 they in turn support the early grades in their
22 respective schools. And this is an ongoing rollout.
23 So those speech teachers might go to a... a wills... a
24 foundations training, they come to recipe for
25 reading trainings. They... they kind of opt for the...

1 the approach that they like but they're all Orton-
2 Gillingham derived approaches and there are a
3 limited number of them. And that... that's working
4 very very positively and we are becoming an even
5 greater resource in their schools.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just to go back to
8 my question which was that it was difficult to
9 recruit speech teachers. There were periods of time
10 throughout my 25-year career where we couldn't get
11 a speech pathologist or a speech teacher into the
12 school just because they weren't out there or
13 whatever reason they might exist. Are we doing
14 better with that now? Do we have more teachers? Are
15 we meeting the needs of those students? You know my
16 colleague Council Member Cohen referred to the... the
17 report that recently came out, the reporting that
18 we required in legislation, about 60 percent versus
19 35 percent versus five percent of students getting
20 or not getting services. So I'm... I'm... I'm trying
21 to... to zoom in on how we're doing with speech
22 teachers particularly because of it's important as
23 you stated to get that disability looked at... at an
24 early age and... and it's part of the dyslexic
25 discussion as well.

1
2 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Yeah. So we still have
3 shortages in speech teachers but are taking steps
4 to address that so for example hiring fairs,
5 various incentives, and so on. So it's still a... a
6 shortage area but progressing.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Still a shortage.
8 And with this new program that the mayor's
9 instituting, universal second grade literacy. I
10 notice the terminology changed a little bit from
11 dedicated reading specialist to reading coach I
12 believe.

13 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Yeah.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: When I was teaching
15 the coach basically was responsible for
16 professional development of other teachers. Is that
17 how this position is being viewed now rather than a
18 specialist that would go into the classroom they're
19 going to be responsible to train the staff in any
20 given school?

21 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: So we are calling them
22 reading coaches. They're going to focus primarily
23 on the early grades K to 2 starting with a heavy
24 focus on grade 2 and then segwaying [phonetic] into
25 supportive K and 1 they're going to be supported

1 very intensively by training from central from my
2 office... broader offices and you know when you think
3 in terms of a reading specialist going into a
4 school over the course of the day they're taking
5 small groups the impact on the number of children
6 is more limited. When you think in terms of a
7 reading coach who's going to be trained to be a
8 real reading person specifically focusing on early
9 reading acquisition which is its own area and then
10 going in and training the teachers and building
11 their capacity... the numbers of kids that are
12 impacted is much greater obviously.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Will those reading
15 coaches be trained in Orton-Gillingham and Wilson?

16 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: They will be trained
17 in... in Orton-Gillingham Methodology. Here... here's
18 the thing they... they may not all be trained in the
19 same program because many schools have selected a
20 program and it's working well. And there are
21 probably scores maybe about between 45 and 50
22 perfectly good Orton-Gillingham derived programs.
23 So if schools have selected one and have history
24 with one that's the one that we want that coach to
25 know. Otherwise we have some that we will teach

1
2 that you know one or two that we would train them
3 in so that they have that option.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And this is going to
5 be in four districts? Am I right about that?

6 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: Just Cohort one which
7 starts July 1 is four districts. And in two in the
8 Bronx, two in Brooklyn, second year another 14 and
9 by the third year everybody, the last...

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And... and by 2026
11 we're expecting all students to be at level? Is
12 that the goal?

13 ESTHER FRIEDMAN: At the end of grade 2
14 at benchmark for the end of grade 2 yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you describe to
16 me the work that you're doing with Manhattanville
17 College to train teachers about how to help
18 dyslexic students?

19 JASON BORGES: Sure. So currently we
20 have Cohort 1, 25 teachers. There are seven
21 schools. So there is at least one... one school
22 present for each borough field support center. And
23 right now we have... depending on the school it could
24 be kindergarten and first grade teachers currently
25 being trained. And then in some cases first and

1 second grade teachers. And they've been receiving
2 not only course work once a week where they
3 actually come together, all 25 teachers from the...
4 the pilot. But they also receive twice a week
5 mentoring, on site coaching so to speak on the
6 methodology and implementation of it. And Then next
7 year we're going to be building that out. So each
8 school will have a Kindergarten through second
9 grade in the Spalding approach. And then they will
10 serve as lab sites in the following year... following
11 years.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well I'm... I'm going
14 to end here and just... I know Council Member Cohen
15 has a follow-up question. And I know that Deputy
16 Chancellor has to leave shortly so we want to
17 respect that as well.

18 CM COHEN: I'll be brief. I just... in
19 terms... when it is determined that DOE cannot
20 provide the... the services that a student needs do
21 we... do we track what happens to those kids? Where
22 they go... if... if...

23 JASON BORGES: Yes.

24 CM COHEN: But I guess...

25

1
2 JASON BORGES: Do you want to know how...
3 how their attainment relates to students who aren't
4 in the outside services? Is that...

5 CM COHEN: Well I... I'm curious as to
6 what kind of programs they go to. You know do we
7 know like... from... where they... in the... in the school,
8 the public school that they're currently in are
9 they generally in ICT programs or are they self-
10 contained classroom? Is there... is there any way to
11 determine where they come from and where they go to
12 so that we know what the barriers are to providing
13 the services that they need?

14 JASON BORGES: So we... I think there's an
15 evaluation process where I don't think we aggregate
16 the information you're talking about but we do have
17 every single student where they came from where...
18 what services they receive, why they would need to
19 receive the services out of a school and then their
20 progress over time.

21 CM COHEN: I... I guess what I'm really
22 just interested in... in knowing is what the best
23 model is to serve these children. And maybe there
24 is no best model. Maybe it really is on a case by
25 case basis but like you know I... you know I know

1 from my... my own family's experience you know I had
2 a relative who went to a... you know a school that
3 was for children with learning disabilities and
4 they thrived there but they were in a... you know in
5 a setting where everybody else... you know all the
6 students there have... and so I... I'm just kind of
7 curious about how...

9 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: And I think
10 you're asking a smart question. I... I think if... if
11 we had a certain answer for you we would get it. I
12 do think it isn't that we know what the exact best
13 model is if... if we can serve people in a public
14 school we do believe that's the best model. But if
15 not we want to make sure that whatever that student
16 needs based on the individual needs is met as best
17 as we possibly can. It isn't something we want to
18 do to have people outside the public school system.
19 We think that our schools are wonderful places, we
20 want to make sure we serve every student.

21 CM COHEN: I mean frankly I think we all
22 believe... ideally there would be a home for every
23 student in New York City who wanted it in the
24 public schools.

25 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Correct.

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1
2 CM COHEN: And so I'm just kind of
3 curious as to you know if we knew where they were
4 going and what was working there maybe we could
5 replicate it. Thank you very much.

6 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So thank you. Just
8 before we let you go I don't know if I asked
9 specifically but do we have a number of LD.. the
10 number of LD students in the system?

11 JASON BORGES: Yes we do. Students
12 currently classified as learning disabled is
13 76,389.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But we do not know
15 how many of those have dyslexia?

16 JASON BORGES: No.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No, okay. Okay.
18 Alright well I want to thank you for coming in. And
19 we appreciate your time and we look forward to
20 continuing this discussion with you as we move down
21 the road. Thank you very much.

22 DEPUTY CHANCELLOR WEINBERG: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So we're going to
24 switch gears a little bit here now folks because we
25 have students who I do want to hear from so that..

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1 that they can give testimony on Reso 375. So our
2 next panel... Our next panel is Kazi Altaha from
3 Global Kids, Sampson Balligan from Global Kids,
4 Ises Bialo I think... I'm sorry if I'm mispronouncing
5 your names. And Maria Simchuck from Global Kids.
6 And we're going to use the clock on this; two
7 minutes each. Yeah. I want to say we've been joined
8 by Assembly Woman Jo Anne Simon from Brooklyn.
9 Thank you for being here. And since Mark Treyger
10 got a plug in for his Alma Mater I want to get a
11 plug in for mine. We've also been joined by Dean
12 Driscoll from the City College... Dean of the City
13 College Department of Education. Thank you for
14 joining us also. Alright. And would you guys raise
15 your hands please. I need swear you in or affirm
16 you in. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the
17 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
18 so help you... and... and to answer council member
19 questions honestly?

20 [combined affirmations]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay very good. So
22 let's start over here with this... with this woman
23 over here.
24

2 KAZI ALTAHA: My name is Kazi Altaha.
3 I'm a Senior at the High School for Medical
4 Professions in Canarsie. So I just want to say that
5 if the life of the earth was condensed into a
6 simple 24 hours people have only been around for a
7 mere three seconds. In these three seconds look at
8 all the damage that has been done. The earth is
9 changing rapidly due to humans. Not only is
10 everyone affected by it but those who are least
11 responsible for these rapid climate changes are the
12 ones that... to be most affected by them. Human...
13 human induced climate change disproportionately
14 affects low-lying coastal and minority communities
15 all over the world. While the group of people who
16 will face the worse affects are the... they are also
17 the population of what is happening in the
18 atmosphere around them. We, the youth, are the most
19 susceptible to the effects of climate change but
20 many of us do not know what is in store for us. The
21 education youth receive in their schools does not
22 fulfill the necessities to survive as they are not
23 learning about climate change. There is no possible
24 way to get a job done if you don't know anything
25 about it. In order to affect change one must be

1 educated on the topic. We, the Human Rights
2 Activist Project of Global Kids are fighting for
3 our right to climate change education. Our earth is
4 our right and our responsibility. Because we are
5 the future leaders and caretakers we must learn
6 about the mistakes of past generations to ensure
7 the same does not continue to happen. We need the
8 leaders of today to make decisions with caution and
9 make sure to take the lives of the youth into
10 consideration. We are here today to fight for our
11 right that we should not ask for. We stand here
12 today representing the youth of New York City and
13 state when we say that we need, we want, and we
14 deserve climate change education.
15

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Just finish up.

17 KAZI ALTAHA: This is only attainable if
18 you know... if you show your support and help to pass
19 resolution 375 to mandate climate change education
20 in New York state schools.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next
22 please.

23 SAMPSON BALLIGAN: My name is Sampson
24 Balligan. I'm 18 years old and I'm a youth
25 activist. I'm a senior at Curtis High School on

1 Staten Island and a Global Kids Leader. For the
2 past few years we have been working to mandate
3 climate education from grades K through 12. Before
4 I joined campaign I didn't know much about climate
5 change or how it affected me directly. It wasn't
6 until a close friend explained to me its importance
7 in... it's importance that I actually started
8 thinking about... about it through a different lens.
9 When I joined this campaign I realized how many
10 people are affected by climate change and the
11 people being affected aren't the people who caused
12 it. I haven't learned much about climate change in
13 school and I know that the same goes for thousands
14 of other kids in New York City and the rest of New
15 York state. Kids are not being taught about
16 something that is affecting and will continue to
17 affect them for the rest of their lives. This is
18 why we need climate change edu... climate change
19 education in all New York City public schools
20 grades K through 12. Please pass... please pass
21 resolution 0375 and help us bring climate education
22 to New York students.
23

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

25 Next, please.

1 ISES BIALO: My name is Ises Bialo I'm
2 from the... I'm a senior at the James Boulder School.
3 I think people should care about climate change
4 because they impact the whole world. Climate change
5 hurts human, animals, and everything we love. Human
6 are causing climate change. We can see climate
7 change is happening now because we have more and
8 worse flooding, higher temperature, and the sea
9 level are rising... sea levels are rising. Climate
10 change education will help citizen and future
11 generation be more aware and learn how to take care
12 of our planet properly. I'm satisfied with the
13 climate change education I'm getting in my career
14 and at school. Last semester my class and I had
15 done a climate change research and others will find
16 out how urban community like New York City can be
17 climate resilient. Because of this class we have
18 learn... We... we have learned certain solution we
19 might try and teach our future generation on how to
20 reduce climate change. Other schools should be
21 doing the same. So I ask you please pass Resolution
22 375. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
25 Next please.

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[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Is that mic on?

Yeah.

MARIA SIMCHUCK: Yeah, okay. My name is Maria Simchuck and I am part of Global Kids... and I'm a Freshman at Notre Dame. Everywhere around us we see climate disasters such as... hurricanes, tsunami, and rising sea levels. And what do we do about it? We blame nature for everything because that's what we think is the truth. But the truth is we're the only ones responsible for this. Every day we destroy more and more things such as forests and grasslands which helps to preserve the ozone layer. The ozone layer protects us from radiation and if it weren't there we would extinct ourselves from existence. 2014 was the hottest year ever recorded globally and now 2015 is on track to break that record. In 2016 we'll most likely brake that record as well. Still think it's just a coincidence? Well accordant to NOA globally the ten warmest years on record all occurred since 1998. You have to understand that if we let it go too far our days may be numbered. Maybe some of you say that it won't happen anytime soon so you will not be

1 affected but think about your future generations
2 that will have to face the consequence of this
3 issue. And this is the reason why we have to fight
4 against climate change. Global warming is like a
5 parasite and we are the only ones who can get rid
6 of it and who can protect and heal this world. Yet
7 before we can do anything we must educate ourselves
8 and our peers on this dilemma. Therefore, my fellow
9 colleagues are trying to mandate resolution 375 in
10 support of climate education. Climate education
11 will help students to increase their knowledge of
12 what is happening globally around them into a
13 working passion to become future leaders and take
14 action against global warming.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you very
17 much and I want to thank this panel for coming in.
18 I think it's so silly that some people try to deny
19 climate change. And your testimony here today
20 proves the need for it. And your advocacy on behalf
21 of the resolution is very much appreciated and will
22 be very valuable to the earth moving forward. Happy
23 Earth Day on Friday and thank you for coming in.
24 Okay our next panel Annie Willis from Global Kids.
25 Is it Lucmama [phonetic]... I can't read it I'm

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1
2 sorry.. Maslam [phonetic]? Oh thank you, okay I'm
3 sorry.. I really.. I... I'm so.. I don't like to do
4 that. Digna Rozalaz, okay, and Briana Johnson from
5 Global Kids. Okay I need to swear you all in. So if
6 you would raise your right hand. Do you solemnly
7 swear or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
8 and nothing but the truth and to answer council
9 member questions honestly? Okay. We want to start
10 over here this time okay? Yep.

11 ANNIE WILLIS: Hello, my name is Annie
12 Willis. I'm..

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Pull it a little
14 closer to you.

15 ANNIE WILLIS: Oh, sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: There you..

17 ANNIE WILLIS: Okay. Can you hear me?
18 Can you hear me? Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No the red light
20 should be on.

21 ANNIE WILLIS: Yeah it is.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay good, now I
23 can.

24 ANNIE WILLIS: I'm currently a student
25 at Bernard Baruch College. Go CUNY! I am a native

1 New Yorker but not only that I'm native FarRockian
2 [phonetic], so I'm from Far Rockaway. As you're all
3 aware of Sandy happened in 2012. I lost my house
4 due to Hurricane Sandy. I lived in that house for
5 16 years... so my whole life. So climate change has a
6 very important impact in my life, personally. We
7 might... we might not all agree about the factors of
8 climate change but we could all agree that it is in
9 fact happening and it is real. It is important to
10 know why storms are getting stronger and stronger
11 each year. You have the responsibility to the next
12 generation to take a positive step and be role
13 models and teach our children the effects of
14 climate change and what is going to happen in the
15 future so they could also be prepared. Climate
16 change impacts minorities and low income families
17 mostly. And we have a responsibility to acknowledge
18 that and... also. I'm proud to say that I am a alum
19 from New York City public school and... So for my
20 whole high school career I devoted my time and
21 along with all the other global kids for resolution
22 375. I fear that our students won't have the
23 important tools to make a change in this world. We
24 are too focused on test scores and not on
25

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1 humanitarian rights and natural rights. Let us be
2 an example of a progressive city and let us start
3 with our curriculum and teach the youth the tools
4 they need to pass on. I aspire to be in your shoes
5 one day and by then I hope that young people don't
6 have to worry about our mistakes. Let us be an
7 example and start with our curriculum and pass
8 Resolution 375. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

11 Next, please.

12 UMAMI MASUME: Good afternoon my name's
13 Umama Masume and I'm a Junior at Curtis High School
14 on Staten Island. The public school system is an
15 establishment in which students are taught the
16 skills needed to advance themselves for the future.
17 However, we are not given a curriculum for climate
18 change education. With the sea levels rising and
19 99.5 percent of scientists confirming that rapid
20 change in the climate is due to human activity
21 there is enough evidence that tells us this global
22 phenomenon needs intervention. Climate change will
23 inevitably destroy human livelihood. Our generation
24 is a... disproportionately at risk and yet many of
25 the youth are unaware of the consequences of our

2 ancestors' mistakes. Unless you are equipped with
3 the knowledge needed to defend our earth we will
4 be... we will be hit helplessly with the... with the...
5 with a... with a deteriorating earth. As a student of
6 the New York City public school system my entire
7 life I urge this council of New York City to pass
8 resolution 0375 which mandates climate change
9 education in New York City public schools because
10 it will pave the way for our generation to take
11 charge of our future. We will be able to understand
12 the dynamics of climate change and use the tools
13 provided by the schools to fight for a better earth
14 for us and generations to come. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next,
16 please.

17 DIGNA ROZALAZ: Good afternoon. My name
18 is Digna Rozalaz. I am a current student at the
19 High School for Medical Professions. I stand before
20 you today to express a sincere concern for the
21 planet we live on. It is undeniable that climate
22 change has a direct impact on the people that are
23 in this room. The severe disasters that have been
24 caused by climate change will only produce more
25 danger for our neighbors, our peers, our friends,

1 and our family. It is our responsibility as human
2 beings who are conscious of our actions to allow
3 and support students to be knowledgeable of their
4 detrimental effects that the... that will leave our
5 planet lifeless. It is our responsibility to
6 protect our home efficiently... Do... so it is
7 important... To do so it is important to understand
8 the root of the problem to educate ourselves and
9 our peers not only outside of the classroom but
10 within it. Three years ago my peers embarked on a
11 journey that has brought us all here. We are here
12 because we understand an endeavor of this caliber
13 would demand commitment and consistency. We have
14 demonstrated that and much more allowing for
15 climate education in classrooms will provide
16 students the resources within their schools to
17 understand a very pressing issue in their
18 communities and abroad. It is essential to
19 understand climate change and its affects, the
20 extreme weather patterns are responsible for the
21 economic downfall in many countries. As a first
22 generation citizen of the united states I have the
23 privilege of not having to question where my next
24 meal will come from. As native Hondurans my parents
25

2 and several other impoverished families depend on
3 crops that will grant them nutrition and stable
4 income. These families are left to live in poverty
5 as a result of climate change due to the
6 uncertainty of crop growth. As a developed nation
7 producing the most carbon emissions per capita is
8 inexcusable. As the citizens of the United States,
9 as New Yorkers we must set an example and educate
10 students. Then... we be closer in achieving a green
11 and sustainable future for ourselves and following
12 generations.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
14 Next please.

