



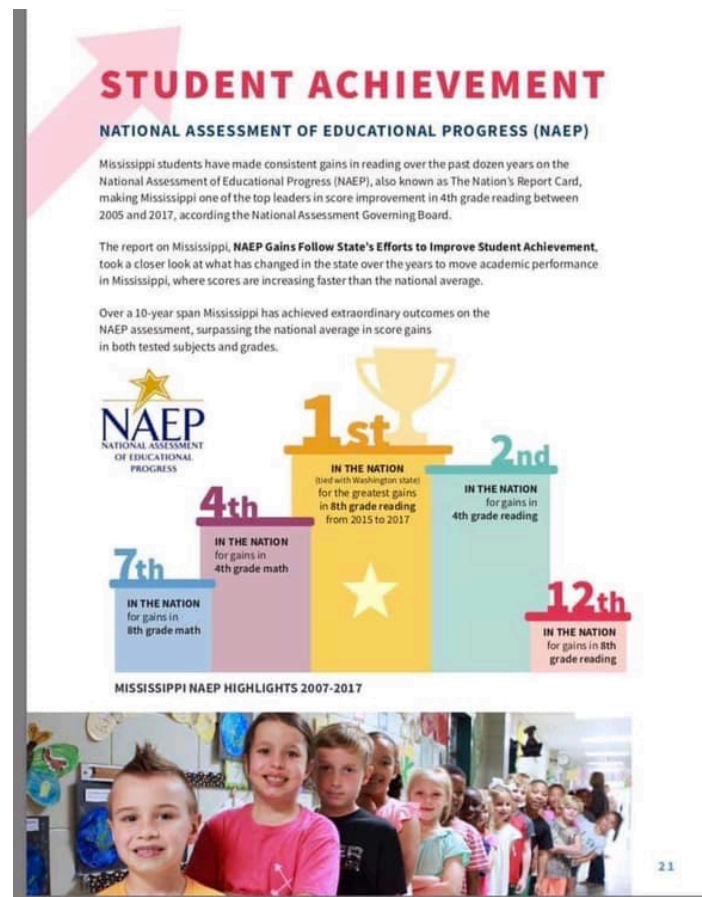
MISREADING READING AGAIN, AND AGAIN: THE MEDIA, READING POLICY, AND TEACHING READING

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THE BIG LIE ABOUT THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

- Dear Media, Stop Misrepresenting Reading Instruction, Please



THE BIG LIE ABOUT THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

- In 2017 NAEP data, MS is slightly ahead of SC in 4th-grade reading (both states remain near the bottom and below the national average), but SC is slightly ahead of MS in 8th-grade reading (again, both near the bottom and below the national average)
- See the same “bump” in 4th grade reading but low 8th grade reading for MS in 2019 NAEP scores: MS 4th reading 2019, MC 8th reading 2019.
- The Big Lie about the “Science of Reading”: NAEP 2019 Edition

THE BIG LIE ABOUT THE “SCIENCE OF READING”


This isn't particularly simple or compelling but let's detail why this recent round of the reading wars is way off base:

- Standardized tests of reading are only proxies of reading, typically they reduce reading to a series of discrete skills that test designers claim *add up to* reading. This is at least inadequate, if not misleading. No standardized test measures eagerness and joy for reading, as well; nearly none address critical literacy.
- Making raising reading test scores your primary or exclusive goal is actually cheating all students. Period. And this is what many states are doing, including MS.
- Achieving test score gains when you are low scoring is much easier than making gains when you are high achieving.

THE BIG LIE ABOUT THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

- Adopting, implementing, and staying focused on any reading program—these are also very common practices, and completely flawed approaches to literacy. Access to books in the home and choice reading remain the strongest predictors of increased reading and reading achievement.
- Ultimately, if we insist on using reading test scores to judge the quality of teaching reading in any state or the country, we must acknowledge that how students are being taught is both almost impossible to identify and completely impossible to characterize as one clear practice (teachers are very likely to shut their doors and do as they please, regardless of policies).
- And most important is the fact that standardized test scores of reading are a reflection of a large number of factors, with teaching practices only one (probably small) causal factor.

THE BIG LIE ABOUT THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

31	 Ohio	15.8%	225 [^]	268	222 [^] < 2017	267 [^] < 2017	12.2%	3.6%	√
32	 New York	15.9%	222	264	220 < 2017	262 < 2017	17.5%	19%	
33	 Michigan	16.2%	218	265	218	263 < 2017	14.2%	4.9%	√
34	 Oregon	16.4%	218 -	266	218	264 < 2017	1.8%	12.8%	
35	 California	16.4%	215 -	263 -	216 - > 2017	259 - < 2017	6.2%	38.9%	√
36	 Oklahoma	16.6%	217 -	261 -	216 - < 2017	258 - < 2017	7.4%	10.3%	[allowed]
37	 Florida	16.6%	228 [^]	267	225 [^] < 2017	263 < 2017	16%	24.9%	√

38	 Texas	17.2%	215 –	260 –	216 – > 2017	256 – < 2017	11.8%	39.1%	[allowed]
39	 North Carolina	17.2%	224^	263 –	221 < 2017	263	21.5%	9.2%	√
40	 South Carolina	17.9%	213 –	260 –	216 – > 2017	259 – < 2017	27.9%	5.5%	√
41	 Tennessee	18.2%	219	262 –	219	262	16.7%	5.2%	√
42	 Arizona	18.2%	215	263 –	216 – > 2017	259 < 2017	4.1%	30.9%	√
43	 West Virginia	18.3%	217 –	259 –	213 – < 2017	256 – < 2017	3.4%	1.5%	[allowed]
44	 Georgia	18.4%	220	266	218 < 2017	262 < 2017	30.5%	9.3%	√

