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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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July 12, 2023

Hon. Eric Adams  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Hon. David C. Banks  
Chancellor, NYC Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Hon. John B. King, Jr.  
Chancellor, SUNY  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

Hon. Félix V. Matos Rodríguez  
Chancellor, CUNY  
205 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mayor Adams, Chancellor Banks, Chancellor King and Chancellor Matos Rodriguez:

At its Full Board meeting June 22, 2023, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

### **Resolution to Support Enhancing Evidence-based Literacy Instruction in the Classroom for All New York City Public School Children**

#### **Whereas:**

1. Low literacy rates in NYC have become a civil rights issue, including contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline, and it is crucial to address these issues proactively:
  - a. Dyslexia affects as much as 10-20% of the population, regardless of primary language or background<sup>1</sup>; it is a learning disability, characterized by difficulties with specific language skills, particularly reading, but also spelling, writing, and pronouncing words, and is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities;
  - b. Historically, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) has failed to develop comprehensive early screenings, curriculums, teacher trainings, programs, or district schools to support and teach children with dyslexia, creating a deeply

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-basics> and <http://dyslexia.yale.edu/dyslexia/what-is-dyslexia/>

- inequitable system that is out of reach for the vast majority of New York City families with a child with dyslexia;
- c. NYC State test data, most recently in 2022, show that 51% of the city's third through eighth-grade students did not score “proficient” on reading, with significant disparities by race: 30% of Asian students are not proficient in reading, 33% of White students, 63% of Latino students, and 64% of Black students<sup>2</sup>;
2. A Structured Literacy (SL) approach to literacy instruction and early intervention are key to remediate dyslexia and support struggling readers;
    - a. SL must include both foundational skills (e.g., decoding, spelling) and higher-level literacy skills (e.g., reading comprehension, written expression)<sup>3</sup> ;
    - b. Currently, Structured Literacy is not taught to teachers graduating at State University of New York (SUNY) or City University of New York (CUNY) schools;
  3. [Literacy Academy Collective](#) (LAC) was founded by a group of parents whose children faced reading challenges and who advocated to open the first DOE district public school to help students with dyslexia, language-based learning disabilities, and struggling readers — a group that traditional public schools often struggle to serve;
    - a. In summer 2021, LAC partnered with the [Windward Institute](#) to lead a summer pilot in District 4 in East Harlem; this included a one-week professional development course in a structured literacy followed by a five week practicum, with trainees paired with a mentor teacher;
    - b. In Summer 2021, LAC led a teacher training program in District 7 in the South Bronx;
    - c. During the 2022-23 school year, LAC led a model classroom pilot at PS 161 in the South Bronx and assessments show that the 2nd and 3rd grade students have made significant progress:
      - i. Initial assessments showed students with a *mid-year kindergarten* level;
      - ii. After just eight weeks of targeted instruction, 28 out of the 31 students tested demonstrated *end-of-year kindergarten* proficiency; making half a year’s worth of progress in eight weeks;
      - iii. The expected weekly rate of improvement for a kindergarten student mastering this skill is 1.1 additional words per week; LAC students improved at a rate of 6.97 words per week;
      - iv. If this progress continues, LAC has the chance to improve literacy for a group of students who had previously experienced no measurable academic success;
    - d. In Summer 2023, LAC will lead a summer pilot in District 1, which will expand to an after-school program for the 2023-24 school year;
    - e. In Fall 2023, [South Bronx Literacy Academy](#) (SBLA) will open as the first stand-alone NYC school for grades 2-8 specifically designed to serve students with diagnosed dyslexia, language based learning difficulties, and other struggling readers;

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<sup>2</sup> With Test Scores Low, NYC Schools Turn To New Approach for Reading, <https://gothamist.com/news/with-test-scores-low-nyc-schools-turn-to-new-approach-for-reading-instruction>

<sup>3</sup> What is Structured Literacy <https://dyslexiaida.org/heres-why-schools-should-use-structured-literacy/#:~:text=What%20is%20Structured%20Literacy%3F,reading%20comprehension%2C%20written%20expression>

