Good morning. I'm Don Tinney, a 31-year veteran English teacher from South Hero, and current president of Vermont-NEA. In addition to being a certified teacher in Secondary English, I also hold an endorsement as a K-12 Reading Specialist and spent a number of years teaching ninth grade reading classes in Middlebury, so I would like to begin my remarks this morning by expressing my personal appreciation to the committee for bringing a new focus on literacy.

As you know, much of our learning is totally dependent upon our literacy skills. Our students must learn to read so they can read to learn.

Providing effective reading instruction in the early years can absolutely change a student's trajectory throughout all twelve years of public school and beyond. For example, schools across America that implemented the New Zealand reading program called Reading Recovery experienced a dramatic reduction in the number of referrals to and placements in special education programs. Given the fact that a high percentage of learning disabilities are "language-based" disabilities this makes sense. Providing reading instruction of the highest quality to all students allows them to be successful in all academic areas in later years.

I have reviewed the side-by-side document prepared by Legislative Council and appreciate this opportunity to respond to all three bills in general. Following my formal testimony, I'm more than happy to address specific sections in the specific bills.

While providing direct reading instruction to students in kindergarten through grade three is essential, it is also essential right through high school. I am concerned that an emphasis on K-3 in this bill will de-emphasize the importance of literacy in grades four through 12, even though that is not your intent. Many boys, for example, may not be developmentally ready to receive reading instruction until grade four or five. We see high school students who need direct reading instruction, as well.

In studying the proposed legislation, I noticed the term "evidence-based structured literacy instruction" is used frequently. I am curious about how this term is defined, since it means different things to different people. To some teachers of reading, "evidence-based structured literacy instruction" is a specific type of literacy instruction that may exclude a variety of instructional approaches found in a balanced literacy block. The "Structured Literacy" versus "Balanced Literacy" debate or comparison continues to take place in the academic world while teachers, literacy coaches, reading specialists and curriculum directors are making informed decisions about what approaches will work most effectively for their students.

The International Literacy Association, formerly known as the International Reading Association, has pointed out that, "There is no single instructional program or method that is effective in teaching all children to read. Rather, successful efforts to improve reading

achievement emphasize identification and implementation of evidence-based practices that promote high rates of achievement when used in classrooms by teachers with diverse instructional styles with children who have diverse instructional needs and interests" (see IRA/ILA information attached).

According to the ILA, "In its simplest form, evidence-based reading instruction means that a particular program or collection of instructional practices has a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement" (IRA/ILA information attached).

There is a difference between "evidence-based reading instruction" and "evidence-based structured literacy instruction." By incorporating the phrase "structured literacy instruction" in this legislation, it appears that the legislature would be dictating what specific instructional practices our teachers would employ.

The specific term "Structured Literacy" is actually a trademarked phrase that was adopted by the International Dyslexia Association in 2014. IDA's Hal Malchow wrote the following in an essay titled "Structured Literacy: A New Term to Unify Us and Sell What We Do."

> The term "Structured Literacy" is not designed to replace Orton Gillingham, Multi-Sensory, or other terms in common use. It is an umbrella term designed to describe all of the programs that teach reading in essentially the same way. In our marketing, this term will help us simplify our message and connect our successes. "Structured Literacy" will help us sell what we do so well (information attached).

Given the language in this proposed legislation and the IDA's promotional materials, it appears the State of Vermont would be promoting one organization's approach to instruction. I want to be very clear, many of the instructional practices within a structured literacy approach are sound and effective; I am not speaking against any of the practices being promoted by the International Dyslexia Association, but I am speaking against the State of Vermont mandating a specific pedagogical practice to be followed by all teachers. We are professional educators who should be making these decisions with principals and curriculum specialists based on the needs of our students.

As a teacher of reading, I ask that you remove the definition of "dyslexia" from this proposed legislation. While the International Dyslexia Association and others use this term, there is not a universal acceptance of the term nor a universal understanding of the definition of the term.

In response to an April 2019 PBS *NewsHour* story on reading, 57 research professors who are the leading experts in the field of literacy wrote a letter to the producers about the apparent misunderstandings about reading instruction presented in the program. In the letter, these experts—three of whom I have worked with at conferences and workshops, including UVM's Marjorie Lipson, with whom I studied in the 1990s—explained the problems with the term dyslexia as presented in the news story.

> It suggests erroneously that there is scientific certainty about dyslexia and how it should be addressed instructionally. In fact, the research evidence is equivocal and there is much room for debate about whether dyslexia is an identifiable condition, whether it can be reliably diagnosed, and whether there are instructional approaches that are uniquely effective in ameliorating it. That ambivalence is reflected in the American Psychiatric Association's decision to drop dyslexia as a diagnostic category in the current edition of its Diagnostic Statistical Manual, that field's most respected and widely used reference source. Further, dyslexia is viewed, and often defined, differently in different countries, language groups, and cultures (see attached letter).

