



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For immediate release

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Response to the Release of the 2026 New York State English Language Arts Test Scores for NYC Public Schools

August 7, 2026 (NEW YORK CITY) — Maria Odom, Executive Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), issued the following statement in response to the release of the 2026 New York State English Language Arts (ELA) test scores for New York City students in grades 3–8:

The test scores released today underscore the need for the City to remain laser-focused on the critical task of strengthening literacy instruction and ensuring that every student leaves New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) a strong reader.

With the launch of NYC Reads in 2023, the City made an ambitious, long-overdue commitment to aligning the way schools teach reading with the research on how children actually learn. While the dramatic year-over-year swings in proficiency rates for students in grades 3–5 raise more questions than answers, what is clear is that the work is far from done — with only around half of students reading proficiently and glaring disparities between student subgroups. There are no silver bullets in education and true change does not happen overnight; when the City committed to overhauling literacy instruction, we knew it would be a multi-year effort requiring a sustained investment of resources and political will.

Teaching children how to read is one of our public schools' most fundamental responsibilities, and the Mamdani administration should double-down on the goal of getting it right. This includes expanding access to small-group intervention for students who need extra help and providing teachers with ongoing training, resources, and support. At AFC, we continue to hear from families of students with language-based learning disabilities or other reading difficulties who have been unable to get the help they need within the public schools — and we also know there are classrooms across the five boroughs where meaningful change is happening. NYCPS should use the testing data released today, along with screener results and other sources of information, to identify both bright spots and challenges in the implementation of NYC Reads. NYCPS must learn from the experiences of the past three years; collaborate with superintendents, schools, and families to assess what's working well and where adjustments are needed; and direct additional resources and support where they are most needed.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.