



# **THE GLOBAL FLOW OF NARROW LITERACY DISCOURSES AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES**

Catherine Compton-Lilly, University of South Carolina

# GLOBAL FLOW OF SOR DISCOURSES

Today, I focus on international efforts to narrow reading instruction by focusing on its component parts (e.g., phonics, phonemic awareness) at the expense of helping children develop multi-dimensional reading processes that recognize and operationalize multiple forms of information.



Importantly, this paper is not a critique of decades of high-quality research related to phonics, phonemic awareness, or decoding, nor is it a denial that phonics is an important resource for learning to read.

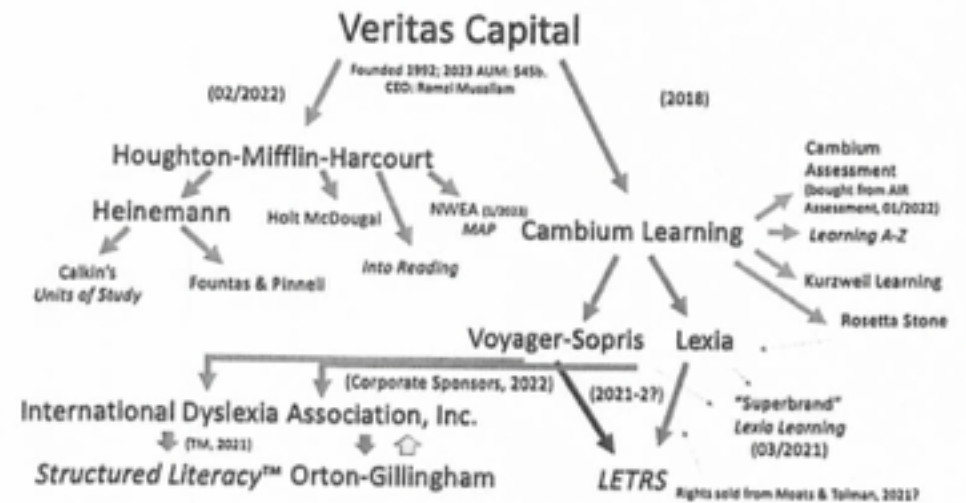


Instead, I problematize approaches often described in the U.S. as the “Science of Reading” that reference “exaggerated, misleading, and at worse false statements promoted in the media by a small group of scholars, educational activists, publishers, and journalists” (Compton-Lilly et al., 2023).

# GLOBAL FLOW OF SOR DISCOURSES

We worry that publishers and politicians across English-speaking countries have found *Science of Reading* initiatives to be internationally marketable and highly lucrative, despite ignoring the diverse conditions, educational traditions, and social histories of global communities (see Hruby, 2023).

Figure 2. An Example of Financial Entwinement of Notable SOR Products (as of August 27, 2023)



SOURCE: Author

Drawing on research and conversations with colleagues in England, Australia, and the United States, my goal is to name, describe, and analyze narrow literacy discourses that have infiltrated reading instruction in local schools in our communities. Through our analysis, we problematize key aspects of this reform, particularly the focus on programs over children, under-recognized financial motivations, and the failure to recognize the expertise, professional judgement, and capabilities of teachers, literacy educators, and reading scholars.



# A BRIEF HISTORICAL LOOK

We are not the first generation of reading professionals to face unfounded attacks that grounded on narrow conceptualizations of reading.

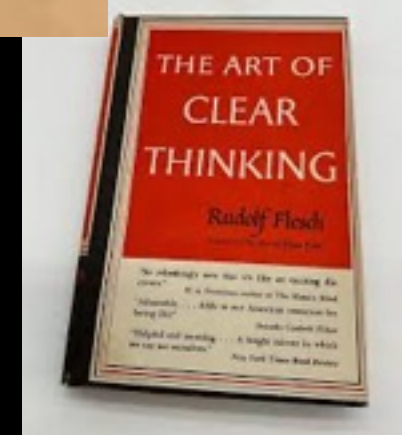
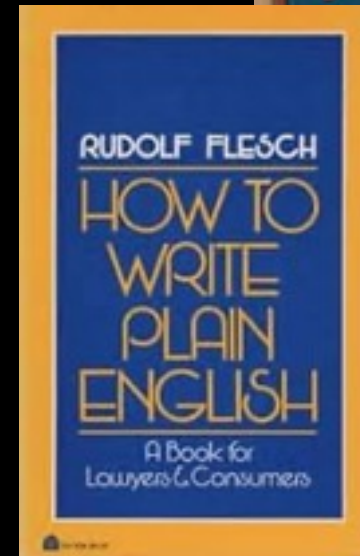
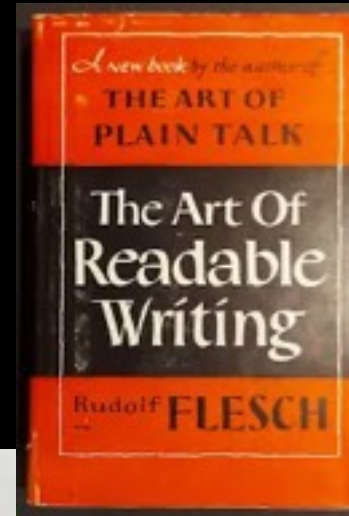
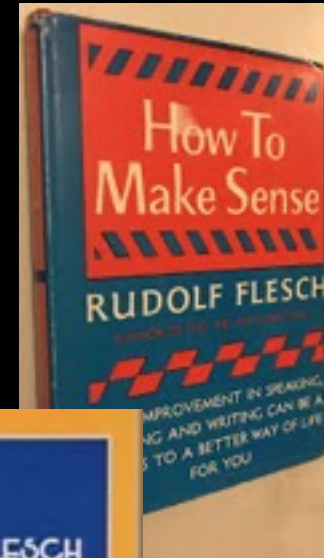
AND this is not just a general reference to The Reading Wars. . .

## EDUCATIONAL HISTORIAN MONAGHAN WRITING IN 2007

[No early rumblings] could have prepared the reading profession for the outburst of venom against their persons and their professional beliefs that was embodied in Rudolf Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read— And What You Can Do About It*, published in 1955. . . Flesch's sarcastic pen spared none of the reading experts among the pioneers who were still at the peak of their profession at that date (i.e., Dearborn, Gates, Gray, Russell, and Strang) nor those long dead, such as Huey. He blamed them all for substituting the whole-word method for systematic phonics in early reading instruction and accused them of thereby causing massive reading failure among the young. The thousands of parents who bought his book apparently agreed with him.

# WHO WAS RUDOLF FLESCH???

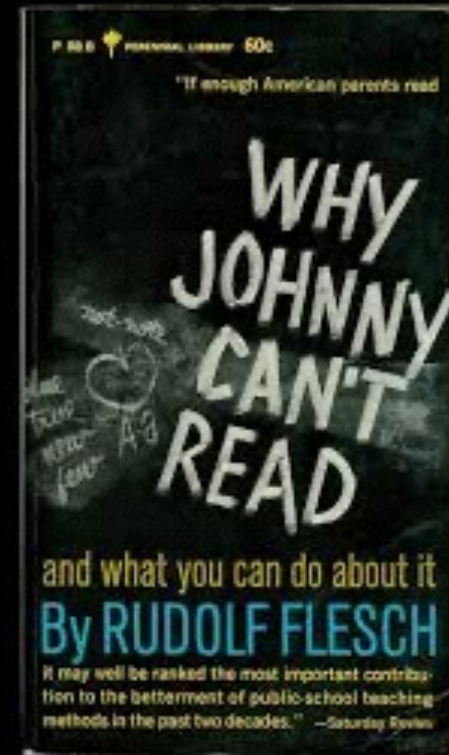
Like Emily Hanford who leads the recent instantiation of the Science of Reading, Flesch was not trained as a reading scholar; his Ph.D. and most of his published works focused on writing readable texts for various audiences. *Flesch* earned his Ph.D. in library sciences from Columbia University in 1955 and published *Why Johnny Can't Read* that same year. Despite his marginal connection to the field of reading, Flesch's text captured the popular imagination, becoming an overnight bestseller and remaining on the bestseller list for more than 30 weeks (Monaghan, 2007).





# JENNIFER MONAGHAN WRITING IN 2007

“Flesch, who had learned to read his native German through systematic phonics, castigated every aspect of contemporary reading instruction. He flayed experience charts (1955/1986, pp. 97–99), Gates’s intrinsic phonics method (pp. 53–57), reading readiness and phonic readiness (pp. 69–73), and the meager reading vocabulary (p. 80–82) and “artificial sequences of words” of basal readers (p. 84). But his most damaging criticism, for a field that claimed its practice was based solidly on scientific research, was that the reading professionals had ignored the results of their own research.”



# FLESCH'S CRITIQUE

Flesch critiqued William S. Gray, as well as the look-say method and its accompanying analytic phonetic methods calling the Dick and Jane readers “horrible, stupid, emasculated, pointless, tasteless” (as cited in Lauritzen, 2007, p. 315).



# JENNIFER MONAGHAN WRITING IN 2007

Professional reaction was understandably angry and defensive. The experts countered by attacking Flesch's definition of reading: He had claimed that "reading means getting meaning from certain combinations of letters. Teach the child what each letter stands for and he can read" (Flesch, 1955/1986, pp. 2–3). Reading, the experts retorted, was not word calling but thought getting.



