

From: [Shelly Lee](#)
To: [KDE KBE](#)
Subject: ESSER funds and RTA Grant
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Dear Kentucky Board of Education Members,

I could tell you about how horrible Kentucky's NAEP reading scores are, even before the pandemic hit, but you should already be aware of that. Instead, I'm writing you a personal letter as a parent that wanted to be supportive of our public schools, but for elementary, have been terribly disappointed, and this will explain why. With ESSER funds being spent on LETRS training for our teachers and the RTA (Read to Achieve) grant being routed toward science based practices, I have hope KY is moving in the right direction. These changes need to happen.

I have two children [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who by their schools' standards, were not struggling readers. Well, except for a brief period in 3rd grade for my now 8th grader, but I was told after a brief period in intervention (probably a guided reading program) that he got better. He was obviously not better, and in addition to experiencing behavior issues in earlier grades, he was starting to act out during certain assignments in school such as writing by 3rd grade. He could barely spell, and it was taking an emotional toll. He also was not reading well. He was hitting a wall as is common in 3rd or 4th grade for those that will struggle with literacy tasks. No one in schools was alerting us to academic concerns. I was always told, he was improving. When I finally had him tested outside of school before starting 4th grade, he was in the 6th percentile for spelling for his age. Moderate dyslexia and dysgraphia were diagnosed. I tried to turn to his school for help, but I was basically made to feel crazy for asking. I was even told by a school psychologist spelling wasn't part of the curriculum. It should have been part of an integrated literacy curriculum, but sadly what I've found out over the years is that teachers aren't taught how to teach reading, spelling, or writing, and appropriate curriculum is not selected by

schools to support it either. The majority of those teaching teachers in university programs, don't know the process behind how people learn to read, write, and spell, and for those that struggle, at least 20% of students, you need to be an expert. In fact, all children would benefit from this expertise. [REDACTED] got by with thousands of dollars in tutoring (from an expert) and assessments that I paid for out of my own pocket. When I saw [REDACTED] younger brother [REDACTED] struggling in a similar manner, I was able to react immediately and provide him the intervention that has meant he's never been behind in reading at all. The ability to spell and write will take longer, but with proper instruction, he'll get there and faster than his older brother because we reacted at age 5 instead of age 9. Getting children the proper instruction as early as possible is crucial if they are to catch up. Being knowledgeable in the issues of the instruction my youngest child would receive when he was in kindergarten, which I was not with his older brother, such as being directed to guess words based on pictures instead of decoding skills, I tried to address it with our public school where I was told by the principal I could not select curriculum. Thanks to our early intervention, he was not behind so there was no hope of securing special education to work around this issue (which by the way securing special education and proper special education is still a battle in my district for these issues). The only option I had left was to remove him from public school and enroll him in a private school using structured literacy instead of balanced literacy. He will likely need to remain there, at least, until elementary school is completed. Either paying for expensive private tutoring on the side or giving up and paying for private school, is how I've found hundreds of parents are getting by in my district alone. If schools and teachers had the skills they needed, why would all these people be paying for experts outside of school?

I want to be crystal clear; I do not trust my public school to pick curriculum. They apparently do not have the knowledge to do so. In fact, here's a link to the EDReports review that recently posted (in October) for the curriculum my school district uses. It's a scathing review for every grade level in elementary K-5. Click on each grade's info graphic to get more details.

<https://www.edreports.org/reports/overview/units-of-study-2018> The fact that I know my school used Reading Recovery as an intervention

for the readers struggling the most was an even bigger red flag that they did not know how to help struggling readers. This is a program that was removed through lawsuits and parent advocacy from the first school it was used in the US, Barrington Elementary in Upper Arlington, OH. A parent wrote an open letter about how the child's repeated failure in the program made their child suicidal. The parents were so passionate about the process, they actually created a documentary about the steps they went through not only removing Reading Recovery but implementing science based practices in the form of structured literacy throughout their school. You can search for it on YouTube call "Our Dyslexic Children" about the Upper Arlington, OH school district. If this program is doing such amazing things, where is the data and why is it only for 1st grade? Are the children put through it on grade level by 3rd grade and was that without their parents getting frustrated and seeking outside assistance because that shouldn't be needed if the program works?

I was delighted to see the educational gaps in our teacher training finally addressed through ESSER funds being directed toward LETRS training for our teachers. LETRS is the gold standard for filling these gaps. The Read to Achieve grant moving towards supporting the science of reading practices would mean schools would not have as much financial incentive to use a terrible program like Reading Recovery. I know how important it is for our teachers to be given this training. This is the quality instruction that will give all children a chance to develop critical skills, not just those with parents that can pay for it, like my lucky children.

Thank You for your time. If you'd like to discuss further, I'm open for discussion via email or phone [REDACTED].

Shelly Lee