



INFO DROP #3

Policy Statement of the Science of Reading (March, 2020. REVISED January 26, 2022.)
National Education Policy Center and Education Deans for Equity and Justice.

<https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/fyi-reading-wars>

1.) ESSENTIAL IDEAS

- Education has a long history of repeating past mistakes with the same misinformation and focusing on quick-fix solutions without considering the depth and breadth of literacy teaching and learning.
- Inadequate and ill-conceived hard and fast reading instruction and policy recommendations have been recycled over time despite no evidence of a real increase in student achievement.
- Despite engagement in the reading wars by media and politicians, experienced teachers have embraced a sensible approach to reading instruction by decisively including both phonics and comprehension skill development along with children reading authentic texts.
- Only using standardized test scores to measure students' reading achievement does not account for the individual differences in students' learning, income level, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and school funding inequity.
- Balanced literacy has shown a strong research base for the combined role of phonics and authentic reading, allowing teachers to draw from a wide “toolbox of instructional approaches and understandings.”

2.) MISINFORMATION EXAMINED

- Media has used “warlike metaphors” (David Pearson, 2004.) intentionally designed to keep the SoR debate alive while creating dividing lines. These metaphors encourage parents, teachers, and administrators to take sides to promote the SoR goals of intensive, systematic phonics.

- The words “scientifically based reading research” repeated 110 times in NCLB could have been used to contemplate “a sensible, evidence-based set of approaches to teaching reading.” Instead, this phrase has been translated and used to justify the SoR distortion of the research.
- Media and politicians are using standardized test scores to suggest that teachers are not teaching phonics or not teaching enough phonics with no actual proof of that being the case.
- Teachers have been repeatedly identified as the source of the literacy problem, blamed for a lack of knowledge and training and intentional resistance to do what is necessary by embracing SoR as “settled science.”
- While the National Reading Panel has long been called into question, SoR overstates and misrepresents the findings of the NRP as research support for the recommended changes in reading and misquotes the role of phonics and how it fits within a larger literacy perspective.
- Some states are claiming success in embracing the “science of reading” as instructional practice when, in reality, students who are not reading on grade level are being retained, which makes test results look better than they actually indicate resulting in “longer-term harms”.

3.) WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- In 2018 Emily Hanford’s “Hard Words” podcast launched a flood of new media efforts that have been an unproductive continuation of the Reading Wars. The constant addition of new media reports is following in the footsteps of Hanford’s false claims.
- The Reading Wars have become a heated debate that has had an increasingly damaging impact as it has played out in schools and the political arena. This impact has “tie[d] the hands of professional educators” from providing high-quality literacy instruction that all children deserve.
- Despite engagement in the reading wars by media and politicians, experienced teachers have embraced a sensible approach to reading instruction decisively including both phonics and comprehension skill development.
- SoR has continuously over time applauded “miracles” of student achievement by holding up test scores without understanding the full meaning of those numbers and the implications of misrepresenting them.
- The authors wisely included “Should not and Should” guiding principles with specific suggestions to support next steps. This is a direct departure from the SoR fueled political mandates that dictate what teachers CAN and CANNOT do.

