



# Embracing Reading (Frustration) for Success

Literacy Academy 2024  
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# About Me

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**Hometown**

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**Family**

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**Education**

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**Professional Experience**

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**[HilderbrandPelzer3.com](http://HilderbrandPelzer3.com)**





# The Most Critical Element in Juvenile Justice: Literacy



**85%** of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally low literate.

In 2018, courts with juvenile jurisdiction handled an estimated **744,500** delinquency cases.

**National Center for Juvenile Justice**

How can we, as educators, address the *frustration* expressed by students particularly in the context of literacy struggles, to prevent potential pathways to incarceration later in life?





# My Introduction to Illiteracy in Jail



# What Incarcerated Students Were Trying to Tell Me: Literacy Struggles and Future Incarceration

Studies have shown that children who cannot read by the end of third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school, a contributing factor to getting on the pipeline to prison, where 70 percent of inmates read at or below a fourth grade level.

Difficulty using letters to represent sounds in words



Trouble recognizing letter-sound relationships



Trouble reading text accurately and fluently



Struggle with the meaning of words to make sense of the content



Confusion with comprehending what they read



# Key Findings from a Study on Misbehavior and Delinquency


In our society, school is the only major legitimate activity for children between the ages of 6 and 18. **If a child fails in school, generally there is little else in which he can be successful . . . delinquency and misbehavior become a way for the failing child to express his frustration at those who disapprove of his academic underachievement.** This disapproval comes not only from parents and teachers, but also from other children who are keenly aware of school status based on performance.

Learning Disabilities: The Link to Delinquency Should be Determined, But Schools Should Do More Now. Report to the Congress, by the Comptroller General of the United States (1977)




# What the Research Says About Poor Reading Instruction Contributes to Developing Delinquent Behavior

“Significant research has been conducted that investigates reading failure as the major source of **frustration** that leads to delinquency.”  
(Hogenson, 1974)



“The causative chain starts with the fact that the child is **not taught reading properly** and that his **reading disorder is not corrected early enough.**” (Mosse, 1982)



“Prior reading level predicted later subsequent delinquency . . . [moreover] **poor reading achievement** increased the chances of serious delinquency persisting over time.” (Huizinga, et al, 1991)

Imagine the consequences if schools don't embrace their students' frustration with skillful reading instruction methods:

- Kindergarteners spend a year in school and move to the first grade without developing letter-naming fluency or knowing the sounds each letter makes.
- Fourth, fifth, or sixth graders cannot recite the alphabet.
- High school students can only read at a third-grade level.
- College students are required to take remedial reading courses before being approved to take college-level courses.

# Unlocking the Pathway to Prison: Navigating the Interconnected Stages – A Vital Resource for Educators



# Unlocking the Pathway to Prison: Navigating the Interconnected Stages – A Vital Resource for Educators

## Reading Classroom:

- Learning environment
- Introduction to literacy skills

## Reading Frustration:

- Struggles with phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension
- Frustration with reading materials

## Misbehaving in School:

- Difficulty keeping up with peers
- Behavioral issues due to academic struggles
- Attention-seeking behaviors

## Developing Delinquency:

- Academic Failure
- Peer Influence
- Lack of positive role models
- Disengagement from school

## Engaging in Crime:

- Pressure to participate in illegal activities
- Lack of constructive outlets
- Influence of external factors

## Prison:

- Arrest and incarceration
- Continued exposure to criminal behaviors
- Limited access to education and rehabilitation programs

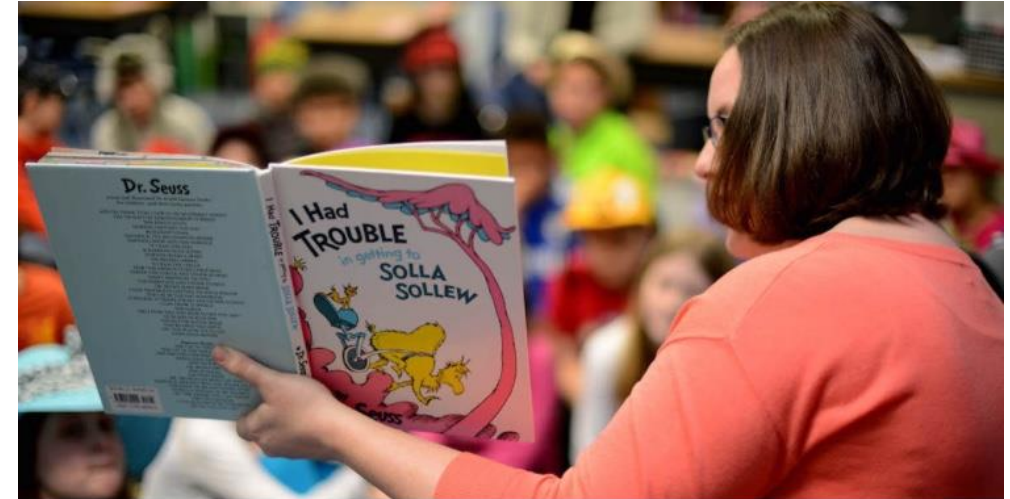
# The Most Critical Element in Juvenile Justice: Literacy

The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is welded to reading failure.

