

Written Testimony to the Ways and Means committee

I'm Sharon Bellusci, I live in Bend Oregon and I'm the parent of a once-struggling reader. In support of "[Oregon Kids Read](#)", I am asking the legislature to appropriate one-time funds to provide training for K-5 teachers.

The training we are asking for with this funding is specific: professional development coursework in a program called LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading & Spelling) at Oregon's lowest performing Title I schools.

Science proves that almost any child can learn to read, given the right type of instruction.

And yet, even before COVID, over half of Oregon's 3<sup>rd</sup> grade readers weren't reading at grade level & over 66% of our economically disadvantaged kids were not reading at grade level. These numbers are heartbreaking and should shock everyone.

So why are we asking for this specific training?

Districts and States across the country are demonstrating that LETRS training works as in [Bethlehem, Pennsylvania](#) which increased grade level readers from 56% to 84% in just 3 years.

Portland Public Schools is [already retraining its teachers in LETRS](#) and the demand is High. Teachers who have this training, often share how it transformed their instructional practice and how their students are showing strong growth in reading. They also openly share the guilt and sadness of not having had this training earlier in their careers.

I can tell you that this type of instruction directly improved my daughter's reading, her ability to access her learning, and will ultimately help her pursue her life's dreams and pay taxes. Four years later, she is reading at grade level, but only because we had the means to hire a private tutor who provided this instruction.

All kids in Oregon deserve instruction grounded not in outdated beliefs, but in science-based evidence of how the brain learns to read. Let's start with our most vulnerable kids and track the results. Because when teachers know better, they can do better.

Thank you  
Sharon Bellusci

**Links to resources:**

LETRS Training:

<https://www.voyagersopris.com/professional-development/letrs/research-results>

Oregon Kids Read:

<https://www.oregonkidsread.com/>

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PPS LETRS training overview:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLCXgE5Z6Ss>

Bethlehem, PA:

<https://www.apmreports.org/story/2018/09/10/hard-words-why-american-kids-arent-being-taught-to-read>