

TESTIMONY

VERMONT HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Blanche Podhajski, Ph.D.

President

Stern Center for Language and Learning

Clinical Associate Professor

Department of Neurological Sciences, Larner College of Medicine

University of Vermont

bpodhajski@sterncenter.org

STERN CENTER FOR LANGUAGE AND LEARNING



Reading is the basis for the acquisition of knowledge, cultural engagement, democracy, and success in the workplace. (Castles, 2019)



95%

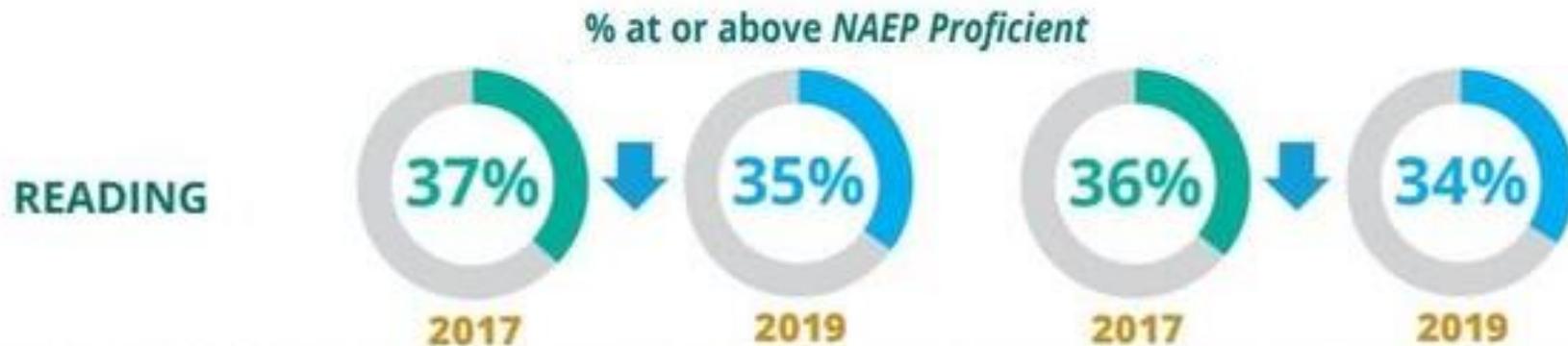
Of elementary students, regardless of background, are cognitively capable of learning to read when they receive sufficient direct instruction on the foundational skills of reading

EARLY INTERVENTION IS EFFECTIVE

'NO PROGRESS' SEEN IN READING OR MATH ON NATION'S REPORT CARD

NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT-LEVEL RESULTS

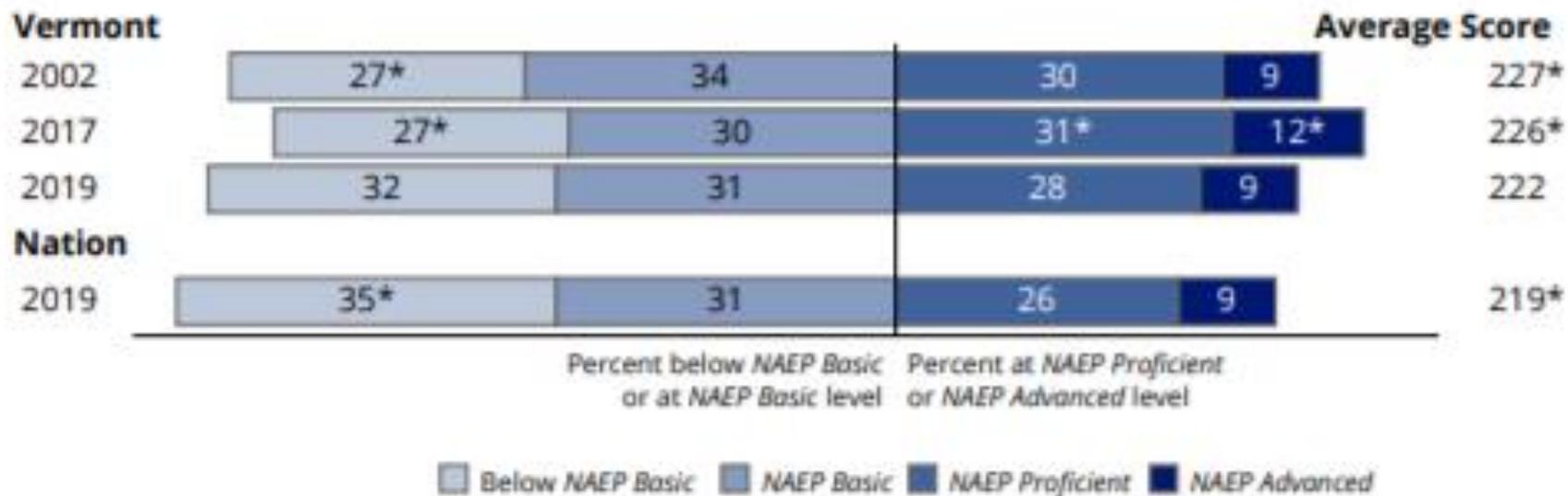
Percentages of students at or above *NAEP Proficient* unchanged in mathematics and lower in reading since 2017