15 BRIANA JOHNSON: Hi, my name's Briana
16 Johnson. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle passes through my
17 head as I... as I toss the next piece of plastic to
18 the ground. Just a passing thought that had no
19 significant meaning to me as I held the hand of my
20 ninth grade peers who lost their homes, who were
21 stranded, who had no power, who had no voice. My
22 eyes cried tears as I experienced what they
23 experienced vividly yet I still tossed the next
24 plastic wrapper to the ground. The irony right? I
25 mean here I was consoling my friends for what they

1 lost due to Superstorm Sandy yet here I was
2 contributing to its cause. It's not like my wrapper
3 would do any harm right? Wrong. That little wrapper
4 was a little footprint that added up to a huge
5 footprint yet of course I was blind to this because
6 in my little bubble my actions didn't matter, my
7 actions didn't have an effect. Now fast forward two
8 years to when I joined Global Kids Human Rights
9 Activist Project and was introduced to what climate
10 change is can you imagine my shock and the guilt
11 that I felt in the pit in my stomach. For two years
12 that one little wrapper contributed to something
13 that is bigger than me, something that is bigger
14 than us as we all sit here today. Had I known back
15 then the catastrophic effect of my... of my actions
16 don't you think I would have been more cautious,
17 more attentive to our one and only earth. As youth
18 we deserve the right to use our voice and advocate
19 for what we believe in. But as human beings we
20 deserve the right to a home and a right to feel
21 safe and secure. That right backed by the Universal
22 Declaration of Human Rights is threatened daily due
23 to the... due to the destruction climate change
24 brings. It's time we begin educating one another on
25

1
2 what's really going on and what we can do. Millions
3 of people like myself have no clue the damage and
4 the destruction their actions can cause. However
5 now that I have received proper climate education
6 through Global Kids I now know the importance of my
7 actions thus I advocate. However, I cannot flip the
8 switch by myself. In order to have a massive effect
9 on climate change people must first be well
10 educated. Once educated we can then and only then
11 fight to save what's been destroyed. That's why I'm
12 here today, to ask you to do your part, help us
13 bring climate education to all New York students.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
15 Council Member Rosenthal has a question.

16 CM ROSENTHAL: Thank you so much for
17 testifying today. Annie Willis you said something..
18 I just want to make sure I heard you right. Did you
19 say that you were talking to us now but that you
20 hope... that you planned someday to be sitting here?

21 ANNIE WILLIS: I do.

22 CM ROSENTHAL: Could you repeat that
23 again?

24

25

1
2 ANNIE WILLIS: So right now I'm Baruch
3 and I'm studying public affairs because one day I'm
4 going to run for office.

5 CM ROSENTHAL: Mm-hmm.

6 ANNIE WILLIS: And I always believe that
7 it's like important to give back to your community.
8 I love New York and I want to see what's best for
9 New York so it just makes sense for me to run for
10 office.

11 CM ROSENTHAL: Mm-hmm. So I just wanted
12 to validate that for you. It does make sense for
13 you to run for office. And I would urge you to
14 reach out to my office anytime. You can find me at
15 Helen Rosenthal dot com and we can then talk
16 offline about your interest in running. I'd like to
17 help you. [cross-talk] For sure. And that goes for
18 any of the young women who testified today who
19 really like... had I been as good as what you just
20 did I might have had this job 20 years ago. So
21 thank you very much for your testimony.

22 ANNIE WILLIS: Thank you. Wow.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
24 Council Member Rosenthal. And I would not want to
25 be the council member in the district in which you

1 live. So I'm so... I think you said Far Rockaway
2 right? Uh-oh. We'll figure that out later. But also
3 thank you all for your personal stories and for the
4 impact that climate change has had on your own
5 lives. That's very important for us to hear. Thank
6 you very much for coming in. Okay and I'm going to
7 call this which I think it may be the last panel on
8 this topic. But if... if you... if I don't call you and
9 you're going to speak on 375 let me know so that I
10 can be sure to call you. This panel will be Kate
11 Share, Yasmine Hussain, Carolyn Pilanco, and
12 Victoria Barrett. Now is there anybody else who
13 wants to speak on Intro... on Reso 375? Seeing none
14 this will be our last panel but of course if
15 anybody comes in later and they still want to speak
16 they can just by signing up at the Sergeant at
17 Arms. So I'm going to ask this panel to raise your
18 right hand. And do you solemnly swear or affirm to
19 tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but
20 the truth and to answer council member questions
21 honestly? Okay let's start over here this time.

23 VICTORIA BARRETT: My name is Victoria
24 Barrett. I attend the Notre Dame School of
25 Manhattan in the Meat Packing District. I'm a 17-

1 year-old social activist, climate activist, and a
2 proponent for human rights. Before I jump in on my
3 testimony I just want you to know I've been working
4 on this campaign since my Freshman year of high
5 school and I got to sit in a room in Global Kids
6 with my peers and decide that we want more
7 education. So I've been thinking about the future
8 of my generation and... of my... of this earth since my
9 freshman year of high school. I've been fighting at
10 the forefront of this movement against the global
11 climate crisis and it's been one of the best
12 experiences of my entire life. So right now in my
13 climate work I'm suing the US Government for
14 failing to protect my right to life, liberty, and
15 property by perpetuating the global climate crisis.
16 I went to Paris in COP21 and I got to see my future
17 being negotiated for by the world leaders. I've
18 been Iceland Energy... renewable energy haven and I
19 got to give a key note on youth engagement. The
20 things I've seen on this trip have given me... on
21 these trips and experiences have given me a new
22 outlook for a New York City. My experiences and any
23 success that I've had come back to this moment
24 testifying before you. It all starts with campaign
25

1 to... climate education and it all starts with the
2 organization of global kids. It's matured me and
3 it's given me a view for the world that will always
4 prove vital. I want to know how long youth will
5 have to ask adults what to do about our future. We
6 need more students at the forefront of this
7 movement because our generation is the one that'll
8 be most impacted. We need more youth to force the
9 change we need but how can students lead a movement
10 that they don't... when they don't understand what
11 they're fighting against. I'm asking you to please
12 take into consideration not only your constituents
13 but also the future of New York City and the future
14 of my generation. I ask you today to pass
15 resolution 0375 and advocate for climate change
16 education so that every New Yorker is ready to face
17 and fight for a more sustainable future.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
20 Next please.

21 YASMINE HUSSAIN: My name is Yasmine
22 Hussain and I'm a New York City public high school
23 senior and a young leader in Global Kids. I
24 personally care about climate change due to the
25 fact that I go to a school in a minority and low

1 income neighborhood. And these have been prove..
2 these neighborhoods have been proven to be more
3 affected by climate change than other
4 neighborhoods. Due to many reasons but specifically
5 to the lack of green areas and to the packing of
6 buildings upon one another which creates insulating
7 layer which traps heat. I also care about climate
8 change because I have witnessed many of my friends
9 being affected greatly by Sandy. Some lost their
10 homes, their jobs. And I watched as individuals
11 lost their family members due to heat strokes in
12 the summer. The fact that my children may not... may
13 only know about polar bears through books is truly
14 devastating and the fact that we're doing nothing
15 to stop it is even more disappointing. The only
16 reason I know that climate change exists is through
17 Global Kids which is an organization that has
18 helped many countless students to know about
19 climate change and to know about their environment.
20 And throughout my many years of education in
21 elementary, middle school, and high school I have
22 never been taught about climate change in depth.
23 It's always been a sub-topic to talk about in a
24 period or two during the whole year. Sadly, many
25

1 students don't even know that climate change
2 exists. They believe it's an irrelevant topic. And
3 they're ignorant to the fact that New York City is
4 one of the cities that is predicted to be under
5 water in the future due to rising sea levels.
6 Students must understand what climate change is and
7 how it affects their lives. Because injustices do
8 not only occur on social and economic levels but
9 they occur most gravely on environmental levels. We
10 could only fight an injustice when we know it's
11 happening to begin with. And that is what we must
12 give the students of New York; knowledge, the
13 knowledge they need to protect their environments.
14 This is why climate education must be implemented
15 in schools from grade K to 12.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
18 Next please.

19 CAROLYN PILANCO: Hello, I'm Carolyn
20 Pilanco, a freshman at... at the Bronx High School
21 for the Visual Arts, a New York City resident and a
22 committed Global Kid student activist. As a student
23 at the New York City Department of Education I
24 believe that I have a say in what we learn in our
25 schools. As somewhat unfortunately not all of you

1 know climate change is real. It is a very powerful
2 and important reality that despite people falsely
3 claiming its nonexistence can make or break our
4 future. Schools should teach about climate change
5 because it is all about our future, the future of
6 youth. Schools are for educating children and young
7 people. The point of giving a child an education
8 and knowledge is so that they know what is coming
9 for them in the future. The people in charge of
10 giving us this knowledge are educators. As it
11 stands now climate change is a huge threat to all
12 of our futures. So how come these educators are
13 doing little to nothing to make us, their future,
14 to see that climate change destroys lives. I
15 understand that there are things that teachers must
16 prioritize but climate change should be one of the
17 things that is prioritized. Climate change may seem
18 boring and like a waste of time to some young
19 people but this is because they're not taught how
20 much it impacts their lives. If they could see what
21 climate change can do to the world they live in
22 addressing it would be their top priority. So the
23 least that you, the New York City Council, can do
24 is make learning about climate change a priority in
25

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1 New York City schools. The absolute least that
2 should be done about this very very serious problem
3 is make it an elective for schools to offer to
4 students. Climate change causes devastating issues
5 worldwide such as rising water levels and droughts.
6 Eventually rising water levels will emerge small
7 islands that are homes to thousands of people. This
8 is just one of the many repercussions that climate
9 change can have on the world.. on the whole world if
10 left unattended. More than 70 percent of the earth
11 is covered in water already and if we add to that
12 melting ice caps due to global warming it could
13 cause many small but well-loved countries to
14 disappear. This would displace their people and
15 cause great cities like ours to flood. For these
16 reasons I implore you to help us by mandating
17 climate change education in New York schools by
18 passing resolution 375 and eventually help spread
19 this movement worldwide.
20

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you again. And
22 next please.

23 KATE SHARE: Hello, my name is Kate
24 Share, I'm 16 years old and I live in Sunnyside
25 Queens. I attend the Notre Dame School of Manhattan

1 and today I'm honored and excited to discuss the
2 importance of mandating climate education in New
3 York City public schools. You might ask why
4 students would spend this much time on an issue
5 like climate change. We are driven by the fact that
6 our generation will be disproportionately affected
7 by climate change. Over one million New York City
8 public school students will witness rising sea
9 levels and extreme weather events in their
10 lifetimes. We will be the ones to see the world
11 change for the worse. If we're the ones to face
12 these things should we be informed. New York City
13 is already facing these issues as seen in the
14 destructive effects of superstorm Sandy. It has
15 been scientifically proven that climate change has
16 worsened storms such as Sandy. Aside from extreme
17 weather events climate change is bringing rising
18 sea levels as well. It easy to forget that
19 Manhattan is an Island but islands all over the
20 world such as the Maldives will be underwater by
21 2100. Manhattan may not be as grave an example but
22 is projected that in the next 75 years surrounding
23 waters will rise six feet. This may not sound like
24 much but it puts all of New York City at risk. My
25

1 school is less than a mile away from the Hudson
2 River and where I live in Queens is only two miles
3 away from the East River. I do not want to see my
4 city damaged beyond repair. Climate change will
5 only worsen if we do not take action. To its credit
6 New York City has been working on these issues.
7 Mayor de Blasio's 80 by 50 is a great step forward
8 but it is not enough for our city. These
9 initiatives cannot be sustained if New York City
10 children do not know what climate change is.
11 According to statistic found by the New York Times
12 the average teacher only spends two hours out of
13 the entire school year talking about climate
14 change. I believe education will be key to
15 preventing the worsening of climate change. It will
16 open a dialogue up between students and inspire
17 them to take action and develop solutions. If we
18 are the ones that have to face climate change then
19 we must be the ones to find solutions.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
22 We don't have a slip from you but you... you can
23 testify. Just say your name and what I'd like you
24 to ask you... and what I'd like to ask you to do is
25 to fill out a slip after you give your testimony.

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1
2 CHIN-A PANACOMMITTEE CLERKIONE: Okay
3 thank you very much. So I am a Social Studies
4 Teacher at Humanities Preparatory academy. I'm also
5 the Sustainability Coordinator there... [cross-talk]

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And your name?

7 CHIN-A PANACOMMITTEE CLERKIONE: Sorry,
8 Chin-A Panaccione. And before that I worked
9 actually for Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon's
10 predecessor Joan Millman. So while I... one of the
11 reasons I decided to be a teacher is because I was
12 really really concerned about what was going on in
13 the world and the environment. And I want to say
14 that I've been teaching for nine years and I teach
15 a class called big history and we cover 13.7
16 billion years of history in an interdisciplinary
17 way from like the beginning of the universe to the
18 future. And there's a crisis going on. And I feel
19 it's super important that the students and their
20 parents understand what's going on in the world,
21 why there's lead in the drinking water which has to
22 do with climate change, why... every California has a
23 severe drought, why we have these erratic weather
24 patterns that are causing terrible terrible human
25 made disasters like Superstorm Sandy and once again

1
2 I stress is a human made disaster as well as
3 Katrina. So I feel that our kids in this room, most
4 amazing people that I've ever worked with, the best
5 job I've ever had in my life. They deserve to have a
6 very very bright and sustainable future. And one of
7 the other things that's important is that kids have
8 to understand you do have a future. If you learn
9 about alternative energy, about the fact that we
10 don't need to depend on fossil fuels, that we can
11 do lots of innovative things to stop and also start
12 a new paradigm where we have zero carbon emissions
13 in the way we live and our transportation that
14 would be the best thing not only for our children
15 but also for our planet. I mean let's not forget
16 we're going through massive extinction of different
17 plant and animal species through the world as well
18 as all the terrible human events that these
19 children have talked about. So Shawn Dewey said
20 that education is a preparation for living. And I
21 feel this is the perfect education that students
22 need in New York City and around the world.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay. Thank you very
24 much. I'm very impressed by the level of dialogue
25 that went on here. Everybody was truly prepared and

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1
2 your written statements as well as your testimony
3 has been very positive and significant. So thank
4 you for coming in. What we're going to now is call
5 the vote on this resolution. And just to explain to
6 all the young people who are here the vote will be
7 taken here in this committee today and then it will
8 go the floor of the city council tomorrow to be
9 voted on by the whole council. So we'll pass it... I
10 think we'll pass it here out of committee today.
11 And then we'll have to wait until tomorrow for the
12 whole council to pass the resolution. So thank you
13 to the panel and we're going to say you know you
14 can leave your seats now. And then I'm going to ask
15 Billy to call the vote.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: William Martin,
17 Committee Clerk. Role call vote Committee on
18 Education; Resolution 375. Chair Dromm.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I vote aye.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Chin.

21 CM CHIN: I just want to thank all the
22 student leaders for being here today to testify and
23 I proudly vote aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Levin.
25

1
2 CM LEVIN: I too want to congratulate
3 all of the students that came out to testify. I was
4 very inspired by your testimony and inspired by
5 your activism in coming out here and being leaders
6 of your generation. We greatly appreciate that and
7 with that I proudly vote aye. Thanks.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Rose.

9 CM ROSE: While I missed your
10 presentation I know a lot about Global Kids. And
11 Global Kids rock and I vote yes. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Barron.

13 CM BARRON: Just want to say having been
14 a former teacher and former assistant principal and
15 former principal my hopes and aspirations for our
16 young people are reaffirmed by what I've seen and
17 heard here today and I vote aye.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Deutsch.

19 CM DEUTSCH: Yes. Thank you all for
20 coming out.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Kallos.

22 CM KALLOS: Thank you to the students
23 for coming out today. As you can see you can change
24 the world provided you have a council member like
25

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Costa Constantinides to carry your resolution. He
is great. You are all great. I vote aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Levine.

CM LEVINE: And I too proudly vote aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Maisel.

CM MAISEL: [off mic] Yes.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Rosenthal.

CM ROSENTHAL: I... and if can explain my
vote?

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes you may.

CM ROSENTHAL: I already tweeted about
you Annie so you might want to retweet. Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Treyger.

CM TREYGER: Aye.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: A vote of 11 in
the affirmative, zero in the negative, and no
abstentions resolution has been adopted by the
commission.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay.

Congratulations to Global Kids for moving this
resolution. We hope to see you again tomorrow. Let
me remind everybody that today is presidential
primary day and I hope that if you are old enough
you are registered to vote. I want to thank Council

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1
2 Member Kallos and Council Member Rosenthal as well
3 as the other members of the city council for the
4 work that they have done in terms of helping to
5 register our young people to vote. It's been a
6 tremendous success. And with that let me call up
7 our next panel. Our next panelist that is
8 Assemblywoman Joann Simon from the 52nd AD in
9 Brooklyn. Congratulations also to Council Member
10 Constantinides. Council Member Simon we do swear
11 everybody in in this committee so I just wanted you
12 to be aware of that. Can I ask you to raise your
13 right hand. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell
14 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
15 truth and to answer council member questions
16 honestly.

17 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And would
19 you proceed?

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Thank you very
21 much. Thank you for this opportunity to testify
22 before you today and for the committee's interest
23 in passing resolution 1027. The council's interest
24 in dyslexia is greatly appreciated. As I often say
25 we are not just teaching enough of our students to

1 read accurately and fluently and our persistent
2 dropout rates reflect that. So it's critically
3 important that the council focuses on this issue
4 because if we're going to move forward we need to
5 move forward together. I will begin my testimony
6 where my journey in truly understanding dyslexia
7 began with the case of Bartlett versus the New York
8 State Board of Law Examiners, a lawsuit I filed in
9 1993 and which finally resolved in 2002 so that was
10 nine years of litigation including a trip to the
11 Supreme Court all about dyslexia. And I'm going to
12 start by reading a little bit from the New York
13 Times article that was done in 2009 to give you the
14 flavor of the real life experience of what we were
15 dealing with. The woman sitting in the witness box
16 was presented with a printed page and asked to read
17 it aloud. She used two hands and her lips... one
18 index finger tracked the words left to right across
19 the page and the other moved down the lines from
20 top to bottom. She mouthed the words to herself
21 before speaking them. She read the word indicted as
22 indicated. The judge Sonia Sotomayor glanced at the
23 clock. It was 11:13. At the end she had a question
24 for the witness Marilyn Bartlett. "What did you
25

1 just read?" "I haven't got a clue." Doctor Bartlett
2 replied. "Neither have I." The judge said. Although
3 the passage was just 426 words it had taken Doctor
4 Bartlett, then a professor of New York... at New York
5 Institute of Technology with a doctorate in
6 education, a law degree, and a verbal IQ in the
7 superior range 11 minutes to read it. The sentences
8 so excruciatingly drawn out that nobody could
9 remember their meaning. That says so much about
10 what is going on for our kids. Fortunately,
11 although the experience was truly excruciating and
12 mortifying for... for Doctor Bartlett because of that
13 demonstration and truly expert testimony Judge
14 Sotomayor wrote in her opinion two statements that
15 I believe capture the essence of the dyslexia
16 experience and why we are here today to ensure that
17 the law's protections are met. First she noted that
18 the board... this is the Board of Law Examiners,
19 wants the comfort of a test score to measure this
20 complex process but as she said a learning
21 disability is not measurable in the same way as a
22 blood disease can be measured in a serum test. Our
23 schools need to be better able to identify children
24 with dyslexia by their challenges as well as by
25

1 test scores, certainly not only by test scores. A
2 child who hides at reading time is hiding for a
3 reason. In a recent national survey 92.5 percent of
4 respondents indicated that their child's LD and
5 dyslexia was identified by an outside professional,
6 not by the school system. And as you know that's
7 only going to cost a lot of money and so many
8 parents don't have the resources to do that. They
9 should be identified within the school. Second, the
10 other thing that Justice Sotomayor wrote, and
11 particularly this is addresses how a woman with a
12 master's, a PHD, and a law degree be disabled in
13 reading when she wrote from those of us for whom
14 words sing sentences paint pictures and paragraphs
15 create panoramic views of the world the inability
16 to identify and process words with ease would be
17 crippling. I believe that we need to understand
18 that dyslexia is real. It's not poor intellect,
19 it's not laziness, it's not a crutch, and it can be
20 very painful. My bill 4th A, 4330A has been... is now
21 before the Education Committee in the State
22 Assembly and also before the state Senate. And the
23 reason for this bill is two-fold. First, for too
24 long school districts throughout the state have
25

