

March 12, 2026

To: Michigan Lawmakers

From: Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy
Fellowship Early Literacy Working Group



We are a group of educators from across Michigan and members of the Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship, a highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan teachers looking to deepen their knowledge of education policy and gain a voice in decisions that affect their students and the teaching profession. Through this program, we strive to ensure that our state systems and policies benefit our diverse population of students. This is especially true when it comes to literacy and the science of reading.

Policy Goal

By June 2026, the State of Michigan will mandate and fund certified literacy interventionists in upper elementary, middle, and senior high schools. The goal is to provide minimum, proficiency-based service time for students reading at least two grade levels below benchmark and require completion of evidence-based phonics and science of reading training by 2028. The mandate would also aim to expand Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) or other approved science of reading professional development to ensure all secondary students have access to structured, research-aligned literacy instruction.

Why This Issue Is Important

- + **It closes structural gaps for students who were missed early:** Students who are two or more grade levels behind in middle and high school are often those who [have experienced systemic inequities](#) that include inconsistent early intervention, high mobility, under-resourced schools, or interrupted instruction.
- + **It protects access to graduation and postsecondary pathways:** By secondary school, literacy is no longer just a reading issue, it is an access issue. Students who cannot read proficiently struggle to pass core academic courses, succeed on state assessments, complete high school graduation requirements, and gain access to college, career, and technical training programs.
- + **It replaces inconsistent remediation with research-based instruction:** Many struggling readers in middle and high school receive fragmented or unstructured support that is not aligned with the science of reading.
- + **It gives students access to educators who can meet their needs:** Having certified literacy interventionists using evidence-based reading and writing training ensures that struggling adolescent readers receive targeted, systematic instruction rather than generic remediation.

This shifts literacy support from reactive to intentional and from inequitable to standardized across districts. Students deserve research-backed instruction regardless of zip code or grade level.

What the Evidence Shows

- + Michigan is [ranked 44th](#) in the nation in 4th grade reading performance, based on 2024 data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- + NAEP 2024 data shows that only 39 percent of 3rd grade students are reading proficiently.
- + [98 percent of school districts](#) in Michigan had lower reading scores in 2024 than they did prior to the pandemic in 2019.

We Recommend

- + Establish and expand funding streams that enable districts to hire literacy interventionists in upper elementary, middle, and high schools to address persistent reading gaps among students who have not had consistent access to science of reading–aligned instruction.
- + Require completion of evidence-based phonics and science of reading training by 2028.
- + Expand science of reading-based training for upper elementary, middle and high school teachers, by providing an additional \$10 million in state funding for continued professional development, including programs like [Lexia’s Aspire](#).

Potential Impacts

Expanded access to certified, science of reading-aligned literacy intervention in grades 4–12 will improve reading proficiency, graduation readiness, and long-term economic mobility for struggling students while promoting greater equity across districts. However, implementation may require increased funding, staffing adjustments, and master schedule restructuring at the school level.

Potential Costs

We propose a five-year grant be awarded to schools to assist with the costs of hiring the needed interventionists, providing professional learning for educators, and conducting a re-evaluation of funding based on growth data.

Respectfully submitted,

Teach Plus Michigan Teacher Policy Fellowship Early Literacy Working Group

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