**U.S. Department Of Justice**



From my long perspective, I've identified the number one reason it is hard to teach reading, which has not changed since at least 2003: Policymakers and academics describe in detail how teachers should teach reading in the early grades, but we don't go into real depth to actually *teach them to do it*.



## **READING LESSON NO 1 —TEACH THE TEACHERS**

How can all students learn to read by 4th grade if so many teachers struggle with teaching reading?

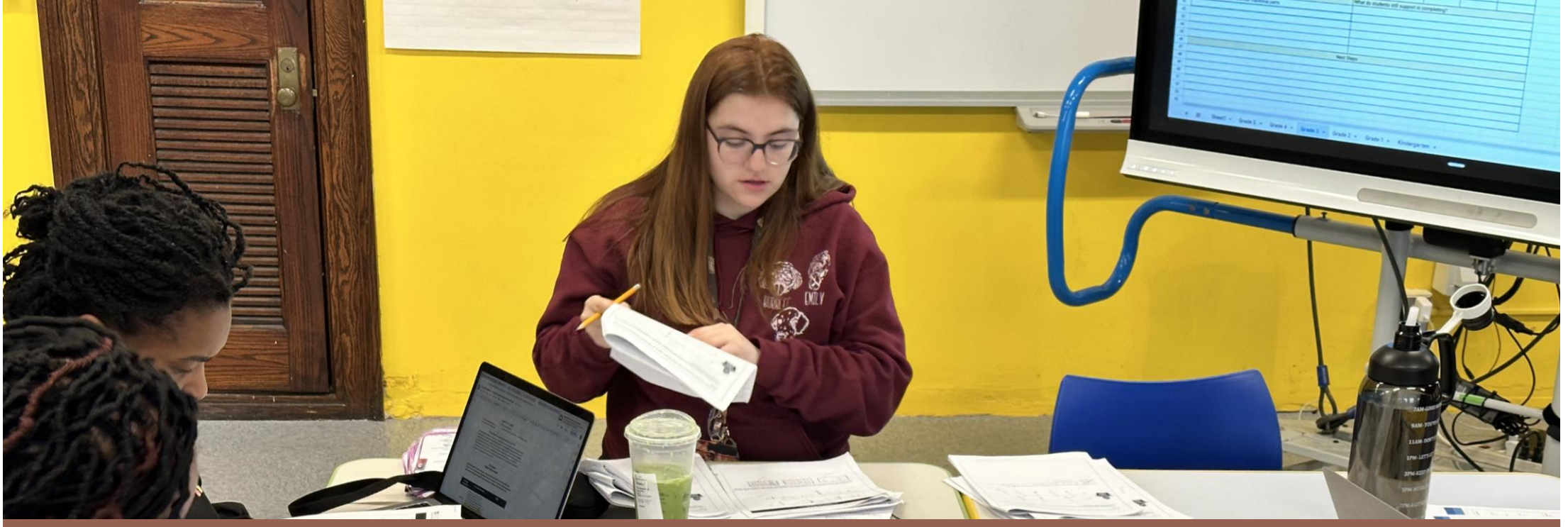
### **DO SOMETHING**

Support Philadelphia Schools

### **READ MORE**

About education in Philadelphia

BY HILDERBRAND PELZER III



## Key Actions to Shift the Teachers' Mindset and Improve Reading Instruction Practices

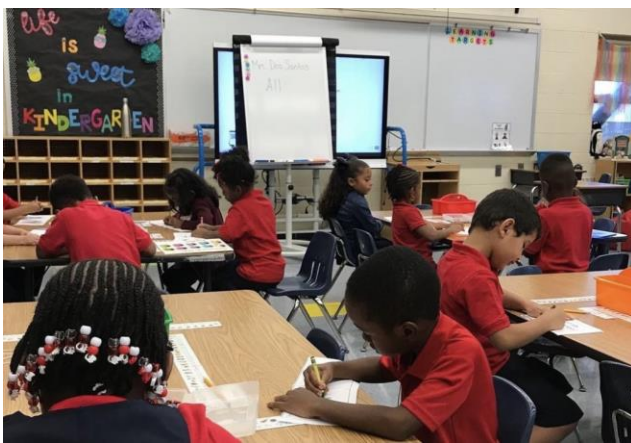
Led LETRS Training

Acquired Language Knowledge

Prioritized MTSS for Reading

Implemented Tier 3 Intervention





# Phonics

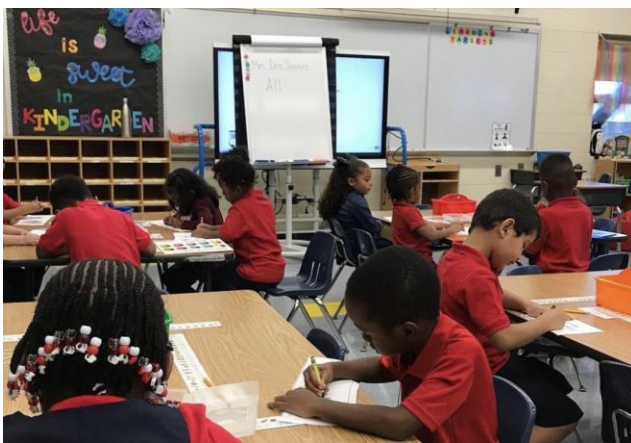
## What is it?

