



March 15, 2023

Re: SF 1273

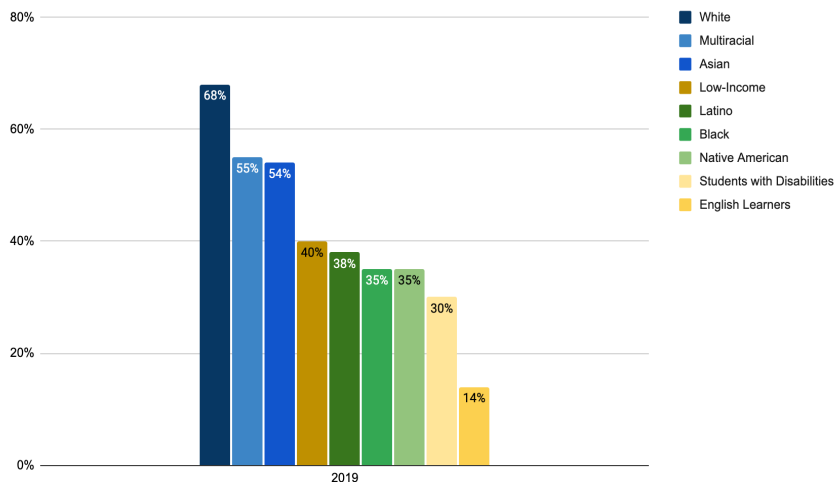
Dear Chair Cwodzinski and members of the committee,

Reading proficiency is critical for success in college, career, and life. Research has found that students who were not proficient in reading by the end of third grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.¹ Despite this, being able to teach reading was one of the most common things over 50 educators told us that they didn't learn, but wished that they had, in teacher preparation.² This need is not unique to Minnesota. Despite a large body of research supporting scientifically-based methods of early reading instruction,³ the majority of Minnesota teacher education programs struggle to equip teacher candidates with the requisite knowledge, skills, and learning opportunities to use an evidence-based approach to teach children to read⁴. Only 22% of teacher education professors say they center their philosophy around explicit, systematic phonics,⁵ the method which most effectively supports early readers.

This is why we support SF 1273, which hold schools accountable to developing a literacy plan aligned with evidence, establish uses for literacy incentive aid, empower literacy experts at the Department of education to provide clear guidance on high quality curricular materials, and would allocate \$100 million to provide training and support for educators to learn about and implement excellent early literacy instruction. Our youngest Minnesotans—particularly those who have traditionally underserved—do not have time to wait and deserve educators with expertise in literacy instruction. Minnesota educators also deserve the opportunity to be trained in evidence-based literacy so they can have the essential tools and knowledge to better serve their students. For an individual teacher, the cost of these training programs can be prohibitive, which is one of many reasons SF 1273 is a smart investment in early literacy and will build off the years of work that have gone toward ensuring all children have access to literacy. We are grateful for Sen. Maye Quade's leadership in crafting a policy that will do right by educators and students.

Sincerely,
Matt Shaver
Policy Director
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Reading Proficiency, MCA 2019



¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). "Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters." http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf

² Kaput, K. (February 2020). "10 Things All Teacher Candidates Should Learn in Teacher Prep." EdAllies. https://edalliesmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Teacher-Prep-Brief_Final_Digital.pdf

³ Schwartz, S. & Sparks, S. (October 2, 2019). "How Do Kids Learn to Read? What the Science Says." Education Week.

⁴ Payeur, A. (November, 2022). "A Content and Thematic Analysis of Foundational Reading Courses in Minnesota's Teacher Preparation Programs." Dissertation.

⁵ Will, M. (January 22, 2020). "Preservice Teachers Are Getting Mixed Messages on How to Teach Reading." Education Week.