

The occasional Springfield publication for persistent education champions



**In This Issue**

**Literacy & Justice for All**

- Statewide Literacy Coalition Wants the ‘Right to Read’ for Every Child
- What We Get Wrong About Reading

**Giving Credit Where Due:**  
Dual Credit Results Show Success

**Ending Juvenile Court Fines and Fees**  
2022 Priority Legislation

**COVID Safety Care Campaign**

**Meet the Team:** Brandi Watts

**Crossword Puzzle:** The Meat and Potatoes of Illinois Politics



# Statewide Literacy Coalition Wants the ‘Right to Read’ for Every Child

Local groups of parents and educators across the state have joined with advocacy groups to form the Illinois Early Literacy Coalition to fight for equitable access to evidence-based literacy instruction.

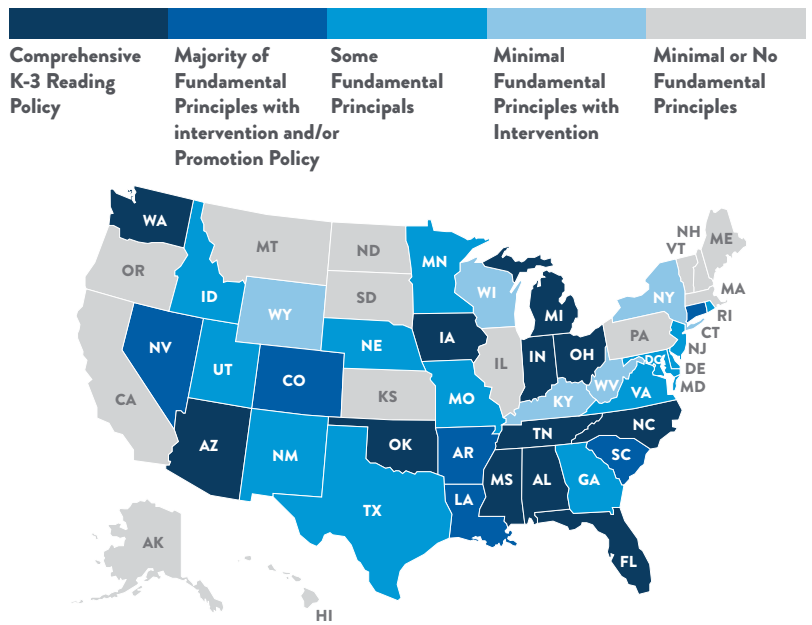
Two-thirds of Illinois students cannot read at grade level, even though researchers estimate that 95% of students could read proficiently if they were provided with appropriate reading instruction. The problem is more profound for students of color, low-income students, and students with IEPs, but no region of the state or demographic group is spared from the stark reality that too many Illinois students are not learning to read proficiently. Most states, no matter where they fall across the political spectrum, have considered their own grim statistics and taken action, but not Illinois – yet.

Many elements go into evidence-based reading instruction, from explicit phonics and sound awareness to increasing text complexity across subjects to access to books. Other state laws have prioritized different elements when developing their literacy policies. For example, about half of states require some sort of reading test as a condition of licensure for certain teachers. Others have

focused on universal screening in grades K-2, with supports to remedy students’ specific early reading deficits. Some provide state-designed professional development for teachers and administrators, or curricular guidance that steer away from programs that use “cueing” methodologies, which encourage students to guess based on context clues rather than decode words.

The Early Literacy Coalition’s bill, called the “Right to Read Act” would provide teacher candidates and current educators with opportunities for

support to tackle this injustice. The bill includes a provision requiring elementary and special education teacher candidates to pass a foundations of reading exam before licensure. It also asks ISBE to provide guidance on reading curriculum, offer Early Literacy Grants to districts that pilot evidence-based literacy programs, and support educators in their professional growth in evidence-based literacy instruction. The agency could do that through creating an optional micro-credential, professional development modules, or providing guid-



The Foundation for Excellence in Education supports literacy policy across the country and monitors states’ progress toward their model literacy policies. Their map (above) shows how far behind Illinois is in its efforts to enact strong evidence-based literacy policies.



