

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

Before I was taught with Intensive Systematic Phonics I was unable to read and spell. I had five cards on my word ring when I was in 1st grade. I believe those consisted of: am, an, go, to, and is. I was and quote, "The second dumbest kid in the class, because the other girl only had three cards on her ring." As a child, one of the most important things is the desire to learn. Without an essential skill, such as reading, that desire is considerably hindered. From my own experience, I know not being able to read made me frustrated, gave me a sense of worthlessness, and lowered my self-esteem. It's not a good feeling knowing that you are one of the "dumbest" kids in class. I was frustrated that I had to work by myself with another teacher and not with the rest of my class because they were leaps and bounds ahead of me academically. It also destroyed most of the confidence I had at that point in my life. I knew I couldn't do what they were doing and it made me feel inferior to them. Having feelings like this made me want nothing to do with school and almost destroyed my desire to learn. I was lucky that my mother pulled me out of school and put me in a school where they used this type of curriculum. Within the first day I had learned more than I did in all of kindergarten and first grade in my previous school. Learning to read helped me gain back my self-confidence and my desire to learn.

Having the skill of reading I have been able to achieve almost every goal I have set for myself throughout my life. I graduated high school with a GPA above a 3.0 while playing sports. I earned an academic scholarship from Baker University on top of my football scholarship. I graduated on the Dean's list from Baker University while still being able to excel on the football field. Now I am working for the Douglas County Sheriff's Office as Corrections Officer and am working toward my goal of becoming a Sheriff's Deputy. I know if I had not been taught to read I would not be where I am at today.

I recommend a powerful book written by Michael Brunner; "Retarding of America, The Imprisonment of Potential." Brunner's research, from the inside of the U.S Department of Justice, uncovered the link between reading failure and juvenile delinquency. He found that these children were not evil, nor did they have learning disabilities. They could not read because of inappropriate reading instruction.

The following are conservative estimates of the illiteracy rates in the United States prison system:

Juvenile Delinquents 85%

Adult Prison Inmates 75%

Thank you for your time and please consider passing SB 74.

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