



**EFFECTIVE COGNITIVE  
LEARNING SOLUTIONS  
FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION  
STUDENTS OF NYC  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN  
UNDERSERVED  
COMMUNITIES**

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# INTRODUCTION

**The purpose of my research is to:**

- **Study the ongoing problem of special education curriculum within the NYC public schools of under-served communities**
- **Suggest a structural change to the special education curriculum**
- **Explore parental rights during the evaluation review & after the IEP has been formed**
- **Explain the impartial hearing process**
- **Stop the School to Prison Pipeline through appropriate, special education programs that address cognitive processing**

# THE PROBLEM

**Many families in underserved communities:**

- 1. Have never heard of cognitive learning programs**
- 2. Would not be able to afford cognitive learning programs**
- 3. Do not demand a specific diagnosis and are not told they can request a private evaluation at NO COST TO THEM during IEP meetings**
- 4. Do not understand their right to an Impartial Hearing, the process, and how to attain an advocate at \*little to no cost**
- 5. Have 'The Squeaky Wheel Gets The Oil Syndrome' imposed upon them**
- 6. Are suffering from 'The School to Prison Pipeline,' which is largely made up of their neighbors, with 10-30% being found to have intellectual disabilities**



# LITERATURE REVIEW

# THE KEY: THEORY OF COGNITION

Theory of Cognition is the process of figuring out an individual's thought process or how they view things as the key to understanding how they learn.

Cognitive teaching & learning is what's missing and here's why:

1. The Committee on Special Education (CSE) cannot legally diagnose a student with a specific disability; thus evaluated students who fit the criteria for needing services under special education are generically classified as 'Learning Disabled.'
2. What the law requires in regards to IEP suggestions is not being observed
3. Response Intervention is not being explained to the parents and in some cases, being used as a stalling technique to delay student evaluations
4. Some schools are using what's available opposed to specifically identifying resources calibrated for the students disability
5. The NYC DOE still believes that there is not enough quantifiable data to prove scientific methodology, such as theory of cognition, advances the learning of Special Education and Learning Disabled, classified students
6. Less concern with input; more emphasis on the output

# PROGRAM APPROACHES TO THE THEORY OF COGNITION

1. **LINDAMOOD-BELL**: A highly successful, evidence-based program, with 35 years of service utilizing theory of cognition through intensive, individually structured programs. Students exhibit a variety of learning challenges and as of recent years, have expanded their business to include students on the Autism Spectrum
2. **ORTON-GILLINGHAM**: An 80 year old validated practice, which uses a direct and explicit, multisensory structured, sequential, diagnostic and prescriptive approach to teaching literacy. Instruction and new materials are tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of the student
3. **TEACHERS COLLEGE READING & WRITING PROGRAM**: uses phonetic, visual, and stimulative auditory learning processes to address the reading and writing needs of school aged children
4. **WILSON READING SYSTEM**: Has 30 years of teaching students with language-based disabilities in grades 2-12 and adults, using an intensive structure in accordance with the International Dyslexia Association.

# OTHER THEORY OF COGNITION PROGRAM CONSIDERATIONS

The following cognitive theories and therapies were considered but rejected:

1. KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY (KELT): Uses a combination of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. KELT failed to increase the understanding of learning
2. MST-ID: is a successful adaptation of multisystemic therapy which adds the component of intellectual disability; However, much like MST, it is not applicable for students with learning disabilities, who do not exhibit behavioral issues, while possibly abusing substances

# SUPPORTIVE & DISSENTING LITERARY OPINIONS OF COGNITIVE TEACHING & LEARNING

1. **ACHIEVING SUCCESS FOR THE RESISTANT STUDENT**: Author Johannessen feels that cognitive views of learning is a more productive approach for students. He states “that at the heart of the cognitive approach to teaching and learning is the idea that instead of focusing on the mechanics of language and lecturing about facts and information, teachers need to provide instruction that will enable non-academic exceptional students how to learn to learn (Johannessen 6). Additionally, Johannessen warns that teachers who use cognitive approaches to learning will be questioned by administrators, parents, students, and even peers because while it is a very effective way of teaching and learning, it is also unique.
2. **THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**: Author Barsch expresses that he is “completely against the idea of classes for students with learning disabilities as full segregated units set apart from the rest of education” (Barsch 12) and that classroom separation should only be considered if there’s a plan to mainstream the student back to general education