NOTE: The *NAEP Proficient* achievement level does not represent grade-level proficiency, but rather competency over challenging subject matter. NAEP achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted and used with caution.

AN EQUITY ISSUE

NAEP Achievement-Level Percentages and Average Score Results

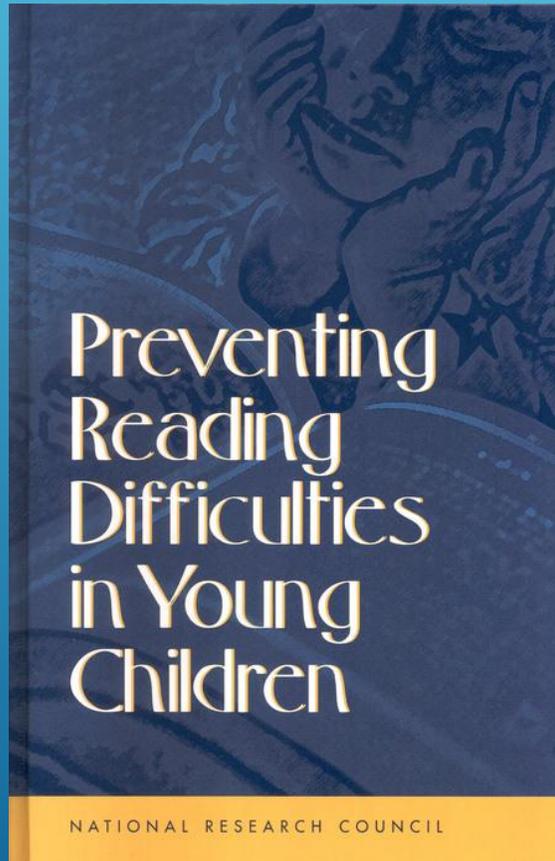


* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from state's results in 2019. Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.

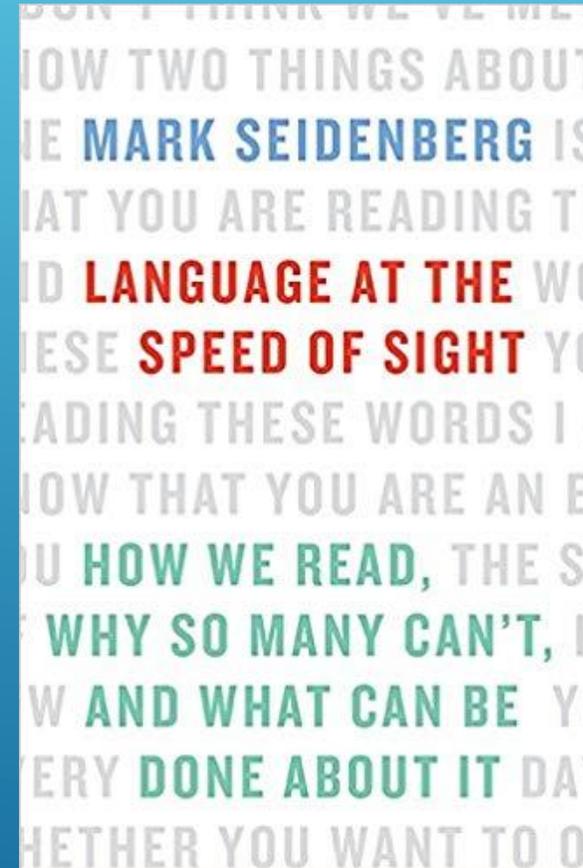
NOTE: NAEP achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted and used with caution. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