Whitney Pearce, a Carmi-White CUSD 5 teacher, provides explicit phonics instruction to a small group of students.

ance on external professional development that is aligned with literacy best practices. A member of the coalition, Everyone Reading Illinois, has put forth a separate bill requiring universal screening in schools – HB 4202 (Carroll) and SB 2936 (J. Morrison).

As we become more dependent on our devices to learn and communicate, strong literacy skills are more important than

ever. The **Right to Read Act** is about economic mobility and racial and social justice. As Dr. Nell Duke, Dr. Ernest Morrell, and Stand Executive Director Mimi Rodman opined in their March 2020 Chicago Tribune editorial: “An education system that subscribes to the deeply ingrained myth of racial hierarchy and Black male dangerousness too often leads to the undereducation of Black boys. Schools with higher

proportions of Black children and youth are likely to have, among other things, fewer and older books in their schools and classrooms; more regressive curricula; very low percentages of Black teachers; poor-quality or nonexistent

instruction in phonics, writing, science and social studies; and fewer opportunities to engage in literary analysis or share perspectives, arguments or creations that involve critical thinking.”

Read more about the Right to Read Act and its quest to bring evidence-based literacy instruction to all Illinois students at [ILEarlyLiteracy.org](http://ILEarlyLiteracy.org).

## What We Get Wrong about Teaching Reading

There’s a quote in reading instruction circles, coined by renowned reading instruction expert Louisa Moats, that says: “Teaching reading is rocket science.” Learning to read is not a natural skill. It does not come automatically by exposing young children to lots of books. It literally re-wires the brain

and there are brain scans to prove it.

Nevertheless, lots of classrooms treat reading like a skill that can be absorbed through exposure, rather than one that needs to be explicitly taught through systematic phonics instruction. To be clear, language compre-

hension is developed naturally – and children begin absorbing it from their earliest moments as their caregivers talk, read, and sing to them and otherwise surround them with activities to nurture their language development. But language comprehension it is only half of the equation. Students also

need to be able to decode the words on the page. Evidence-based literacy instruction addresses both sides of the equation.

By “the equation,” we literally mean an equation called the “Simple View of Reading,” which tells us that reading is

*Continued on page 4*

The Simple View of Reading model shows that reading comprehension requires development of both language comprehension and word recognition.





# 2022 Priority Legislation



## ADEQUATE AND EQUITABLE FUNDING SPENT WISELY

The **Evidence-Based Funding Formula** enacted in 2017 established a minimum funding goal of adding \$350 million in new funds each year until adequate funding is reached. The State Board of Education has requested this increase in its FY2023 budget recommendation, and it is now up to the legislature to ensure these much-needed funds are allocated. Although full funding remains a long way away, the targeted distribution methodology in the Evidence-Based Funding Formula has raised the floor significantly for the most underfunded districts.



## EARLY LITERACY

The Illinois **Right to Read Act** addresses the fact that two-thirds of Illinois students read below grade level and most other states have enacted comprehensive literacy laws to improve outcomes. This bill would require preservice teachers to demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of reading before earning their license. The State Board of Education would also support districts to move toward evidence-based literacy curriculum and professional development.



## HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

This bill revises the **Dual Credit Quality Act** to boost the Dual Credit teacher pipeline through secondary and post-secondary partnerships, pave the way for Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers to benefit from those partnerships, and allow students to take Dual Credit courses for high school credit even if they fail to meet a prerequisite, but still want to be challenged.

A separate resolution tasks the P-20 Council with studying the funding mechanism for CTE funding to maximize its efficiency and collaboration among secondary, higher education, and employer partners.