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESIS

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. IF MODELS FOR THEORY OF COGNITION PROVE SUCCESSFUL, WHY ARE THEY NOT WIDELY TAUGHT THROUGHOUT NY TRI-STATE AREA SCHOOLS?**
- 2. WHICH COGNITIVE PROGRAM WORKS BEST?**
- 3. WHAT WOULD THE PERFECT SET UP LOOK LIKE IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL WILLING TO TRY COGNITIVE LEARNING?**
- 4. WHAT IS THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE?**

# HYPOTHESIS

**IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT COGNITIVE THEORY BASED PROGRAMS AS PART OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL DRASTICALLY CHANGE THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE & LIVES OF NYC STUDENTS ATTENDING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES AND CONTINUE TO ASSIST THEM LONG AFTER GRADUATION**



# METHODOLOGY

# QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DATA, ANALYSIS, AND A CASE STUDY

## QUANTITATIVE TOOLS USED FOR RESEARCH

- ACCOUNTABILITY DATA TOOL FROM [WWW.DATA.NYSED.GOV](http://WWW.DATA.NYSED.GOV)

## QUALITATIVE DATA USED FOR RESEARCH

- ANALYSIS – COGNITIVE THEORY PROGRAMS
  - LINDAMOOD-BELL: LIPS PROGRAM, ON CLOUD NINE, SEEING STARS, VISUALIZING & VERBALIZING
  - ORTON GILLINGHAM FOUNDATIONS
  - TEACHERS COLLEGE READING & WRITING METHOD
  - WILSON READING SYSTEM
- CASE STUDY – ALLA WALTERS (NAME CHANGED FOR ANONYMITY)
  - CSE-SCHOOL BASED SUPPORT TEAM EVALUATION
  - IEP DATA
  - IMPARTIAL HEARING OFFICER DECISIONS
  - LINDAMOOD-BELL EVALUATION
  - NYU CHILD STUDY TEAM – NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

# QUANTITATIVE & QUALITATIVE DATA, ANALYSIS, AND A CASE STUDY CONTINUED...

- **INTERVIEWS WITH THE FOLLOWING EDUCATIONAL AND LEGAL PROFESSIONALS (NAMES CHANGED FOR ANONYMITY):**
  - **DEHAVEN, B. – FORMER HEADMASTER, WINSTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL**
  - **FORBES, A. – DIRECTOR, LINDAMOOD-BELL, NYC**
  - **GARVIN, Y. – SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER, NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL**
  - **HAGRID, S. – HEADMASTER, WINSTON PREPARATORY SCHOOL**
  - **KORGOOD, M. – ESQUIRE, SPECIAL EDUCATION**
  - **TILMAN, J. – PROFESSOR OF LAW EMERITUS**
  - **ZAPA, D. – FORMER NYC SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER**

# CASE STUDY – ALLA WALTERS

**\*Alla was a 7 year old, who did not present any physical or intellectual disabilities at birth but who exhibited reading and comprehension delays inconsistent with a child her age.**