1 instructed schools that they should not use the
2 word dyslexia in an IEP but to only use the federal
3 classification of learning disability. This of
4 course makes little sense when you consider the
5 fact that for the other 12 classifications under
6 the IDEA there is no prohibition about using the
7 actual etiology. That would say that somebody who
8 has a blindness... who is blind for one reason you
9 couldn't say what the type of blindness was. So a
10 child with retrolental fibroplasia is going to have
11 a particular need, somebody with tunnel vision will
12 have a different need than somebody with macular
13 degeneration. It makes no sense not to acknowledge
14 what actually the disability is. Because the whole
15 point of an IEP is to provide appropriate
16 instruction. And in fact the US Department of
17 Education has recently confirmed this as you know.
18 This bill would require the certification or
19 training of teachers, administrators, and
20 instructors in the area of dyslexia and related
21 learning disorders and the use of the word
22 dyslexia. With a clear focus on dyslexia we will be
23 able to affect... effectively diagnose and treat this
24 disability that affects so many. Too often dyslexia
25

1 in children is misdiagnosed as bad vision, poor
2 reading skills, low intelligence, and even
3 laziness. But when diagnosed early children with
4 dyslexia can excel in the classroom and achieve
5 great success in future endeavors. 4330 aims to
6 ensure that every teacher knows what dyslexia looks
7 like and how to provide targeted instruction so
8 that they do not have to experience years of
9 underachievement and low self-esteem before getting
10 help. So why does it really matter? Listen to
11 Doctor Friedman earlier when she talked about
12 whether or not the word dyslexia matters and at
13 some level she's right. If you understand what is
14 going on for a child it doesn't matter what you
15 call it. The problem is that not enough teachers
16 and administrators understand what's going on. And
17 so using the word dyslexia helps you identify who
18 needs to be on that IEP team. My bill would require
19 that appropriately trained people be on the IEP
20 team so that the IEP reflects what it is a child's
21 needs are and provides appropriate interventions.
22 Using that language will not just... will not cure
23 the problems but it will make a big difference in
24 making sure that students are appropriately
25

1 addressed. And of course you know our students with
2 dyslexia aren't always just have dyslexia. They
3 might have attention deficit, very highly comorbid,
4 many of them have anxiety. They have anxiety by
5 being overlooked. They have anxiety from the fact
6 that they're smart and they know they're struggling
7 with the things that they don't need to be
8 struggling with. When you're in first grade and
9 everybody else is learning to read and you're not
10 you know that. Our kids are starting to drop out
11 then. We need to make sure that we do this, that we
12 do it right and we do it early. By mandating
13 teacher preparation programs, require their
14 students to take at least six credit in approaches
15 to teaching reading. Now the bill requires that
16 they must use... they must be instructed in methods
17 that are recommended by the national reading panel
18 including systemic, explicit multi-sensory phonemic
19 awareness, and phonics instruction. It doesn't
20 require any particular program. It doesn't say you
21 need to use Wilson or you need to use some other
22 program. In fact, the DOE has schools that are
23 using various programs and that's good, that's
24 fine. As long as it is Orton-Gillingham based and
25

1
2 is a structured multi-sensory program of explicit
3 instruction in reading that will make a huge
4 difference. I believe it will make a huge
5 difference to our ELL population as well. It's
6 obviously critically important for dyslexic
7 children. But as I listen to the data again and
8 again and again... and I've been doing this for many
9 years. I was originally trained as a teacher of the
10 deaf so I get the morpheme thing you know which
11 unfortunately a lot of teachers are not instructed
12 in, is that we are consistently not graduating half
13 of our kids. We are not... our kids are not on grade
14 level. And a lot of children, probably 50 percent
15 of children will learn to read no matter what
16 approach you use. It's the ones that aren't
17 learning through osmosis, through general ed
18 instruction that need the most help. And those are
19 our kids from disadvantaged backgrounds, our kids
20 who are ELL kids, and our kids who are dyslexic.
21 Using a language based structured explicit system
22 is going to make a difference for all of those
23 children. And we can start getting out from this
24 hole that we've been in with regard to educating
25 our children. Let's see. I'm going to cut to this...

1
2 okay. So simply put the reading is so critically
3 important in today's world. Once upon a time that
4 wasn't necessarily the case as David Boyce as the
5 noted attorney has often said when he was a kid
6 growing up in a farming community it didn't matter
7 whether or not he could read so well and if... he was
8 a boy so it didn't... it mattered even less. But the
9 fact is now he's one of the top lawyers in the
10 country and he doesn't actually read as much as
11 people read to him and he remembers everything. But
12 it is so critically important in the... in the era of
13 standardized tests you know throughout the trials
14 of Bartlett even though she had an MA, a PHD, and a
15 law degree the fact that she was successful in her
16 life was counted against her. She was continually
17 accused of being a fraud. And when it comes to
18 standardized testing companies that is still the
19 pervasive sentiment even though we won that case
20 that... the trial court judge is now under the US
21 supreme court, it doesn't matter. Our students are
22 still... they are made to feel like they are frauds.
23 And we need... by having our teachers appropriately
24 trained we will make a huge difference in
25 addressing that problem. I just want to point out a

1 couple things. As I mentioned before there's a
2 recent Dear Colleague Letter restating the fact
3 that there's no reason not to use the word dyslexia
4 in an IEP. There's recent Department of Education
5 guidance with regard to the need for assistive
6 technology as well as accessible technology and
7 they're not necessarily the same things. The US
8 Department of Justice has issued extensive updated
9 guidance on how to interpret the ADA, particularly
10 in the context of standardized testing. And
11 President Obama just signed the research excellence
12 and advancements for dyslexia act or the READ act
13 into law. That provides five million dollars for
14 the National Science Foundation to support multi-
15 directorate, multi-reviewed, and competitively
16 awarded research on the Science of Specific
17 Learning Disability including dyslexia.
18 Professional development for teachers and
19 administrators and the implementation and scaling
20 of successful models. You know when No Child Left
21 Behind was passed one of the things they tried to
22 do was to take the data... small well-staffed
23 research studies and scale it up to the entire
24 general education system. That has been an abysmal
25

1 failure and that's because you can't take a well-
2 controlled study and decide to scale it up
3 overnight. And we need to make sure that we
4 understand that better so that when we're looking
5 at applying these findings more broadly that we
6 look into scaling. So I'm very pleased with that
7 federal statute and I'm looking forward to working
8 with others with regard to that. So I thank you for
9 your testimony. I'm happy to answer your questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
12 Assemblywoman Simon. I took away a couple of things
13 from the testimony by the administration which was
14 one, the resistance to using the dyslexia.

15 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Mm-hmm.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I just don't get it.
17 I don't think Council Member Cohen understood
18 quite... quite why there's that resistance. I tend to
19 believe that it has to do with something around
20 funding and... and around diagnosis with students
21 with learning disabilities. In fact, there are
22 76,000 learning disabled students that the DOE has
23 classified as learning disabled.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Mm-hmm.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yet we have one in
3 five students that are learning disabled or have
4 dyslexia. That leaves a wide gap. I would estimate
5 the number to be somewhere around 300,000 students.
6 And if we're only servicing 76,000 of them that
7 means the other 230 so thousand whatever is not
8 getting the services that they need because they
9 have not been identified. And I don't know if
10 there's an emphasis on... on... on identifying them.
11 The other thing was that it's... it was... it's
12 shocking that in New York City we are still not
13 allowed to provide students out of capital dollars
14 at least assistive technology. This has been a... a
15 problem. We really need to address that. And
16 perhaps at the state level you could help us with
17 that. The passage of the Smarts Bond School Act did
18 allow for money to be spent on that but I think
19 that the city's spending very little part of that
20 Smart School Bond Act on actually getting assistive
21 devices. It would be great if we could open that up
22 and we could ensure that we could use capital
23 dollars. And so I'm going to ask you for some
24 assistance on that as well when we leave here
25 today. And regarding the six credits I think the

1 teachers are required to get six credits of reading
2 methods instruction and not special education.

3
4 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Literacy, which
5 could be anything.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I'm sorry.

7 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Literacy. [cross-
8 talk]

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Of literacy?

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: ...methods.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So... so explain to me
12 the difference then.

13 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Okay. This is not
14 to say that every institution has this challenge.
15 There are a number of excellent teacher preparation
16 programs that do teach teachers how to teach
17 reading. The problem is most of our teachers are...
18 are taught about reading but not how to teach it.
19 And that's explicit instruction on how to actually
20 teach. When I was in graduate school we had methods
21 of teaching reading, methods of teaching math. And
22 of course I wasn't using multi-sensory in the same
23 way because I was teaching deaf children right? But
24 we were taught how to go about it. So the teachers
25 know that there's a problem. And I've never met a

1 teacher yet who doesn't want to address it. But
2 they don't know how to go about it. And when the
3 school for example may have a program that they
4 purchase or use... the teachers don't know what to do
5 when it's not working. We also have schools... and
6 some of the best schools in our city that where we
7 know a child is dyslexic. And I'll tell you a
8 story. One of my neighbors who is from a family
9 where there's quite a bit of dyslexia. Family's
10 very well-known in the field. Both her children
11 were diagnosed early. Both had different needs. So
12 dyslexia is like a fingerprint. It's not exactly
13 the same for every child and that's an important
14 part of that comprehensive evaluation to really
15 find out what's going on. And her... she lived a
16 block and a half away from one of the best schools
17 in the city and they wouldn't provide Orton-
18 Gillingham based tutoring to her child because they
19 used a different program for first grade and second
20 grade. They could get Wilson in third grade. Now
21 that makes no sense when we know what the child's
22 diagnosis is. Fortunately, she was able to provide
23 independent tutoring. Her child was accepted to one
24 of the specialized schools for kids with dyslexia
25

1 but it's so far away that she chose to have the
2 child go to the local public school with the
3 supplement that she was able to provide. So we
4 sometimes have you know purchasing decisions that
5 kind of guide what it is that we provide instead of
6 what it is we need guiding what it is our
7 purchasing decisions are. That's true in assistive
8 technology. So for example I think it's important
9 to understand there's assistive technology meant
10 for kids with disabilities in particular to help
11 them learn that's instructionally based. And then
12 there's also accessible technology. So for example
13 right now we've been looking at the contract for
14 tablets. Those tablets really need to be accessible
15 to kids with disabilities and that's the reason why
16 that contract was put on hold a while back. There's
17 been some... some movement on that but it's very
18 important that a child with disability does not
19 then have a barrier of a tablet they can't use
20 because it's not accessible to them. So we need to
21 make sure that in all of our purchasing decisions
22 accessibility is part of that and that the
23 accessibility works and not just believe the... the...
24 you know the fine print on the bottom of the box
25

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1 that says it's... it's you know research validated. A
2 lot of these are not research validated. And so we
3 need to exercise a great deal of care and... and
4 focus on those decisions.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We don't... we don't
7 take questions from the floor so... we don't take
8 questions from the floor, I'm sorry. Thank you
9 Assemblywoman Simon for coming in. I'm going to
10 move along but I want to continue to work with you
11 on this issue. It's one of major importance to me.
12 And I as a teacher would have loved to have had
13 some support, some method, some way to work with
14 dyslexic students, students who I thought were
15 dyslexic in my classroom. I have to tell you I made
16 the claim earlier and I saw some of the folks shake
17 their head but I was told never to put dyslexia on...
18 on a referral to the Committee on Special
19 Education, you know suspected dyslexia, and I... and
20 I tend to believe that that's still the case. I'm
21 going to talk to some teachers about that because I
22 got to get to the bottom of that one as well.

23 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Well... and I think
24 that in all fairness to the... the... the DOE I think
25

1 the Chancellor understands this in a different way
2 than perhaps prior chancellors did.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: And of course now
6 we have the guidance from the Department of
7 Education. I do want to say that in my experience
8 that when teachers are actually taught these
9 methods they are very grateful to have them and
10 they are very concerned that they didn't have
11 access to it before. And when it works... you know
12 teachers are reinforced by children learning. And I
13 think that you know my bill does not actually
14 address professional development. Once a teacher is
15 working that's really a different area. This goes
16 to teacher preparation programs themselves so it
17 might be a teacher who's teaching but pursuing a
18 master's degree. But I think that professional
19 development is also critically important.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think we're going
21 to have some people address that professional
22 piece... [cross-talk]

23 ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Sure.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...a little bit later
25 on in the hearing. So thank you very much for...

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ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...coming in. Thank
you for your patience. And thank you for also
allowing me to... to have the students testify before
and... and for staying with us.

ASSEMBLYMEMBER SIMON: They were
wonderful and I was very impressed. I was kind of a
little embarrassed coming up here because I hadn't
written out all of my testimony so... But I will be
submitting something by email.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you
very much Assemblywoman. Okay our next panel.
Doctor Randi Herman from the Council's School
Supervisors and Administrators and Carmen Alvarez
from... Vice President from the United Federation of
Teachers.

[background comments]

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you. And
I need to ask you to raise your right hands. Do you
solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
whole truth, and to answer council member questions
honestly? Thank you. Randy would you like to start?

DOCTOR HERMAN: Good afternoon I'm Randy
Herman. I'm the First Vice President of the Council

1 of School Supervisors and Administrators. And I
2 have to say those kids blew me away. Our public
3 schools must be doing something right, yeah? Yeah.
4 Okay. Onto talk about dyslexia. First you heard a
5 little bit about it. It's a very complex thing as
6 you know and I'm not going to do it justice in a
7 minute and a half. But I will touch on just a
8 couple of things. First children who have learning
9 disabilities do not need to be fixed. They are not
10 broken. They shouldn't be fixed. What we need to do
11 as the adults in the room is find out what they're
12 good at, use those strengths to help them reach a
13 little higher to get the things that they can't
14 reach easily. And we can do that. Let's just think
15 a minute. Everybody in this room I want to say has
16 learned to drive a car, yeah? Just about everybody.
17 Think about that experience. Somebody put you in
18 the car, you put your hands on the steering wheel,
19 you put your foot on the gas, you put your foot on
20 the brake, you were directed to look out the
21 window. It was a full body experience, a body mind
22 experience. So maybe you didn't get all the verbal
23 instruction but you got the kinesthetic piece. You
24 were feeling it. You felt your foot on the pedal,
25

1
2 you knew how hard to push. You knew how many turns
3 to the right how many turns to the left because the
4 car moved when you did that. So it was giving you
5 feedback as you go. That's the best way for a child
6 with learning disabilities to acquire information.
7 Multi-sensory approach. You heard that several
8 times today. Now do we assess for a learning
9 disability? Well if it's a multi-sensory experience
10 that they need you need a multi-sensory and a
11 multi-disciplinary evaluation. Those are expenses.
12 You very often need a neurologist. Those are
13 expenses. So the DOE doesn't do that right now.
14 Maybe they need to start looking at the multi-
15 disciplinary evaluation that we had I don't know
16 about 30 years ago. Those teams really did a good
17 diagnostic. We used a medical model. And probably
18 if we go back to that, a differentiated medical
19 model we'll see a better result. Now onto the
20 preservice and the in-service. Teachers can't work
21 with the child unless they have the methodology. So
22 if they're going into preservice training they're
23 not teachers yet. Hopefully our universities will
24 pick that up. Well the teachers who are there now
25 with the children in front of them, they need help

1
2 now. And the DOE's got the... the... their heart in the
3 right place by putting reading coaches in but
4 they're not licensed reading teachers. They may
5 learn about Orton-Gillingham. They may learn Wilson
6 and Spalding. Anybody else get the sports reference
7 to that, Wilson... Spalding. Anyway it... it... it's a
8 taste. It's not in depth. To assess a child
9 properly you need the right tools. And that's what
10 this resolution will put us on the road to. The
11 right tools for teachers to do what they have to do
12 to help children. And again you heard no two
13 children with a learning disability are the same.
14 Like fingerprints, like the fingers on your hands.
15 They're all yours but no two are the same. So thank
16 you for picking up on the need for this and for
17 what I hope will be a passing of a resolution
18 today.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And you
20 know I... as you're saying things I didn't get to ask
21 all my questions to the DOE. But in regard to a
22 reading specialist versus the reading coach... when I
23 first came into the system there was a special
24 license I think to teach reading right? The kids
25 that needed extra instruction in reading. Those are

1 the reading specialists to me. The reading coaches
2 as I think you've correctly pointed out are people
3 who have been successful in the field and have had
4 the minimum number of requirement courses that you
5 took back... guess when you're going for your masters
6 or your undergraduate degree but not necessarily
7 the same as those who had reading licenses.

8 DOCTOR HERMAN: You're absolutely
9 correct and I'm probably one of the few people left
10 who has a masters degree in learning disabilities.
11 Oh you too? Oh that's because you're as old as me.

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I... I just think
13 there's a big difference. I wish the... I hope that
14 this is successful obviously. We all wish for that.
15 But I do wonder if it... if it shouldn't have been
16 reading specialist but we'll see. Vice President...

17 DOCTOR HERMAN: There probably aren't
18 enough of them.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

20 DOCTOR HERMAN: ...all... [cross-talk]

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...more.

