

PSTEB TESTIMONY JUNE 1, 2017
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Improving Teacher Preparation in Reading Instruction

We are all here today because we care about children and how we, as educators, can enable them to reach their full potential. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of reading for success in school and in life. I thank you for the opportunity to present testimony requesting improvement in reading instruction in Maryland.

In 2015, the Nation's Report Card (NAEP) reported that in Maryland, 63% of 4th grade students were below proficient in reading, and in Baltimore City, 89% of 4th grade students were below proficient. Also in 2015, the National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ), regarding the Policy Issue of Teacher Preparation in elementary reading, ranked Maryland as one of the states that only met a small part of the goal.

It is fiscally beneficial to prepare our elementary school teachers with the research-based foundational skills necessary to teach reading. Many of the students we teach become "special needs" students because they are victims of ineffective teaching in the general classroom. It is a fact that cost per pupil in the general education classroom is significantly lower than in special education. In Baltimore City, special education costs account for nearly a quarter of the district's \$1.31 billion budget.

Professional development dollars could also be used more efficiently because we would not need to spend the money on teaching information which teachers should have learned in their pre-service courses.

Research studies regarding teacher retention indicate that teachers leave the profession because they feel unprepared to do their job. Teachers who are successful with their students would be more likely to stay in the classroom leading to lower teacher turnover- another cost savings.

Fifteen states now require that teacher candidates pass a reading instruction-specific assessment prior to licensure. Requiring rigorous, content-specific assessments prior to licensure is required in all other professions and is now part of a growing trend to hold teachers to higher standards. MSDE has already approved such a test (Teaching Reading: Elementary Education -5203) but is not requiring it for certification.

The Professional Standards Education Board and the Maryland State Board of Education would be instrumental in improving teacher preparation by setting standards for the delivery of evidence based reading instruction for pre-service teachers as well as by requiring the assessment of this knowledge for certification.

Thank you for your kind attention.