EQUITY

Almost 50 years of research demonstrates the efficacy of a structured literacy approach for teaching reading.



1998



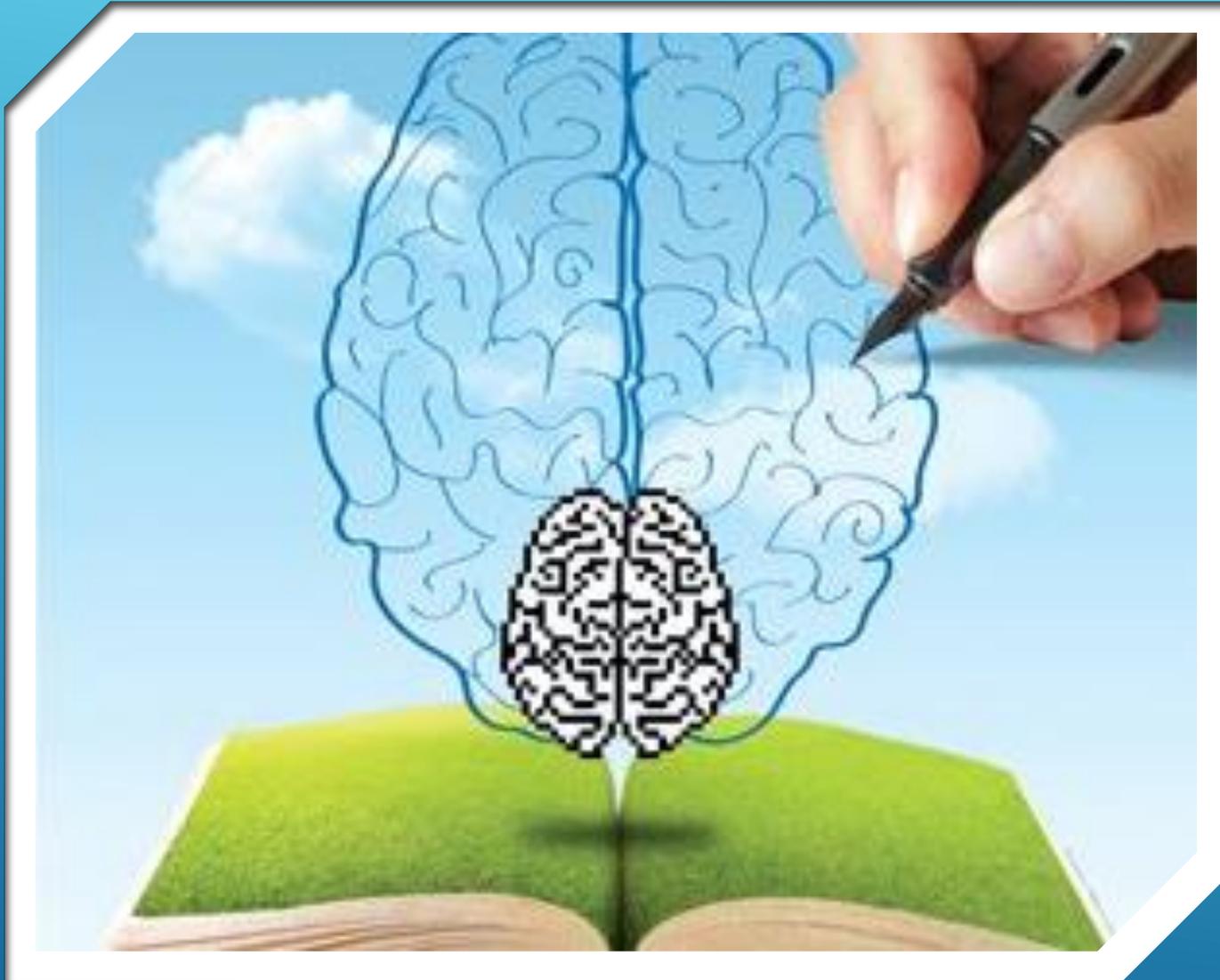
2017

The
No. 1

BARRIER TO EQUITY
in literacy education is
the variability of teacher
knowledge and teaching
effectiveness

- Lack of teacher knowledge
- Lack of teacher preparation
- Lack of teacher effectiveness
- Lack of teacher certification
- Lack of teacher licensure
- Lack of teacher evaluation
- Lack of teacher support
- Lack of teacher collaboration
- Lack of teacher leadership
- Lack of teacher advocacy
- Lack of teacher voice
- Lack of teacher influence