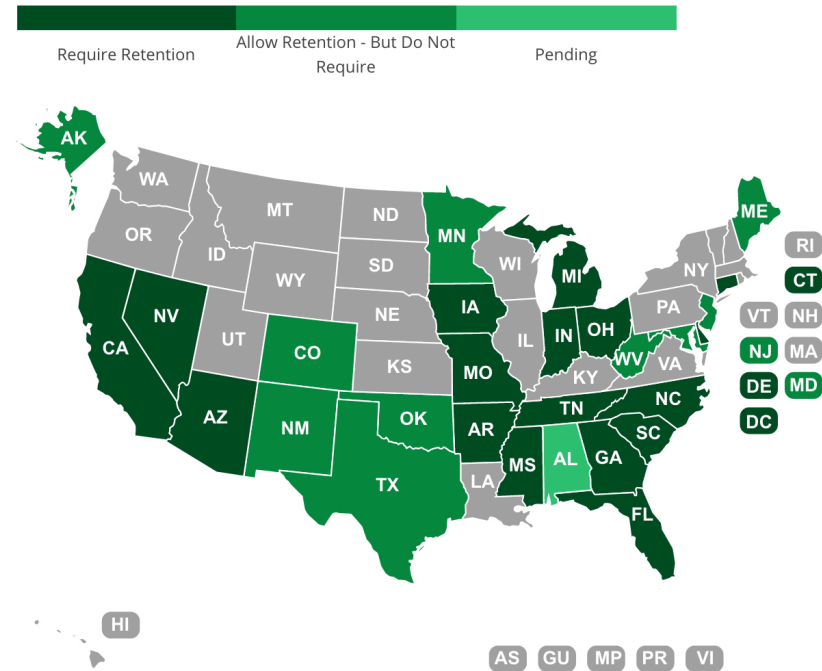
THE BIG LIE ABOUT THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

45	 District of Columbia	18.4%	213 -	247 -	214 - > 2017	250 - > 2017	50.7%	11%	√
46	 Arkansas	18.7%	216 -	260 -	215 - < 2017	259 - < 2017	15.4%	7.2%	√
47	 Kentucky	19.0%	224 [^]	265	221 < 2017	263 < 2017	7.8%	3.4%	
48	 Alabama	19.2%	216 -	258 -	212 - < 2017	253 - < 2017	26.2%	4.1%	[pending]
49	 Louisiana	19.9%	212 -	257 -	210 - < 2017	257 -	32%	4.9%	
50	 New Mexico	20.6%	208 -	256 -	208 -	252 - < 2017	2.1%	48.5%	[allowed]
51	 Mississippi	21.9%	215 -	256 -	219	256 -	37%	2.9%	√

[^] above national average - below national average Drop from 4th to 8th

THIRD-GRADE READING LEGISLATION

Third-Grade Reading Legislation



CHECKLIST: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

- *Misrepresenting balanced literacy (BL), whole language (WL) to discredit them.*
- *Misrepresenting the complex role of phonics in reading in order to advocate for phonics programs.*
- *Lacking historical context about the recurring “reading wars” and the false narratives of failing to teach children to read.*
- *Overemphasizing/ misrepresenting National Reading Panel (NRP) value, ignoring it as a narrow and politically skewed report.*
- *Citing bogus reports from discredited think tanks such as NCTQ.*
- *Scapegoating teacher education while ignoring two greatest influences on reading: poverty and reading programs adopted to comply with standards and high-stakes testing.*

CHECKLIST: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE “SCIENCE OF READING”

- *Conflating needs of students with special needs and needs of general population of students.*
- *Emphasizing voices of cognitive scientists over literacy professionals.*
- *Trusting silver-bullet, one-size-fits-all claims about teaching and learning.*
- *Feeding a false narrative blaming teachers and teacher educators both of whom are deprofessionalized /powerless in accountability structures.*

SEE ALSO

- [Evidence v. Advocacy in Teaching Reading: “We Should Not Mistake Zeal for Warrant”](#)
- [The Big Lie about the “Science of Reading” \(Updated\)](#)
- [Two Threads on Reading](#)
- [What Shall We Do About Reading Today?: Looking Back to See Now More Clearly](#)
- [“A case for why both sides in the ‘reading wars’ debate are wrong — and a proposed solution” Is 50% Wrong](#)
- [Parent Advocacy and the New \(But Still Misguided\) Phonics Assault on Reading](#)
- [The Enduring Influence of the National Reading Panel \(and the “D” Word\)](#)
- [URGENT: Media Misreading the Reading Crisis Yet Again](#)
- [The Big Lie about the “Science of Reading”: NAEP 2019 Edition](#)

SEE ALSO

- [Resisting the Silver Bullet in Literacy Instruction \(and Dyslexia\): “there is no certifiably best method for teaching children who experience reading difficulty”](#)
- [On Normal, ADHD, and Dyslexia: Neither Pathologizing, Nor Rendering Invisible](#)
- [What Is the Relationship among NAEP Scores, Educational Policy, and Classroom Practice?](#)
- [The Wrong “Scientific” for Education](#)
- [Research, the Media, and the Market: A Cautionary Tale](#)