- A type of instruction
- A student who receives instruction in phonics is taught the relationship between the individual sounds in our spoken language and the letters that we use to represent them in our written language.

## Why is it important for Reading?

- It allows students to unlock the code of their written language.

Source: Margaret Goldberg, Right to Read Project



# Phonemic Awareness

## What is it?

- A type of knowledge
- A child with phonemic awareness understands that our spoken language comprises individual sounds.

## Why is it important for Reading?

- The insight that there are sounds within spoken words helps readers to learn and use letters to represent those sounds.

Source: Margaret Goldberg, Right to Read Project

# Fluency

## What is it?

- A characteristic of skilled reading
- A student who has achieved fluency can read text accurately, with expression, at a rate that supports comprehension.

## Why it is important for reading?

- Fluency makes reading comprehension possible.

Source: Margaret Goldberg, Right to Read Project





# Vocabulary

## What is it?

- A component of language
- A child's vocabulary constitutes all the words that the child understands.

## Why is it important for Reading?

- It is easier for a reader to use their knowledge of phonics to translate a written word into a spoken word if they have heard the word before—especially if they already know what that word means.

Source: Margaret Goldberg, Right to Read Project



# Comprehension

## What is it?

- It is the goal of reading
- It is the cognitive process readers use to understand what they read

## Why is it important for Reading?

- Understanding a text allows the information and knowledge in the text to be remembered, analyzed, discussed and integrated into the reader's understanding of the world.

Source: Margaret Goldberg, Right to Read Project

# What the Research Says About Reading

- Reading proficiently by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is critical to a student's future academic success. This is when instruction transitions from "learning to read" to "reading to learn."
- Beginning in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students need to build on foundational literacy skills to learn content across subject areas.
- There is a positive relationship between children's early reading skills and high school graduation.

**What does it mean to read proficiently?** A student might be able to pronounce a word on a page, but if they aren't proficient they might not understand what the author is trying to say, guess what might happen next, or use the information they read. If a student can read proficiently by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, they are more likely to be able to understand content in later grades and have better academic success.

Sources: National Assessment of Education Progress; Annie E. Casey Foundation; Frontiers in Education

# Understanding Reading Challenges of Incarcerated Youth: Research Insights

Problems associated with low levels of literacy among incarcerated youth are largely neglected by the field of education . . . Conducting reading research with incarcerated youth is critical for the advancement of our understanding of the relationship between reading failures and delinquency. (Mulcahy & Krezmien, 2008)



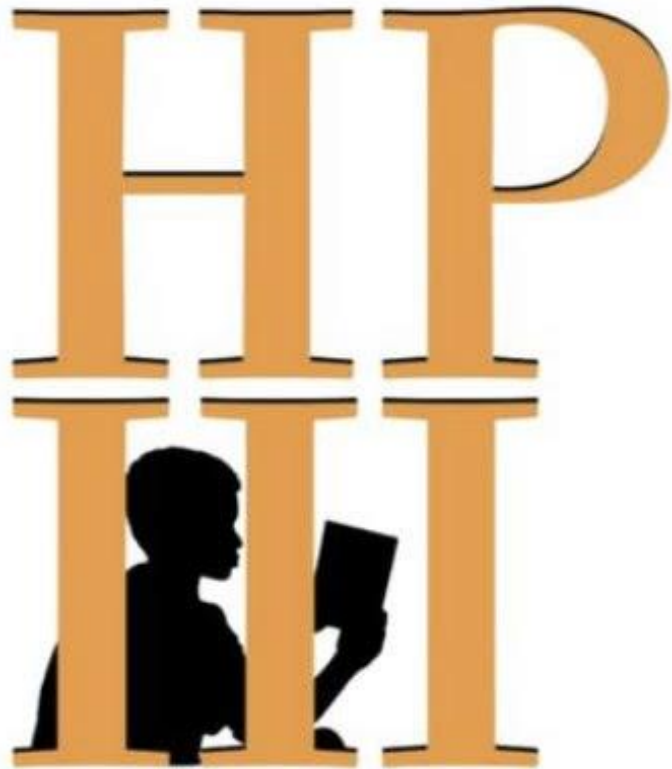
## A Call to Action

Join me in unlocking the power of reading!

Let's empower frustrated students by implementing early interventions and strategies to reshape their reading journey.







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