

## #4 Info Drop

Scanlon, D.M. & Anderson, K.L. **Using Context as an Assist in Word Solving: The Contributions of 25 Years of Research on the Interactive Strategies Approach (ISA)**. (September, 2020). *Reading Research Quarterly*. 55(51), 519-534. International Literacy Association.

### 1) ESSENTIAL IDEAS

- Through 25 years of research, Scanlon and Anderson expand what young children and struggling readers need to become readers beyond the science of reading movement's phonics first and only approach to beginning reading instruction.
- The deep respect for research support is evident in that the authors share six research studies from highly influential researchers. This is a healthy departure from the SoR approach of focusing heavily on opinion or unsubstantiated "research".
- In an analysis of the National Reading Panel's Report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) on phonics instruction, Hammill and Swanson (2006) reported that many other factors besides phonics account for the variance in reading outcomes.
- The key issue is that alphabetic decoding is an important tool in solving unfamiliar words but that skill is not enough. Effective word solvers are flexible and efficient so they can turn their attention to meaning-making. Both code-based and meaning-based word identification strategies, working in interactive and confirmatory ways, are necessary.
- "The authors contend that using both phonics and context-based information facilitates the ability to build a sight vocabulary, which in turn enables readers to turn their attention to the most important goal of literacy learning: meaning construction."

### 2) MISINFORMATION EXAMINED

- Scanlon and Anderson dispel the simplistic misnomer that using context clues as an assist in word solving is guessing at words by describing the more complex process through multiple theories of word learning. There is no research to support that using context as an assist in word solving is harmful to children, in fact it is just the contrary..
- Disputing the phonics first and foremost approach propelled by journalists' reporting of how best to teach reading, Scanlon and Anderson detail six studies of kindergartners through fourth grade struggling readers where both code-based and meaning-based strategies were explicitly and directly taught.
- Contrary to the Science of Reading movement, Scanlon and Anderson demonstrated through research findings that the direct teaching of multiple sources of information in the process of word solving and word learning enhances reading achievement.
- The use of context and decoding is not an either/or proposition but rather is an instructional approach that is responsive to the needs of children as they are learning the alphabetic system. This occurs based on the specific needs of children rather than a one-size-fits-all model.

### 3) WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- As Scanlon and Anderson point out, and readers can confirm, the irregularity of English orthography often results in only approximate pronunciations of some words. Quoting Share, 2008, “If those pronunciations are not checked against context for goodness of fit, inaccurate pronunciations will go uncorrected, and word learning will be impaired.”
- English has a substantial number of words that cannot be accurately identified with alphabetic and orthographic knowledge alone and needs lexical and contextual information.
- Scanlon and Anderson report on five significant large-scale studies, and one smaller study, of young and/or struggling readers that expand, not contract, our knowledge about how children become efficient, flexible, and effective word solvers and proficient readers. This is contrary to the SoR ‘simple and settled’ one-size-fits all recommendations.
- Based on research studies, Scanlon and Anderson advocate for encouraging beginning readers to use meaning-based strategies to understand that “reading involves meaning construction.”
- Contrary to SoR’s ‘simple and settled’ one-size-fits all recommendations, ISA places a focus on explicit instruction and authentic practice over time. This instruction is then transferred into book reading as students apply and practice what they are learning in meaningful contexts.