- Lack of teacher power
- Lack of teacher authority
- Lack of teacher respect
- Lack of teacher dignity
- Lack of teacher honor
- Lack of teacher glory
- Lack of teacher fame
- Lack of teacher fortune
- Lack of teacher honor
- Lack of teacher glory
- Lack of teacher fame
- Lack of teacher fortune

International Literacy Association,
What's Hot in Literacy Report,
January, 2020

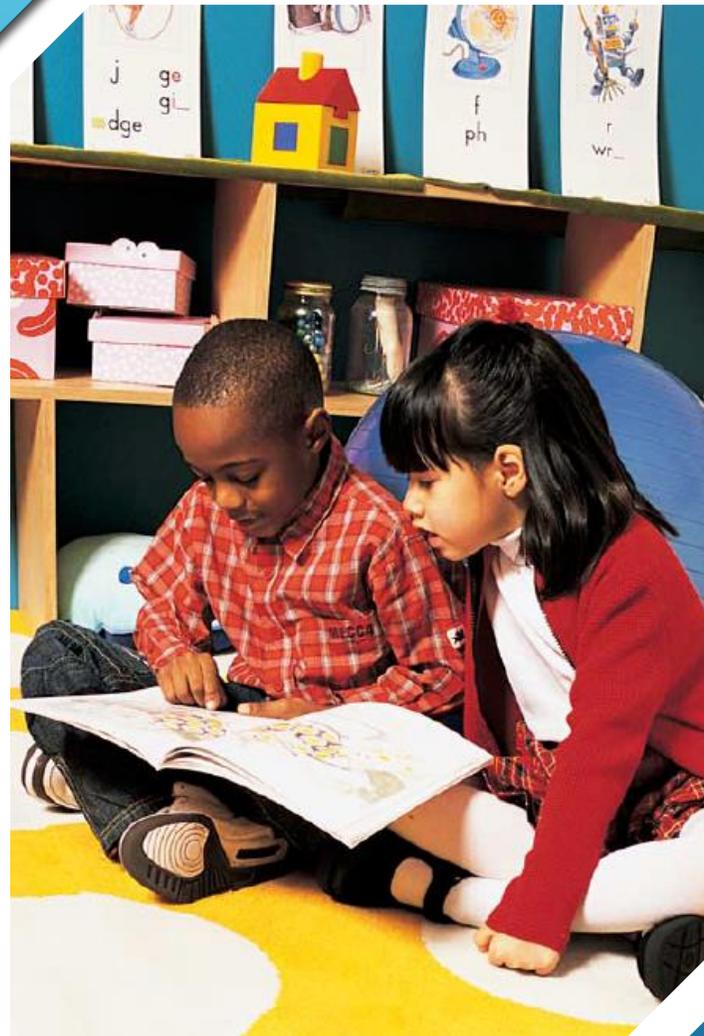


DOES HOW
YOU TEACH
IMPACT BRAIN
WIRING?

YES!

fMRI research indicates that a structured literacy approach changes brain wiring, helping struggling readers' brains to function more like fluent readers' brains...

