

April 29, 2023

Beth Pols
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137 Nequasset Road
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A few years ago I noticed a new teacher Facebook group called: “The Science of Reading; “What I should have learned in college.” I was intrigued. I have two college degrees; from two highly ranked institutions, in fact. I love teaching reading and I love learning and adding to my teaching repertoire. I joined the group and began a journey that resulted in lots of shifts in my thinking and practice; about how we *have been* teaching kids to read and how we *should be* teaching kids to read.

There has been a school of thought in our country that using the “three-cueing method” to teach reading is preferred. Part of three- cueing is that students use guessing (rather than decoding) to figure out unknown words. Recent reporting by Emily Hanford has busted that fallacy. If you haven’t listened to the podcast, [Sold a Story](#), by Hanford, you simply must. In short, our country has fallen prey to a popular approach to teaching reading that has been disproved by science and brain research. Yet this method persists and many American children are failing to learn to read.

In my district I have been part of a team bringing a change in reading instruction to our district. We have provided staff training in the research on how children learn to read and how we SHOULD be teaching them; all of them, every single one of them. This year I piloted a new, evidence based program in my second grade classroom and next fall, all our K-2 teachers will also teach this program. For the first time in my teaching career I will get to see what it’s like when ALL students are given systematic, explicit phonics instruction. The results in my class this year have me more than optimistic about what we will see. To see students in my class thrive and grow as readers and spellers under this type of instruction has been phenomenal. Furthermore, to see my students with learning disabilities making huge strides, is giving me hope. I am passionate about making sure all students have the quality instruction they need to become

readers; this should be available in every single early elementary classroom and the sooner we make that happen, the better.

Many states across our country have put forth and even passed legislation to be sure that “three-cueing” is no longer taught in our schools. We need to be specific in this bill about what will bring about effective change. Some programs or curriculums may claim to include “phonics.” But what we need to ensure is that each school has access to evidence based, research backed, systematic and explicit phonics instruction. There are numerous choices that could fit the bill and that would allow local districts to make their own choices.

I would like to mention that moving toward structured literacy (of which phonics is one component) doesn’t mean phonics only. There are many strands of learning and instruction that create skilled readers. But without the ability to decode text, it’s hard to progress to the skilled reading needed for success in school and beyond.

My suggestions going forward are that:

Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, schools should adopt a program for reading that is aligned with the science of reading and should no longer use reading programs that are based on the three-cueing model.

The DOE should begin work to develop guidelines for science of reading integration into teacher preparation programs.

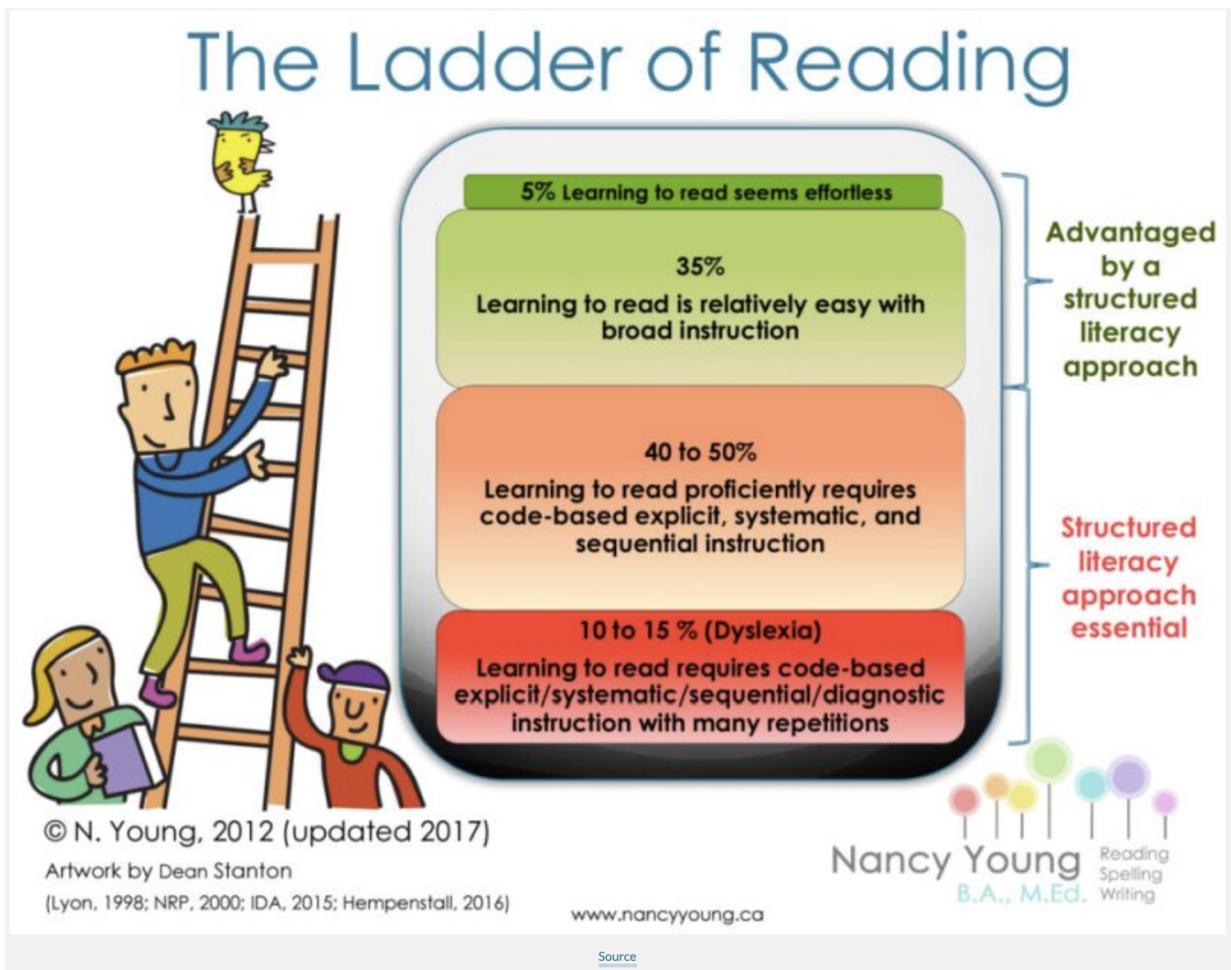
The DOE should develop and publish an advisory list of science of reading curricula. These must be research-backed, evidence-based, explicit and systematic phonics programs.

The graphic below shows how crucial it is to provide this structured literacy instruction for all of our students.

I am sorry to not be able to be there to testify in person. It is hard to be out of the classroom. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

I thank you for reading and considering my testimony.

Sincerely,
Beth Pols



[Source](#)

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