

# 2026 Policy Agenda

The New York Campaign for Early Literacy is a statewide movement of over one hundred organizations and parents committed to improving early reading outcomes through evidence-based literacy instruction and aligned ecosystem support for children from birth to age eight.

The Campaign is celebrating its second anniversary this year and is calling on state leaders to make literacy a top state priority in 2026 and beyond. While the Campaign is appreciative of recent policy developments and investments in early literacy by the Governor, Legislature, and New York State Education Department, we believe bold state leadership is needed to make New York a national leader on this critical education and civil rights issue.

States across the nation, including Mississippi and Louisiana, have led comprehensive multi-year investments in literacy and are outperforming New York students on the NAEP despite spending considerably less per student. More recently, states like California, Massachusetts, and Michigan have overcome political resistance and a history of local control policy to make significant new investments and requirements in curriculum, professional learning, and universal screening.

New York should be leading the nation on literacy, not trailing other states. We urge the Governor and Legislature to support a bold, comprehensive, multi-year literacy agenda for children from birth to age eight, starting with the following policies and investments in the 2026 legislative session:

## K-12 Education

- **Pass The Right to Read Act:** New York lacks a comprehensive policy on literacy and the science of reading. The Right to Read Act (A.78) includes important provisions on curriculum, professional learning, screening, and family engagement that should serve as the state's framework for early literacy policy.
- **Professional Learning:** Many current educators lack training in the science of reading from their preparation programs and require professional learning and coaching aligned to the science of reading to support classroom instruction and help meet the state's new literacy requirements. In addition to the \$3 million provided for science of reading micro credentials in the Executive Budget, **we propose \$17 million in grants to districts to ensure all K-12 educators are provided with the opportunity to receive a micro credential in the science of reading and/or job-embedded coaching to improve classroom practice.**
- **Universal Reading Screening:** New York is one of nine states that does not require universal reading screening in grades K-3 and one of twelve that does not mandate screening for dyslexia. Early screening is critical to identifying reading challenges early, informing instruction, and providing targeted support to

students. **We propose a \$10 million investment that would require districts to screen all K-3 students three times per year using an evidence-based screener that includes dyslexia identification, along with training and support for educators.**

- **Curricula Aligned with the Science of Reading:** EdTrust-New York's recent analysis of district curriculum use shows that many schools are still using non-evidence-based instructional resources. **We propose a \$15 million investment to provide grants to districts not using curriculum aligned to the science of reading, for the purchase of evidence-based K-5 literacy curricula and instructional resources.**
- **High-Impact Tutoring:** High-impact tutoring is a proven strategy for improving student reading outcomes, and **we urge the Legislature to include \$10 million in the final budget to support these programs across the state.**
- **Support for the Center for Dyslexia and Dysgraphia:** The Center was recently signed into law and will play a critical role in supporting students with dyslexia and dysgraphia across the state. **We propose a \$2 million investment to support staffing and implementation of the Center's work.**

## Literacy Ecosystems

An overarching priority of the Campaign is the development of Literacy Ecosystems. Literacy Ecosystems are an intentional network that connects schools, summer and afterschool programs, families, libraries, healthcare providers, early childhood centers, city agencies, philanthropy, and communities. Their goal is to connect, align, and reinforce efforts around shared reading outcomes and evidence-based instruction and support so that every child becomes a confident reader and writer. They share data, language, goals, and activities to create coherent, joyful, and powerful literacy experiences across every part of a child's day and year. Literacy ecosystem work is currently happening across New York City, in partnership with the NYC Reads initiative of NYC Public Schools. Following are our Literacy Ecosystem legislative priorities:

- **ParentChild+ expansion:** [ParentChild+](#) is an evidence-based early childhood home visiting program that boosts school readiness skills for young children. **We are requesting \$500K to expand programming across the state as part of S.3003.**
- **Reach Out and Read expansion:** [Reach Out and Read](#) is a nonprofit early literacy program that integrates books into pediatric care, particularly in low-income communities. The program equips families and medical providers to nurture children's early language and literacy skills, improving both literacy and health outcomes. **We are requesting \$3 million in the state budget to open 95 new Reach Out and Read sites that are currently on a waitlist.**
- **Dolly Parton's Imagination Libraries expansion:** [Imagination Libraries](#) provide free books to children from birth to age 5 across the nation, including in New York. **We are requesting a \$7 million investment to transition from a fragmented grant system to a unified, scaled, statewide program.**
- **Professional Learning for Libraries:** [Teach My Kid to Read](#) (TMKTR) is working to train librarians in the science of reading using the SUNY New Paltz Science of Reading micro credential. **We are requesting \$190k for this program, which will equip librarians to guide families using hands-on literacy routines that strengthen foundational reading skills.**

# Vision 2030: A Four-Year Plan to Make New York the National Leader on Literacy

New York has a unique opportunity to both learn from other states' successful literacy efforts while leveraging our own unique strengths to become a national literacy leader.

States such as Mississippi, Tennessee, and Louisiana have demonstrated that sustained investment—coupled with strong leadership, educator training, and coherent policy alignment—can produce [measurable gains](#) in reading achievement for all students. Closer to home, NYC Public Schools has implemented comprehensive literacy reform and ecosystem support since 2023, resulting in [improved reading outcomes](#) for all student subgroups on local and state assessments.

New York cannot wait any longer to make literacy a top priority. While state leaders can take a huge first step by adopting our recommendations for the 2026 budget, it will take a sustained, multi-year effort to develop a comprehensive, aligned early literacy system that embeds evidence-based support across the birth-age eight continuum. Such a system must include the following components:

- State approved, evidence-based lists of curriculum and professional learning opportunities
- Literacy coaches and support for high-quality professional learning
- Universal screening in grades K-3
- Public transparency on district instructional resources and K-2 reading outcomes
- High-impact tutoring inside and outside of the school day and year
- Summer and afterschool programming for students in need of additional reading support
- Family engagement to help parents support their child's reading development and advocate for their child's reading needs
- Early childhood programming to support literacy development in childcare and 3k/Pre-K settings
- Educator preparation program reforms to ensure all pre-service teachers are trained in the science of reading, utilizing the work currently being led by The Path Forward
- Support for Literacy Ecosystem policies to align literacy resources from birth to age eight, building on the innovative work happening with NYCPS and NYC Reads Together.
- Support for culturally responsive instructional materials

The Campaign looks forward to working with state leaders to develop, support, and implement these important recommendations, starting this year and into the future.

For more information about the Campaign and our policy priorities, please contact Jeff Smink, deputy director at EdTrust-New York, at [jsmink@edtrustny.org](mailto:jsmink@edtrustny.org)