

**Proponent of SB 532  
Senate Education Committee  
March 7, 2024**

**Dr. Debbie K. Mercer  
Interim Provost, Dean of the College of Education, Kansas State University**

Chair Baumgardner and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony of Senate Bill 532 on behalf of Kansas State University. The deans and literacy faculty of the regent institutions have been working diligently on developing professional learning materials for in-service and pre-service teachers and enhancing our literacy learning impact.

The science of reading involves a collective body of evidence about reading and issues related to reading and writing with over five decades of interdisciplinary research. Structured Literacy is an approach to reaching reading and writing that is informed by the science of reading including phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax and semantics. This approach involves instruction in each area is critical and is systematic and cumulative, explicit and diagnostic. The science of reading is supported by the regent institutions.

Nineteen reading experts from the regent institutions, including Washburn, collaboratively developed ten modules and three specialty modules in the spring of 2023. Modules included: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Comprehension, Syllable Instruction, Morphology, Syntax, Language/Vocabulary/Semantics, Writing and Assessments/Interventions. Additional modules put special emphasis on Dyslexia, Special Education and English Language Learners. Thirteen modules including 14 expert videos were offered over the summer to over 800 practicing teachers across Kansas representing 119 districts and 9 other units. Over 1,600 hours of video was viewed and there was over 10,770 hours of direct course contact from these teachers. All Regent Institutions have access to this content and it is being used to enhance their pre-service coursework and potential micro-credential offerings. Please note, work is still needed to validate the efficacy of these modules.

Each regent institution reviewed their reading methodology courses for their elementary education program. Curriculum maps were developed and any gaps were identified. In the Fall 2024 pilots were conducted based on revised curriculum. This work formed the foundation for two reading courses across the regent system: Science of Reading 1 and Science of Reading 2. These courses are aligned with the relevant state and national standards. A common applied work sample and rubric assessment focused on designing and implementing a structured literacy lesson demonstrating the application of knowledge is being piloted by the seven institutions.

Specifically, the regional Centers of Excellence would support struggling readers and their families by providing diagnostic and support the professional development of both pre- and in-service teachers. Collaborative efforts could help strengthen teacher preparation programs in Kansas.

I want to emphasize that the emerging science of reading research is derived from basic science, but the best means for teaching the key pillars is still evolving. Funding directed at examining issues around curriculum and teaching approaches so we are able to not only teach the science, but also the translational research as to how that moves into effective classroom instruction. For example, one of the criticisms nationally is the lack of focus in many approaches on comprehension, something that is very significant for young readers to fully master and understand what they read. Also, we need to emphasize that for any initiative to work, shrinking class sizes for reading instruction and providing reading coaches and supports for teachers in learning to utilize the right approaches is at least as important as the pillars themselves. Senate Bill 532 acknowledges the work of the regent institutions and builds on this momentum. We pledge to continue to impact the literacy development of students in the State of Kansas.