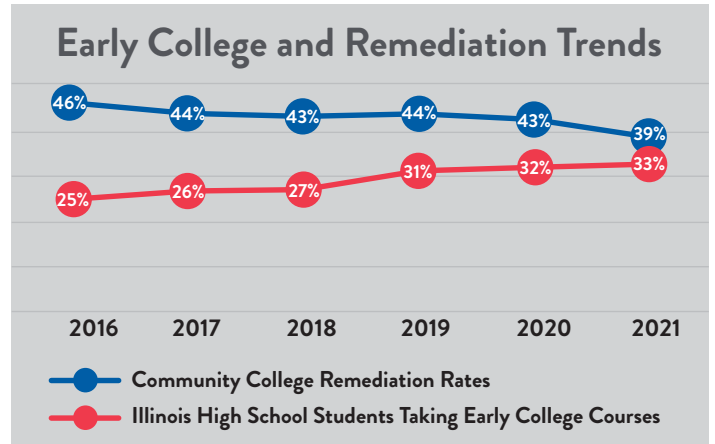


## YOUTH JUSTICE

This bill prohibits **courts from imposing court fees and fines on juveniles**, which can have long-term detrimental impact on their rehabilitation efforts. The fees and fines are unrelated to victim's restitution and do not help victims of crime.

*For more information on specific bills related to our Priority Legislation, visit [bit.ly/StandIL2022PriorityLegislation](http://bit.ly/StandIL2022PriorityLegislation).*

# Survey Says: Dual Credit Prepares Illinois Students Well



Every year, the percentage of high school students who earn early college credits ticks up and remediation rates for new community college students ticks downward. This year was no exception. The 2021 Illinois Report Card data showed another nudge upward in the number of students enrolled in early college coursework, and a decrease in community college students enrolled in remedial courses.

But every so often, the occasional skeptic comes forward to ask: Is a Dual Credit course taught to high school students really as rigorous as most introductory college-level courses? Stand partnered with the Illinois Association of Concurrent Enrollment Partners, the Partnership for College Completion, and Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University to ask the people on the ground. A 2021 online survey of over 1,000 high school teachers, college professors, administrators, students, and parents found that:

- 73% of post-secondary respondents agreed that **colleges benefit from offering dual credit courses**.
- 96% of high school-connected respondents agreed that **high schools benefit from offering dual credit courses**.
- 93% of all respondents, including 98% of student respondents, agreed that **students benefit from participating in dual credit courses**.
- 83% of respondents agreed that **dual credit courses are high-quality and rigorous**.

The new session brings new opportunities to improve Dual Credit access. This Dual Credit bill boosts the pipeline for high school teachers to qualify to teach Dual Credit, allowing three more years for higher education partners to create “professional development plans” for their Dual Credit teachers and opening this option to Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers. The bill also allows high schools to modify Dual Credit courses to allow students an option to take them for high school credit only.

**Want to step up your school's Dual Credit game?** Stand's Dual Credit Advocacy Toolkit is an actionable resource that walks everyday people through the process of creating or expanding Dual Credit programs. It is available free of charge at [StandAdvocacyToolkit.org](http://StandAdvocacyToolkit.org). Contact Aimee Galvin ([agalvin@stand.org](mailto:agalvin@stand.org)) with questions or for a demo.

# Eliminate Juvenile Court Fees and Fines

Illinois youth and their families can face fees and fines at every stage of the juvenile court process – everything from administrative costs to public defender services to DNA tests. The fees and fines can range from \$25 to \$800 and can quickly add up to thousands of dollars for a single family. They unfairly punish youth and families living in poverty and create bureaucratic waste.