Stanford Study on Brain Waves, 2015



TEACHING READING IS COMPLEX AND REQUIRES HIGHLY PREPARED TEACHERS



*We do the best we can with what we
know!*



We have a knowledge gap in the teaching of reading!

The Simple View of Reading

Gough & Tunmer (1986)



IN THE SIMPLE VIEW, READING COMPREHENSION IS THE **PRODUCT** OF WORD READING AND LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION.

WHEN STUDENTS CAN DECODE EXPERTLY, THEIR READING COMPREHENSION ABILITIES ARE EQUIVALENT TO THEIR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION ABILITIES.

Language Comprehension

Background Knowledge
(facts, concepts, and so on)

Vocabulary
(breadth, precision, links,
and so on)

Language Structures
(syntax, semantics, and so on)

Verbal Reasoning
(inference, metaphor, and so on)

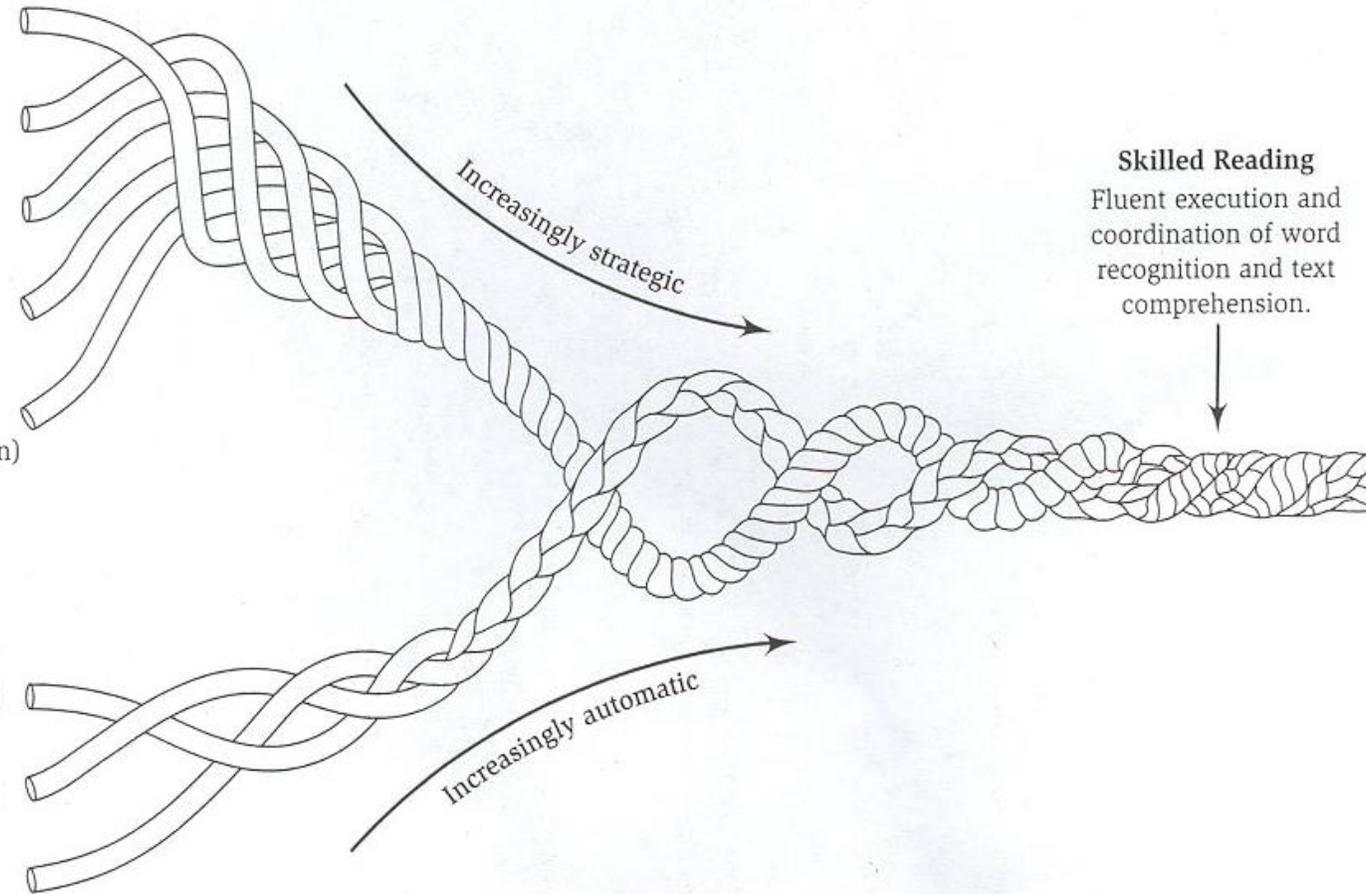
Literacy Knowledge
(print concepts, genres, and so on)

