



# Act Now to Improve Literacy for Students with Disabilities in New York City Schools

## *Literacy matters!*

- ▶ Unless children are able to understand what they read, they will not do well in school. Success in math, science, social studies, and even the arts depends on being able to learn and use information presented to them.
- ▶ Students who struggle to sound out letters, recognize patterns in letters and sounds, read fluently, recognize common vocabulary, or understand what they read tend to avoid reading. The less students read, the more they fall behind. The further they fall behind, the more likely it is they will leave school unprepared for adult life.
- ▶ Students who don't have basic literacy skills face major academic, social, and emotional challenges while they remain in school, and serious economic challenges after they leave school.

## *But too often students with disabilities don't have the basic skills they need to read and write.*

- ▶ 185,000 (or 19% of) students in the NYC public schools are classified as having a disability.
- ▶ Far too few students scored well on last year's State English Language Arts (ELA) exam. Less than 7% of students with disabilities in NYC scored a 3 or 4 on the exam and that number doesn't include students with disabilities who are exempt from taking the State ELA exam because of the nature or severity of their disability. Compare that to the almost 35% of general education students who met that standard.

## *It doesn't have to be that way.*

- ▶ Research shows that schools can teach the skills students with disabilities need to read when staff has the right tools and training.
- ▶ Access to resources like specialized staff and teacher training makes a difference.
- ▶ With quality instruction, we can narrow the literacy gap between students with and without disabilities.

**ARISE**  
coalition

[www.arisecoalition.org](http://www.arisecoalition.org)

## Join the ARISE Coalition in calling for change!

We're calling on the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to make a long-term plan for preparing all schools to teach the skills students, including students with disabilities, need to be literate. Specifically, we want to see all schools in NYC ready to:

- ▶ Provide core literacy instruction for students beginning at pre-kindergarten and continuing through high school. That instruction should be based on proven teaching practices designed to give students the skills they need to learn to read and write and to think deeply and critically about texts.
- ▶ Continually screen all students from kindergarten through high school for reading and writing ability and then provide those students who aren't reading on grade level with extra, proven, targeted interventions.
- ▶ Offer opportunities for students to receive those proven, targeted interventions after school and during the summer months in addition to during the school year.
- ▶ Use technology in addition to proven, targeted, age-appropriate literacy instruction to help students with a range of disabilities access lessons in their classrooms.
- ▶ Offer opportunities for students to engage with text in a variety of ways. Those students who may not be able to read the printed word may be able to learn the content of what is written through spoken word, alternate texts, and communication devices.
- ▶ Provide parents with tools and strategies to support their children in attaining the literacy skills they need.
- ▶ Provide parents of children with disabilities with information on how to make sure that if their children are struggling with reading and writing they receive appropriate instruction to address their concerns.

## How can you help?

- ▶ **Sign our letter** to Chancellor Fariña of the DOE at <http://chn.ge/19nGwhb>.
- ▶ **Contact your NYC Councilmember** by going to <http://on.nyc.gov/1a4RDWR>.
  - Ask him or her to fund the Mayor's budget proposal for \$3.2 million spread out over the next five years to provide literacy training for teachers, including those who work with students with dyslexia and other disabilities.
  - Though not enough money to accomplish our goals, this funding would be a good initial down payment on what we hope will be a longer-term commitment to ensuring that every student in NYC learns to read proficiently.
- ▶ **Call or email the following key Councilmembers** with the same message:
  - Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker the NYC Council | (212) 788-7210 | [mviverito@council.nyc.gov](mailto:mviverito@council.nyc.gov)
  - Julissa Ferreras, Chair of the Committee on Finance | 212-788-6862 | [jferreras@council.nyc.gov](mailto:jferreras@council.nyc.gov)
  - Daniel Dromm, Chair of the Committee on Education | (212) 788-7066 | [ddromm@council.nyc.gov](mailto:ddromm@council.nyc.gov)
- ▶ **Share this information** with your children's teachers, administrators at your school, and other parents.
- ▶ **Contact the ARISE Coalition** for more information about our efforts by reaching out to Maggie Moroff at [mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org](mailto:mmoroff@advocatesforchildren.org) or (212) 822-9523.

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