



Cascade Commentary

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QuickPoint! – The Road to Success Travels Through 3rd Grade Reading

By Kathryn Hickok

Denisha Merriweather failed third grade twice. Today, she is finishing her master's degree, thanks to [Florida's tax-credit-funded scholarship program](#). Last week Denisha was President Trump's guest at his Address to Congress, where he called educational choice "the civil rights issue of our time."

The key to Denisha's success was her godmother's ability to remove Denisha from a school that was failing her, and to send her to the school that provided her with the support she needed.

[Denisha says:](#)

"Now that I'm in graduate school, I can look up statistics that suggest I've beaten the odds....[S]tudents who don't read proficiently by the third grade are four times as likely to drop out of high school as those who do....

"That was me."

According to the [National Association of Education Progress](#), only [34% of Oregon fourth-graders](#) tested "proficient" in reading in 2015. [Oregon students should have the power of choice](#) to find their own path to success, just like Denisha. The Oregon Legislature can help them do this with [Senate Bill 437](#). SB 437 would give parents who want to opt out of a public school a portion of the per-student state funding for their child, to spend on education in other ways. No one disputes the need for improvements to public schools. But children who need help today should be able to get help now.

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