Given the fact that the leading academic researchers in the country don't agree on the definition of dyslexia and avoid the use of the term, I believe that this legislation should not attempt to define it.

I have attached a "Research Advisory" and a "Research Advisory Addendum" from the International Literacy Association that addresses dyslexia and instructional approaches. I hope that reading these advisories will further convince you to avoid the term dyslexia and avoid the prescription of specific instructional practices.

Vermont-NEA can ask its members who teach in the K-3 grades to speak to the issue of mandatory screening; since last spring, I have heard from several of them who have serious concerns about the amount of testing that is happening now and the developmental appropriateness of the standards and tests. I fear that adding more screening or testing will be counterproductive. I think teachers taking the approach to assessment which includes Informal Reading Inventories or Qualitative Reading Inventories as they see the need in their students is a much more productive use of their time and energy.

While I served on the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators for four years and chaired the board for two years, I am not in a position today to speak for the board. I do, however, want to address this legislation's call for the Standards Board to amend its rules to include training on dyslexia and to examine the teacher education programs through the lens of literacy instruction.

I believe that literacy instruction is covered in the "Core Teaching and Leadership Standards for Vermont Educators" and in the specific requirements for each subject area endorsement. I have included the eight pages of standards which apply just to the Elementary Education endorsement, in which you will find literacy instruction addressed (Vermont AOE Licensing Rules). The professional educators on the Standards Board, ably assisted by AOE staff and practitioners in the field, regularly review the requirements for educator licensure and incorporate the latest standards from the relevant national professional organizations in their revisions of the standards for every endorsement area.

I am uncertain if the VSBPE or the AOE would have the capacity to evaluate the syllabi and coursework of teacher preparation programs for K-3 teachers in a single year. I know they just revised the ROPA standards, including teacher preparation for personalized learning in this latest

revision, and that was quite an undertaking. The specific syllabi and coursework of any program are carefully examined during ROPA team visits during the regular re-accreditation process.

Thank you for your attention this morning. I am more than happy to answer any questions or discuss these issues further, either from my perspective as a teacher of reading or as a union president.

Thank you.

Related Resources from the International Reading Association

Books

Beginning Reading and Writing, Dorothy S. Strickland & Lesley Mandel Morrow, Editors (2000)

Children Achieving: Best Practices in Early Literacy, Susan B. Neuman & Kathleen A. Roskos, Editors (1998)

Distinguished Educators on Reading: Contributions That Have Shaped Effective Literacy Instruction, Nancy D. Padak et al., Editors (2000)

Perspectives on Writing: Research, Theory, and Practice, Roselmina Indrisano & James R. Squire, Editors (2000)

Reading Researchers in Search of Common Ground, Rona F. Flippo, Editor (2001)

Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading, Fourth Edition, Robert B. Ruddell, Martha Rapp Ruddell, & Harry Singer, Editors (1994)

What Research Has to Say About Reading Instruction, Third Edition, Alan E. Farstrup & S. Jay Samuels, Editors (2002)

Journal Articles

Baumann, J.F., Hoffman, J.V., Duffy-Hester, A.M., & Ro, J.M. (2000). The first R yesterday and today: U.S. elementary reading instruction practices reported by teachers and administrators. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*, 338–377.

Block, C.C., Oakar, M., & Hurt, N. (2002). The expertise of literacy teachers: A continuum from preschool to grade 5. *Reading Research Quarterly, 37*, 178–206.

Reinking, D., & Watkins, J. (2000). A formative experiment investigating the use of multimedia book reviews to increase elementary students' independent reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*, 383–419.

Van den Branden, K. (2000). Does negotiation of meaning promote reading comprehension? A study of multilingual primary school classes. *Reading Research Quarterly, 35*, 426–443.

This brochure may be purchased from the International Reading Association in bulk quantities, prepaid only. (Please contact the Association for pricing information.) Single copies are free upon request by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Requests from outside the U.S. should include an envelope, but postage is not required. Single copies also can be downloaded free for personal use through the Association's website at www.reading.org (requires Adobe's Acrobat Reader).

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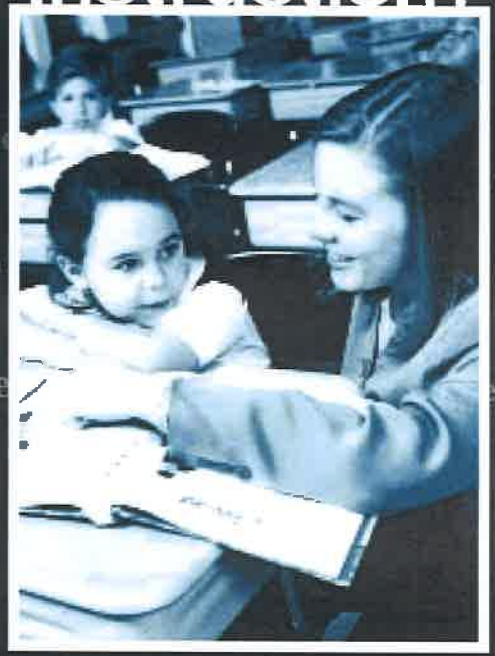
What Is Evidence-Based Reading Instruction?



