

Good Evening,

Thank you for giving me the time to speak here today. My name is Maria Magallanes and I am a currently a reading specialist at Cora Kelly Elementary. I have been teaching for 19 years and have made it a personal goal to instill the love of reading in students as well as help students who struggle in reading. One of the foundational parts of reading is phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is critical for learning to read any alphabetic writing system. Research shows that difficulty with phoneme awareness and phonological skills is a predictor of poor reading and spelling development. I'd like to share with you some research regarding phonemic awareness and reading. "Phonological awareness is critical to reading development because children who lack phonological awareness are among those most likely to become poor readers."(Catts, 1991a; Maclean et al., 1987) "Researchers found that the level of phonological awareness that a child possessed upon entering Grade 1 was more important in predicting success than the type of instruction that they received."(Griffith, Klsius, and Kromrey, 1992) Last, "In a multiyear study, researchers found that the largest growth in student reading development in students were those who received phonics instruction at the right time and in the right amount."

Because of the importance of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness as being a fundamental part of the reading process, I'm here to advocate for our students and teachers, in respectfully requesting that you include funding for a reading program for our K-2 schools. It surprises me that within some of our school there are different programs, and with such a transient population, I think it would be beneficial for students to receive consistent instruction across our elementary schools. I am not advocating for a one size fits all program or a scripted program. I just know from coaching teachers, and supporting teachers, some come in with not enough tools in their tool box to teach reading. So we support them as best we can but because there is a high turnover in teachers leaving, this becomes a challenge to continually train and support teachers to help build their teaching capacity. My hope would be that a K-2 program would include a robust, clear and transparent phonics/phonemic awareness component with lessons plans that follow best practices to support and enhance our teacher's instruction. It is so critical in kindergarten and first grade to lay a solid foundation in phonemic awareness. Research shows that if students do not have a solid foundation in these skills they become struggling readers and continue to struggle in reading throughout school. Because I have seen many new teachers and veterans struggle with creating units and too often pulling resources from websites, I know we can give them better and do better by providing them with resources that will effectively impact our students and their teaching practices. We need to think: what types of resources are we giving our teachers to support their teaching? It is critical that we really think about this and how we can best provide for our students by giving our teachers the best tools possible to lay a solid foundation in reading for all our students.