

February 2, 2018

Honorable School Board Members,

Fourteen years ago I was a kindergarten teacher at George Mason Elementary School. Still new to the profession, I was excited to bring my love of literacy into the classroom and eager to refine my teaching practice. Enter Scott Foresman Reading Program. I remember the boxes of basal readers, the cumbersome teacher manuals, and a few student booklets for guided reading groups. Although the manual told me what to say and what to do, the manual did not know the students in my classroom. I was compliant for many years, but I knew that this "program" did not meet the needs of my students.

Eleven years ago, I was a second grade teacher. I achieved National Board Certification and two master's degrees. I immersed myself in professional research and learning opportunities to grow as a literacy teacher. I attended trainings in Alexandria and beyond because I saw the diverse needs of the students in my classroom. I wanted to be equipped with the latest tools and strategies to help my students succeed. I was introduced to guided reading and the reading workshop and my teaching was transformed. I spent hundreds of dollars to build a classroom library where my students could read books about people who looked like them, topics that they loved, and levels that they could read and understand. The basal, the manuals, and the little booklets continued to be the division resource, but I quietly tucked them away. That same year, I gave birth to my first child.

Six years ago my first daughter entered kindergarten in ACPS. Her teacher used the Scott Foresman program as her primary resource. Eight years had passed since the resource was introduced to our division. Eight years of new research on topics ranging from comprehension strategies, small group instruction, phonic/spelling strategies and writing instruction and my daughter, her peers and hundreds of other students were being instructed by teachers whose primary tool was outdated. I continued to teach second grade and with the help of like-minded teachers in the division, I supported teachers by leading professional development sessions in the area of literacy in order to share current knowledge and teaching practices to benefit all of our students.

My second daughter entered kindergarten this year. It's now been **14** years and our division has not adopted a new tool. My students deserve better! My children deserve better! Our teachers deserve better! Trust the voices of the people who are on the front lines working with our students every day. Listen to their voices. If you are uncertain of what we are asking for, here are a few ideas:

- A program that supports choice, independent reading time, small group, one on one conferring, as well as lessons for ideas.
- A program that focuses on the needs of the individual as much as the needs of the group.
- A program that leaves teachers and students alike thinking that reading and being a reader is something good.
- A program that builds hope for all readers to be readers. That balances out between reading for skill and reading for pleasure. A program with an emphasis on developing reader identity as well as reader skill. A program that doesn't kill the love of reading but instead bolsters it.

Finally, please trust and know that our teachers believe that fidelity should always remain to the students and not to the program. It's been 14 years since our division has invested in the literacy lives of our students. If not now, when?

Respectfully,

Angela Green, NBCT, M.Ed