

## FAQ

### [NAACP Administrative Petition](#) to Oakland Unified School Board

#### 1. ***Who are the petitioners?***

Since literacy is a civil rights issue, having the NAACP as the original, sole petitioner was intentional. Others have agreed to be co-petitioners and supporters, and we welcome their partnership. We've affirmed support from local universities, elected officials, teachers, principals, and currently incarcerated individuals - all of whom acknowledge the importance of literacy and the specific relief requested in the petition, and all of them are willing to be added, by letter, as co-petitioners. If you'd like to voice support, or become a co-petitioner, you can contact us directly through [email](#)<sup>1</sup> or go through the [aCoach](#) portal<sup>2</sup>.

#### 2. ***To whom was it sent?***

It was directed to the head of OUSD's legal team and the School Board President. It was cc'd to all members of the OUSD legal team, school board, and the superintendent. Separately, a copy was sent to the OEA president.

#### 3. ***What are the main points of the petition?***

- a. Provide a statement of facts that ensures clarity about what and why changes must be made to improve literacy outcomes.
- a. OUSD must provide educators with a reading curriculum that has significant evidence of success for kids from transitional kindergarten through fifth grade. We demand evidence of results, not trends or personal preferences. Our children are not guinea pigs.
- b. OUSD must choose a curriculum that is manageable for educators and allows for full implementation within the bounds of teachers' contracted hours. If, due to effectiveness and teacher demand, the district selects a curriculum with a larger planning requirement, they must also have a second option (also with evidence of effectiveness) for schools to choose that falls within the planning requirement. Failure to do this produces burnout, resentment, mistrust and structurally undermines children's educational opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> [oaklandnaacpforliteracy@gmail.com](mailto:oaklandnaacpforliteracy@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> <https://acoach.org/campaigns/literacy-oakland>



- c. Ensure that the newly chosen curriculum currently reflects the diversity of Oakland's students or commits to adapting its content, in collaboration with local partners, with time-bound goals and future financial costs baked into any initial agreement. This allows us to move forward with decisive urgency to get our kids reading immediately while also ensuring a clear path to cultural enrichment and affirmation is factored into purchasing decisions.
- d. Ongoing access to professional development for educators on teaching reading, classroom management, dyslexia identification and support, cultural competency, and how to run small groups - NOT just how to implement a specific curriculum.

The NAACP, through FULCRUM, has provided Oakland Unified teachers with access to professional development through CORE and Wilson. The response was overwhelmingly positive. However, there needs to be ongoing institutional investment in teachers' development needs. **Any teacher or school staff that wants to do a [2 hour training through the Reading League](#), learn [Orton-Gillingham methods \(HNU offering listed here\)](#), or take a [7-10 week CORE class](#), should be able to do so.**

- e. There must be an elevated staff role, within OUSD, dedicated to reading TK-5<sup>th</sup> grade reading; the person must report directly to the superintendent and collaborate with all stakeholders. They need positional clout, budget, and **singularity of purpose** to get things done and be held accountable. And, given that many in OUSD leadership promoted a curriculum (for years) that even the authors now admit lacked key pieces... the person who fills this new role must be willing and able to acknowledge mistakes of the past or be someone from outside the organization. The perception that district officials ignored the brain science and research consensus, followed sector trends, promoted the assessment of patterned reading rather than foundational skills, failed to initially consider student success in the new adoption process, silenced internal dissent, and never came before the community to acknowledge their mistakes is not lost on the NAACP. We need to rebuild trust. Relatedly, this level of leadership accountability is important to teachers, most of whom marched to the district's ideological and pedagogical drum.



- f. There needs to be monitoring and evaluation of Tier2 interventions. There should be pilots for programs like [Read-in-40](#), which have evidence of success with all students, including African-American, English Language Learners, Polynesian, Latino, and students in distressed environments. Currently, OUSD does not pilot and evaluate interventions programs with the same level of scrutiny as the core classroom program. This has to change.
  
- g. Dyslexia screening for all students, K-2.  
California says failure to identify dyslexia is one of the biggest causes of low reading achievement, but we don't screen for it. Here is a former Oakland student (co-petitioner), who was diagnosed while incarcerated, [being interviewed](#) and discussing their reality of getting support in jail while not getting screening and support in school or home.  
OUSD was also out of compliance with AB1369.

**4. What is the NAACP's position on the Black Sanctuary District resolution?**

The Oakland NAACP agrees that harm has been done to Oakland's Black students and that curriculum must be evidence-based; children are not guinea pigs.

We believe that literacy is the heart of any Black Agenda and must be immediately addressed.

We look forward to elevating areas of alignment related to literacy, which is the focus of the Oakland NAACP petition.

**5. When do you expect a response?**

School Board members have already begun to reach out, informally. Given there are budgeting, org chart, and curricular ramifications, we anticipate a formal response taking a while; board members need to digest the contents, consider the ramifications as fiduciaries, and consult with staff/colleagues/advisors. Responses come via writing, meetings, and actions. We will update the public on the response. Consider joining the Oakland NAACP (branch 1051) and coming to our general membership meeting, held the second Saturday of each month, for updates.