Word Recognition

Phonological Awareness
(syllables, phonemes, and so on)

Decoding (alphabetic principle,
spelling-sound correspondences)

Sight Recognition
(familiar words)



Skilled Reading
Fluent execution and
coordination of word
recognition and text
comprehension.

Figure 2.1. The Many Strands That Are Woven into Skilled Reading

Source: Scarborough, 2001.

Orange North Supervisory Union ■ Model of Success

2013 - 2017 A Four-Year Plan

K-5 teachers in all three elementary schools within the Orange North Supervisory Union participated in a robust structured professional learning program of coursework and coaching across a hierarchy of literacy skill development. Results of school achievement testing showed strong student growth and a reduction in special education referrals.

One striking indicator of this success is that there were zero reading-related referrals for specific learning disabilities in special education at Williamstown Elementary School for three school years, 2015-17, a first for the school.

“Since implementation, more students each year are meeting targets on Universal Assessments in the area of foundational reading skills. For example, **72% of first grade students met or exceeded the Foundational Skills target** on Universal Assessments in December, and the group is on track to meet the district goal of 80%.”

~ Michaela Martin, Co-Director of School Transformation

Results from the 2015-16 school year to the 2016-17 school year show evidence of strong growth in students' foundational and reading comprehension skills across grades and schools.



Year 1
School Improvement
Coaching



Year 2
T•I•M•E for Teachers™
trainings



Year 3
Orton-Gillingham
Classroom Educator
training with school year
long practicum



Year 4
Orton-Gillingham
Classroom Educator
training for new teachers
and those from the
consolidation as well as
Orton-Gillingham
Associate Level training
for special educators
and classroom educators

“Our students' phonemic awareness and understanding of language is amazing. Our instructional language is consistent and precise, and our teachers' confidence has never been greater.”

~ Jamie Kinnarney, Principal
Williamstown Elementary School

ORANGE NORTH SUPERVISORY UNION

Fall 2015	Winter 2016	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Winter 2017
22%	36%	46%	64%	72%

First Grade Reading Scores using Track My Progress
% Meeting the Standard



2018-19 SCHOOLS

2 Schools

Total Teachers: 40 Total Students: 464

2019-20 Schools

11 Schools

Total Teachers: 165 Total Students: 2,025





Lead to Read

The proven path to literacy

Deepening teacher expertise with brain science to enhance reading success

Foundation Building & Application

Comprehensive Reading Course for Educators through MindPlay

Self-paced, guided online course

Course Modules:

- Phonological Awareness
- Phonics
- Reading & Spelling Development
- Reading Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Reading Comprehension

Summer or School Year (40-45 hrs)

