

My name is Emilia Kalscheur, and I am a special education teacher who works with children with Learning Disabilities, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Developmental Cognitive Disabilities. I am here today to show my full support of the Read Act.

As a special education teacher, I can say that the science of reading has changed the lives of the students that I teach. I have watched my students' reading abilities, confidence, and attitudes toward school grow in astounding ways. I have seen how students are "unlocking" the code as they begin to learn reading skills in a systematic way that they can generalize into the books they are reading in their classrooms. Students are excited about reading once they are equipped with the tools and knowledge they need to master basic skills.

I have seen significant growth in students whose achievement scores were the lowest. After two years of implementing a reading curriculum based on the science of reading, many of my students are able to read grade-level material that they were not previously able to. I have even been able to dismiss students from special education services because of the growth that was made, and I believe this is because of the science of reading. After the two years, not only did one of my students meet expectations on their reading MCA, but they scored at the top of their entire grade. The science of reading is life changing for so many children who need explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction in order to learn how to read.

It dismays me to hear that people still hold the belief that students with disabilities will never be able to read at grade level and that we should not expect them to. This belief is false. Not only is this untrue, but it is damaging to the children we work with. We should all hold high expectations for every child. We should know and understand that it is possible for us to close reading gaps and that should be our ultimate goal for every child. Lowering our expectations for children causes children to lower expectations of themselves.

Practices based on the science of reading are necessary for some children and beneficial for all.