22 DOCTOR HERMAN: They are. I'll speak to
23 that... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.
25

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2 CARMEN ALVAREZ: Hi, good afternoon. My
3 name is Carmen Alvarez and I am the United
4 Federation of Teachers' Vice President for Special
5 Education. On behalf of the union's 200,000 members
6 including over 50,000 special education teachers,
7 paraprofessionals, and therapists who serve our
8 children with special needs I would like to thank
9 the Committee of Education and the Committee on
10 Health and Developmental Disability, Alcoholism,
11 Substance Abuse, Disability Services and Chairs
12 Danny Dromm and Andy Cohen for holding this
13 hearing. Your oversight over the scrutiny of the
14 services and resources applied to students with
15 learning disabilities are critical. Further we
16 appreciate the opportunity to share our views on
17 both addressing the needs of students with dyslexia
18 and related... related language based learning
19 disability. And on council resolution number 12...
20 1027 regarding the certification of training of
21 teachers, administrators, or instructions in the
22 area of dyslexic... dyslexia and related disorders.
23 The UFT, the United... can't follow me because I'm
24 going everywhere so don't follow the yellow brick
25 road. The UFT together with parents and advocates

1
2 firmly believe that the core of many students
3 learning problems fall within the realm of literacy
4 and language based disabilities. We are pleased the
5 Department of Education made a greater priority of
6 addressing literacy centered issues and please in
7 particular there's a plan to strengthen literacy
8 for early learners. We wholeheartedly support this
9 focus. In testimony before this body on a number of
10 occasions and across a range of issues our union
11 has emphasized that cognitive and social emotional
12 development in the early years are critical. We
13 seek the city council support to implement the
14 following. We are going to make some
15 recommendations to fast track what the Department
16 of Ed has said. 2026 is too long, too far away to
17 make the difference. So I got it... I got it. So... so
18 just bear with me. Align the city's... so here are
19 our five issues; align the city's categorization of
20 dyslexia and language based disabilities on its
21 IEPs with that of the US Education Department's
22 Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative
23 Services. The issue's not just putting dyslexia on
24 the IEP or language based disabilities. The issue
25 is if you put it on there who is going to teach

1
2 them. Who are the skilled people who could really
3 really address it? So we have to deal with these
4 things simultaneously. So it's critical that we
5 deliver the explicit, sequential, intensive,
6 sustained interventions that students with dyslexia
7 need. They need to provide training in evidence
8 based foundation literacy skills, instruction, and
9 dyslexia intervention to special education teachers
10 and others in the system. What that means is just
11 don't focus on the specialty programs of Orton-
12 Gillingham and the myriad... You have to teach them
13 how to read first. You've got to get that... that's
14 your... that's your levelling playing field. And once
15 you have your staff understanding how to teach
16 reading then you understand here's an outlier case
17 and this is the skill set I'm going to use to do
18 that. So we want you to pass 1027 specifically in
19 the area of... of professional training. We stand
20 ready to work in partnership with the DOE in New
21 York City Council as both entities place a greater
22 emphasis on improving outcomes for children
23 struggling with dyslexia and related language based
24 disabilities. I'm going to skip to the section that
25 says... because it's... it's blacked out... injecting

1
2 urgency in our efforts to serve dyslexic students.
3 And I just want to emphasize the time is to act
4 now. With New York City poised to implement sound
5 evidence based literacy instruction and supporting
6 early grades it's time to take the next step and
7 provide interventions and support for students for
8 the... for these students. So we... we define it as
9 appropriate instruction. And what we mean by
10 appropriate instruction and this is why I'm going
11 over it means scientific research based reading
12 programs that include explicit instruction and
13 phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary
14 development, reading fluency, reading comprehension
15 strategies, as well as writing known as the five
16 pillars. And again I could tell you I look at the
17 ATR pool and you know who was put on them? The
18 reading specialists. Why? Because administrators
19 don't understand the value of having somebody who
20 understands how to teach reading. And so that's
21 something we would go back with the Department of
22 Ed to say let's pull those experts out there and
23 really build from that. The other thing I want to
24 just highlight is the DOE will need to provide
25 extensive professional development and support the

1 teachers in evidence based instruction. And this is
2 what I mean. No three-hour three-day workshops or
3 turn-key trainings or webinars. Like the reading
4 for all coaches, special educators who provide
5 interventions and services for students with
6 dyslexia should receive direct training over the
7 summer and regularly scheduled training every month
8 during the school year. The curriculum should be
9 designed and delivered by central staff under the
10 guidance of experts, not somebody who was trained
11 20 minutes ago and then has to implement it. And
12 only because we... we've lived through that with the
13 parents. And I agree with you very often people
14 have been told you cannot put dyslexia but when the
15 parents come to me I give the guidance letter from
16 the letter say you can put whatever you want. And
17 when we give it to the parent... to the... to the... and
18 we say there's a portion in the IEP that says
19 support to staff that's where it needs to be
20 written. The professional development that needs to
21 have staff prepared. So let me just take a little
22 sip of water because I'm so excited. So what we
23 suggest to the Department of Ed is we believe you
24 need to use staff members already in the building.
25

1
2 You need to put people who are already centrally
3 based in the... and we're in negotiations with them
4 right now. So we're really looking to... to really
5 connect the dots. And the positions I'm talking
6 about are IEP teachers. There's a thousand of them,
7 all used badly. So we're going to negotiate that
8 because they should be trained in exactly what I
9 outlined. That means there's a thousand schools
10 that could get that over the period of the year
11 because you have to stagger the professional
12 development. Once you start with them then you get
13 the... teachers, then you could get speech teachers.
14 You need to build capacity building by building.
15 You can't have a coach fly in and fly out. You have
16 to build capacity. And what we are urging at this
17 point it... and I think was mentioned before by the
18 Assemblywoman. I do not... do I want the professional
19 development for them? It has to be mandated. You
20 don't have a choice. You have to... I like that
21 group. You have to really create the vehicle for
22 our staff to do it well. They're... it's not going to
23 happen overnight but I would say if we make that
24 commitment to create three or four people in a
25 building staggered training in how to teach reading

1 first and then you could take your specialty Orton-
2 Gillingham foundations etcetera and then one of
3 each could be certified in it, not trained in it,
4 certified in it. And that takes about two years. In
5 three to five to seven years you could have at
6 least a thousand schools with experts in the
7 building. So I really urge you to read the rest of
8 my testimony because I'm not going to read it. But
9 that's the goal. And the one thing I want to add
10 and we could use your support in the audience as
11 well as yourself. 21 years ago we had a nasty thing
12 called mandate relief. And what they did was only
13 in New York City they made the group size for
14 resource room eight. As well as the related
15 services. Now at least the related services were
16 smart enough to say I'm not going to do speech with
17 a... no I'm not going to do counselling with eight.
18 So they never went to eight. But unfortunately the..
19 the... the maximum became the rule. So we are putting
20 legislation together and we want co-sponsors to
21 push it that let's bring back the group size to
22 five. Response to intervention, the second level of
23 response to intervention is a group size of five.
24 And then level three is a group size of eight?
25

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2 Let's give our students the best chance possible by
3 having specially designed instruction in those
4 positions that can provide it in that way. I was a...
5 teacher and I was a damn good one. And I could tell
6 you each one of my kids and what was different
7 about them and what they needed. And I really
8 instructed them as they needed according to their
9 needs. None of my IPs look the same. All I'm saying
10 to you is we can get there. My niece was in
11 district three last century and she started out in
12 the resource room but she needed help because she
13 was dyslexic. But god bless that school, PS87. You
14 had a self-contained classroom teacher who said
15 we're going to tell you how to address your
16 disability, demystify it so you can have the
17 skillset to succeed back in general ed. And she
18 went back into general... she graduated from Pratt
19 and she is now in the school system. She won't
20 teach but she is in the... she's in the classroom as
21 a paraprofessional and she is damn good. So special
22 ed is special if you use it that way. And I'm just
23 going to say one point of information about
24 preservice. When I got my degree it was... my
25 certification of the state it was for students of

1 emotional disturbances and I got that at city
2 college. At least 60 credits all dedicated to that.
3 Then I went to Bank Street College and got my
4 certification in reading. You know that a lot of
5 our young people in that school to prison pipeline
6 is either the behavior that caused them to not read
7 or it's either the... not being able to read the
8 cause of the behavior. So we have to address those
9 components. And I believe we have a terrific
10 opportunity. And I really urge us not only to
11 support us but to really follow through... can we
12 make those connections and create a critical mass
13 of... of... of people in the school trained, really
14 professionally developed over the next three to
15 five years to create that expertise in a minimum of
16 a thousand buildings. Okay I'm done.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. It also
19 hits me... you know I had 34 kids in my class every
20 year. And some years I had 38 kids in my class. And
21 you know I thought I was a well-intended teacher
22 and I wanted to do the right thing by my students
23 but I was never really trained in... in how to deal
24 with dyslexic students. Told I wasn't really
25 allowed to use the word. And... and really I... I

1 probably... I think I know that I never really got to
2 those kids you know. And it's a shame. I tried to
3 press the... the DOE on that a little bit today
4 especially in regard to balanced literacy and how
5 you know you can do the whole class and still do
6 the other piece of it. What are your feelings on
7 that?
8

9 CARMEN ALVAREZ: Well I think many of us
10 who... a lot of us talk to each other. When you have
11 either balanced literacy, pacing calendars, all
12 these types of things that have nothing to do with
13 the individualized need of... of a young person
14 whether they're... an IEP or not. There's just not
15 enough information and... and support not only for
16 the teachers but for the principals. Because the
17 principals need to understand that because they
18 make these demands on teachers that are impossible.
19 And they say well you got to fix it, well how, show
20 me how. They... they don't know. So it... yes it's an
21 issue but we have to also have mandated
22 professional development for principals. They
23 can't... it cannot be optional anymore. And so I
24 don't know if I answered the question, I think it
25 was a little wordy but I just think it's... it's

1 never that simple but it really means you are.. this
2 system must dedicate time and effort for people to
3 get that skill set so they really own it and
4 understand it's about all the young people in their
5 building and that you're helping them all. And when
6 those kids... and I think some of the people said it
7 already, who need more, you pick the right child
8 who needs that support versus okay take everybody
9 in in that corner and teach them... give them Wilson
10 with no fidelity. And... and that's one of the things
11 we... we should monitor over the next couple of years
12 in terms of the professional development.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you for
15 coming in. Thank you for your... your great testimony
16 both of you. I really appreciate it. We have a lot
17 of people behind you yet to speak.

18 CARMEN ALVAREZ: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So I'm going to move
20 it along.

21 CARMEN ALVAREZ: Absolutely.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: But definitely we
23 want to continue looking at this.

24 DOCTOR HERMAN: Thank you very much.

25 CARMEN ALVAREZ: Thank you so much and..

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DOCTOR HERMAN: And...

CARMEN ALVAREZ: ...for what you do.

DOCTOR HERMAN: ...the support for each of
the resolutions before you today you know you have
it from CSA.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

CARMEN ALVAREZ: And for... UFT.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Thank you
very much to both of you. Alright our next panel,
the former chairman of this committee Robert
Jackson, come on down, Joanna Garcia from City
College, Debby Meyer from Dyslexia Plus Taskforce,
Paula Heitman from Parent of a Child with Dyslexia,
and Laura Cavalleri from Dyslexic Friendly School
Public Environment. Oh I'm sorry, okay Laura
Cavalleri, yep come on up. Yes. Dean Driscoll do
you want to come up with us? Yeah. Alright I do
swear everybody in in this committee. It was a
habit that Council Member Jackson got us into a
long time ago. So please if you would raise your
right hand. I'm going to ask do you solemnly swear
or affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
nothing but the truth and to answer council member
questions honestly? Okay Council Member Jackson.

1
2 ROBERT JACKSON: Thank you Chairman
3 Dromm and to the staff and all the other members
4 that were here. And I'm glad that the New York City
5 Council is videotaping this so that you can go on
6 the city council channel to actually view the
7 hearings. I've done that on other hearings. But let
8 me say this is my first time outside of office
9 since I was term limited in December 2013 that I'm
10 testifying at the city council of New York. Because
11 this is a very very very special issue for over
12 200,000 students that are being impacted as a
13 result of the Department of Education not
14 recognizing their issues and concerns. So when I
15 walked 150 miles to Albany to build support for the
16 campaign for fiscal equity lawsuit to fix this
17 broken system that the New York state funding
18 formula cheated our children. I did... I did it on
19 behalf of all of the students so that every student
20 had the opportunity to learn and reach their full
21 potential and however Chairman Dromm there are too
22 many children... children affected by dyslexia that
23 by no fault of their own do not have a chance to
24 reach this important goal. They work twice as hard
25 as their peers that read more naturally but

1
2 accomplish only half as much. Their frustration
3 mounts and it affects all parts of their lives and
4 their family's lives. And we have seen great
5 progress in many areas in our educational system
6 and also advances around the country and
7 identification and support for dyslexic children.
8 And that said not nearly enough is being done for
9 these children in the New York City public school
10 system. And as the Yale Center for Dyslexia and
11 Creativity said quote in dyslexia there's not a
12 knowledge gap but rather an action gap. And from
13 listening to the testimony here today especially
14 from the two unions that represent the educators
15 and administrators and others clearly there's an
16 action gap. And despite the fact that one in five
17 children in our school system are dyslexic our
18 school system lacks a coherent plan or commitment
19 to support dyslexic students and schools aren't
20 providing access to early intervention of dyslexia
21 and related language based learnings. And in fact
22 the question was asked by one of the council
23 members, how many children in the New York City
24 public school system have been identified with
25 dyslexic... that are dyslexic. And that could not be

1 answered. And in fact there's no way that they have
2 put in place to determine that. And in fact... so the
3 children suffer again and again. And their parents,
4 and I'm part of a task force with Joanna Garcia and
5 Debbie Meyer and... and Silby [phonetic] who's
6 sitting there, these are three parents that have
7 children with dyslexia and in fact they've come
8 together and bonded together in order to try to
9 find a way to help not only their children but the
10 hundreds of thousands of children in the New York
11 City for dyslexia. And I know that we're running
12 late and I'm just going to go to the conclusion. So
13 my last paragraph. We need to create a new culture
14 for dyslexia or what leading New York City
15 advocates call dyslexia plus. And more specifically
16 this means first increasing dyslexia awareness and
17 training of dyslexia is warning signs and
18 appropriate intervention strategies, second,
19 providing students access to proven teaching
20 methodologies and help dyslexia, dyslexics learn to
21 use their learning differentiate, differentiations
22 to their advantage for success. Third, providing
23 social emotional support in public schools. Fourth,
24 providing support for all parents in the form of
25

1
2 advocacy, resources and knowledge. Fifth,
3 developing partnership between the Department of
4 Education and the City's Public Higher Education
5 University System, CUNY, to prepare teachers going
6 into the public schools. And six, supporting
7 legislation that Joans... Jo Anne Simon talked about
8 in which she's a sponsor in Assembly and Marty
9 Golden is a sponsor in the senate. And finally,
10 let's teach every child to read and make sure each
11 have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
12 I text my daughter who is an educator in Virginia
13 and I asked her if she had any comments. And she
14 said it is absolutely necessary in order to train
15 educators and administrators so that they can
16 recognize children with dyslexia so that they'll be
17 able to teach them appropriately. I thank you
18 Chairman Dromm and staff for coming here and
19 hopefully all of the members of the city council
20 will review this and support the resolution. Thank
21 you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. It was
23 very shocking to me to hear that they didn't know
24 the number of students with dyslexia. And I don't
25 know how you begin to conquer a problem unless you

1 know the number that you're talking about. And
2 we've had other hearings here since you've
3 departed [phonetic]... since your departure and we
4 often find that they don't know the number of
5 guidance counsellors or gym teachers or whatever it
6 is. And I think that a first step in this is to use
7 the word dyslexia and to find out the number of
8 students in the system with dyslexia. I don't... I...
9 I... I just don't see how you can begin to tackle the
10 problem unless you know those things.

12 ROBERT JACKSON: Well we... clearly
13 there's ways to tackle the problem and there's
14 experts in the field and schools that are doing it
15 and so let's start with training our educators and
16 administrators and the ones... to recognize it so we
17 can get the job done. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

19 ROBERT JACKSON: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Next please.

21 DEBBIE MEYER: Thank you Mr. Chairman.
22 My name is Debbie Meyer and of course I'm not the
23 famous education reformer Debbie Meyer but I am the
24 founding member of the Dyslexia Plus Taskforce. And
25 this is why. I am the mother, wife, sister-in-law,

1 and aunt to dyslexic people. Yes, it runs in the
2 family. My 10-year-old son began public school here
3 in New York City. Before second grade the school
4 noticed that he seemed be struggling with reading
5 and placed him in an ICT class with an IEP. The
6 second grade cycle education evaluation noted his
7 cognitive abilities far above the norm, his reading
8 slightly above norm despite not being able to sound
9 out a single word and writing far below the norm.
10 We explained how dyslexia runs in our family. But
11 when we discovered the school wouldn't test for it
12 we took our son to private neuropsychological exam.
13 Dyslexia was confirmed and an Orton-Gillingham
14 based literacy curriculum was recommended. However,
15 at school he continued to be taught language arts
16 with a method that does not address dyslexia. His
17 teachers and school staff had not received the
18 proper preparation to support his learning needs.
19 He continued to struggle and frustration impacted
20 his self-esteem. Exhausted each day he couldn't
21 even deal with the tutoring we tried to arrange for
22 him. And his anxiety escalated and he began to
23 write on his arms and legs and tell us how he
24 wanted to die. He really needed help. He was you
25

1 know nine years old saying this. He started therapy
2 and for fifth grade we pulled our son from public
3 education. We put him into the Windward School.
4 He's doing well now but he has not regained the
5 full degree of empathy for kids that struggle that
6 he used to have. But this story's rather typical.
7 But I'll skip a little. But you know while... while
8 that typical our family's story of finding the
9 right resources is not. When I realized what an
10 effort it was from being an older educated mother
11 of one with a flexible schedule and a supportive
12 husband I couldn't really imagine how a parent of
13 four kids with no spousal support and two jobs
14 might do the same. The amount of misinformation
15 that takes time to sift through simply astounds me.
16 The number of phone calls and appointments that
17 need to be made during working hours, it
18 practically requires an administrative assistant.
19 And I thought isn't this the job of our schools and
20 our pediatricians to help in a really substantive
21 way. I'm also involved in reentry from
22 incarceration and education. As you mentioned in
23 your report the dyslexia rate in the prison system
24 is more than twice as high despite the rate
25

1 reported you know in the rate... in juvenile justice
2 is like 60 percent. And that's about the same rate
3 as... is among NASA scientists. So the list of
4 successful of dyslexics spans career spectrums from
5 lawyers, to doctors, to artists to entrepreneurs.
6 And clearly dyslexia does not have to be a prison
7 sentence if students are properly supported. I
8 first considered founding a new public possibly
9 charter school for dyslexia but I realized how
10 little this would help. And then I thought about
11 another teacher training program and realized how
12 little that would help. I did a survey to find out
13 why and found out that teachers who were trained
14 didn't have support from their principals. And
15 there was so little knowledge they couldn't build
16 support among their staff peers. So our task force
17 wants to take the components of treating dyslexia
18 students, dyslexic students out of silos and create
19 a schoolwide culture where students will thrive in
20 their neighborhood schools.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: When you're talking
23 it's hitting there... I'm thinking there were years,
24 years, and years when we were told we were not
25 allowed to do phonemic awareness in... in this... in

1 teaching reading. I mean I just... you know so we're
2 only beginning to catch up with ourselves in that.
3 So thank you. Next please.
4

5 PAULA HEITMAN: Good afternoon. My name
6 is Paula Heitman. I am the Executive Director of
7 Families First in Early Childhood Nonprofit Center
8 in Brooklyn. But I'm here today as the mother of a
9 dyslexic child. My daughter attended public school
10 for Kindergarten and first grade in one of the best
11 public schools in Brooklyn. A school which has a
12 PTA which raises hundreds of thousands of dollars
13 every year to provide enrichment classes assisting
14 teachers in all kindergarten classes, supplement
15 supplies for all classrooms. Despite this my
16 daughter was failing first grade. Despite the fact
17 that she had been evaluated, designated as learning
18 disabled, she had an IEP, she was placed in ICT
19 classroom with two wonderful seasoned committee
20 teachers she was failing. Her teachers did not know
21 how to teach her. And their only option when it
22 came time toward the end of the year when she was
23 clear she was not going to be promoted to second
24 grade was to retain her in first grade in the same
25 program, same instructional method that was failing

1 her the first time. I'm an educator. I'm a former
2 DOE high school English teacher. I have worked in
3 education nonprofits for the past 20 years. My
4 daughter is one of the lucky ones. She has a mom as
5 an educator and a dad as an attorney. This... she's
6 lucky. I knew of a nonpublic school that served
7 students like my daughter. We were lucky enough to
8 be accepted at this school, had the means to hire
9 an attorney to file a petition to secure the
10 funding for my daughter to attend this school. This
11 is not fair. She is now in her fourth year at her
12 school. She's reading, she's writing, she loves her
13 school and her teachers. She feels supported,
14 understood, and successful. However, she loved her
15 public school too. She did not want to leave. I did
16 not want her to leave. I was deeply involved in her
17 public school. I was a class parent. I was an
18 elected member of the school leadership team but it
19 was not working. What is it that prevents teachers
20 from receiving the training to teach the students
21 with dyslexia? Had the DOE had a program that met
22 my daughter's needs we would still be there and I
23 would still be the involved parent that I was. The
24 DOE has other programs that serve students with
25

1 special needs. There's a wonderful program that
2 serves students on the autistic spectrum called the
3 nest program. In the nest program students with ASD
4 are educated along with their typically developing
5 peers taught by teachers who are specifically
6 trained to work with those students. Can we design
7 a similar program to serve dyslexic students so
8 that those students may continue to attend their
9 local public school? Thank you.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next
12 please.

