

Pennsylvania State Board of Education
Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission
Harrisburg, PA

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Review Commission

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1, Scott, and the IRRC Board,

Thank you for the opportunity which allows the public to comment on the amendments to Chapter 49 specifically subchapter C. Higher Education and subchapter A. General Provisions. As an active member of Decoding Dyslexia Pennsylvania and The Literacy Alliance of PA, a student teacher university supervisor, and as a retired teacher, I strongly support the addition of and definition of Structured Literacy as provided in the revisions of Chapter 49.

As the adage says, 'When we know better, we do better'. Structured literacy ensures that all children are systematically and explicitly taught how to break the code and become successful readers. It is imperative that provisions in both educator preparedness and professional development include substantive instruction in the science of literacy (yes, reading, but also spelling and writing). I know that many have noted the correction needed by changing systemic to systematic and would note that the error is ironic. We do have a systemic issue in education that needs to change - namely, how we teach beginning readers to read and write.

As we embark on the largest teacher shortage in Pennsylvania history, we need to ensure that our teachers, especially those underrepresented, are supported by our universities through coursework that is grounded in science rather than theory.

Please consider additional language that supports Structured Literacy knowledge in the assessment program for certification. Currently, the 'praxis' contains items that are considered balanced literacy and have been debunked by the research surrounding learning to read and write.

When students receive a strong, equitable education, Pennsylvania, and society as a whole, reap the rewards. A thorough and intensive pre-certification program, steeped in literacy research, as well as continued professional growth as determined by state standards, will ensure that our students achieve their highest possible level. We all have a stake in our students across Pennsylvania. These revisions to Chapter 49 will positively impact our future generations.

Warm regards,

Jackie Behney
Decoding Pennsylvania
The Literacy Alliance
Children's Dyslexia Center of Central PA
Eastern University