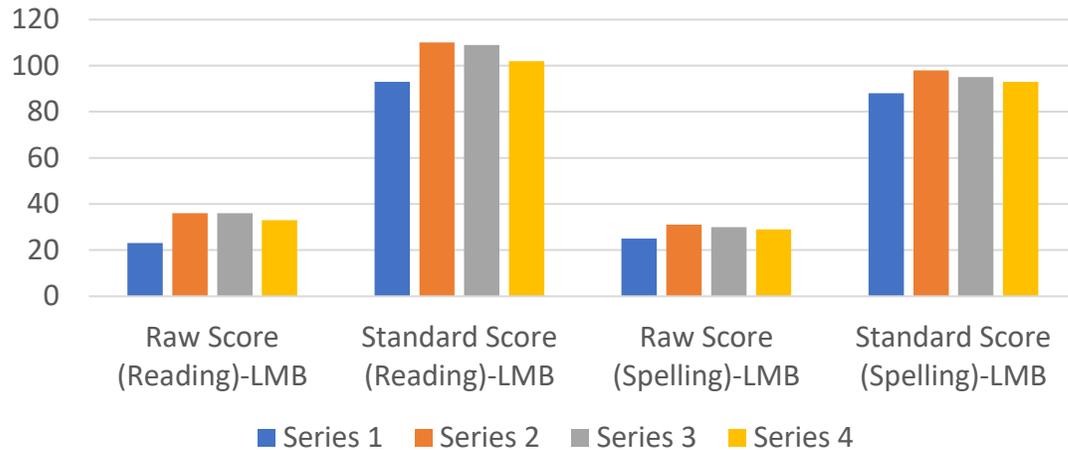
**The following steps had been taken before her mother's research led her to Lindamood-Bell & cognitive theory techniques:**

- Reading Recovery (an intensive reading program)**
- School Based Support Team Evaluation**
- Classification of 'Learning Disabled'**
- Sylvan Learning Center**
- Retained in Grade 2**

**After Lindamood-Bell, Alla's reading and comprehension improved drastically due to their programs, which are cognition theory rich. Alla received further support in her new school, Winston Preparatory School (WPS), which was also cognition theory rich. Alla became an honor roll student, a member of the basketball & softball team, and was mainstreamed back to general education with supportive services for grades 10-12. She received a Regents Diploma, attended college and received her associates degree. She is currently finishing her BS degree, is a business owner and retail manager, a wife, and mother.**

# EMPIRICAL DATA

## LMB/Woodcock Reading & Mastery Tests



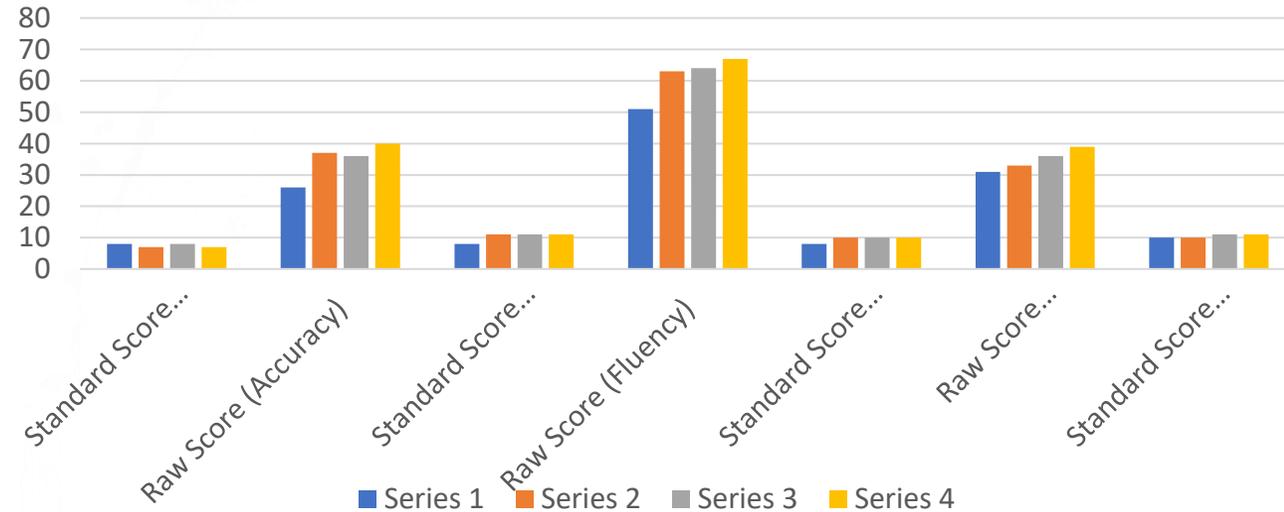
The data above reflects Pre-eval, Eval, and Re-Evaluations of the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test & the Wide Range Achievement Test (Spelling) given to Alla on 10/30/2003, 3/5/2004, 5/4/2004, and 8/17/2004. While the data reflects a steady increase in Alla's reading and comprehension, the slight decline at the end was the result of Alla spending her summers away, without the reinforcement of cognitive learning.