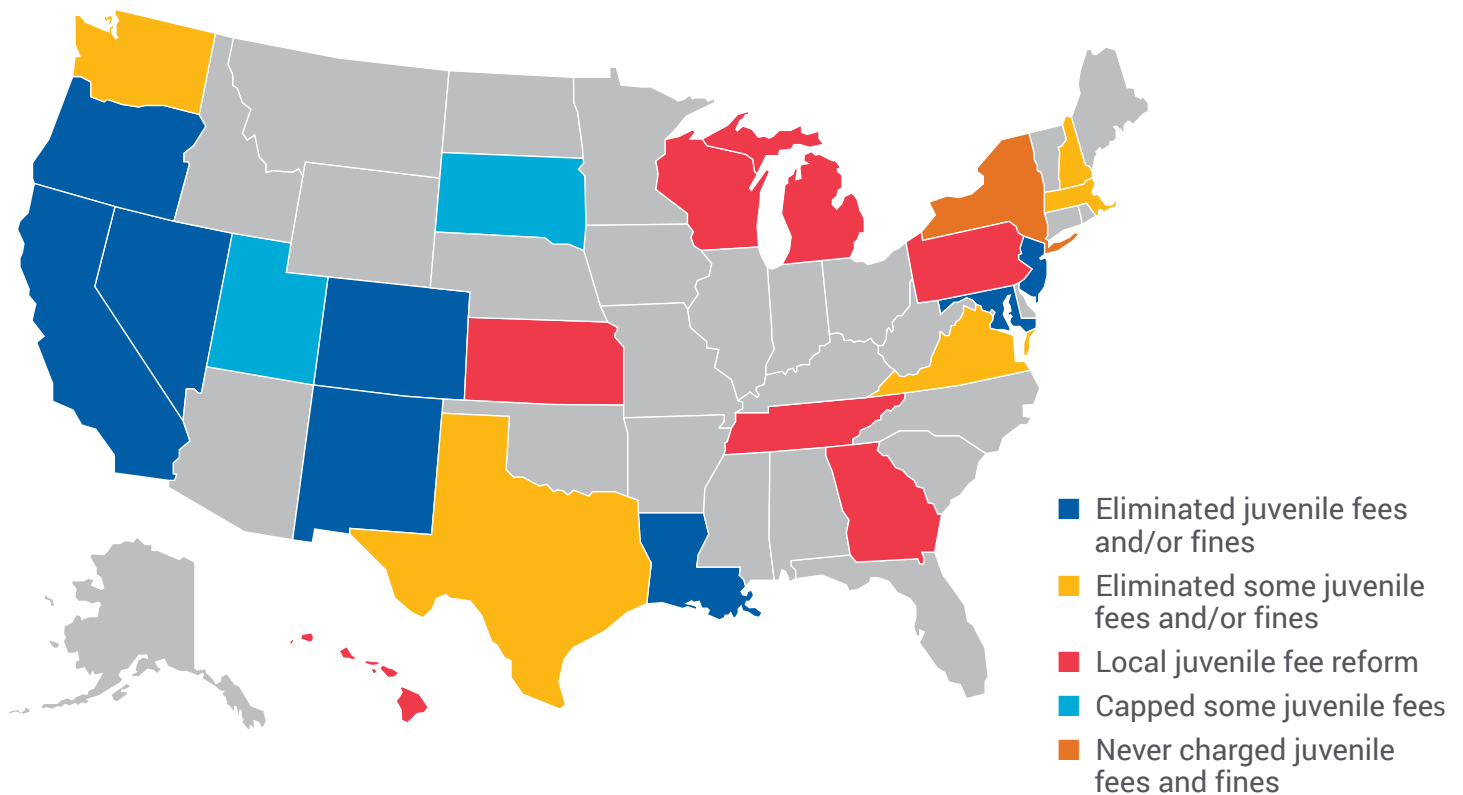
Realizing the inefficiency of charging these fees, a growing number of counties in Illinois have moved to reduce or eliminated court fees charged to youth. However, Illinois law still allows these penalties to be charged. Many states across the country – both majority Democratic and Republican – have reduced or eliminated juvenile court fees and fines. Since 2015, 11 states have reduced or eliminated fees and fines for juvenile court.

A bill to be introduced soon would prohibit courts from charging youth with court fines and fees. Court-involved youth, who are disproportionately low-income, are often

unable to pay these fees and start their adult lives in debt with a deflated credit score, or pay for court fees instead of basic household necessities. Organizational support for the measure ranges from Americans for Prosperity to Faith Coalition for the Common Good.

The costs of collecting juvenile court fees and fines often outweigh any revenue they might generate. For example, Oregon spent \$866,000 to collect \$864,000 in support fees for youth in custody in 2019. Colorado spent 75 cents for every \$1 it collected in juvenile fees.

The fees and fines are unrelated to victim's restitution and do not help victims of crime. Instead, they result in very minimal revenue for counties, contributing to government bloat, while placing a financial strain on Illinois families. These fees and fines are also racially discriminatory and can lead to extended system involvement – simply for failure to pay – the exact opposite result we hope for all juveniles in the court system.