As Monaghan (2007) maintained *Why Johnny Can't Read* was “arguably the catalyst” (p. 26) for the creation of the International Reading Association in 1956, bringing together the *National Association of Remedial Teachers* (NART) and the *International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction* (ICIRI), two organizations with many shared members, but also different views on reading instruction, “as a unified organization of reading professionals and of all others who cared about reading and reading instruction.”



INTERNATIONAL  
**LITERACY**  
ASSOCIATION

# SIMILARITIES

- Both critiques came from people, perhaps journalists, from outside of the field of reading and who have assumedly never taught anyone to read
- Both used vitriolic language and personal attacks of prominent reading scholars based on a narrowly defined “Science of Reading”, which even in the 1950’s was recognized as entailing more than decoding and phonics.
- Both attacked, reading scholars and the teachers they prepared were blamed for a supposedly massive failure of children across the nation to learn to read.
- Finally, both appealed to laypeople who were sold an incomplete, exaggerated, and anecdote-based accounting of reading failure without the requisite knowledge or understandings to question what was proposed.

But, back to my thesis about the international circulation of SoR discourses. .



# GLOBAL FLOWS IN EDUCATION

- Marinson and Sawir (2005) noted that the metaphorical meaning of *flow* challenges agency; flows are typically conceptualized as pervasive and inevitable, carrying things along with gentle passivity.
- Marinson and Sawir warn that flows are seductive and encourage people to question whose invisible interests are served by flows of people, ideas, technologies, and finances.

# JAMES HOFFMAN (2012)

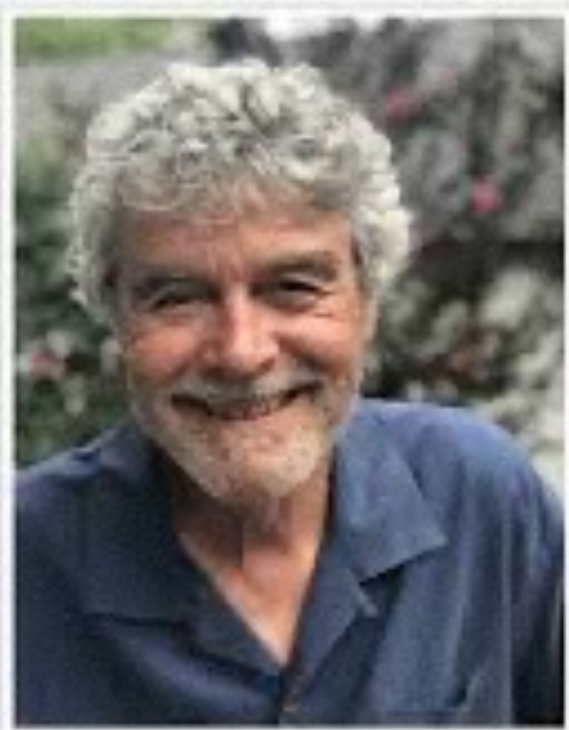
## AN EXAMPLE OF GLOBAL FLOW

James Hoffman (2012) focused on the global flow of K-12 literacy practices, specifically reading assessment. He described how *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) assessment of reading fluency and accuracy, which was created in the USA, was adapted and exported to African countries as the *Early Grades Reading Assessment* (EGRA).

Oscar S. Causey Award:  
James V. Hoffman

Library Awards Team:  
Patricia and Francis  
2014-15  
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Applying for the award:  
http://www.bl.uk/awards/oscars  
www.bl.uk/awards/oscars

BL/AGE





Importantly, EGRA is a recent manifestation of one minute literacy assessments that can be traced back to the *Dutch One-Minute Test* (Brus & Voeten, 1973), which according to Share (2012, p. S392) was Anglicized and reincarnated as the *Test of Word Reading Efficiency* (TOWRE; Torgesen, Rashotte, & Wagner, 1999) to support educators in early detection and diagnosis of reading disabilities.

Nonword and familiar word reading  
example test.

```
custom-egra-test(type = 'words',  
duration = 30, continuity = 1)
```



- |     |       |      |       |         |         |
|-----|-------|------|-------|---------|---------|
| (1) | tob   | lig  | pum   | inbok   | maton   |
| (2) | gatch | tup  | ncom  | sen     | timming |
| (3) | beeth | mun  | ellus | tot     | widge   |
| (4) | han   | pite | dazz  | unstade | rike    |



TOWRE assesses reading efficiency by counting the number of actual words and decodable non-words that students read within in 45 second timeframes. As Hagan-Burke and her colleagues (2006) explained not only do both TOWRE and DIBELS focus on accuracy and fluency via short assessments (a minute or less), but they also measure similar constructs (e.g., phonetic decoding fluency, sight word reading).



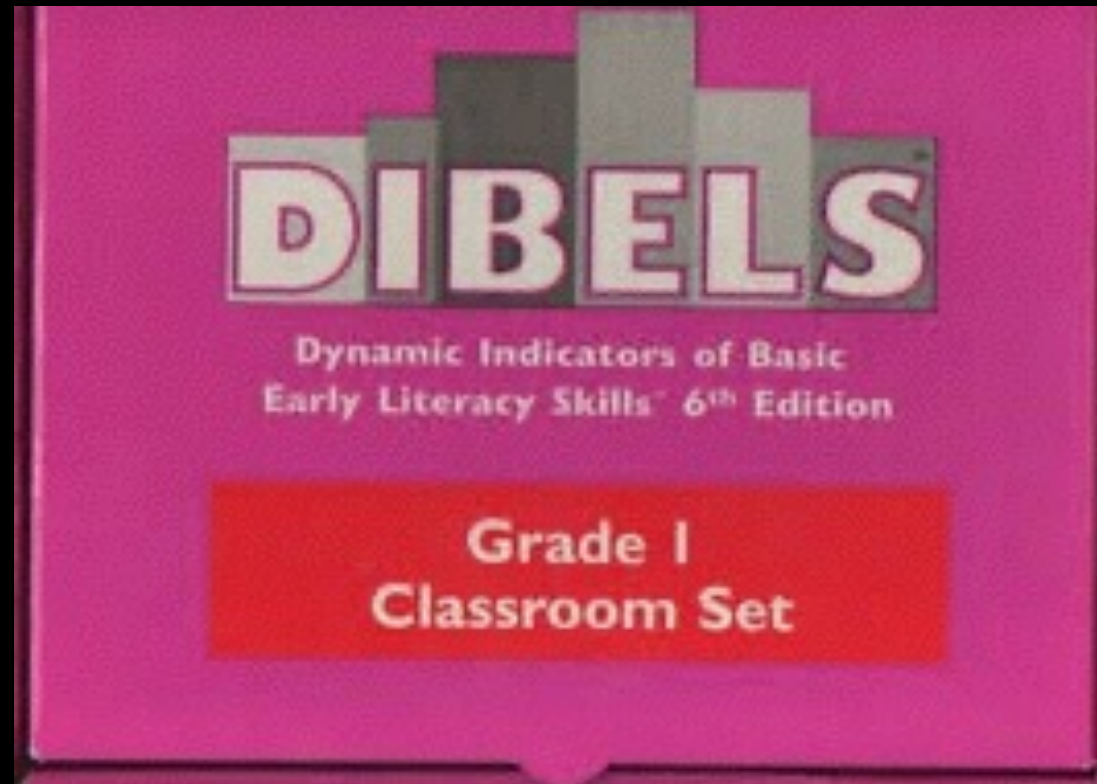
Ray is attempting to blend, but is inaccurate. Ray has many errors which include errors with short vowel sounds and errors with letters with similar sounds (g), (v, s/z).

Plan: dig deeper with a letter/sound assessment.

Initial intervention: Targeted intervention with the similar sounding letters which will include sorting activities. Use a phonics phone!

Word	Accuracy
the	
and	
is	
at	
the	
top	
of	
the	
page	
the	
word	
was	
not	
read	
at	
all	
of	
the	
words	
on	
the	
list	
are	
the	
same	
words	
as	
the	
words	
on	
the	
list	
are	
the	
same	
words	
as	
the	
words	
on	
the	
list	

Dowd and Bartlett (2019) described DIBELS as first developed in the 1970s and as promoting a “bottom-up model of reading” (p. 191) which “has been criticized by respected literacy researchers for distorting the skills required to read and then testing only a fragment of those skills; emphasizing speed over accuracy; not adequately measuring comprehension; and proving difficult to administer consistently” (p. 191). DIBELS became widely used in the USA when it was promoted as a viable assessment for schools implementing *Reading First*, (see *No Child Left Behind Act, 2001*).



