



EdTrust-New York and New York Campaign for Early Literacy Urges \$26 Million Investment in Literacy Programs to Strengthen Back to Basics Initiative

Background: The [recently released](#) National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) showed that more than half of Black and Latinx students in New York scored Below Basic in fourth grade reading. Below Basic is the lowest performance level on NAEP and shows that students lack even partial mastery of the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for future success. NAEP results are confirmed by 2023-24 New York State ELA assessment data showing only 35% of Black and 32% of Latinx third graders scored proficient in third grade reading.

While last year's [Back to Basics](#) literacy initiative was an important first step in ensuring that all students and educators are provided with instruction and training aligned with the science of reading, it will only impact a small number of current educators and significant questions remain about how the state will enforce new evidence-based curriculum requirements. Much more needs to be done to support students and educators to improve reading outcomes across the state.

State leaders must respond to these unsatisfactory outcomes by approaching literacy as a multi-year, phased-in investment that incentivizes districts to align instruction and professional learning with the science of reading.

To build on last year's Back to Basics initiative, we urge inclusion of the following priorities in the 2026 enacted budget:

- **Micro-Credentials for Current Educators:** Many current educators were not provided with literacy training aligned with the science of reading as part of their teacher preparation program. As a result, educators across the state will require evidence-based professional learning to support classroom instruction and help meet the state's new Back to Basics literacy requirements. Last year's investment in professional learning was an important first step. However, we estimate that over 40,000 current K-3 teachers will not benefit from this training. Additionally, state leaders must provide

professional learning for teachers in grades 4-8, many of whom did not receive evidence-based reading instruction as part of their training.

- **We request \$15 million** for grants to districts to ensure all PreK-8 educators are provided with the opportunity to receive a free micro-credential in the science of reading, with priority for micro-credentials developed by [SUNY](#), [CUNY](#), and other New York based organizations.
- **Incentive Grants for Districts:** Evidence-based curricula are an essential component of the state’s new requirement that all district instructional resources are aligned with the science of reading by September 2025.
 - **We request a \$10 million** investment to provide grants to districts the New York State Education Department (NYSED) identifies as “high-needs” to purchase evidence-based PreK-5 literacy curriculum and aligned professional learning and coaching, with priority for districts replacing disproven balanced literacy programs.
- **Increase NYSED Literacy Capacity:** NYSED will require a significant increase in capacity to monitor Back to Basics implementation, support districts in the shift to science of reading aligned instruction and implement the recommendations of the state’s [The Path Forward plan](#) for New York to ensure all teacher preparation programs are consistently preparing their graduates using evidence-based practices.
 - **We request a \$1 million investment** that would provide NYSED with increased staffing to support districts, educators, and teacher preparation programs in the shift to science of reading aligned programs and policies.

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About The New York Campaign for Early Literacy

The New York Campaign for Early Literacy, convened by EdTrust–New York, is designed to harness the collective voice of New Yorkers committed to better reading outcomes by seeking policy change at the state and local levels through the adoption of evidence-based instruction and materials aligned with the science of reading from birth onward; subsequent professional learning for educators; and improved public transparency regarding literacy materials used in classrooms. A diverse group of individuals and civil rights, education, parent, and nonprofit organizations comprise the Campaign, which unites around the principle that reading is a civil and human right and all children can learn to read by the end of third grade with evidence-based instruction and holistic support inside and outside of school, beginning at birth.

About EdTrust-New York

EdTrust-New York is dedicated to eliminating equity and opportunity gaps that hinder students from reaching their full potential. We focus on ensuring that all students, especially Black, Latinx, Native American students and those from low-income backgrounds achieve high levels of success from early childhood through college. For more information, visit EdTrustNY.org.