*Continued from page 2*

the product of the words one recognizes and the language one understands. The first part of that equation depends on students having a strong grasp of phonics, being able to identify and manipulate sounds in words, and ultimately “mapping” those words in the brain. Ideally, these skills are developed in the early grades and become so automatic that readers decode words without thinking about it, freeing them to expend their mental energy on comprehension. Some

students will “crack the code” with minimal instruction, but for over half of the population, those skills must be taught explicitly, sequentially, and systematically.

The language comprehension side of the equation starts early, as parents babble with their babies, read to them, talk to them, and share life experiences that help children build background knowledge. Moving into school, children continue this development more formal-

ly, reading and interacting with rich literature that exposes them to new vocabulary, experiences, and cultures. Speaking is natural; children will pick up language through exposure without explicit instruction. But some students will come to school with significantly more contact with books and language development than others. Text complexity increases throughout school and students need clear strategies for comprehension and vocabulary development.

Evidence-based literacy instruction provides students with the explicit, systematic phonics instruction that is essential for early readers, and with the exposure to great literature that pushes students to build their vocabulary and think critically about what they read. It is only by getting both sides of the equation right that Illinois will build a future of strong readers.



# COVID Safety Care Campaign

Her life hasn't been the same since Stand's Community & Family Partnerships Director, Tommorrow Snyder, got COVID near the beginning of the pandemic. She's a "long-hauler," with continued battles of fatigue and shortness of breath. Now she even has to see a cardiologist, another long-term impact of the virus.

But Tommorrow is also a fierce advocate for her community and for health justice. So when she got an opportunity to canvass the community to share her story and provide vaccine information to her neighbors, she jumped at it.

Over three weeks this fall, Tommorrow's team of eight canvassers knocked on over 2,000 doors on the South Side of Chicago. They shared their stories about why they chose to get vaccinated, listened to neighbors' stories and concerns, and provided face masks and information on where to access vaccines and tests. Team members also hosted small group meetings with parents and educators, which provided much-needed support as they endure the emotional toll the pandemic has taken on their families.



*Tommorrow Snyder (center) taking a quick break from knocking doors, joined by members of the COVID Safety Care team, including (l-r) Mimi Rodman, Nastassia Ballard, Snyder, Brandi Watts, and Scott McDonald.*

Knowing there remains some hesitation about vaccines, the COVID Safety Care team worked to get the most up-to-date information about the vaccine and testing sites into the hands of folks in those neighborhoods. Each volunteer

of the team had either survived COVID themselves, had loved ones with diagnoses, or unfortunately lost a loved one from COVID. Their stories and resources were important to share with communities most impacted by the pandemic.

Learn more about Tommorrow's story at [bit.ly/-COVID-19story](https://bit.ly/-COVID-19story) and reach out to Tommorrow at [tsnyder@stand.org](mailto:tsnyder@stand.org) if you would like more information about Stand's COVID Safety Care Campaign.

## Meet the Team



**Name and Role:** Brandi Watts, Educator Partnerships Director

**Lived in:** Dallas, Barcelona, and Chicago

**Education and Certifications:** BA in Interdisciplinary Studies and MA in Humanities from the University of Texas at Dallas, IL and TX teachers' licenses, DiversityFIRST Certification from the National Diversity Council

**What do you love about your job?** Having taught for 10 years, I know how difficult teaching can be. Here at Stand, I get to partner with teachers and schools to make their hard work as impactful as possible. I love that.

**What do you do for fun?** I love live performances. Music, dance, poetry. Chicago has lots to offer.

**Who is your role model and why?** Michelle Obama's commitment to going high when others go low is something I try to emulate.