6. ***Why do you reference the teachers union? Why AFT ?***

AFT has updated [its position](#) on effective reading instruction since The National Reading Panel report and provides clear guidance on the elements of effective reading instruction. NEA's [Task Force on Reading 2000](#) was published in February 2000, but the [National Reading Panel](#) report wasn't published until April 2000. The NAACP tries to understand and share the most up to date information, and we believe that when professionals discuss the latest evidence and science in their field, we should listen to them. As the most recent national teachers union to take a position on effective reading instruction, we believe their perspective has value to the public's awareness.

7. ***Why are you so concerned with the curriculum? Other things influence reading.***

Asking teachers to help improve student reading outcomes without a quality curriculum that has evidence of success, is like asking them to make 'bricks without straw'. While some teachers have developed toolkits to effectively support students, many teachers have not.

Reading teachers shouldn't also have to be curriculum designers, be required to use ineffective tools, or be forced to spend so much time planning that they have little remaining bandwidth to do the other aspects of the job - many of our students have extraordinarily complex and demanding needs that require teachers' attention.

8. ***Does the petition take a stand for a particular curriculum?***

We stand for selecting something with evidence of success, and we stand against things so complex that people are forced to either half-do it or risk their health and livelihood by extending themselves beyond reasonable levels. These things seem like common sense.

We have videotaped the [interviews of 7 educators](#) sharing their perspectives on various curricula, along with 86 phone conversations since last year. We've interviewed 5 CEOs of curriculum companies, including two publishers, and done extensive reading and analysis of the various studies. We've also brought national experts to share insights. [Our color-grid reflects that information.](#)



We must find a curriculum that has evidence of improving student achievement for the most number of students, and we need it now. Our kids can't wait. We must also have a roadmap to ensure cultural competency (as described in the petition). National curriculum experts advised the Oakland community to leverage its unity and insist that publishers work with OUSD to ensure cultural competency in materials and include the costs of any resulting material revisions in the original price. We must operate with urgency befitting a situation where our kids are being rendered illiterate by design. We need a better curriculum as soon as possible.

**9. *Is this a fad or a pendulum swing?***

No.

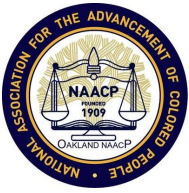
The research has been clear for decades, but OUSD hasn't followed it. Balanced literacy, as applied, wasn't very balanced. OUSD's chosen curriculum had good parts that emphasized a love of reading, but it also had holes in foundational reading skills which underserved a generation of students. People became defenders of programs, philosophies, and personalities, rather than adherents to research and science. The community is clear that we demand the next curriculum choice has evidence of success. For 7 years in a row, Oakland was the fastest gaining urban district in California. Now, as reported in the Ella T case, we have 11 of the states' lowest 75 schools for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading. By comparison, Los Angeles has only 6 schools. Our precipitous fall was enabled by many things, but an ill-advised curriculum and philosophical shift was at the center. We don't have time for ideological remonstrations.

**For perspective on the urgency of the crisis:**

- Oakland Unified serves 35,000 kids in about 50 elementary schools.
- Los Angeles Unified serves 730,000 kids in over 500 Elementary schools.
- Oakland Unified has 11 of California's lowest 75 schools for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading.
- LA Unified has 6 of California's lowest 75 schools for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading.

**10. *What about Trauma? Doesn't that limit what children can do?***

A. Yes, trauma matters. However....



- B. Our children are brilliant.
- C. Black children in America have always been traumatized. **Google “four little girls”**.
- D. In the information age, illiteracy is a historically peculiar form of trauma.
- E. We encourage every educator and stakeholder to [read this blog](#). We encourage schools to use it for professional development and have conversations about it.

**11. Does the petition address math and science?**

No.

**12. Is the petition supportive of the Superintendent or teachers union?**

The NAACP is looking at what’s best for students. We partner with many different groups and, sometimes, not all of them see eye-to-eye. We did not consider who it “supports” outside of the context of what’s best for kids.

**13. We thought The NAACP was against adopting EL Education? Has that changed?**

*Our concern was and remains the lift for teachers. It was designed as a curriculum and a professional development tool. We reviewed the research and spoke with the CEO of EL Education to address specific concerns. However, along with the critiques, we have heard from educators at schools who believe in the curriculum and are struck by the student progress. Since teacher buy-in is **the** critical component of implementation success, we have adjusted to say there must be a second curricular option for schools that has evidence of success (preferably more evidence). Having two, high-quality, affordable options with evidence of success promotes agency, buy-in, and respects the voices of educators with whom we have spoken. The one-size-fits-all approach is much less likely to be successful. We know that having two curricula is not ideal. But if both support the systematic development of foundational skills, build knowledge through content, and are rigorous, the district can justify this as it continues to look for the fit. This also provides leverage with publishers who make promises to modify their programs to ensure cultural competency. If they don’t follow through, there will already be a replacement for them.*

**14. Why does this only cover OUSD? Why aren’t charter schools being addressed?**



*Everyone must serve our children well. If charter school practices, systems, and curricula are not evidence-based and producing high-quality reading outcomes, they should also be scrutinized by an informed, focused public. **Stay tuned.** It's not about politics; it's about our kids.*

**15. How can I make sure to stay updated on the district's response?**

Email questions, [join the NAACP \(branch 1051\)](#), read FULCRUM's [newsletters](#) (subscribe [here](#))