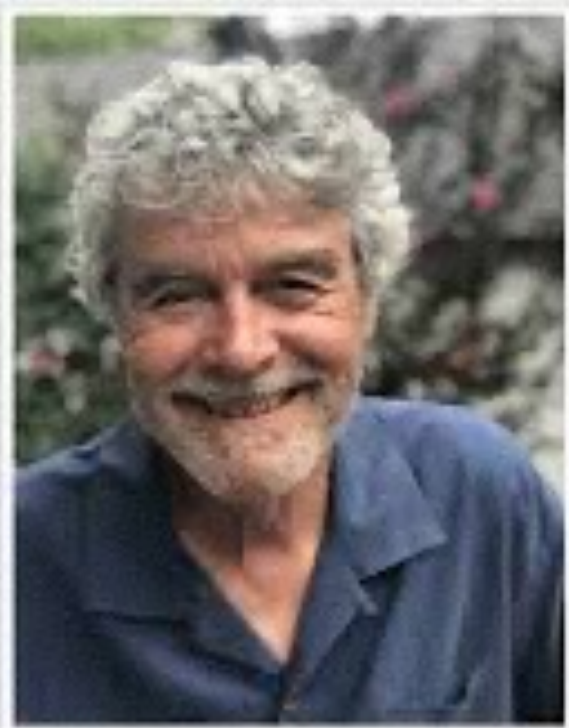
# JAMES HOFFMAN (2012)

- Hoffman (2012) questioned the “viability of exporting educational aid efforts to developing countries” (p. 340) and specifically questioned the validity of exporting EGRA referencing its reliance a simple and reductive model of reading focused primarily on rate and accuracy with little attention to comprehension. Thus, reading in international spaces was reduced to automaticity – instantaneous decoding – with almost no attention to meaning construction.



**Oscar S. Causey Award:  
James V. Hoffman**

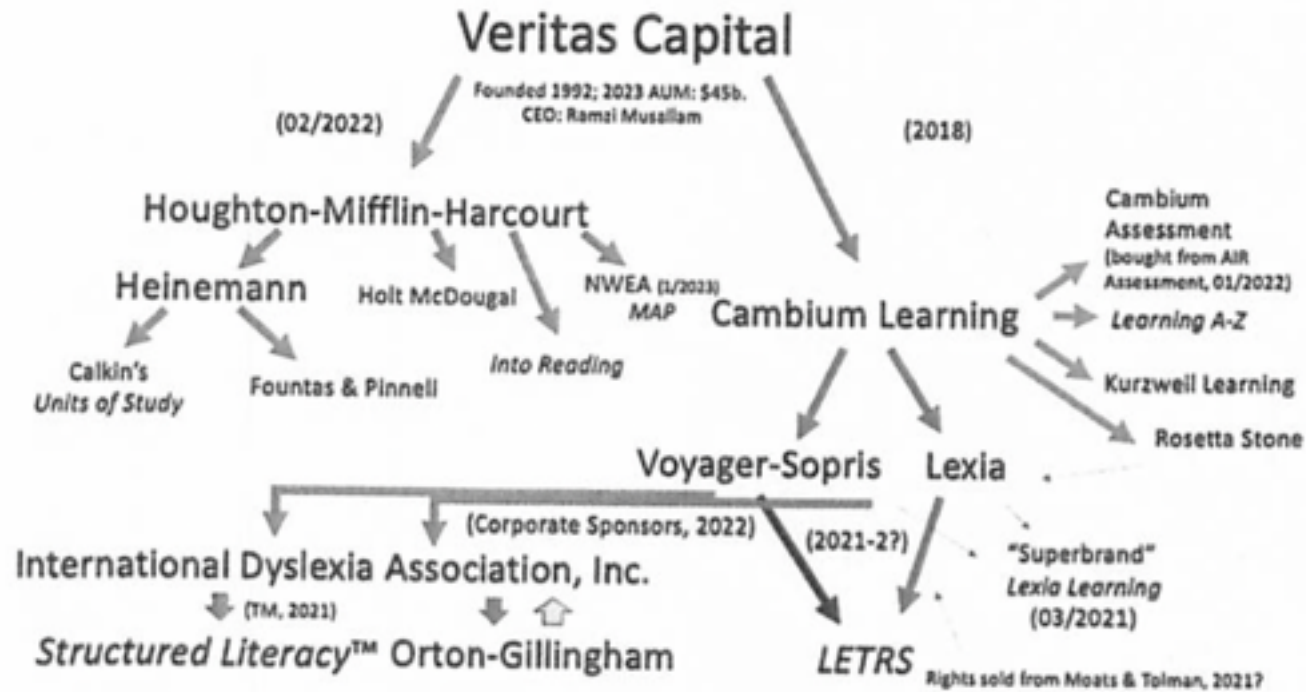
Oscar S. Causey Award  
2014-2015  
The International  
Association of  
Developmental  
Education  
www.iaede.org



# HOFFMAN'S WORDS

“I challenge the basic approach that locks development aid into the exporting of any single approach or method; and second, I argue for a model of development aid for literacy that education that is situated locally and that stresses a holistic instructional design approach, rather than an emphasis on interventions that are piecemeal and disconnected.” (p. 350)

Figure 2. An Example of Financial Entwinement of Notable SOR Products (as of August 27, 2023)



SOURCE: Author

**Veritas Capital** is a private equity investment firm that invests in companies that provide critical products and services to governments worldwide.

# KERRY DIXON, CATHY COMPTON-LILLY, & ANNETTE WOODS

As international scholars who have collaborated on various projects, spoken at the same conferences, and socialized in international spaces, our conversations have often turned to concerns about scripted and narrow approaches to literacy instruction. In the past, we collaborated to explore the international proliferation of summative literacy assessments and the international impact they have on teacher expertise, instructional practices, and accompanying visions of children (see Authors, 2019). Since then, our continuing collaboration has featured critical conversations about the international circulation of narrow and program-based approaches to teaching reading that fail to recognize the cultural, linguistic, and experiential background of children, families, and communities, as well as their educators.



We were struck by similarities between the discourses used internationally to discuss literacy and the recommended/mandated practices that accompany these discourses:

- directive and/or scripted lessons that tell teachers what to say and do within pre-determined and paced lesson sequences,
- an almost exclusive focus on phonics, phonemic awareness, and decoding to the exclusion of meaning making practices,
- attention to written and spoken languages in ways that privilege the logic, syntax, and orthographies of English and other alphabetic languages,
- denials that children use multiple sources of information when they read,
- decodable texts that do not engage all dimensions of reading, and that often do not make sense,
- mandated “structured literacy” programs that lack empirical evidence, and
- privileging the interests of politicians and publishers over children.



# TWO DECADES AGO...



## National Reading Panel

TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ:  
An Evidence-Based Assessment  
of the Scientific Research Literature  
on Reading and its Implications  
for Reading Instruction

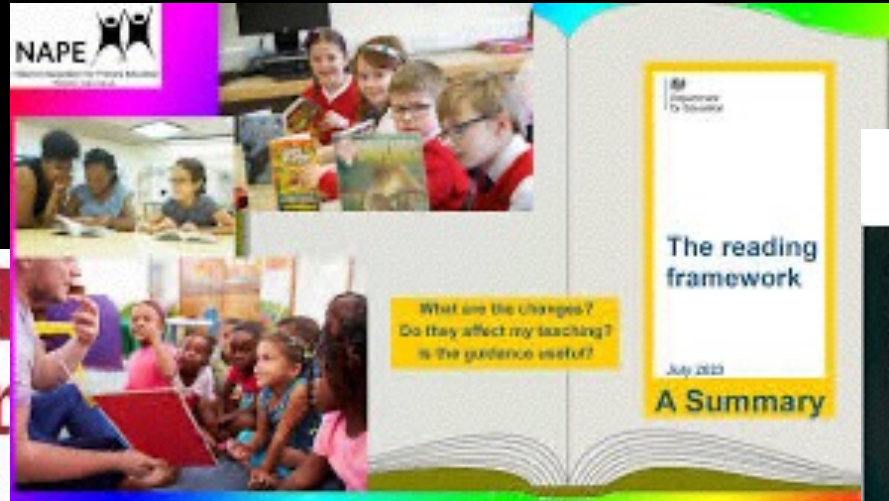
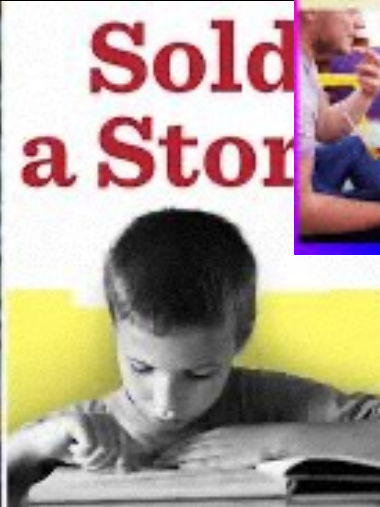
REPORTS OF THE SUBGROUPS



# MORE RECENT DOCUMENTS...



USA, 2022



UK, 2023



Australia, 2024

# FIRST, WE GO BACK TWO DECADES . .



## National Reading Panel

TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ:  
An Evidence-Based Assessment  
of the Scientific Research Literature  
on Reading and its Implications  
for Reading Instruction

REPORTS OF THE SUBGROUPS



# TO TRACK THINKING ABOUT THE SOR OVERTIME, I TRACK A FEW TERMS...

- Fidelity
- Multi-sensory
- Decodable Texts
- The use of pictures
- Cues/Cuing systems
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