13 JOHANNA GARCIA: It's like I'm hearing
14 my own story. Thank you Chairs Dromm and I also
15 thank Cohen, I know he had to leave, and other
16 members for holding this very important hearing. My
17 name is Joanna Garcia. And I sit before you today
18 wearing several hats. I'm the Executive Director of
19 City College Partnership at City College of New
20 York and as such serve as a founding member of the
21 Dyslexia Plus Taskforce. I am also the mother of a
22 second grader with dyslexia enrolled in his
23 neighborhood public school as well as a parent
24 leader in School District 6. The time is right for
25 New York City to lead in making a systemic change

1 in our schools. Actually it's long overdue. With
2 legislation pending on the federal, state, and
3 local level and together with an administration
4 keen on improving literacy rates among our youngest
5 we are in a strong position to change the tide for
6 dyslexic students in our public schools. I proudly
7 share that the City College of New York through
8 working collaboratively with DOE is excited to take
9 the lead in ensuring New York City public schools
10 become a place where students with dyslexia and
11 other language based learning difficulties can
12 learn and thrive in their neighborhood schools.
13 Fortunately, the work in supporting students with
14 dyslexia has been started by many other advocates
15 before us; petitioners, educators, and
16 psychologists. We plan and have already begun
17 conversations to work with individuals and
18 institutions who have long standing experience in
19 this field. We hope to count on the city council as
20 one of our partners. As a result of a positive
21 meaning between the Dyslexia (Plus) Task Force and
22 Chair Danny Dromm late last fall and later with the
23 DOE City Council submitted a discretionary funding
24 expense application for a new city council
25

1 initiative titled Dyslexia Plus in public schools.
2
3 The initiative basically is to build capacity in
4 our public schools. It would address four key
5 factors that through our research finds dyslexic
6 students will be successful with one and we've
7 heard it over and over today. Parent advocacy and
8 understanding of available services, what's out
9 there. Two, affordable and accessible evaluations
10 in early diagnosis. You have to be able to get the
11 diagnosis before triggering services. Three,
12 academic support provided by highly skilled
13 teachers and staff, not just the teachers but the
14 staff in the schools trained in understanding and
15 addressing dyslexia. And four mental health support
16 with difficulties often associated with learning
17 differences. The more we wait for those kinds of
18 interventions the worse the problem gets. In
19 essence this is building capacity and creating a
20 culture supporting dyslexia. Getting the right
21 education and services should not be limited to
22 students whose families can afford it, are educated
23 about options, or have the resources and time
24 necessary to navigate to get their child the proper
25 services and settings. In essence it shouldn't be

1 based on luck. Even for parents who are savvy the
2 process is incredibly difficult and emotionally
3 taxing and frustrating. Take me for example. I have
4 been involved in education advocacy for a while and
5 in fact sat on the other side of this table when I
6 worked for then Chair Robert Jackson. Yes, there
7 isn't a day that goes by that I don't worry about
8 getting my son Aries [sp?] the help he needs before
9 it's too late. When he was kindergarten I suspected
10 Aries had dyslexia much like his father and my
11 brother. But instead I was dismissed by his well-
12 meaning teachers and it was recommended he repeat
13 the grade, same instruction. When he finally
14 entered first grade he was still reading below
15 grade level. After DOE evaluations didn't bear out
16 what I suspected I was lucky enough to find
17 affordable private evaluations. I still have to
18 advocate to make sure he didn't repeat the first
19 grade. Frustrated by his teachers and therapists
20 who didn't understand dyslexia or had the training
21 to help him I sought specialized... tutoring that is
22 far too expensive for a single mother of three. He
23 is making progress but so are his peers. Today my
24 son is in second grade faced with another promotion
25

1
2 in doubt. His school is finally admitting that
3 repeating the grade is not the answer and that they
4 lack the resources to adequately teach my child.
5 Sadly, I hear my story echoed over and over when I
6 talk to other parents and children struggling to
7 get by in school. By the way my child's IEP still
8 doesn't dyslexia and at the last parent and teacher
9 conference even though the evaluation is two years
10 old they still would not say the word dyslexia. I
11 kept saying can you say dyslexia. This hearing is
12 the beginning of bring this issue into the public
13 discourse. I hope the city council will continue to
14 support legislation, efforts, and initiatives that
15 will address the crisis affecting thousands of
16 dyslexic students who wish they could thrive in
17 their neighborhood schools. I'm proud the COMMITTEE
18 CLERKNY is taking the important step in preparing
19 teachers and joining with other CUNY institutions
20 to build a consortium. Together we can turn this...
21 we could take this even further. Let's help New
22 York City be a national leader at making room in
23 our public schools for students with dyslexia.
24 Please support the Dyslexia (Plus) in Public
25 Schools initiative. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much

Dean Driscoll.

DEAN DRISCOLL: Good afternoon. My name
is Mary Erina Driscoll and I'm the Dean and Herald
Kobliner Chair in Education at the School of
Education at City College of New York. And we're
very proud of our alumni. Several in this room,
actually, thank you. I've... I've submitted written
testimony so I'm going to sort of move quickly. I
mean one of the things... the first point I make is
the long history and mission of city college in
supporting all of the children of New York. And so
understanding and improving the life chances of
children is very much at the core of the work of
city college and very much at the core of what we
do in the school of education. And this hearing
today has really demonstrated the importance of
meeting the needs of dyslexic children who wish to
be served in the New York City public school system
which again is very much what... what we are about. I
think CUNY is an important partner in this work
because CUNY as an institution trains and prepares
many of the teachers in the New York City public
schools and many of our students come from the New

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2 York City public schools. They want to be urban
3 educators and they want to remain in the city. At
4 present within the... the preparation program
5 specifically in terms of dyslexia and not just
6 generalized reading students do have to demonstrate
7 that they understand the needs of all learners. And
8 so some of that work is included in course work on
9 inclusive education that was mandated by the state
10 within the last five years as well as their
11 performance on the more recently mandated
12 certification exams for educating all students. I
13 want to sort of cut to the chase. I think the
14 urgency here in terms of workforce development
15 mandates that we work with the state immediately to
16 develop an extension to certification and dyslexia
17 and that this is one of the ways that a 15 to 24
18 credit program can be developed that is focused and
19 intense. This... this state is recently... and the city
20 has supported and subsidized teachers with
21 extensions in bilingual education because the need
22 is so great. And part 154 in Albany legislation at
23 the state now is saying that you have to have for
24 English language learners somebody... more teachers
25 with that extension and specialized training. So

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1 we're certainly willing to do that in partnership
2 with other CUNY institutions and other partners in
3 the room. I want to join with Joanna in reiterating
4 our commitment at COMMITTEE CLERKNY to bring
5 together resources from across CUNY in a taskforce
6 to study, recommend, and develop the kinds of
7 professional development experiences and coursework
8 needed to address the knowledge gap in our
9 profession. As I said we'd be happy to partner with
10 other CUNY institutions. There's interest at
11 Lehman. I know there's interest at Hunter as well.
12 It is our hope that such a project potentially
13 could lead to something along the lines of a CUNY
14 dyslexia institute. This could become a center for
15 applied research, professional development, and
16 direct services. For example, a multi-disciplinary
17 clinic that offers consultation, diagnostic, and
18 instructional after school and summer offerings
19 that would be available and affordable to public
20 school parents. We see the Department of Ed and the
21 state as critical partners and we look forward to
22 the continued interest and support of the city
23 council. Thanks.
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CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next
please.

LAURA: Hello, my name is Laura
Cavalleri. I am dyslexic so I'm not going to read
from my statement. I'll ad lib as best as I can. My
family represents 60 years of dyslexia in the New
York City Board of Ed. My mother was tested back in
1950 and screened. She went to a screening center
on... Street. The building's still there. I am a drop
out through the 70s, socially promoted but both my
mother and I and my aunt we have the gift of art. I
now have two sons. One is 15, one is 13, one is
dyslexic... classic dyslexic, the other one is
dysgraphia dyslexic. I had them both tested last
year. My son Lawz [sp?], the oldest one in High
School, McKee High School now is an honor student.
He had Lindamood-Bell in the second grade. As a
dyslexic myself looking for services for my child
what would I sit through I said because dyslexics
are smart, Lindamood-Bell did it. He is now an
honor student in the 10th grade in McKee High
School and cannot get him back on his IEP because I
showed them, I says look at his certification, it
still says he's dyslexic even though he's an honor

1 student. So I want to make point now. Google..
2
3 google everybody, Starbucks U.K. dyslexia because
4 there was just a lawsuit right and the woman won
5 against Starbucks and she told them that she was
6 dyslexic and you know the star.. so think of it this
7 way when my son now graduates with his honors and
8 goes to his job and he's going to have to stand
9 there with his certification too and say I'm
10 dyslexic, I'm going to need accommodations but you
11 want me for my honors, you want me for my
12 strengths, you hired me for my strengths. Now I got
13 voted off my SLT team at McKee High School recently
14 this past... March 7th because I publically asked for
15 help at a Town Hall meeting from Carmen Farina to
16 target McKee High School 640 kids. We did a PD
17 train... the school did a PD training done by the
18 teacher because it was on the CEP... wonderful.
19 Dyslexics have to be bright. They're above average
20 in IQ. They need a different font size to read. The
21 whole PD itself given by just a teacher to teachers
22 was to show them how easy it was to make simple
23 accommodations in the classroom for dyslexics. What
24 I'm asking for is to make a dyslexic friendly
25 schools environments because also too in my son's

1 middle school book share, audio books. I didn't
2 know that the library could give him an audio book
3 and the librarian says well there's only three kids
4 in the school so far on it. Two of them have it
5 privately. Your son's the first one to get it
6 through the librarian. I says goodness gracious I
7 want an embracing feeling. I want all the dyslexic
8 students to know and their teachers... because the
9 teachers didn't know that they could recommend
10 students to audio books, make my schools friendly
11 environments and because we don't have enough
12 teachers right now to teach this you have to make
13 it friendly so that the kids can start helping each
14 other. And we will help each other learn. Thank
15 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you
18 everybody for coming in. I really appreciate it and
19 I look forward to continuing to work with all of
20 you, specifically with the city college program,
21 has moved down the budget path. Thank you very
22 much. Maggie Moroff Advocates for Children, Ximena
23 Atbara, Fotera Jeffa, Vetara... Vetara, I'm sorry how
24 do you say it? Patara Japay thank you. Wendy Ramos,
25 Noel Tortore, and Kristen Berger. Alright let me

1 ask everybody to raise their right hand please. Do
2 you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth, the
3 whole truth, and nothing but the truth and to
4 answer council member questions honestly? Would you
5 like to start Patara? Yeah just hit that so the red
6 light's on.

8 PATARA JAPAY: Good afternoon. My name
9 is Patara Japay. According to current studies in a
10 classroom of 35 students at least five of them have
11 deficits in reading associated with dyslexia.
12 Whether anyone knows it or not. The problem is that
13 many people may not be diagnosed or a lot of people
14 do not disclose that they have which is why I felt
15 so alone as a child and every step of life feeling
16 like I'm reinventing the wheel. I am now very open
17 about my disability because I believe that it is
18 part of who I am. I was diagnosed in the third
19 grade with dyslexia. Well, let me correct that, a
20 learning disability because I was never allowed to
21 put the word on my IEP. I was recently retested and
22 I now read on about a fourth or a fifth grade
23 reading level which does not include fluency or
24 decoding. If those things were factored in I would
25 read significantly lower. I'm sharing this with you

1 because as an African American female from Bedford-
2 Stuyvesant Brooklyn I was told I was a student that
3 was not going to be able to graduate high school
4 let alone be a productive member of society. My
5 family and I didn't give up. I experienced almost
6 every academic environment that the DOE offered.
7 However, I had to go to schools outside of my
8 neighborhood. In fact, the DOE did not have the
9 ability to properly handle my dyslexia at all. And
10 in the 7th grade they paid for me to attend
11 Churchill, one of the few 12 to 1 to 1 private
12 schools for children with language based learning
13 disabilities. It was there that I began receiving
14 methods of teaching reading that actually helped
15 students with dyslexia. This is an opportunity that
16 many students do not get. The tuition alone is
17 approximately \$50,000 which is crazy because if all
18 teachers were trained in their teacher preparation
19 courses in methods of teaching reading it would
20 have saved the city so much money. I am often
21 shocked when new and seasoned teachers share with
22 me they don't really know what dyslexia is which
23 may be why I was not tested until the third grade
24 even though I cannot physically read any of the
25

1 words on the page, or they don't know what can help
2 students that have it. Thanks to my families,
3 accommodations, multi-sensory techniques, and
4 assistive technology I defied the odds. I not only
5 graduated high school but I received a New York
6 state regions diploma. I then went on to attend
7 Adelphi University where I graduated magna cum
8 laude along with other honors. I became the program
9 director at Everyone Reading. And at the age of 24
10 I was asked to come on board as Chief of Staff to
11 New York state Assembly Member Simon where I served
12 until I resigned to attend law school. My journey
13 is true that with the right amount of opportunity,
14 resources, and support students with dyslexia can
15 become successful. That is why we need early
16 identification, to use the term dyslexia on a
17 student's IEP, and adequate teacher training in
18 methods that help students with dyslexia and
19 related learning disabilities, not just a literacy
20 whole language approach. To ensure that students no
21 longer linger in the back of the classroom without
22 the help they need it is our duty as New Yorkers to
23 make sure that all children are given the
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1
2 opportunities and tools to become successful, even
3 those with dyslexia.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Very powerful. Who...
5 how did you get into the private school? How did
6 that all happen?

7 PATARA JAPAY: I'm one of the rare few
8 that the DOE did not fight back because I had tried
9 every single program that they had; from OT to
10 speech, to 12:1, to 12:1:1, to collaborative teen
11 teaching, to... I mean you name it I received it. And
12 it was unfortunate but allowed my family to not
13 have a fight. But it also... [cross-talk]

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did your... did your
15 parents advocate for you? Or did you advocate for
16 yourself or...

17 PATARA JAPAY: I was taught by my
18 parents to advocate for myself but obviously when I
19 was a young child I didn't know how to express what
20 was going on. I didn't even know that you hear
21 yourself read when you read. So often times if you
22 don't know what you don't know and it's hard to
23 advocate.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well you're very
25 forceful now so congratulations.

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PATARA JAPAY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's great. Thank
you. Next please.

XIMENA ATBARA: My name is Ximena Atbara
and I live in Queens New York. I... I knew my
daughter Melonie had an issue early on but I didn't
know what it was. My husband and I are so dedicated
to our children we didn't know what to do and we
felt alone. Because we didn't have any... any other
family or any experience with anybody. We... we tried
to tell Melonie's public school teachers that there
was something wrong. Year after year they kept
telling me that Melonie was okay. But even when she
was younger I knew that having a four year grader
that couldn't read or write was an issue. I
couldn't believe it but the school told us to lower
our standards. They told me that the only thing
Melonie could do was be a hair dresser. They stuck
her in the special education to fail even and
eventually drop out. My daughter is a responsible,
outgoing, and wonderful kid but she cry every day
because no one in her old school want to have her
in the room. I was finally referred to Advocate for
Children. Our attorney was wonderful and a big

1 help. After we have Melonie evaluated we learned
2 that she was... she has dyslexia. And we found out
3 that she was reading at a third grade level even
4 though she was heading into a nine grade. When...
5 with the help who our lawyer my husband and I
6 fought to get Melonie to... to help... to get the help
7 that she needs. It was a long and hard process but
8 we stay with it and won the case to get her into
9 the Lowell private school where... where they believe
10 in our daughter and they're finally teaching her
11 how to read. My daughter is doing really well. She
12 has stopped crying and she has made friends in her
13 new school. She's getting the help and support she
14 needs there and she's feeling like she can do more
15 in her own. I am not saying that she's doesn't
16 still need help but with the help of teachers who
17 know what they're doing things are getting better.
18 Melonie is telling me mommy I understand. I also
19 think that Melonie is a child that could benefit a
20 lot from assistive technology which has been told
21 could bring her into reading level two grades above
22 where she is now. Melonie is in the honor class now
23 at Lowell. She is going to go to college. She wants
24 to be a veterinarian. By giving Melonie the help
25

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1 she needs we are helping all of us because now she
2 can grow up to be a contributing member of society.
3 Maybe she will even take care of your pets one day.
4 Now my son is having problems too but because I
5 went down the road with my daughter we anticipate
6 less obstacles getting him with the needs he needs
7 in the public school. I know there are so many
8 children struggling with dyslexia who need help.
9 More of them need to go to get... more of them need
10 to get help from their teachers and... and the school
11 no matter where they go to school. They're... there's
12 not enough placement in private schools for all
13 kids that need the help. Our public schools need to
14 get better. Teachers need to know where to turn
15 when their children aren't learning. And family
16 members need to know what they can do to be
17 successful advocates. Thank you... thank you for a
18 chance to speak today and I want all the students
19 to get the help Melonie has. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
22 Next please.

23 MAGGIE MOROFF: That's a hard act to
24 follow. Good afternoon. I'm Maggie Moroff. I'm the
25 Special Education Policy Coordinator at Advocates

1 for Children. And I'm the Coordinator of the Arise
2 Coalition. I'm testifying today on behalf of AFC.
3 I'd like to speak with you on the need to make sure
4 that New York City's public schools are prepared to
5 provide all students including those with dyslexia
6 and other disabilities with appropriate evidence
7 based literacy instruction. I'm going to do my best
8 to shortcut my testimony and not read everything.
9 I'll try. Right. For decades parents have come to
10 AFC desperate for help because their children need
11 more support in learning to read. One mother of a
12 13-year-old with a learning disability told us this
13 story very similar to the one we just heard from
14 Ms. Atbara. She told us I've done everything. I've
15 done everything a parent is supposed to do. I had
16 her in early intervention. I worked with her after
17 school. I made sure that she did the work. And she
18 doesn't have a behavior issue. She doesn't have
19 attendance issues. So now she's 13 years old I want
20 her to be able to go to college. How can she ever
21 go to college if she's not at grade level? How can
22 she ever have a future without a higher education?
23 It should be an educational priority to teach all
24 students to read. And that includes students with
25

1
2 dyslexia and other disabilities. But we hear from
3 families far too often that their students... that
4 they don't have access to the targeted research
5 based literacy instruction that they need. Test
6 data confirms that. I know you know the numbers.
7 I'm not going to go through them. Advocates for
8 Children recently released a report which I think
9 you are also familiar with. A is for All; meeting
10 the literacy needs of students with and without
11 disabilities in the New York City public schools.
12 We made four primary recommendations in there that
13 I just want to really briefly go through. We... we
14 urge the department to develop a comprehensive
15 multi-year plan to meet the literacy needs of all
16 students. We ask them to prepare and support
17 classroom teachers by building literacy expertise
18 in every school including elementary, middle, and
19 high schools, district 75 schools, and district 79
20 programs. We urge them to use technology, assistive
21 technology and accessible educational materials to
22 support that instruction. And then we ask that they
23 improve communication with families really making
24 families true partners in the work ahead of them to
25 improve literacy rates. It goes without saying that

1
2 all of these reading supports and literacy
3 instruction need to be provided to students who are
4 English Language Learners and with the language
5 supports that they need as well. There's no more
6 time to waste and we can't... as other people have
7 said today we can't be blaming the students. We
8 need to prepare our teachers and our schools to
9 deliver that instruction. With adequate resources,
10 dedicated teacher preparation, and a strong
11 commitment from everyone involved school staff
12 won't have to struggle to teach reading, students
13 won't have to struggle to read, and parents won't
14 have to fear that their children regardless of
15 whether or not they have dyslexia or another
16 disability won't leave school as readers. Really
17 briefly we do support the resolution before the
18 committee today. Thank you for the opportunity to
19 speak. I'm always available to answer questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
21 Next please.

