

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education
March 21, 2023
Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 33

Good morning, Chairwoman Richardson, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Isaacsohn and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Primary and Secondary Education. Thank you for the opportunity to testify as an interested party to House Bill 33. My name is Michael Lombardo and I am the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of BookNook, a synchronous online learning platform designed to enhance K-8 literacy skills through small-group reading instruction and high impact tutoring.

I want to begin by thanking the members of this committee for their work on primary and secondary education and the Legislature's commitment to improving literacy through high quality tutoring. As many of you know, last year the Legislature passed House Bill 583 that instructed the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) to compile a list of tutoring programs that it considers to be of high quality and submit reports on the programs' effectiveness to the General Assembly. BookNook is proud to report that we were selected by ODE as a one of the high quality tutors across the state. While ODE has worked to identify the highest quality tutoring service providers and report those providers on a list available to school districts across the state, there is no requirement or process for ODE to uplift that list by incentivizing school districts to utilize tutoring providers to address literacy and learning loss. Other states, such as Texas and Virginia, have implemented policies to help school districts identify tutoring providers but also incentivize the usage of those tutors to make sure that the students are receiving the best quality tutoring services that fit their needs.

I commend the Governor for prioritizing literacy in his budget through:

- literacy support coaches;
- subsidies for core curriculum materials in English language arts and evidence-based reading intervention programs; and,
- professional development stipends for school staff to complete training in the science of reading.

However, I am here today to urge your support of an amendment to more directly help students improve reading skills. The amendment allocates \$15M a year for a grant program that public, community, STEM, chartered nonpublic and education-related nonprofits can utilize to fund high quality tutoring. This will have an immediate and tremendous positive effect on reading achievement for students across Ohio. A student's ability to read has a profound impact on their success including high school graduation rates (those who cannot read by the third grade are four times more likely to not receive their high school diploma) and future workforce participation. Unfortunately, per a release from the U.S. Department of Education, classrooms across the

country are confronting severe learning losses, including low literacy rates, amongst students, and Ohio is no different. The average reading score for U.S. students at the age of 9 fell by 5 points from 2020 to 2022. According to National Assessment of Educational Progress, commonly referred to as the Nation's Report Card, Ohio's eighth grade reading proficiency rate fell from 38 to 33 percent.

Decades of peer-reviewed research have shown that high impact tutoring is one of the most effective ways to accelerate learning for students across a variety of subject area. There are few areas of true consensus in education, but one of them is that high impact tutoring gets results for students. At BookNook, we have demonstrated that through a study conducted by Teachers College at Columbia University which showed that students exposed to high-usage high-intensity tutoring saw a 40 percent greater increase in iReady scores than similar students who did not participate in high intensity tutoring. Moreover, research has shown that for every ten hours of high intensity tutoring that a child utilizes, it makes up for six months of classroom time. At a time where we are still recovering from the adverse learning loss students experienced due to the pandemic, we should invest in proven, tangible and immediate results to get Ohio's most vulnerable students back on track.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony. I urge your support of the creation of a grant to implement ODE's high quality tutor list.

Michael Lombardo
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BookNook