Everway Testimony Before the Ohio Senate Education Committee

Date: May 14th, 2025

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Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee. My name is Glenna Wright-Gallo. I represent Everway, a global leader in assistive technology and artificial intelligence for learning. Our company, formerly known as "n2y," was founded 28 years ago in Huron, Ohio by speech language pathologist, Jacquie Clark. Despite serving students and teachers in over 60 countries, we have deep roots in Ohio and continue to operate our headquarters out of Erie County. I am a career educator, most recently serving as an Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. I previously served as state director of special education in Utah and Washington State.

Supporting literacy for every K-12 student in Ohio

Ohio's K-12 system serves 1.6 million students, including over 250,000 students with disabilities (over 15% of the population) and a growing number of English learners. Persistent achievement gaps in reading threaten the state's future workforce and economy. The gaps are most acute in rural and urban districts, each operating with limited resources.

Strategic investment in assistive technology (AT) and artificial intelligence (AI) is both an educational imperative and economic necessity. AT and AI can automate administrative tasks, freeing teachers to focus on evidence-based instruction and individualized support. AI tools like text-to-speech and speech-to-text ensure all students can access grade-level content, directly supporting the ReadOhio Initiative

(Ohio's science of reading initiative) and Ohio's dyslexia support legislation with identification, real-time interventions, and progress monitoring.

Opportunity: Leveraging AI and AT to power educational outcomes and workforce development

Ohio's Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) has broadened its mission to integrate workforce readiness with traditional academic priorities, placing a strong emphasis on career pathways alongside rigorous academic standards. The AI Strategy developed by Ohio's AI in Education Coalition specifically calls for expanding purchasing opportunities for AI tools, ensuring that all students are prepared for an AI-driven future. This expanded focus is especially timely as Ohio intensifies efforts to improve literacy, recognizing that strong reading and communication skills are foundational to both academic achievement and career success. Additionally, Ohio's Model Curriculum for Technology (adopted in 2022) seeks to facilitate the use of technology for academic tasks, leveling the learning environment for students of various learning styles and abilities.

Everway's suite of tools exemplifies this opportunity, especially for the use of AI technology. uPar is a universal literacy screener that helps educators identify how students best comprehend text, pinpointing those who would benefit from reading accommodations and enabling targeted instruction. Read&Write complements uPar by providing a broad range of portable, interoperable literacy supports, such as AI capabilities like text-to-speech, picture dictionaries, translation, and audio note features, making curriculum accessible for all learners, including English learners and those with reading difficulties. Everway's professional learning offerings complement uPar and Read&Write to ensure successful implementation.

Together, these tools foster meaningful and impactful access to core instruction, boost literacy, and help close achievement gaps by empowering students to learn in the ways that suit them best, a critical step for improving reading scores and preparing all learners for success in higher education and the workforce. These tools also can follow students as they participate in community colleges, universities, apprenticeships, and other workforce-related programs.

Arkansas is one state that has made an investment in these tools, administering uPar to over 170,000 students and deploying Read&Write to over 300,000 students and their teachers. In the most recent NAEP scores, Arkansas saw a significant narrowing of the gap in reading scores for 8th grade students with disabilities.

I respectfully urge you to:

- Allocate dedicated funds to implement and support AI-based AT pilots not only in K12 public schools, especially in small and rural districts and urban schools where literacy scores have been the lowest, but also community colleges, and in the workforce.
- Invest in professional learning for educators on technology integration and evidence-based literacy.
- Strengthen partnerships between K-12, higher education, and Ohio's business community, so technology supports follow students into every learning and career pathway.
- Fund Ohio Wesleyan University, which has a long history of educating teachers, as an independent third party evaluator for this program.

Targeted investment in technology will maximize Ohio's education dollars, close achievement gaps, and ensure the state leads in workforce readiness. Let's make Ohio a national model for accessible, future-ready schools.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment. I am happy to answer any questions.

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Addendum to Everway Testimony to the Ohio Senate Education Committee

Everway

May 14, 2025

1. Product Overviews
   a. uPar
   b. Read&Write

2. Support for the Science of Reading

uPar

uPAR identifies the reading accommodations that are right for each student to help students access grade-level text.