What is most important about the observation of the decline in \*Alla's testing scores during periods where she was away without the reinforcement of cognitive theory for extended periods of time, is that it presented a pattern of decline whenever there was a long-term absence of effective cognitive programs to assist with her learning process. This was witnessed again when the last IEP report was constructed for Alla in 2011. \*The IEP showed that despite Alla's grades and the fact that she was graduating from high school, her last assessment reflected a grade equivalent of 10.9; thus, CTT was ineffective because her public high school did not possess the appropriate program to assist Alla through her learning challenges.

\*NYC DOE Records Management did not provide IEP's from Alla's 12th Grade Year as requested; not even at the request of their attorney

\*Alla Walter's name has been changed for anonymity

## LMB/ Gray Oral Reading Test



The data above reflects Pre-eval, Eval, and Re-Evaluations of the Gray Oral Reading Tests given to Alla on 10/30/2003, 3/5/2004, 5/4/2004, and 8/17/2004. The exam tests for raw & standard reading rate, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. While the data reflects a steady increase in Alla's reading and comprehension, the slight decline at the end was the result of Alla spending her summers away, without the reinforcement of cognitive learning.



# FINDINGS

# OUTCOMES

- **Analysis shows that Lindamood-Bell & Wilson Reading System are preferred cognitive programs**
- **The ‘Right’ cognitive theory program matters. Public School 20 (Bronx) rolled out the Teachers College Reading & Writing Method in 2018. Quantifiable data is still unavailable; However, feedback regarding the program has been:**
  - **Controversial**
  - **Not best suited for inner city kids**
  - **Does not meet the needs of ESL students**
  - **Scientific portion of program is not fully utilized due to the NYC DOE maintaining not enough quantifiable data to prove scientific methodology works**
  - **Remediating students in grades 6-12 has proven problematic**
- **10-30% of youths in juvenile detention have intellectual disabilities that are discovered for the first time after detainment.**

# OUTCOMES

- **Incarceration is up 700% since 1970, with the majority of the offenders being people of color from underserved communities**
- **The law allows public school classrooms to hold up to 35 students per class. Some classrooms in underserved communities exceed this number, making push-in/pull out services a disruption opposed to an environment for Learning Disabled classifications.**
- **In the case of Alla Walters:**
  - **NYC DOE ignored some of the orders given by the Impartial Hearing Officer**
  - **Alla's progress was most evident with Lindamood-Bell & Winston Prep**
  - **Continued assistance from former teachers at WPS allowed Alla to continue to do well; Collaborative Team Teaching after mainstreaming was ineffective**
  - **Strong advocates and a willingness to learn make the difference in the outcome of children with learning disabilities**