- i. SBLA will have two teachers and 18 students per grade, initially enrolling students in grades 2 and 3;
  - ii. SBLA is designed to meet the unique needs of students two or more years behind in fundamental literacy skills, will offer intensive Tier 1 instruction<sup>4</sup> in structured literacy throughout the day and embed consistent and purposeful practices to support social emotional learning and executive functioning skill development to meet the needs of our student population, including co-occurring conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety and depression;
- 4. In May of 2023, Mayor Eric Adams and DOE Chancellor David C. Banks announced, “New York City Reads,” a major city-wide campaign to dramatically strengthen literacy in New York City’s public schools<sup>5</sup>;
  - a. As part of NYC Reads, all NYC elementary schools will be required to begin implementing one of three evidence-based literacy curricula; Each district superintendent will select from *Into Reading*, *Wit & Wisdom* and *EL Education*;
  - b. One criticism is that these curricula currently lack culturally responsive literature;
  - c. In June 2021, the DOE announced Universal Mosaic Curriculum but Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks paused the full implementation of the mosaic curriculum, while retaining the recommended literature for use in NYC schools; and
  - d. The DOE will implement NYC Reads over two years with our local schools in Phase 2 in 2024-25.

**Therefore Be It Resolved** that CB2 urgently implores the DOE to:

1. Provide unfailing support for Literacy Academy Collective’s approach to teaching children with language-based learning disabilities how to read and write to close the educational gap among NYC children;
2. Expand the Literacy Academy Collective pilots to additional schools districts;
3. Create a dyslexia-focused public school program at the Bleecker Street site to cater to and support dyslexic students' educational needs;
4. Ensure that each borough add a stand-alone DOE public school for students with dyslexia, language-based learning disabilities and who struggle to read;

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<sup>4</sup> Tier 1, also known as the universal tier, refers to the curriculum, instruction, and assessments offered to all students within a grade level. It is the guaranteed instruction provided to everyone. Typically, universal tier instruction emphasizes the state's grade-level standards. <https://www.renaissance.com/2022/06/02/blog-understanding-tier-1-instructional-strategies-that-support-an-engaged-classroom/#:~:text=The%20universal%20tier%E2%80%94%20Tier,level%20standards%20for%20your%20state.>

<sup>5</sup> Mayor Adams and Chancellor Banks Launch Major new Citywide Campaign to Dramatically Strengthen Literacy, <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/325-23/mayor-adams-chancellor-banks-launch-major-new-citywide-campaign-dramatically-strengthen#/0>

5. Allocate sufficient funding to ensure proper implementation of Mayor Adams' and Chancellor Banks' *New York City Reads* Initiative, for Fall 2023 and beyond, including initial and ongoing professional development to ensure the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction;
6. Emphasize and include the importance of cultural responsiveness in literacy education, and encourages schools to integrate culturally sustaining practices and materials from the "mosaic curriculum" to engage students from diverse backgrounds;
7. Collaborate with organizations like LAC and similar stakeholders to develop comprehensive literacy programs for NYC students; and,
8. Address systemic racism in the education system and promote inclusive and equitable practices that meet the needs of all students.

**Vote:** Unanimous, 43 Board Members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Susan Kent, Chair  
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Patricia Laraia, Chair  
Schools and Education Committee

PL/em

cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, NYS Senator  
Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senator  
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NYS Assembly Member  
Hon. Grace Lee, NYS Assembly Member  
Hon. Brad Lander, NYC Comptroller  
Hon. Jumaane Williams, NYC Public Advocate  
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Alvin Bragg, Manhattan District Attorney  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member  
Hon. Christopher Marte, Council Member  
Hon. Carlina Rivera, Council Member  
Sayde Campoamor, Chief Equity Officer for NYC Comptroller Brad Lander  
Carolyne Quintana, Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, NYC DOE  
Jennifer Foti, Chief of Special Education, NYC DOE

Jason Borges, Executive Director of NYC Public Schools Literacy Collaborative,  
NYCDOE

Hon. Mark Treyger, Executive Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, NYCDOE

Kelly McGuire, NYC DOE District 2 Superintendent

Emily Hellstrom

Community Education Council District 2