The science that powers uPAR is based on The Protocol for Accommodations in Reading developed in partnership with Montgomery County(MD) Public Schools and Dr. Denise DeCoste.

More information here.

Online, student-led protocol with state level data reporting

- Autoscored
- Student-led
- Reports on individual students & cohorts, all the way to statewide data

Identify needs for accommodation & inclusion

- English-language learners
- Dyslexics
- Neurodiverse individuals
- Low-SES & rural students

1

Students take the uPAR protocol online

2

Results show optimal reading method & accommodations

3

Administrators get reports for individuals & groups

Read&Write

Read&Write is a literacy support tool that offers help with everyday tasks like reading text out loud, understanding unfamiliar words, researching assignments and proofing written work.

More information here.

Read&Write is the world's leading literacy toolbar that's everywhere students need it

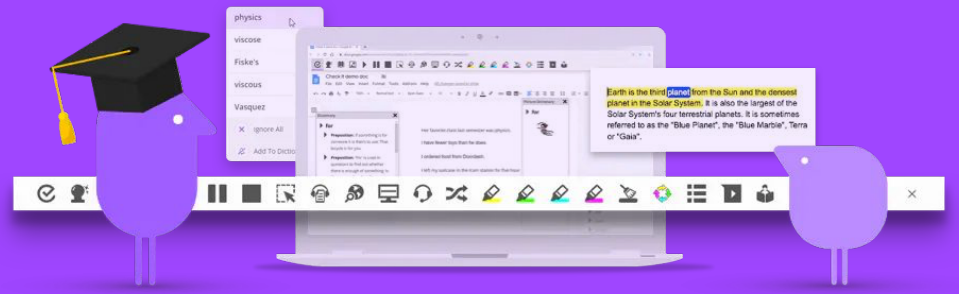
Writing Supports
Word Prediction
Speech to Text

Reading Supports
Text to Speech
Dual Highlighting
OCR for accessibility

Language & Vocabulary Supports
Translation
Picture Dictionary
Re-wordify

Learning Supports
Vocabulary Study
Fluency Practice

Study Supports
Highlighters
Organizers



Support for the Science of Reading

Science of Reading	Daily Literacy Supports	Progress Monitoring
WR × LC = RC	Read&Write Co:Writer	Read&Write **Practice Reading Aloud**
Word Recognition • Phonemic Awareness + Letter Recognition • Decoding + Spelling • Connected Text Reading • Handwriting	– Text to Speech -- models fluent reading – Speak As I Type -- learners gain phonemic awareness – Audio Maker -- easy creation of auditory phonemic level practice (RW) – Word Prediction -- includes phonetic spelling support; CW includes speak letters, words, or speak sentences – Vocabulary List -- front load or identify difficult content vocabulary (RW) – Simplify Page with Discovery mode for on-the-spot connected text (RW) – Dictionaries and picture dictionaries to assist with word recognition and pronunciation – Practice Reading Aloud (skills are practiced, but data is not stored) (RW)	– Monitor student progress over time for word recognition and reading fluency – Teacher created content can include phonemic awareness rehearsal (nonsense words, rhymes, predictable text) – Use dictionary to hear words pronounced
Science of Reading	**Daily Literacy Supports**	**Progress Monitoring**
WR × LC = RC	Read&Write Co:Writer	uPar
Language Comprehension • Grade Level Texts • Text Sets to Maximize Vocabulary + Background Knowledge • Asking + Answering Text Dependent Questions • Writing Connected to Text	– Text to Speech -- learners to access grade level content and above grade level content – Collect Highlights to curate a text set; Customize to include background knowledge (RW) – Use Simplify Page with Discovery mode to build background knowledge (RW) – Topic dictionary (CW) ***Word Prediction – prompt students to use appropriate and contextually relevant words, reinforcing their understanding of syntax and grammar.	– Monitor student progress over time for reading comprehension – Reading protocol begins at grade level and provides data to optimize reading challenge – Learners answer a series of text-dependent questions to determine optimal reading level and accommodations Accessing Text: Identifies whether a student benefits from listening and seeing text using text-to-speech as compared to silent reading with efficiency and accuracy