# NATIONAL READING PANEL REPORT USA, 2000



REPORT OF THE

## National Reading Panel

TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ

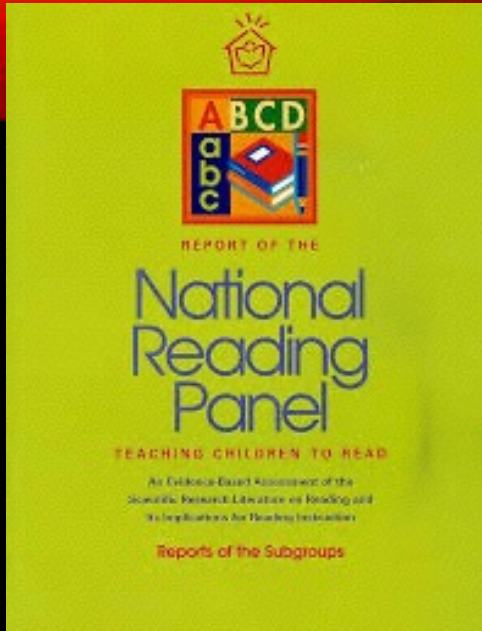
An Evidence-Based Assessment of the  
Scientific Research Literature on Reading and  
Its Implications for Teaching Instruction

Reports of the Subgroups



# THE NATIONAL READING PANEL REPORT USA, 2000

- Fidelity is discussed as a criteria for the selection of the research studies reviewed; they noted that rigor did not seem to be related to the effect sizes of the studies they analyzed (e/.g., p. 2-26).
- “Multi-sensory” is only mentioned once on the reference list in the title of a cited study

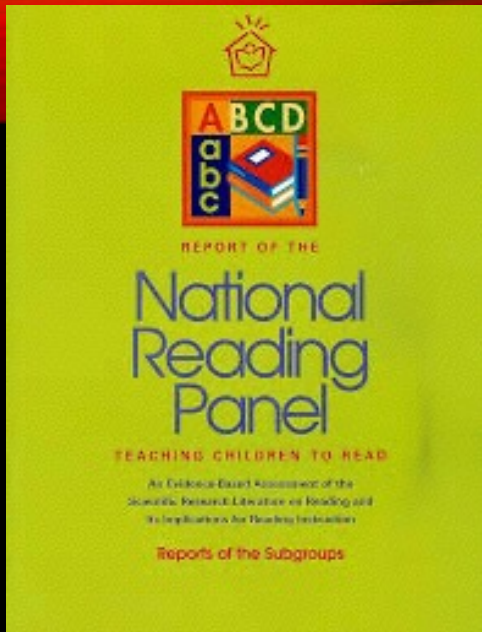


# THE NATIONAL READING PANEL REPORT USA, 2000

## **Decodable Texts**

- Descriptions of studies reviewed
- As a direction for future research
- As neglected Topic #3
  - (3) How does the use of decodable text as early reading material contribute to the effectiveness of phonics programs? (p. 2-136)

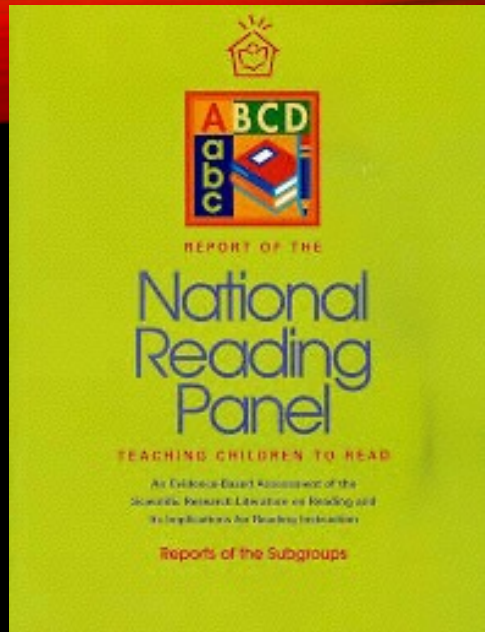
“The intent of providing books that match children’s letter-sound knowledge is to enable them to experience success in decoding words that follow the patterns they know. The stories in such books often involve pigs doing jigs and cats in hats.” (p. 2-137)



# THE NATIONAL READING PANEL REPORT USA, 2000

## The Use of Pictures

- Using pictures in matching tasks, phonics
- Descriptions of texts with/without pictures
- Jolly Phonics - Central to the program is the use of meaningful stories, pictures, and actions to reinforce recognition and recall of letter-sound relationships, and (p. 2-124)
- Also referenced in relation to pictures of the mouth created letter sounds, mental imagery, pictures as mnemonic tools for learning phonics, and the use of pictures to support story retellings

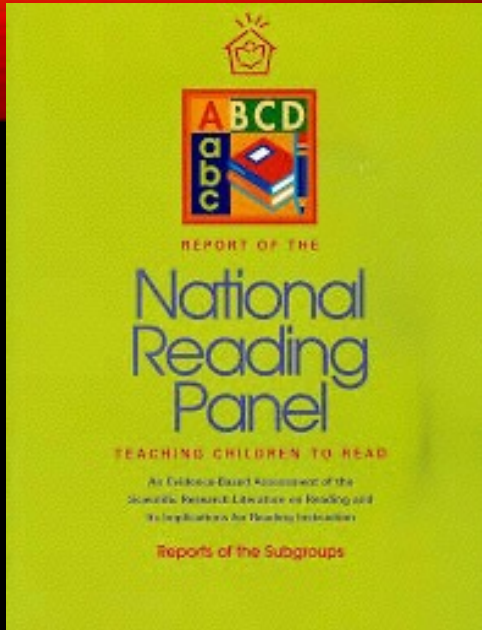




# THE NATIONAL READING PANEL REPORT USA, 2000

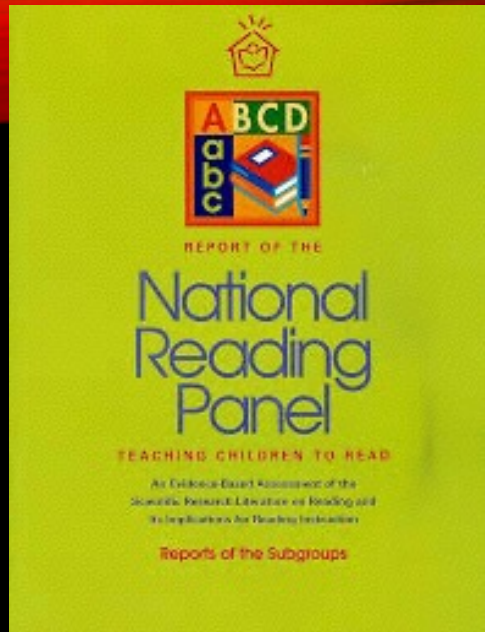
## Use of Cues/Cueing (many references)

- “[Children] may combine grapheme-phoneme cues with meaning cues to derive the word (Tunmer & Chapman, 1998).” (p. 2-33)
- “Phonics in context approaches teach children to use sound-letter correspondences along with context cues to identify unfamiliar words they encounter in text.” (p. 2-89)
- “The whole language approach regards letter-sound correspondences, referred to as graphophonemics, as just one of three cueing systems (the others being semantic/meaning cues and syntactic/language cues) that are used to read and write text.” (p. 2-102)



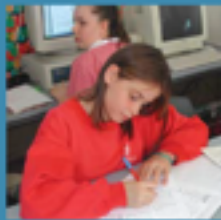
# THE NATIONAL READING PANEL REPORT USA, 2000

- “It is important to emphasize that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program. Phonics instruction is never a total reading program.” (National Reading Panel Report, 2000, p. 2-97)





Australian Government  
Department of Education, Science and Training



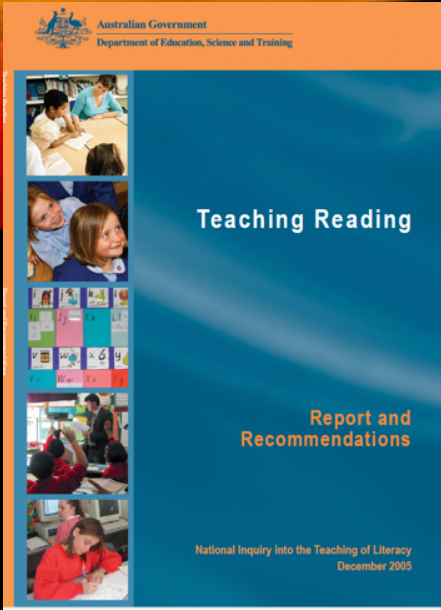
## Teaching Reading

### Report and Recommendations

National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy  
December 2005

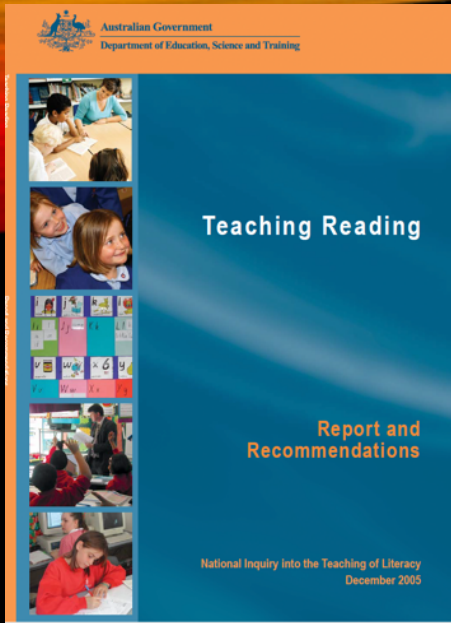
# TEACHING READING: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS AU, 2005





# TEACHING READING: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS AU, 2005

- No references to fidelity
- One references to multi-sensory (in a footnote and in the title of a text on the reference list)
- No references to decodable
- No references to the use of pictures
- No references to cues or cueing systems