22 NOEL TORTORE: Good afternoon. I would
23 like to thank the committee for bringing so much
24 attention to dyslexia and everyone who has spoken
25 today. I really appreciated hearing it. And my name

1 is Noel Tortore and I am not here as a policy or an
2 educational expert. But I'm here as a life... the
3 illustration of the life changing difference that
4 an effective and early intervention can have for a
5 person with dyslexia. I'm the case where everything
6 went right. Most of us take literacy for granted
7 and we forget how often we are reading text to
8 guide our lives, not just in terms of questions of
9 identity but also in questions of you know where is
10 the subway. You know and I just want people to
11 image what it would be like if you couldn't reach
12 your children, what it would be like if you
13 couldn't do inventory, what would it be like if you
14 never got to read that book that changed your life.
15 And I want to think about who you would be if that
16 was the world you experienced because I think about
17 that everyday. I think about how often I'm reading
18 and what information I receive through text and the
19 fact that if things were only slightly different I
20 would have never read and certainly not like I do.
21 As a child I avoided any activity involving
22 reading. I would pretend to read during class time.
23 You learn to flip the pages appropriately and use
24 pictures. And it's natural for all kids. But
25

1
2 luckily my first grade teacher noticed I was not
3 reading and that year I was diagnosed with
4 dyslexia. Between first and third grade I spent
5 part of the day in a small class, no more than five
6 students, receiving intensive instructions on
7 phonics and reading. At times I received individual
8 instruction. I went to my tutor's house over the
9 summer to receive instruction. And after three
10 years I went back to a normal class. I stopped
11 receiving any additional instruction and just
12 became a regular student. In fact, I felt like I
13 had missed so much that I needed to read everything
14 that everybody else had read while I was unable to.
15 So I read everything I could get my hands on for
16 years. And the fact that I was dyslexic was just
17 simply irrelevant. So after graduating high school
18 I studied history at the University of Chicago. In
19 2014 I graduated Phi Beta Kappa with general and
20 departmental honors. After graduation I worked as a
21 project associate at a criminal defense practice
22 for an indigent defense provider in the city and
23 I've actually written testimony that was submitted
24 to this very council. Today I'm a first year
25 doctoral student at the History Department of

1 Columbia University where I study modern European
2 history. I read fluently in Italian and Spanish and
3 I've been studying German irregularly since college
4 and I was recently awarded a grant to spend the
5 summer in... studying German. Accepted wisdom says
6 that dyslexics shouldn't be able to read in more
7 than one language. I didn't know that until I was
8 working on my fourth. Dyslexia is not an incurable
9 disease. It is not a life sentence. A diagnosis of
10 dyslexia should in no way limit the opportunities a
11 child has in life. The treatment for dyslexia is
12 simple and it's been well known for quite some
13 time. Early identification and early intervention
14 in the form of intensive small group or individual
15 instruction in the five pillars of reading. If the
16 intervention is done correctly a student only
17 receives additional instruction for a relatively
18 short period and dyslexia becomes irrelevant. And
19 while I'm certainly no expert it certainly seems
20 more effective to provide a powerful and early
21 intervention than to delay the intervention
22 decreasing its efficacy and lengthening its
23 duration. The failure to provide effective
24 interventions is a waste of human resources. We
25

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1
2 have countless children with dyslexia who dream of
3 becoming fireman, doctors, lawyers, teachers... and
4 unless they have effective interventions they'll
5 likely never be able to achieve those dreams. And
6 it can be a tragedy for these students personally
7 but for us as a society it's a loss. So thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you for your
9 testimony. Very very moving, thank you.

10 WENDY RAMOS: Good afternoon... or
11 evening. I feel privileged to be able to address
12 you today on the topic of dyslexia and the
13 struggles of our New York City students and their
14 families and the daily battle that they face
15 because of the lack of awareness, understanding,
16 and services.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Can you just state
18 your name for the record?

19 WENDY RAMOS: Oh I'm sorry. Wendy Ramos,
20 founder and Executive Director of Wish... Literacy. I
21 find it interesting that no one from the DOE
22 thought it important to stay and continue to
23 listen. But my son Lewis struggled from the very
24 beginning..

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: We have.. we do have
3 a rep here..

4 WENDY RAMOS: Oh we do?

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...from the DOE, yeah.

6 WENDY RAMOS: Excellent. I apologize
7 then. My son Lewis struggled in school from the
8 very beginning and no one in his school could
9 figure out why this intelligent creative boy
10 couldn't learn. Well intentioned teachers moved him
11 from ICT classes to special ed classes and
12 suggested private tutoring. Around the age of seven
13 it was suggested by his private tutor that he see a
14 neurologist and he was finally diagnosed with
15 dyslexia. The doctors explained it was common. It
16 had nothing to do with his intelligence and told me
17 to get him out of the DOE right away. They would
18 never help him. I was excited to have an answer to
19 his struggles but overwhelmed by the thought of
20 sending him on a bus four hours a day to private
21 school. I thought I would speak to his teachers and
22 principal. This is an educational issue. Now that I
23 had a reason they would be the ones who could help
24 him. I was wrong. As soon as I mentioned dyslexia
25 the walls went up and I heard all kinds of excuses.

1 We don't recognize dyslexia. It cannot be put on
2 his IEP. We do not have anyone trained who can help
3 him. I educated myself on my child's rights, Orton-
4 Gillingham, and what helps children with dyslexia
5 and fought for services for him. It was a never
6 ending battle and in fifth grade when he still
7 could not read, write, or do math I was told by his
8 vice principal some kids were not meant to be
9 successful. I knew in that moment I had to get him
10 out of the DOE and into a private school for kids
11 with dyslexia and similar learning disabilities. We
12 were the lucky ones. Our request for private school
13 funding was approved in days. The DOE did not have
14 a chance. They failed him for six years and the gap
15 was too big. For the past four years my son has
16 traveled like a grown man commuting to work four
17 hours a day to Teaneck, New Jersey. They had him
18 reading in six months, six months using pure
19 authentic Orton-Gillingham every day. Now he is a
20 freshman in the high school and is honor roll math
21 and computer science. My only regret is that I
22 waited and did not listen to that doctor who told
23 me to get him out. Excuse me. Because of our
24 struggle and all I learned I decided I wanted to
25

1 help other families in the same situation and
2 founded Wishes of Literacy. We just opened a
3 literacy center that offers an array of affordable
4 services that include evaluations, advocacy, and
5 1:1 Orton-Gillingham tutoring as well as associate
6 level Orton-Gillingham certification classes on
7 Staten Island. We are the only ones helping the
8 over 9,000 students who are struggling with
9 dyslexia on Staten Island. So on a daily basis you
10 can imagine the amount of numerous calls from
11 parents desperate for help and from teachers
12 frustrated because they do not know how to help
13 their own students. Our stories are all so similar.
14 Still so many years later the stories have not
15 changed. The stories need to change now. Sorry.
16 Dyslexia is not new. It is the most common learning
17 disability. It's the most misunderstood and most
18 underserved. We know what works and how to help
19 these kids yet principals and educators feed so
20 much misinformation and much of it intentional that
21 parents don't know what to do or what to believe.
22 Every step of the way is a fight for acceptance and
23 services and more time wasted before these kids get
24 the help that they need and deserve. You've heard
25

1 the testimonies. Kindergarten screenings for
2 phonological and phonemic awareness and teachers
3 trained in authentic full-fledged Orton-Gillingham
4 methodologies. For the older students 1:1 or very
5 small group Orton-Gillingham instruction if not the
6 struggle progresses and can become unbearable. They
7 will struggle with college entrance exams and job
8 applications and to teach their own children to
9 read. That's if they make it that far because
10 you've also heard the statistics of the juvenile
11 justice population. We as a city, state, as a
12 nation should be ashamed of ourselves when we say
13 we look at fourth grade reading scores to determine
14 how many beds our prison needs. We have condemned
15 our dyslexic children to failure without giving
16 them a chance. What needs to change? We need future
17 teachers trained at the college level in authentic
18 Orton-Gillingham, dyslexia needs to be a course not
19 a paragraph in a book. Every DOE employee should
20 have a training on dyslexia to learn what it is and
21 what it is not. All our current kindergarten
22 through second graders should be screened for
23 dyslexia and all our kindergarten through second
24 grade teachers need authentic Orton-Gillingham
25

1 training to be administered to every child and
2 class as the method to teach reading, writing, and
3 spelling. And we need select individuals also
4 trained to help the older children whose gap is too
5 big. Lastly and specific to Staten Island we need a
6 school just for our dyslexic and LD kids. Enough
7 with our children having to go to other boroughs
8 and New Jersey for their education. As I said these
9 children are our future and it is our
10 responsibility to do everything we can to make sure
11 that future is a bright one.

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. It was
14 very powerful and so on the mark and validated some
15 of what I was trying to say earlier..

16 WENDY RAMOS: Absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...in terms of not
18 even being allowed to put it onto an IEP etcetera
19 so forth and so on. And that idea of evaluating all
20 the kids. Hmm... gives me... [cross-talk]

21 WENDY RAMOS: Why not?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...a idea of a
23 thought.

24 WENDY RAMOS: They do a vision screening
25 for all kids...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah and then I..

3 WENDY RAMOS: ...so why not...

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I don't know if it
5 was on this panel but maybe it was on the panel
6 before where somebody said you know their kid was
7 you know held back from one grade and had to repeat
8 the grade and the same reading methods were used in
9 the class. And not only there. I mean it made me
10 think too.. I don't say everything all the time
11 because it takes too long. There's so many people
12 still yet to testify but you know even in summer
13 school that was the truth. So they put.. they'd
14 force kids to go to summer school and use the same
15 methods in summer school that they were using
16 during the year. And of course it's not going to
17 make a difference. And then those kids were going
18 to fail so like why do they even bother to do it,
19 you know?

20 WENDY RAMOS: What are they doing
21 differently the second time around?

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: How long ago did you
23 have to deal with your child?

24 WENDY RAMOS: It's been four since he..

25 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Four years, so..

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1

2

WENDY RAMOS: Well... yeah.

3

4

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...it's still... I mean
look I think... I think the other thing was that they
was... they were trying to say oh it's changed a
little bit like since I left you know the
department.

8

WENDY RAMOS: I deal with parents every
day, on a daily basis. It has not changed.

10

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

11

WENDY RAMOS: Otherwise I wouldn't have
all these calls coming in on a daily basis.

13

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah. Yeah.

14

WENDY RAMOS: It's not changed.

15

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah.

16

WENDY RAMOS: Whatever they're doing is
not working.

18

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yeah, okay. Well
thank you. Very powerful.

20

WENDY RAMOS: Thank you.

21

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. And... and...
and I know everybody has... and I just can't comment
for everybody but thank you. Next please.

24

KRISTEN BERGER: Good afternoon. I'm

25

Kristen Berger from Community Education Council 3

1 on the upper west side in west Harlem. Thank you
2 for holding these hearings today. I'm sorry the two
3 council members from my district had to leave but
4 Community Education Council 3 has looked at this
5 issue and we are so grateful that the hearing is
6 occurring. And we strongly support Resolution 1027.
7 I'm glad to see it's gotten the city council's
8 attention. It's unacceptable that for an estimated
9 200,000 New York City public school students
10 struggling with language based disabilities.
11 There's no standardized evidence based teaching
12 methods for these students in the system. The
13 current practice of the New York City Department of
14 Education does not provide sufficient specific
15 training for teachers nor sufficient intervention
16 for students with language based disabilities.
17 Language based disabilities require appropriate
18 evaluation and intervention that are tailored to
19 the child. It is a system... the DOE system is one
20 that relies largely on luck and parental
21 intervention as we've heard repeatedly today. There
22 is no clear plan within the DOE for student with
23 language based disabilities. It's ludicrous that
24 educators are still afraid to use the terms
25

1
2 dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia in IEPs. And off
3 of my written testimony as a parent I know that
4 that's true, that we are not encouraged to use
5 those words. The state can certainly provide
6 guidance by at least providing a clear definition
7 for all educators across the state. Presently the
8 onus is on parents to identify the problem, to
9 advocate for appropriate evaluation, and sort
10 through reading and writing programs to find the
11 best one for their child. The Department of
12 Education is shirking their responsibility to
13 adequately educate these students. The burden's on
14 all families, many of whom find the only way to get
15 appropriate service for their child is to pay for
16 extensive private tutoring or go through the
17 lengths of suing the city for access to the few
18 private schools that specialize in dyslexia. This
19 is not right for any family and is especially
20 troubling for families that may lack awareness of
21 the disability or the resources to pay for access
22 to these private services. The state legislation
23 within A4330 provides solid starting point to
24 address the needs of these students. By properly
25 identify... identifying students' disabilities,

1 acknowledging the diagnosis in their IEPs and
2 providing teachers who are adequately trained to
3 instruct such students we can provide a way up for
4 our struggling students. It is the responsibility
5 of the education department to provide the best
6 possible education for all of our students. We look
7 forward to a time when we can have the confidence
8 that this is being done. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Okay thank you
11 everybody for coming in. I really appreciate it.
12 And look forward to continuing this discussion.
13 Thank you. Okay Doctor John Russell the Windward
14 School, Doctor David Salsberg okay Pediatric
15 Assessment Learning and Support, Scott Gaynor
16 Stephen Gaynor School, Katherine Garnett Hunter
17 College, Barbara Vivolo Decoding Dyslexia
18 organization, and Carolyn Strom an advocate at PHD.
19 Okay James Wesley Children of the New York
20 Dyslexia... with Dyslexia. He left? Okay. And Desiree
21 Jones... Faith Bowie Jones [sp?] okay. And Barbara
22 Glassman from INCLUDE New York City. Okay hold on
23 one second. We're going to get everybody up and
24 swear you all in together. By the way did the...
25 anybody from the other panel, the last panel have

1 testimony that they didn't turn in? Yeah oh... okay.
2 Well we're going to... it's still here. And we're
3 going to get to it. I think it'll be the next
4 panel. And we will stay 'till everybody who wants
5 to speak has an opportunity to speak. Okay. Okay
6 good. So let me ask you to raise your right hand.
7 do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the truth,
8 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and to
9 answer council member questions honestly? Thank you
10 very much, okay. Should we start over here this
11 time? Yeah? Okay. Change it up a little.

13 BARBARA GLASSMAN: So good afternoon. My
14 name is Barbara Glassman. I'm the Executive
15 Director of Include NYC. We'd like to thank you
16 very much for holding this hearing today. Include
17 NYC formerly Resources for Special Needs supports
18 the Resolution 1027 sponsored by Council Members
19 Cabrera and Cohen. Include NYC is a parent resource
20 center for families who have a child from birth to
21 age 26 with a disability. We serve over 5,000
22 parents annually through a resource line and
23 workshops and New York City's five boroughs. And
24 all of our services are free to our families.
25 Approximately 18 percent of our resource line calls

1 are from families who state they have a child with
2 dyslexia or related disability. And our parent
3 workshops, 30 percent of attendees indicate
4 dyslexia or related disability as the primary
5 concern for their child. In spite of the
6 significant number of inquiries we already receive
7 about dyslexia and related disabilities many more
8 parents make... do not even know the exact nature of
9 their child's disability or even that such
10 disabilities exist. The reluctance to identify
11 disabilities such as dyslexia on IEPs can lead to a
12 classification that does not reflect the student's
13 actual disability and therefore to... inappropriate
14 methods of remediation. In our experience working
15 with parents we often find that dyslexia is
16 misidentified as another disability that fits into
17 one of the 13 approved classifications. For
18 example, a child may be classified as having an
19 emotional or intellectual disability when in fact
20 the root of his issue is dyslexia. Since the
21 current evaluations do not identify dyslexia
22 parents who call us feel compelled to seek private
23 costly evaluations and once a private proper
24 diagnosis is obtained they often have to find
25

1 appropriate services for their child's learning. In
2 our conversations with parents we find that they
3 frequently encounter significant hurdles to try and
4 obtain these services from public schools. We
5 receive many calls from parents asking how we can
6 help them obtain access to private schools or to
7 services that can only be accessed with high
8 financial or logistical cost to the family. A lag
9 in funding reimbursement causes the need for
10 parents to pay for these services out of pocket.
11 The vast majority of the parents with whom we speak
12 do simply do not have the funds to do so. As a
13 child ages the consequences of the failed... address
14 dyslexia becomes greater. About one-third of the
15 transition age students in our Project Possibility
16 program have a learning disability. Many of these
17 students are over aged, under credited high school
18 youth. Some... fallen behind in school primarily
19 become... because they are dyslexic. These students
20 for example are 17 years old, in 9th grade, because
21 they have only one quarter of the credits to
22 graduate from high school and they are in jeopardy
23 of not receiving their diploma. For non-English
24 speaking families we... also seen how dyslexia and
25

1 related learning disabilities present another layer
2 of complexity. They... they're misclassified because
3 they have neither the English language skills to
4 test their actual level nor an English speaking
5 parent to advocate for them. In our work we see
6 first-hand that classroom environments which employ
7 a multi-sensory... can help break the code for
8 students with dyslexia and related disabilities and
9 thus enable them to stay on track for successful
10 academic careers. Thank you for your time and
11 attention to this critical issue.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
14 Next please.

15 DESIREE JONES: Thank you. Hi. And god
16 bless everybody on the panel there. And my name is
17 Desiree Jones and I'm here on behalf of my daughter
18 Faith Bowie Jones. And she has dyslexia. Now I hear
19 a lot of things and a lot of it's true and a lot of
20 it's not true. The tracking is not true. My
21 daughter is in a YABC class because she was bullied
22 and I moved her and I kept her home because I had
23 fear of her safety because she had medical
24 conditions and she keeps having surgeries. And when
25 I tried to express this they look at me as though

1 it's an excuse but it's not an excuse. If she gets
2 hurt because somebody wants to bully her it's going
3 to be a big problem. So in order to avoid all of
4 that I kept her with me, kept her safe. Because her
5 safety and her medical condition is paramount. But
6 what's going on is in the YABC school they're not...
7 they're not approaching her situation the way it
8 needs to be addressed. Instead of them harnessing
9 her they're trying to push her out due to whatever
10 is going on in there. And I'm here to address it
11 because I'm angry. I'm angry and I'm confused
12 because I always depend on the DOE to do the right
13 thing. And I believe in the DOE. I came through it.
14 And if I can come through it my kids can come
15 through it. This thing that's going on is just... not
16 fair. It's not fair. Because the kids are being
17 looked at in a different way because they have
18 dyslexia. And not to label dyslexia on an IEP is a
19 crime because the teachers will not know how to
20 address the child. They just see learning
21 disability. And it's much more than that because it
22 is known but it's not addressed. So in order not to
23 address it specifically you don't label it. And I
24 think that's so unfair to all the children. And
25

1 these children are highly intelligent people. My
2 daughter... and I'm embarrassed to say it but I'm
3 going to. My daughter came with me to the tax
4 preparer. I've been getting my taxes prepared by
5 someone who hasn't been doing me fair so I changed
6 and went to someone new. And when she went with me
7 and she listened to the woman and she understood
8 everything. I didn't. That tells me my daughter is
9 very intelligent and she knows how to disseminate
10 what's right and what's wrong and when people are
11 attacking her she says something but then she
12 becomes a problem. They try to make my daughter a
13 criminal problem by force allegations that were
14 entertained but were not true. So I'm faced with
15 trying to get my daughter through the system
16 without her having a criminal record because she
17 made a report on someone that punched her face and
18 she didn't punch back because she said mom I
19 thought about my future and I want my diploma. And
20 I was proud of her. But they didn't care. They
21 tried to find a reason to make her the problem
22 instead of addressing the issue. If she could take
23 a lot of verbal abuse... and it's very difficult.
24 These social emotional problems that these children
25

1 have you will not begin to believe. And your... if
2 you're bullied all the time you learn how to take
3 it but then when you start speaking out now you're
4 no longer being bullied and that is wrong. I... I
5 don't know where to go, who to turn to for my
6 daughter to get through school. She's ready to walk
7 away, literally walk away. And yes, she wants to be
8 a lawyer. What... where... you know I'm sorry I don't
9 have notes and everything but where is the justice
10 in this system for these children. She's not the
11 only one. If they address the whole situation and
12 the people that are in their schools, they will
13 find if they teach them the way they're supposed to
14 be taught they will have a lot less problems and a
15 lot less YABC.

