



## INFO DROP

*Stories Grounded in Decades of Research: What We Truly Know about the Teaching of Reading.* Catherine Compton-Lilly, Lucy K. Spence, Paul L. Thomas, Scott L. Decker. (2023). Reading Teacher, ILA.

LINK: <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.2258>

### 1) ESSENTIAL IDEAS

- The Science of Reading Movement mischaracterizes the research about children’s neural networks involving multiple sources of information when reading, positioning it instead as guessing at words. “Cueing systems are simply labels for neural networks in the brain related to language and meaning. Teachers must work to develop children’s reading networks... the reading brain uses multiple sources of information (e.g., phonetic, orthographic, semantic, syntactic). Anything else is not science-based.”
- The Science of Reading Movement is disseminating a “singular, unproven solution, the teaching of phonics”, to what they are calling a “reading crisis” to justify a limited ideology about how children learn to read.
- There is a “confluence of research evidence that reading is a multidimensional process” and the Science of Reading Movement relies heavily on misleading “anecdotal evidence and imprecise interpretations” of large bodies of research.
- There is no national standard or clear definition for what reading proficiency is or what constitutes grade level texts, and “scoring basic on the NAEP is closer to grade level than NAEP Proficient.”
- “Phonics is essential, but not enough.” ...“Given the diversity of learners and the complexity of reading, it is impossible to justify a simple or single approach to teaching reading. While inconvenient and difficult to market, there is no program or product that will teach all children to read.”

### 2) MISINFORMATION EXAMINED

- The Science of Reading Movement has unscientifically established causation, lack of and faulty phonics instruction, for their “national reading crisis” which includes an unscientific claim that “teacher educators have carelessly or willfully failed to teach beginning teachers” the science behind reading instruction.
- There is a long history of underfunded schools in our country which has been repeatedly gaslighted by the Science of Reading Movement.

- “Fail-safe” scripted mandated programs assume that there is one approach that will work for all readers and ignore informed professional judgment and responsive decision-making.
- Since Emily Hanford stepped into the educational arena, a growing circle of those without an educational background including media, educational activists, parents, and those who profit from the SoR position have used carefully crafted stories that cite ill-informed data that have escalated the spread of misconceptions, often to justify compellingly simple solutions that can be packaged, mandated, and prohibited.
- “Not only do these blogs, media reports, podcasts, and ‘news reports’ reduce reading to phonetic decoding and recommend prescriptive and sequenced approaches but they also rely on anecdotal evidence alongside imprecise interpretations of the corpus of reading research. Unfortunately, these arguments target audiences—parents, politicians, community members—who lack the expertise needed to interpret and interrogate problematic claims.”

### **3) WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?**

- “Science of Reading legislation prohibits teachers from drawing on established, replicated, and research-based knowledge” as well as emerging research findings and neuroscience studies. It is educational malpractice to ignore compelling bodies of research that highlight the need for children to use their knowledge of language and think about making sense as they blend phonemes together to become accomplished readers.
- Neuroscience informs us that “reading processes are distributed across multiple neurological systems in the brain...through continuous and reciprocal interactions between phonological and semantic representations,” which contradicts the SoR Movement’s use of a one-size-fits-all universal instructional approach of phonics, for teaching all children to read.”
- Children are not homogeneous, they are complex, requiring teacher expertise and multiple approaches to meet their diverse needs. “HOW you teach must be determined by WHO you are teaching” and therefore teaching cannot be reduced to scripted, arbitrarily paced, under-researched practices mandated by purchased materials.
- “Reading is complex and multifaceted. Skilled readers use phonics but always in conjunction with other sources of information. Good teaching is contingent on educators attending to multiple aspects of reading.”
- The authors have shifted the biased narrative of “a single story” by using “research-based stories” that reflect the multidimensional and broad-based view of what reading is, what readers do in the context of reading, and how we use that information in the course of decision-making.