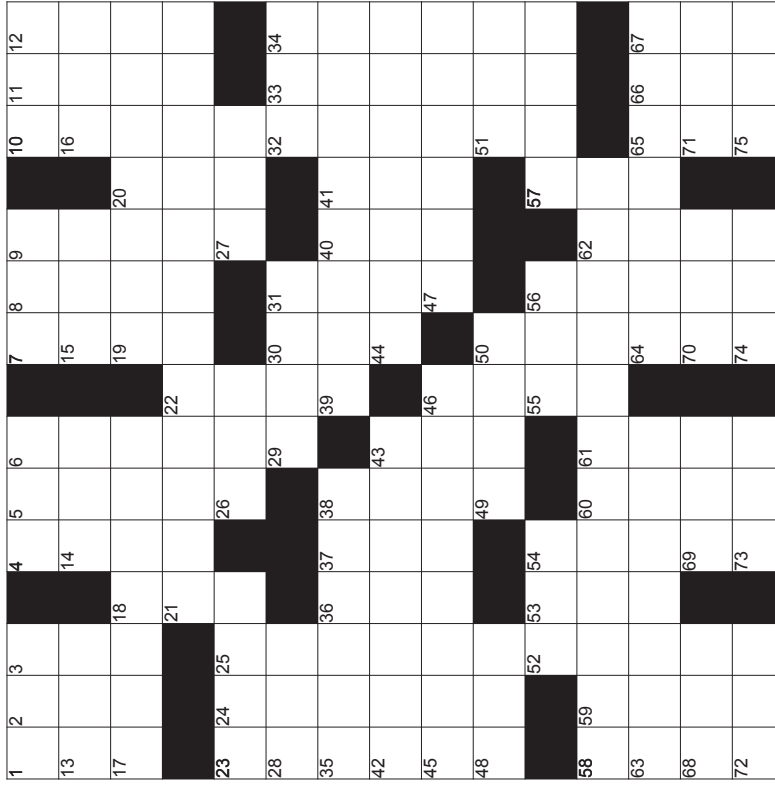
**What is your hidden talent?** I'm a pretty good karaoke back-up singer, but never the lead.

**Favorite book?** *Memoirs of a Geisha*

**Favorite movie?** School Daze

# The Meat and Potatoes of Illinois Politics

Find the crossword solution at [stand.org/lon22NewsStand](http://stand.org/lon22NewsStand).



## ACROSS

1. Gosh
4. Tool for videoconf.
7. Com refuse
10. Bit
13. Extension
14. The rime of "mine" ("m" is the onset)
15. Wing
16. Brazilian destination
17. You don't want to see how it's made
19. Managing
21. Local jobs bills or \_\_\_\_\_?
23. Extra
26. A vote
27. The loneliest number
28. Powdered drink
29. Tears
32. Cheerleader's cry
35. Call
39. May apply to some texts
42. Ardent
44. Home of the House and Senate
45. The \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment (a perennial bill)
47. Executed again
48. Dozens of mos.
49. A deer or a beer
51. It is mightier than the sword
52. Epoch
55. \_\_\_\_\_, myselfes, and Is
57. SNAP agency
58. Bring \_\_\_\_\_
63. Drank
64. Populist issues to rile up a crowd
68. Today I learned, briefly
69. Present tense were
70. Last page

## DOWN

1. An unpopular tax
2. A still-unratified amdt.
3. Australian bird
4. Adios
5. Twelve \_\_\_\_\_ Men
6. More mild
7. Comp. Annual Fin. Rpt.
8. Oil
9. A twangy dueler
10. A three-horned dinosaur

11. An informal dialectal contraction
12. Beagles and terriers
18. Health resort
20. Home for a lion
22. Compensated
23. Swampy
24. Letter addressee
25. Two year legis. period
30. One type of cmte
31. Hollywood sidewalk decor
33. Repented
34. Montana's capital
36. Foolish talk
37. Elite Campaign high school
38. Electoral subdivs.

40. Gorilla or chimpanzee
41. Divest
43. Headgear
46. Baby sheep
50. \_\_\_\_\_ up (got ready)
53. Type of investmt.
54. Turn at the plate
56. Landscape
57. Albuquerque univ.
58. Great songs
59. Leave out
60. Fearless protagonist
61. The first garden
62. Not evens
65. Ages
66. Amazement
67. A casual top



850 W. Jackson Blvd., Suite 330  
Chicago, IL 60607

### About Stand for Children

Stand for Children is a unique catalyst for education equity and racial justice, to create a brighter future for us all.

 [stand.org/Illinois](http://stand.org/Illinois)

 [facebook.com/StandIllinois](https://facebook.com/StandIllinois)

 @IllinoisStand