17 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I'm going
18 to have one of my staffers reach out to you and see
19 if we can't find out a little bit more about what's
20 going on with your daughter.

21 DESIREE JONES: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you.

23 DOCTOR GAYNOR: Thank you. I am Doctor
24 Scott Gaynor. I am the Head of School at the
25 Stephen Gaynor School. Thank you for the

1
2 opportunity to testify before you today on behalf
3 of New York City's struggling young readers. I have
4 been working with children with language based
5 learning disabilities for over 22 years. As a
6 teacher, administrator, and Head of School at
7 Stephen Gaynor School I've had the opportunity to
8 see students who enter gainer with limited and no..
9 no reading skills become proficient readers. While
10 I could easily state that it was our gifted faculty
11 that enabled these children to unlock the code of
12 reading it would not be telling the entire story.
13 The teachers at Gaynor are trained to use a multi-
14 sensory phonics based instruction more commonly
15 known as the Orton-Gillingham or OG approach. My
16 school has been using this approach since our
17 founding by my grandmother back in 1962. The OG
18 approach has been around since the 1930s and in
19 2000 the national reading panel reviewed hundreds
20 of studies and concluded that programs that utilize
21 direct systematic phonics based approaches such as
22 Orton-Gillingham to address dyslexia present the
23 most effective method of providing students with an
24 accurate foundation of phonological decoding for
25 higher level reading skills. While this methodology

1 has been successful at Stephen Gaynor you might be
2 thinking how this would work within the larger and
3 more complex New York City Department of Education.
4 For the past 10 years my school has run an after
5 school reading program called the community
6 learning center or CLC. The CLC is a partnership
7 with two public schools, PS166 and PS84. Every fall
8 we evaluate the bottom quartile readers in each of
9 the first grade classrooms. Based on the results of
10 the evaluation we invite 25 of the lowest readers
11 to attend our program at no charge to the school or
12 family. These students work with our teachers in
13 small groups for one hour sessions twice a week.
14 With this limited exposure to OG I'm pleased to
15 announce that we have been able to get the vast
16 majority of CLC students reading on grade level by
17 the end of second grade. Imagine if all New York
18 City's dyslexic learners could have access to that
19 type of instruction five days a week. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
22 And that Orton-Gillingham is really important.
23 Thank you.

24 DOCTOR SALSBERG: Hi, my name is Doctor
25 David Salsberg. I'm a clinical Neuropsychologist on

1 staff at Weill Cornell Medical Center and NYU
2 Medical Center. I have been practicing and
3 evaluating thousands of children for the last 20
4 plus years, many of whom who have dyslexia. It is a
5 pleasure... I'm going to speak off of my testimony.
6 I'm trying to do it quicker. It is a pleasure to be
7 testifying proactively for a change. I am usually
8 testifying in educational hearings to get parents
9 funding for \$50,000 a year tuition, Lindamood-Bell,
10 everything that has been spoken about and often
11 winning. The frustrating part of all of this is so..
12 so much resources have to be put into after the
13 fact fighting. We know from every... everything that
14 this committee has reviewed, everyone that has
15 testified and decades... literally decades of
16 research we know a couple of things. The monetary
17 cost is huge. The emotional cost is bigger. The
18 cost to society even bigger than that. This... all of
19 these interventions... also we know scientifically we
20 have ways of evaluating, monitoring, and treating.
21 That's a blessing. We don't always have that in the
22 field of psychology or in education that we
23 scientifically prove here. What was most
24 frustrating to be honest with you about today and
25

1
2 it has come up in a couple of different ways is the
3 not putting the diagnosis. I have sat in dozens of
4 IEPs where I've been told that sometimes the child
5 is not dyslexic, sometimes that dyslexia doesn't
6 exist, but always that you cannot put on an IEP.
7 And I have been told and also hypothesized but... but
8 have confirmed that part of the reason it is not
9 put on IEP is multi-faceted and every... every level
10 of it is complicated. One is psychoeducational
11 evaluations see... teachers are not generally... and
12 general ed teachers certainly not trained in
13 evaluating and diagnosing. We get past that and a
14 professional comes in and we diagnose this. We're
15 not... diagnose it. We're not allowed to put it on
16 why? The honest truth is... is because that would
17 then dictate approving course of action which
18 they're not set up to do. They don't want to put in
19 writing that this is a disorder that needs
20 treatment because that treatment they cannot do. If
21 I ask for individual sets because that's what the
22 child needs, we're told it doesn't happen
23 individually. If a child's in ICT and needs sets
24 because they're dyslexic we're told they can't have
25 it. Summer services... they can't have it which is

1
2 why many parents are forced into school systems
3 that they don't necessarily want to be in but have
4 a proven track record of how to intervene with
5 this. So everything on everything on every single
6 level needs to change this. Proposal is a step in
7 the right direction. There needs to be help on
8 every little... on every level identifying,
9 diagnosing, and treatment.

10 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So doctor... and I... I
11 should have followed up with the... the DOE too on
12 this but there are other types of learning
13 disabilities other than dyslexia right?

14 DOCTOR SALSBERG: Correct. And... and
15 there are many types of upper respiratory
16 infections but if your doctor didn't tell you that
17 you have strep throat you can't treat it. So just
18 throwing out a cold and saying go to Dwayne
19 Reading... go walk up the aisles and see what works
20 is the same analogy as saying it's a learning
21 disability, dyslexia eh doesn't matter if we call
22 it that. Of course it does. It's the one... it's one
23 of the few learning disabilities that we actually
24 have proven methods of treating it. So it... it

1 should be dictated to the teachers and the
2 treatment team.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So it's... it's
5 impossible for a classroom teacher who knows you
6 know the child has a learning disability to address
7 all of the possibilities of different learning
8 disabilities to try to cure one of them is like
9 guess work?

10 DOCTOR SALSBERG: Correct. And then
11 unfortunately gets identified when there is an
12 emotional or behavioral or other trajectory set
13 forward by the fact that the child can't read.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm. Okay thank
15 you Doctor. Next please.

16 KATHERINE GARNETT: Hi, my name is Kate
17 Garnett and I'm a Professor at Hunter College. I
18 started the Learning Disabilities Graduate Program...
19 Teacher Preparation Program 35 years ago. And I've
20 been putting out special educators with a
21 specialization in learning disabilities and reading
22 disabilities as well as math disabilities for all
23 of that time. You'd think I would have solved the
24 problem by now. I'm going to go off my... my list to
25 start with. On the issue of the term dyslexia. The

1 whole thing about terminology has been... has a very
2 long history and has been fraught with a variety of
3 things and especially the fact that the field
4 itself for years has not agreed upon a terminology.
5 We've even got a split now between DSM5 and this
6 federal law for education. So that being said I'd
7 like to make a simple breakthrough idea just to
8 work with... just a workable idea which is that
9 learning disabilities was a chosen name, a really
10 good one for... I could give you... I could teach the
11 whole course on it. It's a good frame of reference
12 okay so I think we need to keep it and keep it in
13 education. With it... below that as you said in your
14 first remarks below that we need to specify just
15 like a respiratory disease we need to specify
16 whatever we can specify. And I think the old time
17 kind of medical/neurological terminology of
18 dyscalculia, dyslexia, and dysgraphia are decent
19 identifiers for academic difficulties. When they
20 rise to a certain level of a certain quality then
21 we can call these things that. And I think it's
22 important for them to be seen. I think dyslexia is
23 far more visible than dyscalculia which is an area
24 specialty of mine. They have teachers not only have
25

1
2 no idea what to do with it they don't even know
3 that it exists. So... and it does. So the naming I
4 think is important but keeping learning
5 disabilities, going below that, and maybe
6 specifying... a simple picture is that learning
7 disabilities... I think we can agree on this though
8 we haven't yet... are made of language based learning
9 disabilities which include dysgraphia and dyslexia
10 and nonverbal learning disabilities which are much
11 smaller under which you can be... have comorbid
12 difficulties with self-regulation. So we're not
13 going to call ADHD a disability for educational
14 purposes. Okay, I hope that's useful. In the
15 picture of 76,000 anyone in the field... whatever the
16 actual number is, whether it's 200,000 or 76,000,
17 whatever the number is about 75 percent of those
18 kids will have significant reading disorders which
19 can be called dyslexic. I think I'm... I've got
20 agreement there. So you... they don't have to know
21 their exact numbers because they haven't been
22 allowed to call them dyslexia. But we can... you can
23 count on 75 percent of the... the number they've got
24 having dyslexia and 25 percent having a variety of
25 other things. So it's the most common. I hope

1 that's useful. There are I want to say a couple of
2 other things if you don't mind. Oh I'm... so I'm a
3 preparation program person right, I realize, been
4 preparing teachers. You need to know that being
5 certified in literacy in the state of New York does
6 not mean you believe in dyslexia, does not mean
7 you've learned how to remediate dyslexia. It..
8 there... nationwide people in reading remediation and
9 what they now call literacy have an allergy to
10 dyslexia. They do not in general consider it their
11 specialty, their turf, someone else does that.
12 Special education does that. It's beyond me but now
13 I'm a special educator. Unfortunately, I have to
14 tell you a large majority of special education
15 preparatory programs do not make their... their
16 program... make their students proficient and
17 specialists in dyslexia, certainly not in
18 dyscalculia, for god sake not at all at all at all
19 and rarely in... in... in dyslexia. So I think you need
20 to watch out when you think about certification.
21 What's stamped on the... on the degree is not the
22 same as what the expertise is.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Used literacy..
25 literacy coach together with the..

1
2 KATHERINE GARNETT: They said reading
3 coach. I thought that was a step forward.

4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...dedicated reading
5 coach.

6 KATHERINE GARNETT: That was a step
7 forward because now they're talking about reading
8 because literacy is... has become too vague.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think in the past
10 my experience is that they use it interchangeably.

11 KATHERINE GARNETT: No I...

12 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That's why I...

13 [cross-talk]

14 KATHERINE GARNETT: ...I think they're
15 using the word reading on purpose.

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...specifically...

17 KATHERINE GARNETT: But who they're
18 picking for that I don't know.

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Mm-hmm.

20 KATHERINE GARNETT: The other thing is
21 that I have been preparing people to teach within
22 Orton-Gillingham frames of reference. And I've been
23 preparing them not just to know about it but to do
24 it. It doesn't stick very well. Because when they
25 get into the system they're not allowed to do it.

1 And you can be prepared to given you know shots and
2 to do this and do that but if you don't practice it
3 you lose what beginning expertise you had. So their
4 schools are problematic in terms of a providing
5 time focus, willing of... insufficient intensity
6 meaning one to five or several times a week the
7 schools have made it difficult for the specialists
8 to become seasoned which is a major major problem.
9 I want to make one other suggestion. And that is
10 technology on the... level of technology. It's really
11 simple. We need to screen all kids for their
12 strength in being able to take in language by ear
13 and certainly all kids with learning disabilities
14 by a... third grade. Because it's fourth grade when
15 they start to be uneducated. Not only can they not
16 read, not only can they not write well, but they're
17 not being educated because they're not doing the
18 things that gain them the access. So we need to
19 screen them by third grade so that by fourth grade
20 everyone who can benefit from it is getting
21 educated through... through the ear... through
22 recordings for books. And schools absolutely do not
23 have any idea about this, zero. It's like what do
24 you mean, I never heard of that, what do you mean I

1
2 can go to my librarian. So no one knows. So there's
3 lack of knowledge, there's lack of understanding,
4 and there's lack of skill. And then you got to make
5 time for it.

6 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. I
7 appreciate it very very much. Next please. Yes, go
8 ahead please.

9 BARBARA VIVOLO: Hello, my name is
10 Barbara Vivolo. I am the founding member of
11 Decoding Dyslexia New York state. I have over 3,000
12 members on my Facebook page, 500 members on Long
13 Island. I live on Long Island. We are the fastest
14 grassroots movement in the United States. We're in
15 50 states and three Canadian provinces. I have a
16 seventh grade girl that is 12 years old and
17 dyslexic. My story is not a unique one. It is the
18 story I hear form all of my 3,000 members. I
19 volunteer my time advocating and helping parents
20 get services for their children. My child went to
21 the public school system 'till 6th grade. My child
22 was diagnosed with dyslexia in third grade by
23 Doctor Salsberg. During this process I educated
24 myself about dyslexia and the needed manage it...
25 management and appropriate education and the

1 scientific evidence based reading programs to help
2 the public school to help my child. I was very
3 diplomatic at the CSE meeting trying to collaborate
4 with my school district to help them help my child.
5 Moving along my child's frustrations anxiety,
6 stress, negative self-esteem, low confidence
7 started. As we were moving along third grade,
8 fourth grade, and fifth grades things started
9 falling apart. With all the supports in place and
10 the golden IEP that the lawyer said I had the
11 public schools could not meet my child's need. They
12 worked hard at helping me. I got them professional
13 development in my IEP to help them help my child
14 because I did not want her leaving my community.
15 Their only resolution was to put my child in
16 contained classroom where she clearly did not
17 belong but it was the only placements they had.
18 Fifth grade was the most difficult time for my
19 child. She was falling apart fast. In and out of
20 school all year, long... some days my little girl
21 couldn't even get her exhausted body up from bed to
22 face another very intense stressful day. Going into
23 sixth grade reading on a first grade level we were
24 very excited about this because it was a new
25

1 building, new teachers, new principal, new things
2 looked great. But my child said mom does everyone
3 know that the dumb kid's coming into sixth grade.
4 It was then I realized that my child was being
5 broken from the system. We started in sixth grade
6 reading on a first grade level. Like every other
7 child it was hard for my child to get into this
8 building called school that should have been
9 exciting and fun and adventurous and all her
10 friends... There were days when the team and the
11 guidance counsellors and the school psychologist
12 had to pull her out of the car like a dog going to
13 a veterinarians until the day she woke up and said
14 mom I never want to go in that school again and
15 that's when the journey turned positive. I put her
16 in a school called the Kildonan School in Amenia,
17 New York and it's a school that specializes for
18 children with dyslexia. And my child now is 17
19 months, doesn't live at home, she's a five-day
20 boarder. I travel 2,000 miles a month to go get her
21 every Friday and bring her home for the weekend to
22 bring her back up on Sundays. And she is now all
23 whole again because of the appropriate educational
24 environment and the proper scientific [phonetic]
25

1 methodology of Orton-Gillingham reading. My child
2 now is writing a book. She's on her eighth page...
3 eighth chapter of writing a book. She sat at the
4 Senator's... at the capital in Albany with Joann
5 Simon to support this bill because how important it
6 is. And she was interviewed and she said my mom's
7 doing this not only for me but for all the children
8 in New York state. When I tell you 3,000 members my
9 phone is exploding from the support that I give,
10 the free support. So my thing is I really... really
11 would love to see this bill passed. I would love to
12 see dyslexia in the IEPs so that these parents
13 could have help. My upset-ness... I have so much
14 built up in me because I have so many parents that
15 I support and I realize that I am a driving force...
16 well my child is the Chief force and I am right
17 behind her, she's blazing the trail, and I'm just
18 happy that I could help everyone in New York state
19 and I'm doing the best I can but I'm only one mom
20 and you know have some women up in Albany and I
21 have a lot of you know seeds that I kind of plant.
22 I do support groups. I'm doing the best I can but I
23 think the DOE needs to realize that we need to say
24 the word dyslexia. There's nothing wrong with it.
25

1
2 It's really a strength. That's what I give my
3 daughter. And that's what I tell every parent. Talk
4 about it. Say it. There's nothing wrong with it.
5 It's just learning different. We learn different.
6 So I just have one quote that I love to from
7 Confucius that is if you plan for one year to plant
8 rice... wait... if you plan for one year plant rice, if
9 you plan for 10 years plant trees, if you plan for
10 100 years educate children.

11 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much
12 Barbara.

13 BARBARA VIVOLO: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: What's the name of
15 your organization?

16 BARBARA VIVOLO: Decoding Dyslexia New
17 York State.

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Oh yes, okay, yeah.
19 And did you have any written testimony?

20 BARBARA VIVOLO: I don't...

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Would you send that
22 to me though.

23 BARBARA VIVOLO: I will send you this.

24 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And we'll give you
25 our email address as well.

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1

2

BARBARA VIVOLO: Okay great. Thank you.

3

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.

4

Really very touching.

5

BARBARA VIVOLO: Thank you.

6

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And thank you to the

7

panel as well everybody. And our last panel Rose

8

Kair [phonetic] from the Staten Island Borough...

9

Kerr, I'm sorry, Kerr, from Staten Island Borough

10

President's Office James..., Susan Crawford The Right

11

to Read Project, Christina Reuteskiold at NYU

12

Steinholt... Steinhardt, I'm sorry, Victoria Taccolm,

13

and Elizabeth Hendricks the Children of New York

14

City with Dyslexia. Alright I'd like to swear

15

everybody in if you'd just raise your right hand

16

please. Do you solemnly swear or affirm to tell the

17

truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth

18

and to answer council member questions honestly?

19

Thank you. Would you like to start?

20

ROSE KERR: Good afternoon Chair Dromm

21

and others on the committee. I appreciate this

22

opportunity to offer testimony today on behalf of

23

the Staten Island Borough President James S. Oddo.

24

My name is Rose Kerr. I serve as the Director of

25

Education for the Borough President. Improving

1 access to special education services for our Staten
2 Island students is a priority of the borough
3 president. And as a result in order to ascertain
4 the... the scope of the issue of obtaining adequate
5 services for our dyslexic students he began meeting
6 with parents, advocates, and students. You met one
7 of our parents who offered testimony, actually two
8 of our parents that offered testimony this
9 afternoon. Those were pioneers in... in speaking with
10 the borough president and others of the staff to
11 just to have... make us aware of the outcry there is
12 on Staten Island. He also visited specialized
13 schools in order to become familiar with
14 educational environments where dyslexic students
15 feel hope and the relief that comes with
16 understanding that they can do it and the belief
17 that they will do it. Specifically that was the
18 community school in Teaneck. We were overwhelmed by
19 the amount of joy in those children in that they
20 could learn. However, it became apparent that
21 although the DOE has recently taken steps in
22 training classroom teachers and intervention
23 strategies for dyslexic students they are not
24 willing at this time to entertain the notion of
25

1 opening a standalone brick and mortar school for
2 our children who struggle with reading. As a
3 result, we are working hard to bring our borough a
4 specialized school built around the model of the
5 community school be it private, nonprofit, a
6 charter, or regular DOE school dedicated to the
7 large population of students who are not obtaining
8 the needed specialized instruction in their... in our
9 district. We applaud the city council's efforts to
10 address the needs of students with dyslexia and
11 related language based learning challenges and
12 agree in large measure with the statements made by
13 Chair Dromm and former Chairman Jackson in their
14 recent article how to better serve dyslexic
15 students in our public schools. We concur that... in
16 what you had said and I don't need to repeat any of
17 that here, it's clear, one of the... many of the
18 recommendations you made with regard to what the
19 schools need to do. One thing though I would want
20 to mention in the developing partnerships between
21 DOE and CUNY we recently met with the chancellor.
22 We visited a school, the pilot school where the
23 dyslexia pilot is functioning, PS57 on... on Staten
24 Island and the chancellor was there yesterday with
25

1
2 us and asked us and we gladly... we... we gladly agreed
3 that she would meet with the heads of our
4 individual colleges and universities on Staten
5 Island. We're... we're taking measures to have that
6 meeting soon so that she can and we can and they
7 can together formulate a plan. And I urge others
8 and other boroughs to do the same. Formulate a plan
9 on what the teachers need to be learning in order
10 to face the challenges. Among one of the big
11 challenges is our children with dyslexia. So thank
12 you very much and please know this. Whether you are
13 a struggling reader, a family member, a teacher,
14 school administrator, advocate, or government body
15 that had been here... today who... I'm going off... we
16 have... you have a strong partner sitting in the
17 Office of the... of the Staten Island Borough
18 President. Thank you... [cross-talk]

19 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
20 And thank you for your patience today, staying with
21 us throughout the hearing. And please express my
22 gratitude to the borough president for his advocacy
23 on behalf of this issue. And we look forward to
24 continuing to work with him and would like to
25

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coordinate with him... some efforts as well in terms
of what he's doing with the colleges out there.

