

# Equitable Literacy for All Students - Preamble (Whereas)

- 1 - WHEREAS, The 2022 results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) revealed that only 31% of California 4th graders performed at or above the *NAEP Proficient* level and 42% performed below *NAEP Basic* level of reading proficiency; and
- 2- WHEREAS, It has been demonstrated that by the end of first grade, 95% of students can learn to read if taught using comprehensive, evidence-based, structured literacy curricula that include, but is not limited to these essential components of learning to read: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Reading Fluency, Vocabulary, Text Comprehension, Knowledge Building, Oral Language teaching methods; and
- 3 - WHEREAS, As reported by Yale University, an achievement gap exists as early as 1st grade between dyslexic and typical readers, but that achievement gap can potentially be narrowed with early reading interventions with evidence-based, structured literacy instruction. Further, 3 out of 4 students who do not read well in third grade remain poor readers in high school and beyond; and
- 4 - WHEREAS, Evidence-based research shows students who experience reading failure face social, emotional, and mental health challenges, including but not limited to severe anxiety, depression, and trauma, at a rate 2 to 5 times greater than their peers; and
- 5 - WHEREAS, A large percentage of youth involved in the justice system have low academic reading achievement. Higher levels of literacy are associated with greater success at achieving employment on release, and lower rates of re-arrest, and recidivism; and
- 6 - WHEREAS, There is substantial evidence that illiteracy, including that from dyslexia, results in significant social and economic costs; and
- 7 - WHEREAS, Senate Bill 488 (Rubio, 2022) requires all accredited teacher preparation programs to meet the reading instruction competence assessment standards that align with evidence-based preparation programs, and requires the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to revise and strengthen standards for teacher licensure that incorporate both evidence-based structured literacy and the California Dyslexia guidelines; and
- 8 - WHEREAS, The implementation of SB 488 (Rubio 2022), which calls for strengthening of teacher preparation programs and state licensure requirements aligned with evidence-based structural literacy, is vital for the equitable literacy of all students.

# Equitable Literacy for All Students - Request for Action (Resolved)

- 1 - RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts advocate for legislation and public policies that require public schools to conduct K-4th grade universal screenings for all children at entering and exiting each grade level, to identify those at risk of reading and literacy disorders; and screen for reading proficiency; and be it further
- 2 - RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts advocate for legislation and public policies that ensure children who are not reading proficiently upon entering or exiting grade levels K-4 are provided additional support and instruction to ensure their rights to equal access to all aspects of their education; and be it further
- 3 - RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts advocate for legislation and public policies to ensure that if the majority of children in a K-4th grade classroom are not reading at grade level proficiency as defined by state standards, the whole school or district needs to make changes to its literacy program to ensure it meets the needs of students through evidence-based, structured literacy instruction;, and be it further
- 4 - RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts work with schools, school districts, and families to educate them regarding evidence-based, structured literacy instruction, and be it further
- 5 - RESOLVED, That the California State PTA and its units, councils, and districts advocate for legislation and public policies that ensure all students are taught reading based on comprehensive, evidence-based, structured literacy curricula; and be it further
- 6- RESOLVED, That the California State PTA, its units, councils, and districts support the establishment of a taskforce of experts in the field of evidence-based structured literacy to ensure creation and implementation of a statewide comprehensive literacy plan that includes, but is not limited to teacher preparation, coaching, and professional development requirements.

Approved.  
Pending Official  
Publication

## Background Summary

In 2020, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the second largest teacher's labor union in the U.S., wrote in her foreword to a report authored by Louisa C. Moats:

“Reading is not simply a desire; it is a fundamental skill necessary for virtually everything we do. And we need to ensure all of us, particularly our children, learn to read and read to learn so they too can do everything.”<sup>1</sup>

This PTA resolution, brought on behalf of all of California's students is summarized well throughout this mentioned report authored by Dr. Moats<sup>1</sup>, who is a respected teacher, psychologist, researcher, and professor who has been at the forefront of the research related to reading instruction for five decades.

“This report is an update to the original *Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science* published by the American Federation of Teachers over 20 years ago<sup>2</sup> and emerges from a collaboration between the AFT and the Center for Development and Learning. Together they acknowledge that, although some progress has been made in teaching reading effectively, too few at-risk, disadvantaged, and minority students become proficient readers. Insufficient emphasis has been placed on understanding the science of reading, which, when appropriately implemented, can enable these students to make significant reading and writing gains.” (pg. 4)

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a congressionally mandated program, provides important information about student achievement across our nation and has provided meaningful results to improve education policy and practice since 1969.<sup>3</sup>

California's 2022 NAEP score shows only 31% of California 4th graders perform at or above the proficient level in reading.<sup>4</sup> Poor reading instruction by California's education system continues to perpetuate inequalities that have had a greater impact on at-risk, disadvantaged, and minority students. Of concern, studies show when the literacy gaps widen, also known as the Matthew effect<sup>5</sup>, the inequalities become exponentially greater, as each year passes. Importantly, Dr. Moats indicates:

“Persistent “gaps” between more advantaged and less advantaged students can be narrowed and even closed. Fundamentally, these gaps are the result of differences in students' opportunities to learn—not their learning abilities.”<sup>1</sup>

NAEP allows us to compare states, including Mississippi, which passed statewide legislation in 2013 which implemented early screening, teacher training, and evidence-based reading curricula. The data show nationwide ranking of 4th-grade reading achievement, Mississippi's legislative action has proven successful:

2013 - Mississippi below 49th  
2017 - Mississippi just below 44th  
2019 - Mississippi just below 29th  
2022 - Mississippi tied at 21st

To quote State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond who spoke at the 2022 California Reading Summit, “If evidence-based programs are not mandated the school districts will not do it.” This is a social justice issue and is a matter of equity. It is vital that as an organization, PTA supports this resolution to ensure all students have equitable access to literacy.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2020/moats#A1>

<sup>2</sup> <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED445323.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2022/pdf/2023010CA4.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4500191/pdf/nihms678476.pdf>