



# Reading Allowed



SEPTEMBER 2024

## Executive Director Message



### Happy Birthday, Reading Allowed!

It's hard to believe that Reading Allowed has been serving students for five years now. Before starting Reading Allowed, I had the privilege of working with students in two very different communities. I worked with middle school students at in southwest Philly, an underserved part of the city. Of the 100 students who joined us each year in 5th grade, about 75% were reading well below grade level. I then worked with elementary school students at a private school and that's where I saw the massive and glaring disparity in access to high quality literacy support. I saw just how well our struggling

readers did when they had access to the supports they needed. These students had access to tutors who were certified in a structured literacy approach to literacy instruction and over and over again, I saw these students blossom and set off on exciting paths. I started Reading Allowed to give every struggling reader, regardless of their financial circumstances, access to the highest quality instruction they deserve. It's that simple.

The "School to Prison Pipeline" is a real thing. As I know you know, a large percentage of the prison population are low literate, a huge percentage of juveniles who interact with the juvenile court system are low literate. Adults who cannot read

experience worse health outcomes and longer-term poverty than those who are literate and I can keep going.

Within weeks, we were receiving calls from families who were hearing about us and we were desperately trying to figure out how we could support as many students as we could. I also knew that if we could work with students at school during the day, that would be a really efficient way to provide the high dosage tutoring our students needed.

**I can't believe I'm saying this, but as of September, 2024, Reading Allowed has impacted more than 700 students and that number is growing rapidly. In 2023, we provided 12,236 hours of instruction and that number is growing too. Our data shows that what we are doing is working.**

Most of all, I've learned that we can't do it alone and the power of community. I have had the incredible privilege of meeting so many wonderful people, all of whom, in their own unique way, feel as passionately as we do that every student deserves the right to the highest quality instruction and who have helped Reading Allowed get to where we are today.

Every one of the 700+ students we have impacted has a story. One of our first students was a sweet, sweet preschooler. We met his mom in a homeless shelter in West Philadelphia and she was really worried that her son's language was not developing appropriately. One of our first Reading Allowed tutors, Amy, started working with this young man, continued through COVID and he and his mom are still very much a part of our Reading Allowed family. It is with great pleasure that I tell you that this young man is now reading above grade level and is an engaged and enthusiastic student.

At the other end of the spectrum I'd like to tell you about Brian who is in his forties and recently released from jail. With tears in his eyes, he told his Reading Allowed tutor that no one has ever taught him like this before.

We wouldn't be here if not for our incredible tutors. We are the only nonprofit in Philadelphia to provide affordable tutoring delivered by structured literacy certified instructors. Every day, a Reading Allowed tutor is going above and beyond to make sure that their students know that they are cherished and loved.

**So where are we going? We have an ever growing waiting list of students who need our support. We are getting calls and emails daily from families who don't know where else to turn and we are working as hard as we can to provide each one with the literacy instruction they deserve as soon as possible.**

We are replicating our school model in 5 schools this year and that's just the tip of the iceberg. We've provided funding for 30 individuals to go through Wilson certification and another 15 individuals have just begun their training. We can't do this work without instructors who are well trained, certified and who are representative of the wonderfully diverse community of students we serve. Going forward, we will be funding training for more instructors for whom this training would otherwise be inaccessible.

We are working on a pilot to screen and provide support for preschoolers. Of course we know that prevention is better than a cure.

We can't rest on our laurels. As science evolves and we learn more about how to teach struggling readers, we need to make sure that we continue to stay on the

cutting edge of literacy instruction.

I am so humbled and don't think I can ever adequately express my gratitude for your support in all its forms - your financial support, your kindness, your advice, your collaboration, your friendship and your belief in our mission.

Fondly,

**Angela**

[Donate](#)

## EITC Webinar Announcement



Reading Allowed is an approved Educational Improvement Organization (EIO organization), meaning it is eligible to receive EITC gifts. That means individual and corporate donors are eligible to make a donation to Reading Allowed and obtain a Pennsylvania state tax credit equal to 90% of their donation.

We will be hosting two webinars to talk about how you can utilize Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) to support Reading Allowed students.

[Click here to register for Tuesday, October 8th at 12 PM](#)

[Click here to register for Wednesday, October 9th at 7 PM](#)

### You'll Learn How To:

- Redirect your tax payment from Harrisburg to Reading Allowed.
- Receive a state tax credit of up to 90% of your 2024 donation.
- Claim a 10% itemized charitable deduction or ordinary + necessary deduction
- Provide tutoring support for Reading Allowed students

# Struggling Teenagers Left Out in New Push to Overhaul Reading

Districts like New York are revamping elementary school reading instruction. But the middle and high schoolers who don't read proficiently are an afterthought.



The number of middle and high school students in New York City who are behind in reading is striking. Sarah Blesener for The New York Times



By **Troy Closson**

Aug. 29, 2024

American public school districts are rethinking how to teach reading to the youngest children. They have thrown out old lesson plans, retrained teachers, and bought new reading programs.

But the national movement to rethink reading has largely left out a generation of older students who are behind in literacy — and who will not recover without extra help.

In New York, where the Education Department is in the midst of a high-stakes elementary reading overhaul, the scale of the reading problems for these students is striking.

More than 60 percent of the city's Black and Latino middle schoolers were not proficient in reading on this year's state exams. In the Bronx, over 37 percent of middle-school boys

scored in the bottom level, meaning they did not demonstrate even partial mastery of skills expected for their age.

[READ THE ENTIRE ARTICLE HERE](#)

## Swinging into the Fall Season



We may be a little biased, but we think that Susan Shmania, longtime Reading Allowed tutor, has the sweetest children, Ellie and Benny (left).

**Free Eye Exams - Saturday, 9/28/24**



Walk-ins are welcome between 8am and 1pm

# FREE EYE SCREENING & GLASSES

Saturday, September 28th, 2024  
8AM to 1PM  
at Wills Eye Hospital



photo: roger barone/WILLS EYE



photo: roger barone/WILLS EYE

**NO INSURANCE REQUIRED!**  
Vision screenings on *Give Kids Sight Day* are available for children 6 through 17 years old who have not had or not passed an eye exam. If you wish to sign up ahead of time, you can call, email, visit our website, or scan the QRcode. Walk-ins are welcome between 8am and 1pm!

**SCAN TO SCHEDULE TODAY:**



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SPECIAL THANKS TO...  
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215-928-3041



[gksd@willseye.org](mailto:gksd@willseye.org)



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