# TEACHING READING: REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS AU, 2005

## Definition of Reading

- Reading involves two basic processes: one is learning how to decipher print and the other is understanding what the print means (Center, 2005, p. 7). Clay (1991) defines reading as a 'message-getting, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practised' (p. 6); and 'a process by which children can, on the run, extract a sequence of cues from printed texts and relate these, one to the other, so that they understand the message of the text' (p. 22) – the instructional purpose of which is that children are able to read and understand continuous text with ease (see also: Clay, 1993b)." (p. 89)



# Independent review of the teaching of early reading

Final Report, Jim Rose, March 2006

# THE ROSE REPORT UK, 2006



# ROSE REPORT, UK 2006 NATIONAL CURRICULUM

“Despite uncertainties in research findings, the practice seen by the review shows that the systematic approach, which is generally understood as 'synthetic' phonics, offers the vast majority of young children the best and most direct route to becoming skilled readers and writers.” (p. 4)



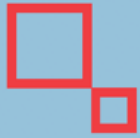
Independent  
review of the  
teaching of  
early reading

Final Report, Jim Rose, March 2006

Department for  
**education and skills**  
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

# ROSE REPORT, UK 2006

- “While such work, from the standpoint of those who teach beginner readers, may not be 'rocket science', it does require practitioners and teachers to have a detailed knowledge and understanding of its teaching content so that they can plan and implement a high quality programme.” (p. 5)



Independent  
review of the  
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Final Report, Jim Rose, March 2006

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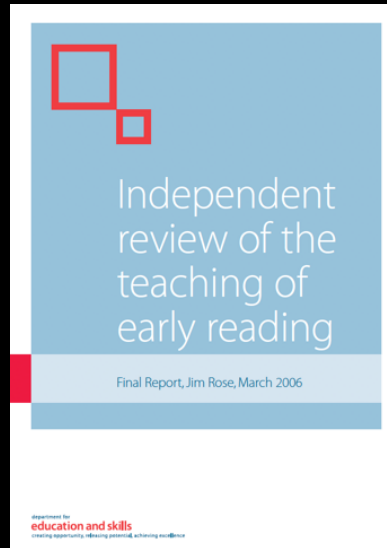
Moats, 1999



# SUMMARIZES/CITES USA AND AU DOCUMENTS

•In summarising the findings of the Reading Panel in the United States, she [*Linnea Ehri*] concluded:

“These findings show that systematic phonics instruction produced superior performance in reading compared to all types of unsystematic or no phonics instruction.” (pp. 17-18)



•The recent Australian report, *Teaching Reading*, came to much the same conclusion...from the extensive body of local and international evidence-based literacy research... [children must] to be able to link their knowledge of spoken language to their knowledge of written language, they must first master the alphabetic code – the system of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that link written words to their pronunciations. (p. 20)

# ROSE REPORT, UK 2006

- “‘fidelity to the programme’ is also important for ensuring children’s progress.” (p. 21)
- “Multi-sensory activities featured strongly in high quality phonic work” (p. 21)
- “children should be given reading material that is well within their reach in the form of ‘decodable books’, (p. 27)
- “if beginner readers, for example, are encouraged to infer from pictures the word they have to decode this may lead to their not realising that they need to focus on the printed word.
- “Three waves of instructional types (AKA RTI) (p. 42)



Independent  
review of the  
teaching of  
early reading

Final Report, Jim Rose, March 2006

# ROSE REPORT, UK 2006

## •Criticism of the “Searchlight Model”

Rather than viewing reading development as involving a continuous increase in the child’s ability to apply and orchestrate different ‘cueing systems’ (searchlights), researchers ...looked at children’s ability to read and understand words in and out of context. . . beginning readers need to learn how to decode effortlessly, using their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and the skills of blending sounds together.





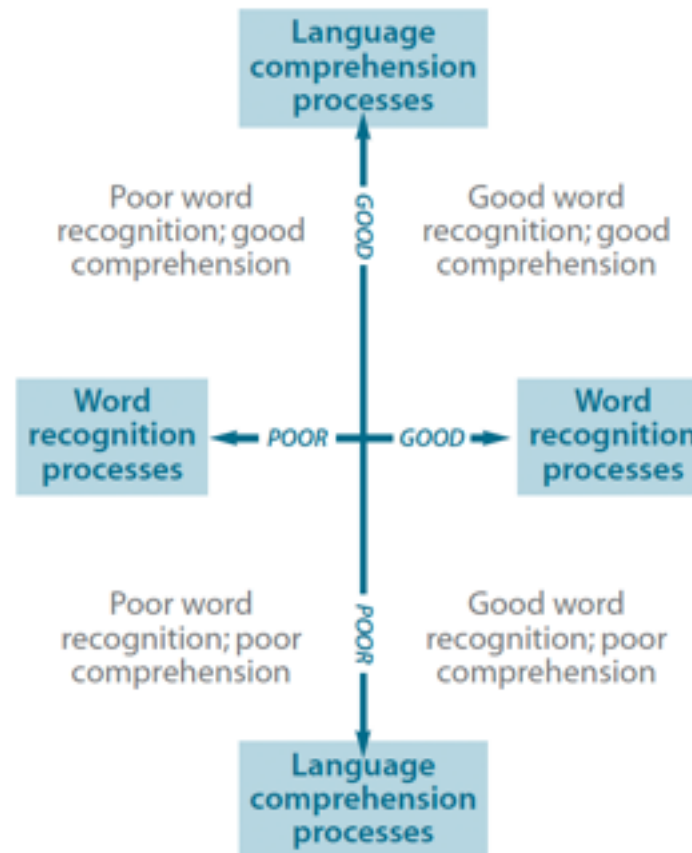
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# ROSE REPORT, UK 2006

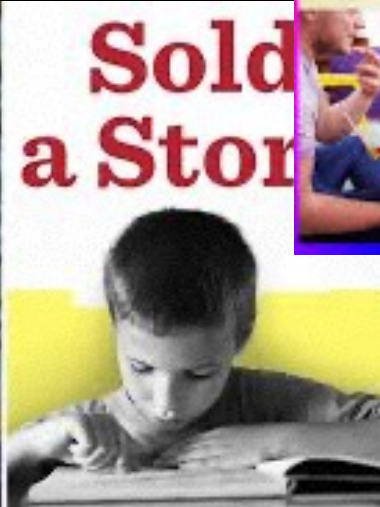
Figure 1



# MORE RECENT DOCUMENTS...



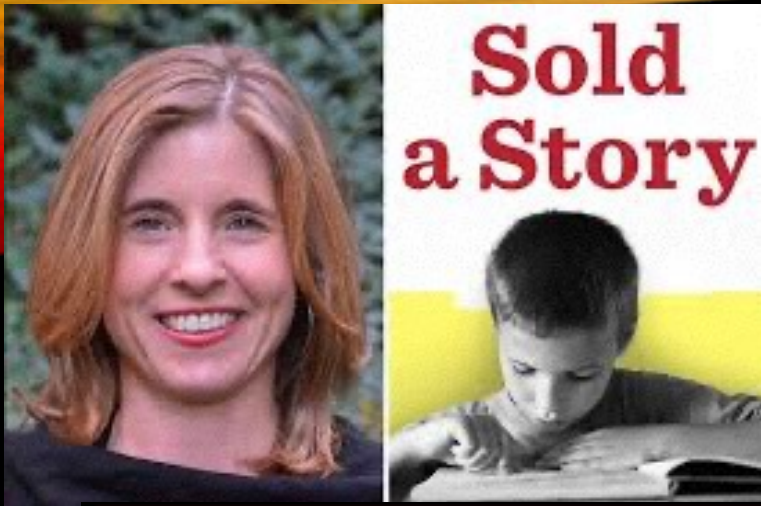
USA, 2022



UK, 2023





Australia, 2024




# SOLD A STORY (EPISODES 1-3) USA, 2022

**Sold a Story**

 **1: The Problem**  
Sold a Story  
Lee Gaul watches his daughter's lessons during Zoom school and discovers a dismaying truth: She can't read. Little Zoe isn't the only one. Sixty-five percent of fourth graders in the United...  
Oct 20, 2022 • 32 min 47 sec

 **2: The Idea**  
Sold a Story  
Sixty years ago, Marie Clay developed a way to teach reading she said would help kids who were falling behind. They'd catch up and never need help again. Today, her program remains...  
Oct 20, 2022 • 51 min 41 sec

 **3: The Battle**  
Sold a Story  
President George W. Bush made improving reading instruction a priority. He got Congress to provide money to schools that used reading programs supported by scientific research. But...  
Oct 27, 2022 • 42 min 13 sec

- Episode 1: The Problem
- Fidelity – no references
- Multi-sensory – no references
- Cues/cueing – no references



# SOLD A STORY USA, 2022

- Episode 1: The Problem

We're in their apartment. It's a tiny one-bedroom. When Lee decided he was gonna teach Zoe to read, he scoured the internet for resources, taught her some things about how to sound out words, and got what are known as "decodable" books.

**Gaul:** Do you remember what it felt like the first time we read a decodable book?

**Zoe:** Yeah, it was kind of hard.

**Gaul:** Yeah.

A decodable is a book with words that have spelling patterns a child has been taught. So she can try to read the words. She doesn't have to guess them.