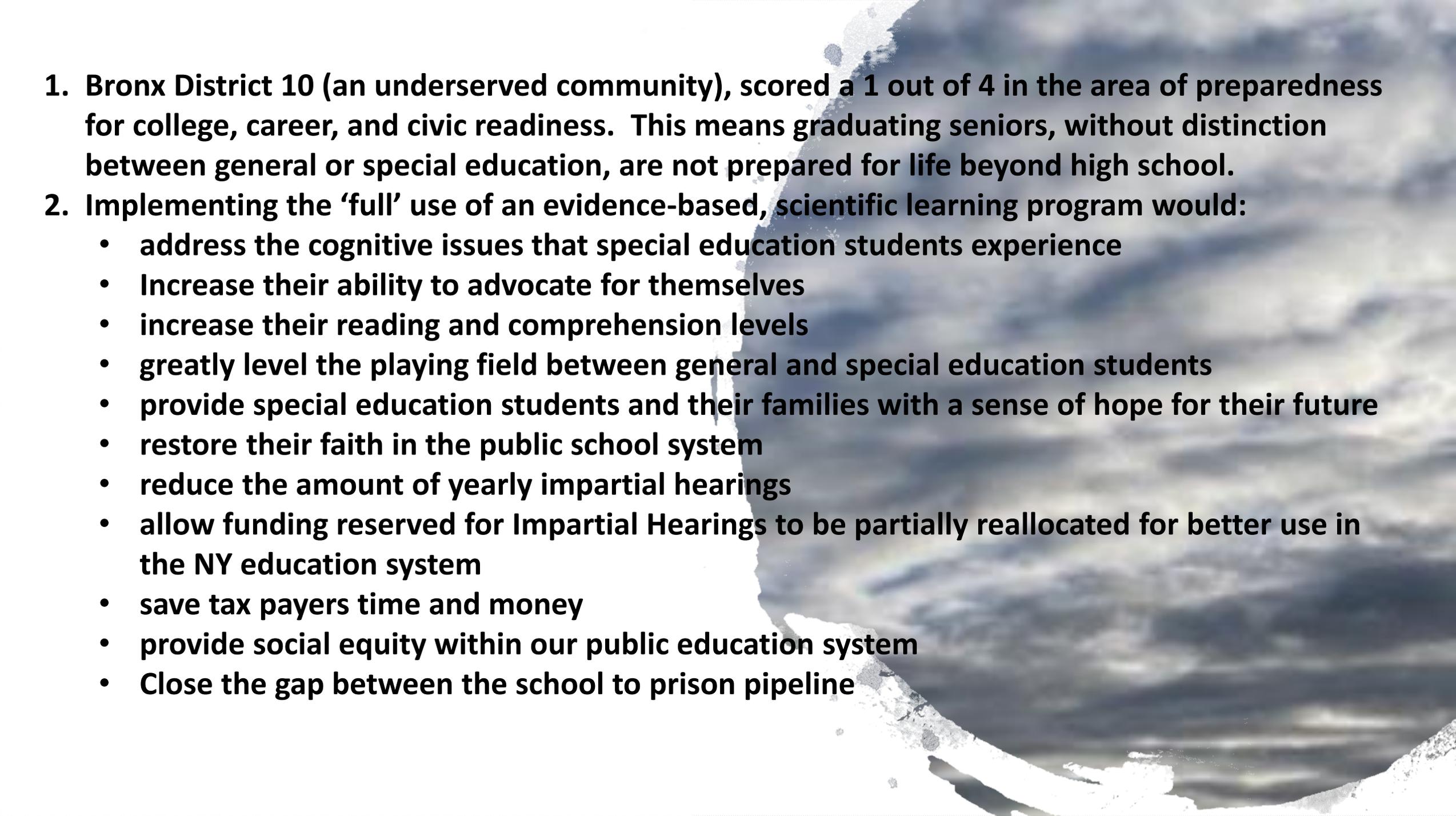


# RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Similar to MRE environments, create classes for students classified as Learning Disabled, grouping them by the similarities in their evaluations, and teach them using effective, evidence-based cognitive programs. After 2 years, begin integrating students into general education with the continuity of supportive services based on their progress**
- 2. Institute a 2-Part Focus; One focus on grades 6-12 as they are the students who typically don't have the benefit of early intervention and represent a high risk of dropping out. The 2<sup>nd</sup> focus should be on grades K-5 to avoid latent interventions**
- 3. Work together with the United Federation of Teachers to figure out what a special education curriculum revamping to include scientific based methods such as cognitive theory means on a large and small scale**



CONCLUSION

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- 1. Bronx District 10 (an underserved community), scored a 1 out of 4 in the area of preparedness for college, career, and civic readiness. This means graduating seniors, without distinction between general or special education, are not prepared for life beyond high school.**
  - 2. Implementing the 'full' use of an evidence-based, scientific learning program would:**
    - address the cognitive issues that special education students experience**
    - Increase their ability to advocate for themselves**
    - increase their reading and comprehension levels**
    - greatly level the playing field between general and special education students**
    - provide special education students and their families with a sense of hope for their future**
    - restore their faith in the public school system**
    - reduce the amount of yearly impartial hearings**
    - allow funding reserved for Impartial Hearings to be partially reallocated for better use in the NY education system**
    - save tax payers time and money**
    - provide social equity within our public education system**
    - Close the gap between the school to prison pipeline**



THANK YOU