CORNERSTONE
JEFFERSON-DOUGLASS ACADEMY

September 30, 2026

Dear Cornerstone Jefferson-Douglass Families,

Helping every child become a strong, confident reader is at the heart of our Complete Life mission. We are writing to share an update about our K-5 reading curriculum and a recent Michigan law that supports that same goal.

Michigan's new literacy law

In 2024, Michigan passed the K-12 Literacy and Dyslexia Laws (Public Acts 146 and 147 of 2024). They call on schools to teach reading using evidence-based methods grounded in the science of reading. We share this commitment and wholeheartedly support the state of Michigan's direction. It reflects what research has shown for decades about how children learn to read, and it is the approach we have built our reading program around.

As part of this work, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) published a list of evidence-based K-5 reading curricula in December 2025. MDE continues to review and add programs. Michigan law and MDE guidance (MDE memo) does not require districts to select curriculum from the MDE list. Our K-5 reading curriculum, Abeka, is not currently on MDE's list. When a school uses a curriculum that is not on the list, state law (Section 164k of the State School Aid Act) requires us to share that if it's not on the list that it is "not evidence-based or not aligned to state standards" through the state list process "which could negatively impact student academic outcomes."

Our approach

We initially re-adopted Abeka's reading and language arts program in 2024 with a fuller roll-out in 2025, before the state's list existed. Abeka has been part of Cornerstone's story for more than 30 years. Over that time it has helped generations of Cornerstone students become confident, capable readers. Abeka has taught reading through intensive, systematic phonics since 1972. Students in the early grades receive direct, explicit instruction in letter sounds and phonics rules, taught in a structured sequence. The program also builds phonemic awareness in the early grades, and fluency, vocabulary and comprehension throughout the elementary years. These are the core skills the science of reading identifies and Michigan's new law emphasizes.

Our plan and timeline

Beginning in the 2027-28 school year, every Michigan school must ensure its reading instruction and materials are evidence-based. We will meet that requirement, and we will continue to follow MDE's guidance and adjust as needed.

Thank you for your partnership in your child's reading journey.

Sincerely,

Taiwo Da-Silva

Superintendent, Cornerstone Schools