



The LAC School Approach

At Literacy Academy Collective (LAC) we believe access to literacy is the most pressing Civil Rights issue in New York City. Only 8% of students with disabilities and 20% of students living in poverty are proficient in reading by 8th grade. Illiteracy greatly increases the risk of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, dropping out of school, and involvement in the criminal justice system. Students with dyslexia, LBLD, and struggling readers currently operate in a “wait-to-fail” system lacking comprehensive screening, curricula, and teacher training to identify and teach struggling readers. Families of privilege are sometimes able to attain services to enable their students to read, but for most NYCPS families, solutions are out of reach. For those most marginalized, with the least access, this failure can have devastating consequences. These are the families we intend to serve.

Our mission is to build and support a network of NYCPS schools to allow striving readers to achieve academic success by bringing culturally relevant, structured literacy to students at the intersection of race, poverty, and disability. These schools will serve as the anchor to our change strategy; labs for evidence-based practice and innovation in teaching which will radiate change, affecting students, teachers, and leadership in each borough of NYC.

Our first school, South Bronx Literacy Academy (SBLA), opened in fall 2023 as the first district public school in the country specifically designed to support students with dyslexia. We meet our students’ unique needs by employing highly trained teachers using evidence-based structured literacy. All essential elements of literacy are explicitly taught, woven across the day in every subject area, allowing for accelerated learning. Students are supported in small group settings with direct feedback and practice, and individual needs are identified and diagnostically assessed ensuring all students improve.

- Title I school, serving 97 students and families
- Two sections each of 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th grades, with plans to serve grades 2-8
- City-wide admissions with a Bronx and D7 preference
- All students fall in the Red in Acadience, a foundational reading skills assessment
- Students do not need an IEP or a dyslexia diagnosis to attend
- Curriculum follows NYS Standards in all subject areas. Students receive grade-level content through multiple mediums (read aloud, multimedia, hands-on projects, trips, etc) in addition to foundational reading skills.

- Services provided in a whole-class setting - students do not need to be pulled out to get the support they need

SBLA & The Science of Reading

Key Idea #1: The Science of Reading Reflects a Body of Research

- The science of reading is not a specific program. At SBLA, we pull from multiple programs and develop/adapt curriculum as needed, pulling on the latest research about what we know about how kids learn to read and write.

Key Idea #2: The Science of Reading Informs Instruction from Early Childhood Through Adolescence, for All Populations

- All students benefit from evidence-based reading instruction, but students who are two to three years behind in reading, like those at SBLA, need it with more practice, more intensity, and woven throughout the day.

Key Idea #3: The Science of Reading Emphasizes the Importance of Structured Literacy Instruction That Develops the "Big Six" Skills and Competencies

- Our literacy program focuses on all of the key components that support effective reading and writing. *All six* are taught explicitly and directly, with opportunities for supported practice.
- Multisensory instruction is used across the content areas to process language. For example, students connect phonemes to graphemes using different modalities such as hearing, speaking, writing, and engaging the gross motor and sensory systems.

Key Idea #4: The Science of Reading Emphasizes and Reflects the Importance of Fostering a Culturally Responsive Teaching Environment

- We have created a culturally responsive curriculum grounded in the NYS CRSE framework, but adapted for students with significant language needs.
- Our writing program is centered around culturally relevant high interest relatable topics that reflect our students, but highly structured to help our students use both oral and written language to express complex ideas.
- 60% of our staff at SBLA are BIPOC, and our part-time and paraprofessional support staff also reflects the diverse South Bronx community.
- Professional development, planning support, coaching and feedback are provided to all teachers.

Key Idea #5: The Science of Reading Suggests Key Instructional Approaches to Build Literacy Skills—Many of Which Also Cultivate Learners' Social-Emotional Skills

- Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings' Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education Framework shows us three pillars¹, with the first pillar requiring that students experience academic success. In the current system, children with dyslexia, LBLDs, and struggling readers NEVER experience pillar A, and therefore never attain B (cultural competence) or C (critical, aka socio-political, consciousness).
- Based on research and our experience, by using culturally relevant structured literacy with fidelity throughout the day, our students will finally experience this success, and because of this, self regulation around instruction begins right away.
- As students build confidence in reading, writing and learning, the success helps develop more trusting learning partnerships with their teachers overall.
- With dyslexia and LBLDs known to correlate with deficits in executive function (EF), in addition to co-occurring ADHD upwards of 30% within this population, we also aim to integrate a specific Executive Functioning skills curriculum, which will include behavioral, cognitive, and emotional regulation.

¹ <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/culturalrelevantpedagogy.asp>.