Coaching & Communities of Practice

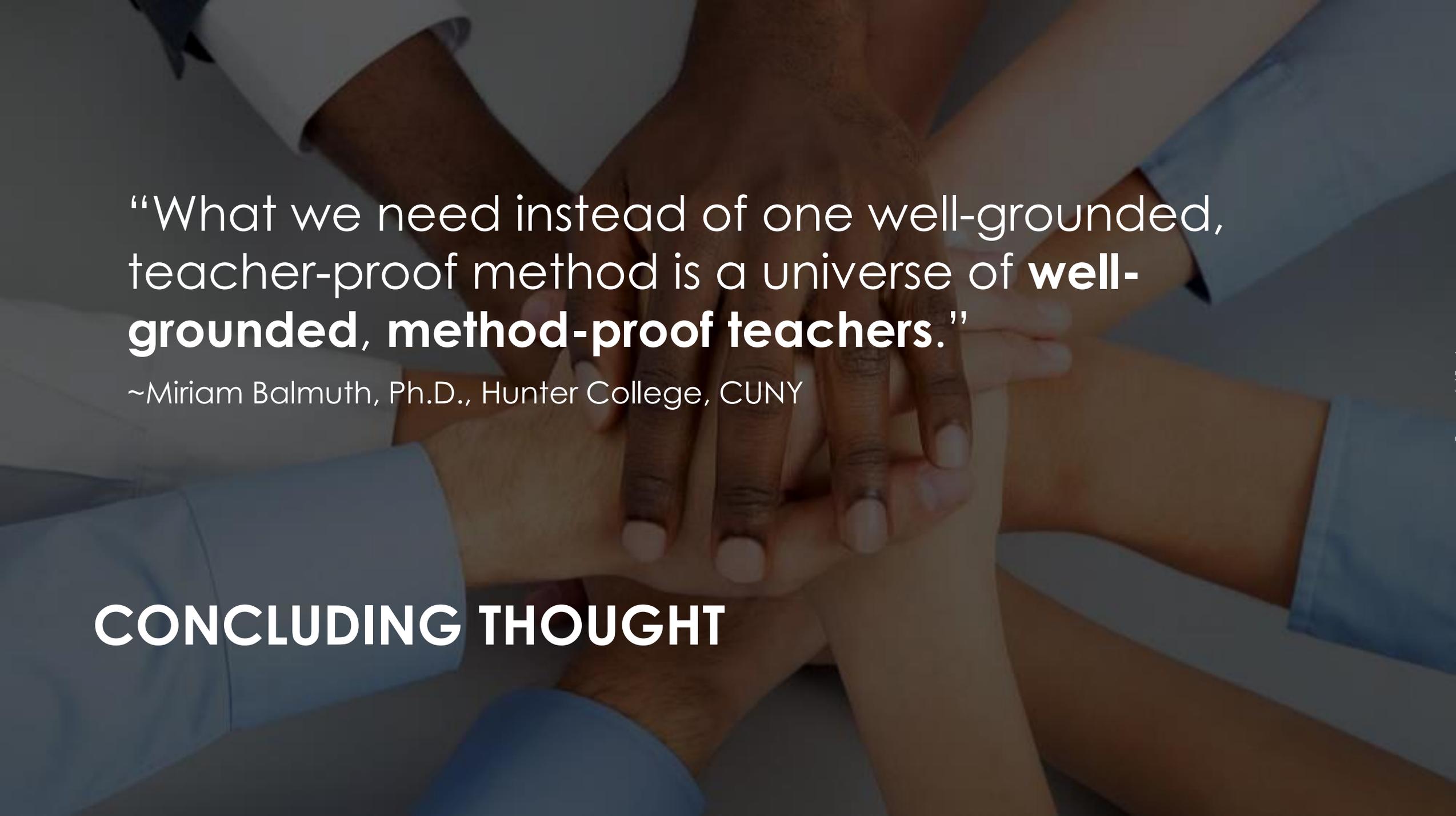
- Guided conversations to promote classroom application of course material
- Module by module
- Grade level clusters or individually

Peer Coaching

- School-based coaches become facilitators for sustainability
- Supports course modules and classroom application throughout the school year
- Large and small groups as well as individually

“...this work brings the literacy conversation to the forefront and teachers are thinking about what they do with greater intentionality, day to day.”

– Principal from local pilot school



“What we need instead of one well-grounded, teacher-proof method is a universe of **well-grounded, method-proof teachers.**”

~Miriam Balmuth, Ph.D., Hunter College, CUNY

CONCLUDING THOUGHT



THANK YOU FOR HELPING OUR CHILDREN
BECOME SUCCESSFUL LITERACY LEARNERS!

BPODHAJSKI@STERNCENTER.ORG