**JUNE 2023 BOARD LETTER TEMPLATE**

Send to: _____

Subject: Strengthen the Framework for Reading Success
_____

Dear _____ Unified Leadership team,

On June 7, _____ will present their second court monitor report to the Board of Education to provide an outside, impartial assessment on progress made toward supporting every student in reaching grade-level reading proficiency. While you consider his feedback, there are a few points to elevate:

1. **Professional Development & Instructional Leadership:** All the evidence-based core instruction and intervention curriculum in the world won't make a difference without adequate professional development. Our teachers, staff, *and administrators* need to understand the rationale and purpose of instructional components with ongoing follow-through with implementation. A year into this work, teachers, leaders, and families across the district still have little concrete understanding of the plans for literacy improvement. It is essential to acknowledge that the shift away from balanced literacy and toward evidence-based instruction is an enormous change, one that may shake the foundation of teachers' long-held practices and understanding. We encourage ___USD to deliver the intensity and frequency of professional learning that will be needed to support this degree of change. This may require increasing the volume of professional development currently available to teachers and administrators.
2. **Support for Older Students:** Learning to read does not stop at 3rd grade. Once older students can decode accurately, they need continued instruction in spelling, morphology, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension. Unfortunately, though it is required by the settlement—and was highlighted by the court monitor—little progress has been made for 4th-8th grade students. A lack of capacity does not mean a lack of need.
3. **Oversight for Students with IEPs:** This group of students often falls through the cracks. Special education may be seen as complex because each Individualized Education Program is driven by individual student needs. However, there are key improvements that can be made system-wide to support the movement toward the International Dyslexia Association-aligned practices required by the settlement, and those must be urgently addressed.

Our students need to come first. The community needs a clear, accountable, publicly available plan that maps out how _____ Unified will achieve its goals under the Literacy Action Plan. Consistently bumping into capacity or organizational barriers points to a resource issue that requires a solution.

Literacy is the foundation for all learning. Please continue to put significant resources toward this important work. It is central to so many district-wide goals.

Thank you,
YOUR NAME
RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL (i.e. Parent, Committee member, etc.)

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SCHOOL BOARD MEETING PUBLIC COMMENTS TEMPLATE

**Comment option 1: Curriculum Changes**
My name is XXXX and I am a parent of X student/s at XXXXX school. I want to encourage XUSD to take a stand and declare its intent to move toward evidence-based literacy instruction, known as “structured literacy.” Teachers and families have questions, and they are waiting to hear from district leadership on this issue. I also urge the district to involve all stakeholders in the process of moving toward an evidence-based curriculum. Now that the review of our K-5 literacy program is complete, we must involve all educational partners in the next steps so that we don’t repeat our history of intending, but ultimately failing, to address our gaps in early literacy. Literacy is a high-priority social justice issue. Widely discredited curricula still form the foundation of our general ed and intervention strategy at XUSD schools. Teachers are forced to waste valuable class time administering ineffective assessments aligned with these outdated programs. Evidence has been ignored for too long, causing devastating impacts on our children’s reading ability and our community as a whole. We must take action for our students now to implement high quality curriculum, during this settlement process, and not wait for another 10 plus years.

**Comment option 2: Barriers to Implementation**
My name is XXXX and I am a parent of X student/s at XXXXX school. All of our students deserve to learn how to read fluently by the third grade and graduate high school able to comprehend complex texts. We know that leaders in our city are positioned for success as long as they keep students in the center of decision making. As you listen to the report on progress toward improving reading outcomes for K-8 students please ask yourselves — what are the barriers to implementing the recommendations he has outlined? How can the district rectify and make amends for the delay in supporting students in grades 4-8? How can we actualize the change we are reaching for? What additional support will teachers and administrators need to make meaningful changes? What can be done to make more cohesive and long-lasting improvements? We urge you to think bravely and to act decisively. The work of literacy improvement is deserving of as much funding and energy as we can give it. Other districts are taking on this work with urgency. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. Please, do your best to remove barriers to implementation so that XUSD has the greatest chance of success. There are

hundreds of families who live in this struggle to read and learn every day and watch the school system fail their children. We're waiting for your next move.

**Comment option 3: Good Intentions vs. Meaningful actions**

My name is XXXX and I am a parent of X student/s at XXXXX school. Our community sees itself as breaking new ground in so many ways. We are a prideful, well-intentioned group. But sometimes our good intentions fail to translate into effective action. The district has declared a focus on improving literacy instruction next year – good! But brave action is needed to move the needle on our students' scores. Instead of inquiry-based professional development, our teachers, literacy coaches, and interventionists need concrete, curriculum-specific learning to be better able to deliver evidence-based instruction. Instead of handing DIBELS scores to families without sufficient context, teachers need the support to make an actual plan for improvement and a process for communicating that plan with families. Instead of having interventionists use ineffective programs with our youngest students, they deserve high quality training and ongoing professional development to be able to use evidence-based programming with students during that critical early window. Instead of random worksheets from Teachers Pay Teachers, learning in after-school programs should be tightly connected to our core instruction, and extended learning teachers should receive high quality training. Our summer program, too, should be integrated into this work, rather than using yet another separate program. Our work with the Literacy Action Plan is essential, but it requires more than good intentions — it requires an investment in doing the work and coordinated efforts to actually have an impact.