ROSE KERR: That'd be great. I'll...

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...to prepare
teachers.

ROSE KERR: I'll let him know. Thank
you.

CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you again.
Next please.

CHRISTINE REUTERSKIOLD: chair...
Chairperson Dromm and members of the committee
thank you for the opportunity to speak today on a
topic that I care deeply about. My name is
Christine Reuterskiold. I'm... I'm an Associate
Professor and Chair of the NYU Department of
Communicative Sciences and Disorders where we
educate future speech language pathologists. My
research focuses on developmental language
disorders in children with a special interest in
the reciprocal development of oral and written
language. Literacy skills are part of an
individual's language skills. There is a reciprocal
relationship between the development of reading and
writing and the development of oral language skills

1 throughout the school years. Children we think of
2 as dyslexic are challenged by the decoding phase of
3 reading in an orthographic system like English.
4 Children with dyslexia struggle with decoding and
5 encoding of the alphabetic system with difficulties
6 sounding out words, decoding words, and spelling
7 words. These children will come from two groups.
8 The first group consists of children who have an
9 earlier oral language learning disability or a
10 language disorder without any apparent reason such
11 as autism, intellectual handicaps or social
12 deprivation. This group represents approximately
13 seven percent of all Kindergarteners. And many of
14 these children continue to struggle with literacy
15 learning. The second group are children who have
16 not been identified with an oral language disorder
17 but who struggle when their language system is
18 taxed with the challenge to learn to read and write
19 which requires them to actively think about
20 language as a system and represent spoken words and
21 sounds in writing. The third group of children do
22 not show significant problems with decoding. And
23 they would therefore not be included under the
24 diagnosis of dyslexia. These children have oral
25

1 reading skills that sound fine but they have poor
2 reading comprehension and they are talked about as
3 poor comprehenders. They typically also have weaker
4 general language skills including lower levels of
5 oral language comprehension. When the oral and
6 written language they have to process in the
7 classroom gets increasingly complex they struggle.
8 Poor comprehenders can go undetected and fall
9 behind in all academic areas if we do not have
10 structure identification and screening systems in
11 place. Language skills, oral and written, are used
12 in every single subject in school, not just in ELA.
13 So what can we do to help these children with these
14 different problems. Early identification and
15 screening is central. Letter identification and
16 tasks that test if children have the awareness of
17 words are made of sounds and can be represented by
18 letters are good screening tasks. But we also have
19 to make sure that comprehension is tested not... not
20 just reading fluency. Finally, it's important to
21 raise awareness of different types of oral language
22 and literacy difficulties to make sure that all
23 children who need help get help. I am pleased to
24 see that proposed legislation would provide
25

1 continuing education for teachers and school
2 administrators in the area of dyslexia and language
3 learning disabilities. Early identification and
4 support is important but it is also important to
5 continuously screen students since language
6 processing vulnerabilities change over time and may
7 look different at different points in development.
8 Thank you again for the opportunity to testify
9 today and for taking the time to have a hearing on
10 a topic that affects so many children in New York
11 City and New York state. I'm happy to answer any
12 questions you have.
13

14 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you very much.
15 Next please.

16 ELIZABETH HENDRIX: [off mic] Hi, I'm
17 Elizabeth Hendrix and I have a master's in reading
18 and I am a certified academic... I don't know. It's
19 not on, sorry. Shall I start all over?

20 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Yes.

21 ELIZABETH HENDRIX: Alright. My name is
22 Elizabeth Hendrix and I have a master's in reading
23 and I am a certified academic language therapist.
24 In order to become a certified academic language
25 therapist, I had to attend two additional years to

1
2 be trained in how to teach dyslexic children to
3 read, write, and spell. Unfortunately, there are
4 only about 12 hundred of us in the United States
5 that are as well trained as I am. My granddaughter
6 is dyslexic. She attended public school here until
7 it was apparent the teachers did not know how to
8 instruct a dyslexic child. Since New York does not
9 recognize the word dyslexia my son had her tested
10 privately. At the expense of the New York people
11 she went to a private school at a cost of about
12 \$30,000 a year. Unfortunately, the private school
13 teachers were only trained for five days. And.. what
14 is it.. prevent academic failure, PAF, at Churchill
15 with no follow-up. When I observed in my
16 granddaughter's class it was very obvious that the
17 teachers were ill trained. They were doing the
18 program incorrectly, mispronouncing the phonemes
19 and giving the students wrong information. Five
20 days is not enough training especially when there
21 is no follow-up or further training. My
22 granddaughter had to come to me four days a week
23 after school, after travelling on a bus from her
24 apartment to Churchill for an hour and 15 minutes
25 and an hour and 15 minutes to get home and then

1
2 have to come to me to learn how to read, write, and
3 spell. Obviously there is something wrong with this
4 picture. Why is New York paying private schools
5 millions upon millions of dollars who are not doing
6 their job correctly. This money could be spent
7 instructing public school teachers how to teach not
8 only dyslexic students but any student who has
9 difficulty in learning to read. Instead of reaching
10 only a few students public school teachers could
11 reach thousands of children both special and
12 general education teachers do not know the early
13 signs and what to do. Dyslexia can be identified as
14 early as kindergarten. Mary... Doctor Maryanne Wolf...
15 Tufts University well-known specialist in dyslexia
16 has a one minute rapid naming in kindergarten that
17 they could easily do to start identifying to check
18 out if there's more testing that needed to be done.
19 A student does not have to fail before intervention
20 takes place. We are letting our future down by
21 letting our children fall through the cracks. It
22 will not cost an extra dime to accomplish this if
23 we take all the money that the state is giving and
24 providing to private schools and put it to more
25 productive use by properly training public school

1 teachers. After training there absolutely has to be
2 follow-up. Cannot just say goodbye, you've had your
3 training, that's it. It... there has to be much much
4 more. Just to let you know all Orton-Gillingham
5 based programs are not created equal. So when
6 someone says that they're Orton-Gillingham trained...
7 you know five days does not cut it. And instruction
8 does not have to be one on one. There is research
9 upon research backing that up that one on one is
10 not effective as three to five students that are on
11 within six months... sorry my mouth is dry, on...
12 within six months of ability level and no more than
13 two years' difference in age. Doctor Reid Lyon who
14 headed one of the largest or the largest federally
15 funded program on reading and among those was
16 Doctor Sally Shaywitz, many many other gurus said
17 that only 10 percent of the teachers in the United
18 States are highly trained to teach children how to
19 read. And he considered it a public health problem
20 that this was allowed to happen. This was back in
21 2000. Has not changed unfortunately. And every
22 school district received a copy of the report which
23 was you know very long but it did explain what
24 needed to be done. And if... as far as DOE today
25

1 they, in my opinion, misrepresented what was
2 actually going on in the public schools. I have
3 attended in the last six years many IEP meetings
4 and have read many IEP reports. It is a disgrace.
5 In that time, I have not read one single IEP report
6 that was done correctly by law.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well the whole issue
9 of IEPs is a topic for another hearing to be honest
10 with you.

11 ELIZABETH HENDRIX: But then that is
12 what's going to...

13 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Right.

14 ELIZABETH HENDRIX: ...determine the
15 goals...

16 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: And... and...

17 ELIZABETH HENDRIX: ...of what...

18 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...we've had that. And
19 as a matter of fact we've written legislation
20 because we know that special ed services in general
21 have not been provided adequately to the students.
22 So... and as an outcome of the hearing and... and the
23 gathering of the numbers at the Provision of
24 Special Education Services we found out that the
25 DOE is only providing 60 percent of students with

1 the full-service range according to them, 35
2 percent are getting something of what they're
3 supposed to get, and five percent were not getting
4 anything at all. So just it... we're beginning to
5 scratch the surface of the services that are
6 needed. But I thank you for coming in today.

8 ELIZABETH HENDRIX: Your welcome.

9 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. [cross-
10 talk] Yes, next please.

11 SUSAN CRAWFORD: Thank you. My name is
12 Susan Crawford, Director of the Right to Read
13 Project. I've testified before you before and I
14 also testified to... with... to Robert Jackson a number
15 of times. And as I said to Maggie Moroff, I've
16 recently started working with the Arise Coalition
17 as well and also with Decoding Dyslexia New York.
18 And there is so much going on now around this issue
19 that I feel like I died and went to heaven because
20 I was a voice in the wilderness 15 years ago,
21 believe me. And I especially thank you for holding
22 these hearings and for drawing out from the DOE
23 what they are and are not doing. So my testimony
24 which I will type up and send to you but I like to
25 show up and respond to things I hear. So you noted

1 the DOE could not say how many dyslexics are in the
2 system. Well it's very easy, 20 percent of 1.1
3 million is 220,000 children. And from the research
4 I'd done if you double that then you'll also be
5 accounting for the kids who really need very
6 structured decoding skills to learn how to read.
7 And what we still have in the system is a whole
8 language approach in balanced literacy and it's too
9 far out of balance. We really need to go with those
10 five pillars that are enshrined in the... in the 2000
11 report of the reading panel that she just cited and
12 that also the Arise Coalition report is built on.
13 And unless and until that gets done nothing will
14 change. For all the DOE is doing that they outlined
15 in their testimony if there's no teeth in the form
16 of legislation... first of all what they are doing
17 much of it is good but it's not going to be the
18 kind of targeted tier 3 interventions that are
19 needed for dyslexic students under response to
20 intervention. That is still not anywhere in their
21 plan. So that will leave out those 220,000 children
22 year after year after year after year who have also
23 been left out over the past two decades. And I was
24 really struck by the coincidence of your saying
25

1 when you started to teach you were told not to use
2 the word dyslexia and Randy...

3
4 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: That was throughout
5 my career actually, 20... years.

6 SUSAN CRAWFORD: Yeah. And... and Randi
7 Herman said that 30 years ago there was a medical
8 model for evaluating the students that was done
9 away with. I think it would be... the city council to
10 look more deeply into that and I'm happy to be part
11 of that research. And then... so for all that the
12 DOE's doing if there's no teeth in the form of
13 legislation no matter what they do, these teaching
14 practices, everything being put in place now could
15 all come undone with the next transition of mayor
16 or chancellor. When... the reason this legislation is
17 so important is that for instance a member of
18 Decoding Dyslexia was told by an administrator of
19 one of the SUNY colleges, an administrator of
20 teaching... the teaching department, there's no such
21 thing as dyslexia. And the issue of dyslexia denial
22 is real and rampant. So again I applaud you for
23 bringing... drawing the word out regarding building
24 capacity as Carmen Alvarez was discussing. I
25 suggest that instead of this trying to build up

1 every teacher being able to teach reading to all
2 three levels of response to intervention that
3 things be handled at the district level, not
4 necessarily in a district office but overseen at
5 the district level so that principals can't mess
6 around with the academic intervention services
7 funding that they get or with the teachers who were
8 sent to them to do these interventions. Sorry I've
9 numbered these. Five... I'm up to six here. Putting
10 together things that have been said here I
11 mentioned the dyslexia denial. I want to point out
12 that in Finland they do evaluations on all the
13 students... it's a tiny country but they do all the
14 students. They evaluate them at the age of five. So
15 they know who the dyslexics are but they actually
16 don't teach any of the kids to read until the age
17 of seven. So you know it can be done. And regarding
18 this resolution I suggest it proceed as is. You've
19 had a lot thrown at you today. And rather than try
20 to work you know on all kinds of peripheral things
21 to add on or to reconsider that this proceed as is
22 because there's a whole lot more work to do and
23 this is really really great start. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: I think basically
3 we'll proceed as is. I think one of the things with
4 DOE though. I was... to be honest with you I wasn't
5 sure how they were going to even react to having
6 the hearing because of my experiences as a
7 classroom teacher. So they've come today. They've...
8 they've talked about the issue. They've
9 acknowledged the issue so let me at least give them
10 credit for that you know. And I think you're right.
11 It is... it is exciting that we're finally beginning
12 to talk about dyslexia so...

13 SUSAN: I did mean to start with
14 something but was all caught up with my numbers
15 which is to say that what we're dealing with is
16 what I call the IgnazSimmelweis-ification
17 [phonetic] of reading instruction. He was the
18 Austrian physician who discovered by washing his
19 hands before childbirth his patients were not dying
20 of child bed fever. It took 50 years for the
21 medical profession to pay attention to that. And
22 this is very similar now. We're 50 years in since
23 the 60s when a lot of the reading research was
24 done. And whole language came up right at the same
25 time. And I think 50 years is long enough.

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON
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2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Thank you. Next
3 please. Go ahead, I'm sorry. I was smiling because...

4 VICTORIA TACCOLM: No that's okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: ...my other counsel
6 here is stuck with us too. I don't know if she's
7 had these longer hearings... you're alright. Okay,
8 good.

9 VICTORIA TACCOLM: Hi, my name is
10 Victoria Taccolm and I'm speaking on behalf of
11 myself and my dyslexic daughter Isabel Calone
12 [sp?]. I just wanted to preface and say that we're
13 actually from District 10 in the Bronx, that's
14 where she started at as they said that it was a
15 high need area. And I just wanted to say that I am
16 in favor of Resolution 1027. The importance of
17 certification is necessary so that the education
18 administration can become educated and identify
19 children at a young age before they fail and fall
20 behind, that they no longer wish to attend school,
21 or they themselves have such a low self-esteem that
22 they don't feel that they are capable of learning.
23 Education administrators can then become a bit more
24 compassionate for parents and children, not calling
25 names such as lazy and stupid, or blaming the

1
2 parents themselves. My daughter was six when I
3 first saw the signs in her in kindergarten. And I
4 brought my concerns to her teacher who said that it
5 was no big deal. She was a normal kindergartener.
6 Throughout first and second grade she struggled
7 substantially and in second grade I had had enough
8 and I requested an evaluation. I expressed my
9 concerns to the DOE but I was told that dyslexia is
10 just a jargon term that wasn't used. So my daughter
11 was just given sets. And in third grade Isabel
12 failed every class on her first grade... on her first
13 report card. And she went from an A plus student to
14 being a failure in her eyes. She could no longer
15 keep up with her classwork and she was no longer
16 learning to read but she now needed to read to
17 learn which she wasn't giving the tools to be able
18 to do that. The school had no space in the proper
19 classroom setting and she remained in general ed
20 with constant pullout. Isabel ended third grade
21 with a first grade reading level. And I was told
22 that for fourth grade they still had no space for
23 her and that she would continue in general ed with
24 pull out as the previous year which didn't work. So
25 I got myself an advocate and I was able to get the

1
2 appropriate education for my daughter that she's
3 entitled to. And I know before they wanted to know
4 where do the children go, this is where she went.
5 Isabel currently attends Sterling School in
6 Brooklyn. So she commutes from the Bronx to
7 Brooklyn on the daily basis at the DOE's expense
8 and is almost at her grade level now in all her
9 subjects. They use multi-sensory learning and
10 Orton-Gillingham based methods. And there are many
11 times that I look back and think how differently
12 things could be if she was identified when I first
13 saw the signs in kindergarten. Emotionally we
14 struggled and financially I have exhausted every
15 possibility that I could. And I just think how many
16 other children are suffering with the same problem
17 and how they get lost in the system or they're just
18 being pushed along. In conclusion I'm in favor of
19 the resolution so that the education administrators
20 can become educated on dyslexia and hope that this
21 resolution can open doors to identifying dyslexia
22 to testing evaluations, having multi-sensory
23 learning, Orton-Gillingham based method learning.
24 Really quickly.. I feel like at this point that when
25 I come to speak and.. and fight I do fight for my

1 daughter but I... I know that at this point some of
2 these things that are going on, they're not going
3 to help her anymore because she's out of that
4 system. And I'm fortunate enough that she got
5 accepted to a middle school that's going to
6 continue her into high school and they're giving
7 her the education that she needs. But as everybody
8 knows dyslexia is hereditary and I hope this will
9 help her children, my grandchildren, you know the
10 rest of our family that's going to continue to go
11 through this. And as many people have said it is a
12 financial burden. I'm a single parent who's
13 struggling and has paid over \$20,000 in advocate
14 for my educational lawyer, for tuition, and that's
15 nothing compared to what the DOE has been willing
16 to shell out even after they realized how wrong
17 they've been for the past three or four years. And
18 I don't... I really don't get it. The first time I
19 went to court I paid the lawyer double... I'm just
20 sorry to take up so much time... and the DOE
21 contested nothing at both hearings. And I couldn't
22 understand it, how they could just sit there and
23 have nothing to say and then at the end be willing
24 to pay when what it costs to educate a child in
25

1
2 public school is nothing compared to what they were
3 willing to pay for her to get a private education.
4 And I think it's just unfair that I'm lucky enough
5 that I am a hard working parent and I know so many
6 other parents who do come to me with the same
7 questions that I had when I first started this
8 struggle. And I... the... the most I can usually tell
9 them is start at the Children's Advocate Center and
10 I try to help them the best that I can. And it's a
11 shame that there's not enough services out there
12 for parents and children who really need... who
13 really need the education that they are entitled
14 to.

15 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Did you say that
16 your child was in sets?

17 VICTORIA TACCOLM: Yes she was. Under...
18 under being labeled learning disability and that
19 got her nowhere. But she is dyslexic and she does
20 have ADHD.

21 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: So did they ever use
22 like Orton-Gillingham or anything like that...
23 [cross-talk]

24 VICTORIA TACCOLM: In the school... they
25 said that they... they couldn't use those methods.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Do you know what
3 they used with her for reading?

4 VICTORIA TACCOLM: No...

5 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: No?

6 VICTORIA: No. I'll be honest... [cross-
7 talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Maybe it was just
9 more of the same of what was going on in the class.

10 VICTORIA TACCOLM: It was a lot of... I'll
11 be honest, because at that time it was a lot of
12 just run around because they couldn't even give her
13 the... they couldn't put her in the 12:1:1 they
14 recommended for an entire year. And then they... when
15 they finally told me that the following year they
16 had no space for her in the school... her school was
17 K through five and had over a thousand students.
18 This... you know... and it's a very... the district
19 itself it was... and... and that was considered the
20 best school in the district. You know it's very
21 disappointing that that's what my tax dollars are
22 paying for.

23 CHAIRPERSON DROMM: Well thank you. You
24 know it's... it's probably good we're ending on the
25 notes of a parent. And we heard from a number of

1 other parents today including some who were
2 dyslexic which I really appreciate as well. And
3 we're just grateful that we do have parents who
4 have been willing to advocate but the burden as
5 either you or somebody else said should not have to
6 be on our parents' shoulders. So thank you very
7 much and thank you to the panel. I want to thank
8 everybody who stayed with us throughout this
9 hearing. You deserve one of these as well. So my
10 education committee folks, they're always here
11 'till the very end. And I deeply appreciate your
12 passion for education. Thank you very much to
13 everybody. This meeting is now adjourned at 6:00.

14 [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 May 6, 2016