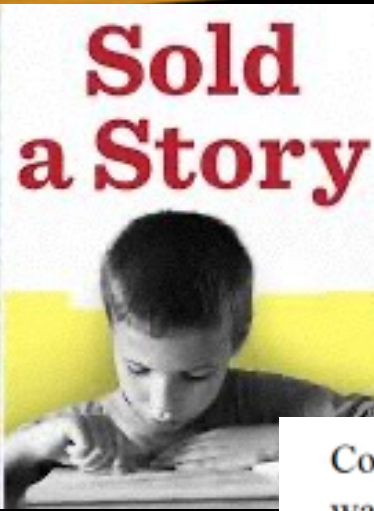
**Gaul:** And we started reading that book. You – I said, "Hey, I have a decodable book. I want you to read it. Let's try reading it." And you're like "OK, OK," and we started reading it. And I had to stop you after 54 pages. Cause you read 54 pages of it. Remember that?

**Zoe:** (mumbles)

**Gaul:** Yeah. I think both of us were kind of blown away, right?

**Zoe (whispering):** It was like the best. Thing. Ever.

Decodable  
books



# SOLD A STORY USA, 2022

## • Episode 1: The Problem

Corinne's a stay-at-home mom. She wasn't juggling online school with another job. So she was watching pretty closely. And the reading instruction seemed kind of – odd to her.

**Adams:** They gave us, like, these strategies to follow.

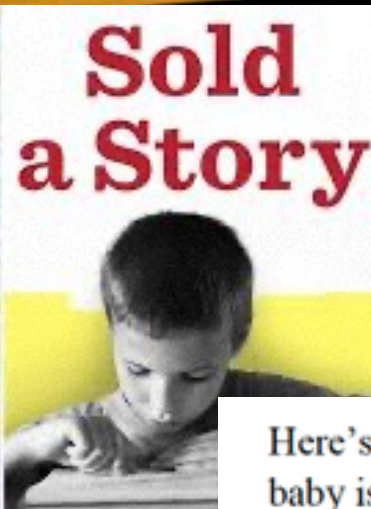
These were things kids were supposed to do when they came to a word they didn't know. Strategies to figure out the word. They were things like – look at the picture. Look at the first letter of the word. Think of a word that makes sense. Corinne wanted to tell Charlie to sound out the word. But handouts coming from school were telling her that wasn't a good idea, that sounding out words should be a last resort.

**Adams:** So I was like, OK, well this is a new, different way. And I'm sure they understand what they're doing. Because I do remember sounding out. I do remember that activity.

But Charlie and his classmates were being taught to use these other strategies.

Use of pictures





# SOLD A STORY USA, 2022

## • Episode 2: The Idea

Here's how it works in practice. Let's say a boy is reading a book and the sentence says: "The baby is napping." But the boy says: "The baby is sleeping." According to Clay's theory, the boy was paying attention to meaning as he was reading. But he was neglecting other cues – like the letters. So the teacher might ask, "What's a word that starts with the letter 'n' that would make sense here?" But Sandra Iversen says Reading Recovery teachers were not supposed to tell kids to sound out the word.

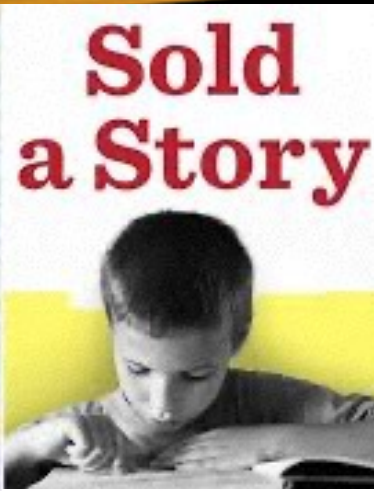
**Iversen:** No. You could tell them to look at the first letter. And it'll pop out of your head. If you're looking at the picture as well. You know, look at the first letter and it will pop out.

Marie Clay did not believe in phonics instruction. In one of her books, she described phonics as "nonsense."

(Music ends)

Sandra says a child with a good oral vocabulary could usually come up with a word by looking at the picture in the book. Then the Reading Recovery teacher would ask the child to check the word to make sure it was right.

Use of  
pictures  
and cues



# SOLD A STORY USA, 2022

- Episode 3: The Battle

Direct Instruction is a very structured program. With a big focus on sounding out words. And none of the cueing strategies.

**Teacher:** What is that word?

**Kids:** Eats.

**Teacher:** Sound it out.

**Kids:** E-a-ts.

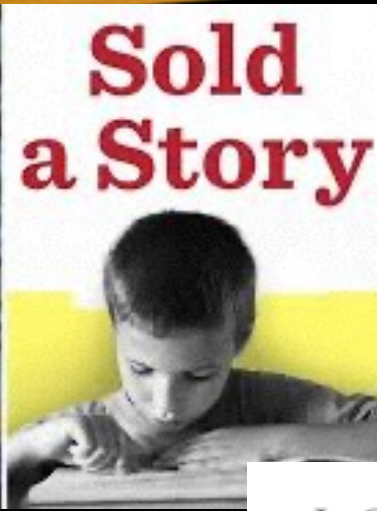
**Teacher:** What word?

**Kids:** Eats.

**Teacher:** Start from the beginning of that sentence. Go on.

(Kids read...)

Cueing  
Strategies



# SOLD A STORY USA, 2022

## • Episode 3: The Battle

In Guided Reading, kids are given the same kinds of little books I told you about in the last episode. Books with words the children haven't been taught how to read. But there are pictures to help them guess. And Fountas says teachers can do what she calls "word work."

**Fountas:** Use an easel, small chalkboard, white dry-erase board or magnet letters to involve children in working with words and parts of words.

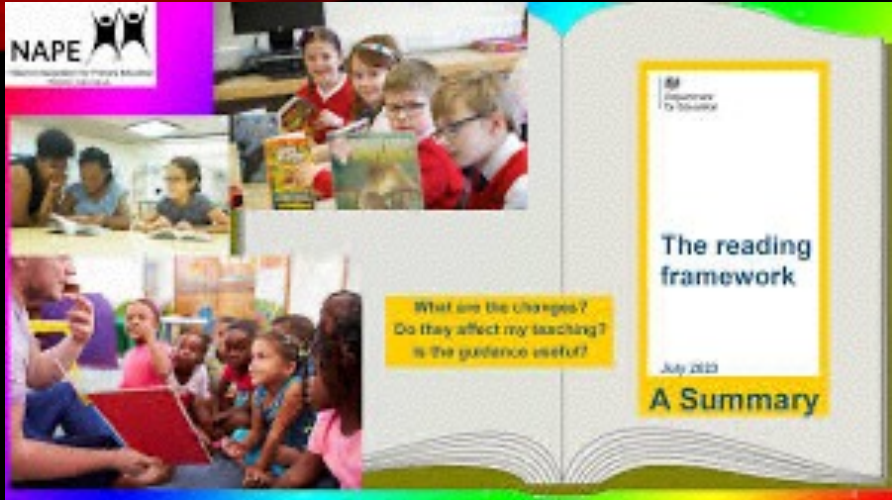
But Fountas says "word work" should only last one or two minutes. And she says it's not necessary.

**Fountas:** Word work is an optional part of the lesson. It'll be very important for some readers. You will want to include it for children who need to solve words more quickly as they read text.

(Music)

## Use of Pictures

# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023

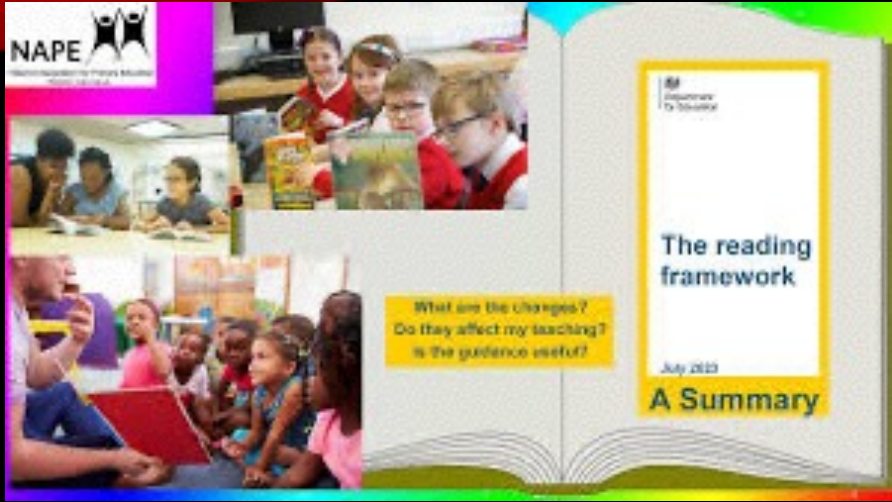


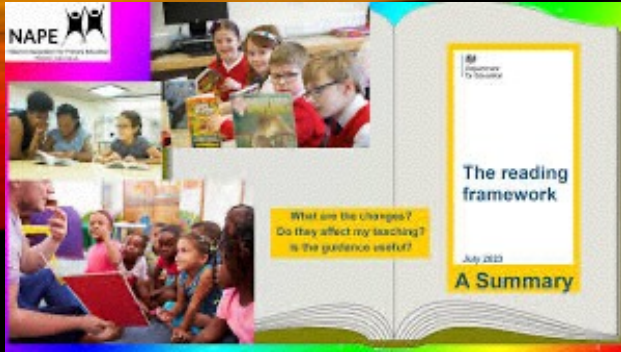
## The guidance aims to:

set out some of the research underpinning the importance of talk, stories and systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) in reception, the importance of ‘fidelity’ to the programme in phonics, and the DfE’s evidence-informed position on the best way to teach reading

# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023

- No references to multi-sensory
- 37 references to decodable texts or words

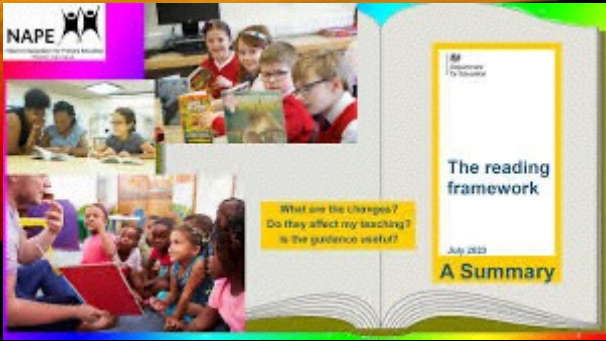




# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023

## ‘Decodable’ books and texts

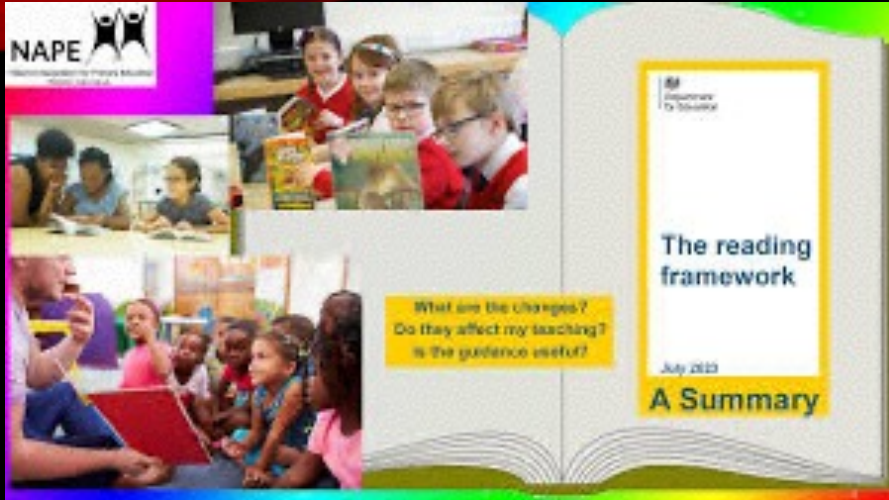
- The national curriculum says that pupils should be taught to:
  - ... read aloud accurately books that are consistent with their developing phonic knowledge and that do not require them to use other strategies to work out words.
- This is why schools should invest in books that have been carefully structured in cumulative steps for pupils learning to read, so that they can decode every word as their knowledge of the alphabetic code increases. These books are often referred to simply as ‘decodable’ books. They give pupils the opportunity to develop their fluency in reading individual words and texts.



# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023

- ‘Decodable’ books and other texts make children feel successful from the very beginning. They do not encounter words that include GPCs they have not been taught. If an adult is not present, they are not forced to guess from pictures, the context, the first letters of a word or its shape (see Appendix 7: Decodable texts for examples). ‘Decodable’ books and texts that children read should run alongside or a little behind the teaching of the GPCs, so that they always feel a sense of achievement when they are asked to read such books.

# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023



The child would not be able to decode any of the deleted words in the first two books below (Books 1 and 2).

## **Book 1: ~~What do they like to eat?~~**

~~What does a bird like to eat?~~

~~A bird likes to eat worms.~~

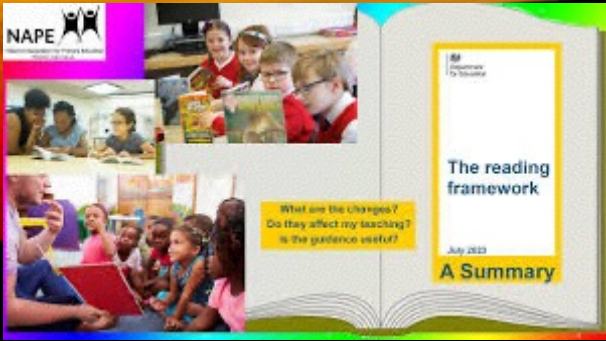
~~What does a giraffe like to eat?~~

~~A giraffe likes to eat leaves.~~

~~What does a seal like to eat?~~

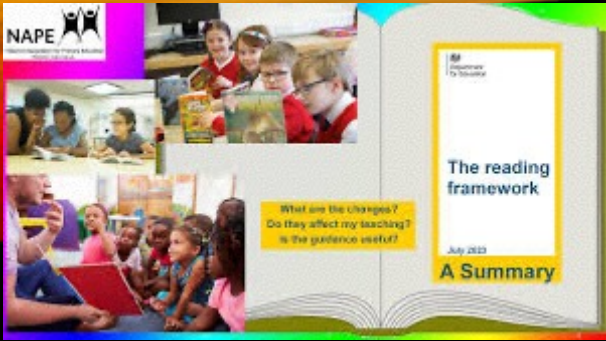
~~A seal likes to eat fish.~~





# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023

- These books are carefully graded by level or colour. However, a system of levels or colour banding that includes books with words that are not aligned with the progression of a school's SSP programme, or that includes books where pupils are expected to guess words from the first letter, from pictures or context cues, or from syntax, should be avoided. This is because pupils should be reading 'books that are consistent with their developing phonic knowledge and that do not require them to use other strategies to work out words'. (p. 85)



# THE READING FRAMEWORK UK, 2023

## Advice to Parents

- Read favourite stories over and over again. On later readings:
  - • Let your child pause, think about and comment on the pictures.
  - • If you think your child did not understand something, try to explain: ‘Oh! I think what’s happening here is that...’
  - • Chat about the story and pictures: ‘I wonder why she did that?’; ‘Oh no, I hope she’s not going to...’; ‘I wouldn’t have done that, would you?’
- (p. 130)



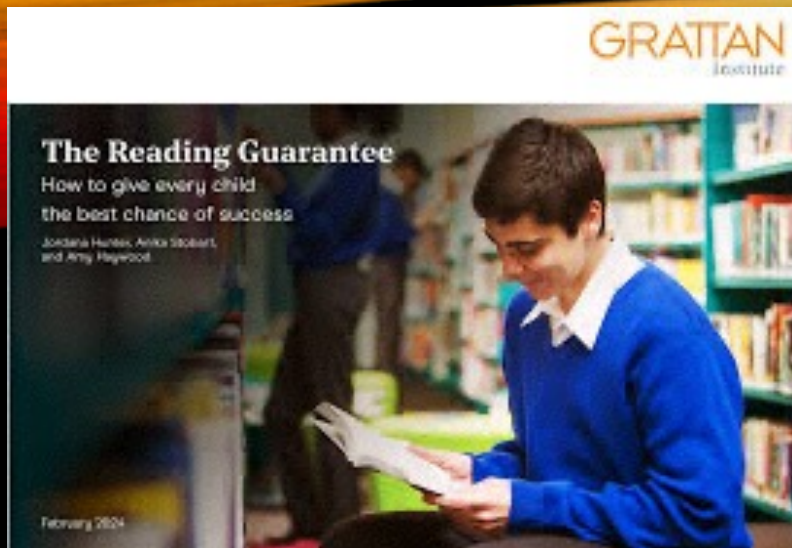
# THE READING GUARANTEE

## AU, 2024

The only reference to fidelity:

In England, validated systematic synthetic programs (SSP) must meet all of the following criteria. The program should:

- 1. constitute a complete SSP program providing fidelity to its teaching framework for the duration of the program;



# THE READING GUARANTEE

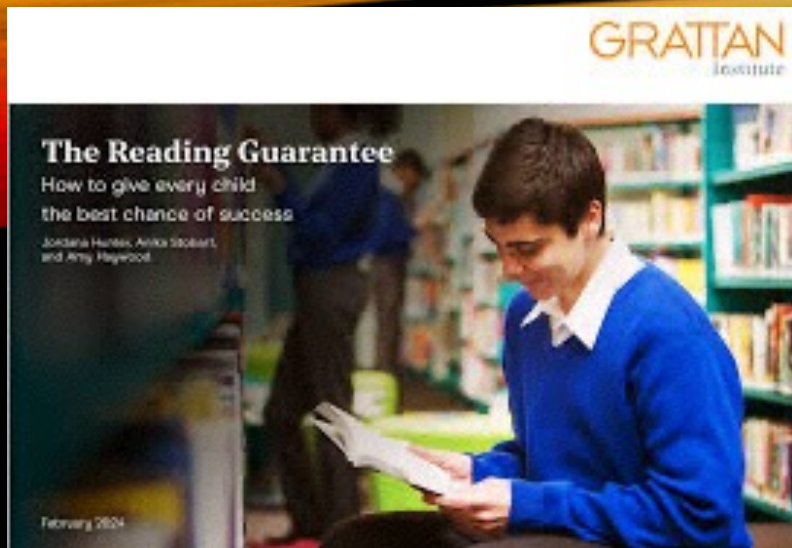
## AU, 2024

The only reference to multi-sensory:

In England, validated systematic synthetic programs (SSP) must meet all of the following criteria. The program should:

- 12. be built around direct teaching sessions, with extensive teacher child interaction and a multi-sensory approach, with guidance on how direct teaching sessions can be adapted for online delivery, either live or recorded;

Three additional references to Orton-Gillingham

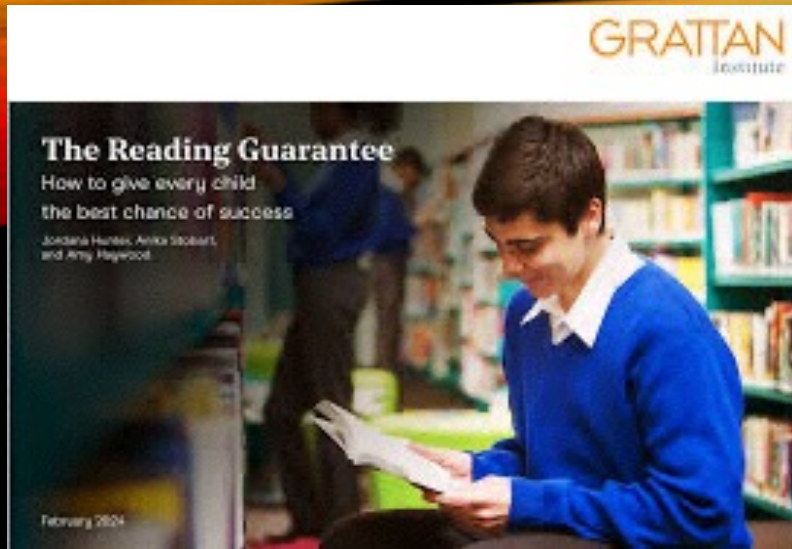


# THE READING GUARANTEE

## AU, 2024

### Decodable Texts – 29 references

- To teach this well, schools need to adopt a systematic phonics sequence or program, starting in Foundation, which follows a careful learning progression and provides lots of deliberate opportunities for practice. Students from low socio-economic backgrounds can particularly benefit from being taught using phonics. The use of ‘decodable’ texts or books can help students to practice their phonics skills. Decodable texts are like training wheels on a bike, and by the end of Year 2 most students should no longer need them.

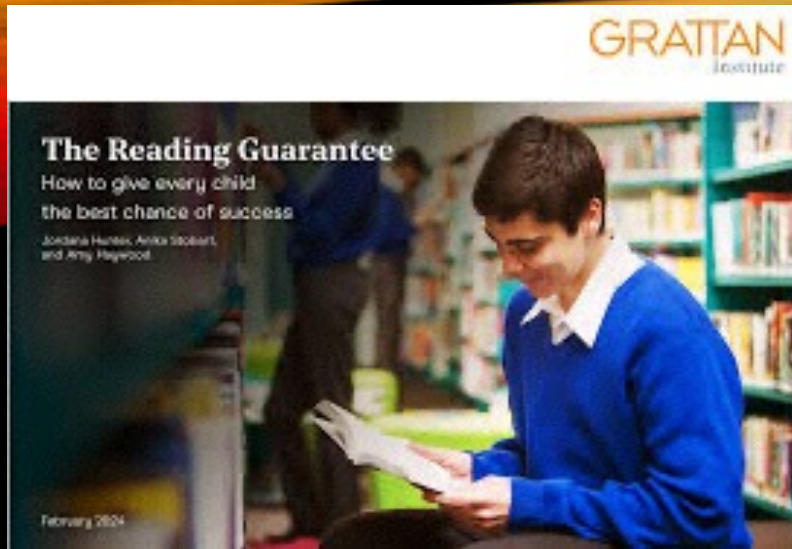


# THE READING GUARANTEE

## AU, 2024

### Using the Picture

- The process involves a student reading a text, with the teacher marking the words read correctly, the number and types of ‘cues’ that a student uses to mis-identify a word, and self-corrections. For example, if ‘the little dog’ is misread as ‘the small dog’, the student may have used the picture as a ‘cue’ to guess the adjective. But the student is not marked down for this; it is marked as a reading ‘strategy’. This makes it hard for the teacher to identify why a student with poor reading skills is struggling – i.e., is it their decoding skills, or their vocabulary, or something else?



# THE READING GUARANTEE

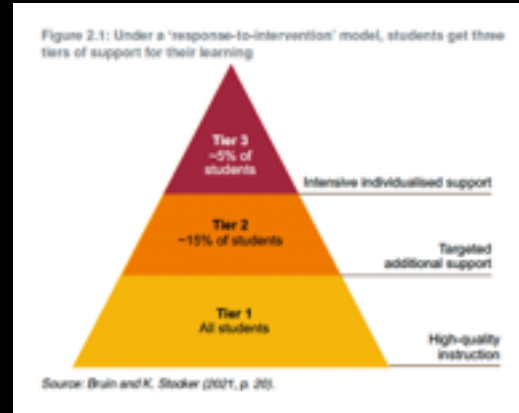
## AU, 2024

### Cues/Cueing

- The whole-language approach – popularised in the 1970s – follows the idea that learning to read is a natural, unconscious process. Teachers use ‘predictable’ or ‘levelled’ texts to build students’ skills, and meaning cues (such as three-cueing), where pictures and context help students arrive at (in many cases, guess) the right word. While this approach works for some, it doesn’t work for all students. (p. 23)



# THE READING GUARANTEE AU, 2024



## Multi-Tiered Levels of Support

- The Australian governments and the Catholic sectors should require all primary and secondary schools to embed a multi-tiered system of support to ensure all students stay on track with their learning (p. 58). Strong and well-established evidence also shows that adopting a 'multi-tiered system of support' (MTSS) is an effective way to ensure all students stay on track with their learning.<sup>61</sup> For reading, this requires a whole-school approach to instruction, with high-quality classroom instruction, universal screening of students' reading ability, extra help for students who need more practice, and continuous monitoring of student progress. (p. 21)



There is much more that we need to understand about these circulating discourses. . .



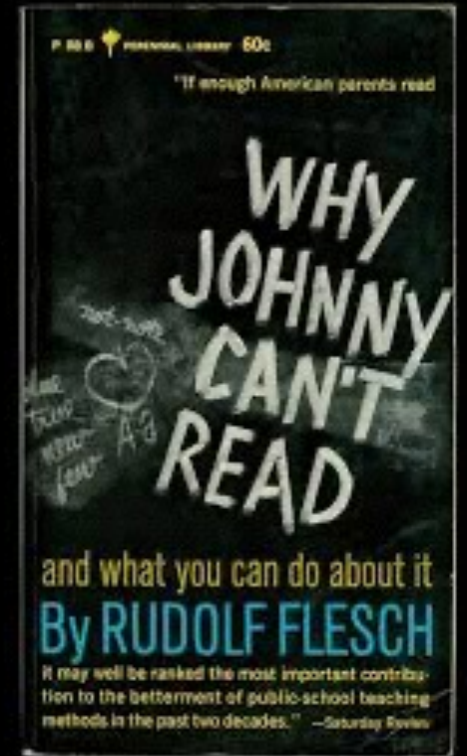


- How do they circulate?
- What forces enable or fund this circulation?
- How might the full body of reading scholarship curb/correct the circulation of problematic, exaggerated, and unfounded bodies of knowledge?
- How can we resist problematic discourses, when they have been established on a global level?

# A FINAL INTRIGUING EXAMPLE...

## WHY JAYDON CAN'T READ: THE TRIUMPH OF IDEOLOGY OVER EVIDENCE IN TEACHING READING

The current entrenched rate of illiteracy among Australian children is unnecessary and avoidable, write **Jennifer Buckingham, Kevin Wheldall** and **Robyn Beaman-Wheldall**.



Although it is tempting to suggest that all schools should be required to implement government-designated reading instruction programs that meet the criteria of effective evidence-based reading instruction, such a proposition carries the risk of any monolithic policy—one fails, all fail. Some level of professional autonomy must be allowed to schools. One way around this problem is the British government's policy of creating a list of approved reading programs from which schools can choose. Schools wishing to use a different program must provide justification, including support from parents.

What might be learned from the UK?

Governments must cease wasting money on ineffective 'add-on' programs that add to the burden of schools. If more money is to be spent on schools, it should be spent on up-skilling classroom and learning support teachers. The Response to Intervention (RtI) model is being under-utilised, but is potentially a more effective and cost-effective approach for schools to identify and offer timely intervention for struggling readers.

What might be learned from the USA?

## BUCKINGHAM ET AL., (2013)

- A consumer, market-driven approach might be preferable. The National Council on Teacher Quality is an independent non-profit organization that has evaluated almost all of the more than 1,300 teacher education courses in the United States and rated them on various criteria.'” Prospective teacher education candidates can use this information to decide where to enroll, just as schools can use it in their hiring decisions. Such a project is feasible in Australia, with the government compelling universities to provide the information and data required by any organisation that undertook it.

Thank you for listening. . .

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Compton-Lilly, C., Spence, L. K., Thomas, P. L., & Decker, S. L. (2023). Stories grounded in decades of research: what we truly know about the teaching of reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 77(3), 392-400.

Compton-Lilly, C., Spence, L. K., Thomas, P. L., & Decker, S. L. (2024). A Response to our Critics: Agreements, Clarifications, and Children. *The Reading Teacher*, (published online)