A POSITION STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

There are few instructional tasks more important than teaching children to read. The consequences of low achievement in reading are costly both to individuals and society. Low achievement in literacy correlates with high rates of school dropout, poverty, and underemployment (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Wagner, 2000). The far-reaching effects of literacy achievement have heightened the interest of educators and noneducators alike in the teaching of reading. Policymakers, parents, administrators, and teachers seek the same end—to provide literacy instruction that is most likely to lead to high rates of achievement for all children.

As we pursue this goal, we must be mindful of the critical lesson provided by investigations of the past and of the present: There is no single instructional program or method that is effective in teaching all children to read. Rather, successful efforts to improve reading achievement emphasize identification and implementation of *evidence-based* practices that promote high rates of achievement when used in classrooms by teachers with diverse instructional styles with children who have diverse instructional needs and interests (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997; National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2001).

Also, as we seek effective programs and practices, we must remain mindful of the powerful influence teachers have. Time and again, research has confirmed that regardless of the quality of a program, resource, or strategy, it is the teacher and learning situation that make the difference (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997). This evidence underscores the need to join practices grounded in sound and rigorous research with well-prepared and skillful teachers.

What does the term *evidence-based reading instruction* mean?

In its simplest form, *evidence-based reading instruction* means that a particular program or collection of instructional practices has a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement. Other terms that are sometimes used to convey the same idea are *research-based instruction* and *scientifically based research.*

This relatively simple concept becomes more complicated when we attempt to define the types of evidence that are reliable and trustworthy indicators of effectiveness. The central question is, What counts as evidence of success? In general, educators agree that such evidence should be as follows:

- objective—data that any evaluator would identify and interpret similarly
- valid—data that adequately represent the tasks that children need to accomplish to be successful readers
- reliable—data will remain essentially unchanged if collected on a different day or by a different person
- systematic—data that were collected according to a rigorous design of either experimentation or observation
- refereed—data that have been approved for publication by a panel of independent reviewers

In addition to evaluating the quality of the data by which programs or practices are judged, teachers also must examine the generalizability, or fit, of the evidence. In other words, teachers might ask if the children in their classrooms closely resemble the children from whom the evidence was collected: Are they the same age? Do they have similar language and cultural backgrounds? Do they have similar learning profiles? Teachers might also ask if the learning contexts are the same: Are class sizes and teacher–student ratios similar? Is the allocation of instructional time and resources similar? Do teachers have similar funds of knowledge? Has more than one study produced particular findings? If the answer to all of these questions is *yes*, then teachers might conclude that there is a good fit and that their students might be expected to make similar achievement gains with the same program or practice. If, however, the answers to some or all of these questions is *no*, then it is difficult to predict whether similar results might be achieved.

Research studies used to collect evidence about programs and practices may have a variety of designs. In general, studies that demonstrate effectiveness using experimental designs (studies that compare results from the program or practices of interest to results from a control group with random assignment to the groups) and quasi-experimental designs (studies that do not use random assignment to the program or comparison group, but use adequate statistical procedures to control preexisting differences) give the strongest evidence of effects of a program or practice on the "average" student—particularly when the studies are carried out in naturalistic environments. Quantitative studies such as these generally investigate program effects on relatively large numbers of students. In addition, they can be aggregated by using meta-analysis. In contrast, qualitative studies typically focus on small samples or on individuals and are especially valuable in helping teachers understand how particular programs or approaches affect individuals who may not represent the mainstream or average student.

However, no single study ever establishes a program or practice as effective; moreover, it is the convergence of evidence from a variety of study designs that is ultimately scientifically convincing. When evaluating studies and claims of evidence, educators must not determine whether the study is quantitative or qualitative in nature, but rather if the study meets the standards of scientific research. That is, does it involve "rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry that is data-based" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 43)?

What is the difference between evidence-based programs and evidence-based practices?

The quest to find the "best programs" for teaching reading has a long and quite unsuccessful history. Most notable among such efforts is a group of studies conducted in the mid-1960s that became known as the First-Grade Studies (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997). This series of U.S. federally funded investigations examined popular approaches to teaching beginning reading. Included were examinations of basal reading, phonics, language experience, and linguistics approaches to reading instruction. The collection of 27 studies comparing different methods and materials found as many differences between and among teachers using the same program or approach as there were between and among teachers using different programs or approaches, leaving the authors unable to identify a "best" program. Instead, the results led the authors to conclude,

> Children learn to read by a variety of materials and methods.... No one approach is so distinctly better in all situations and respects than the others that it should be considered the one best method and the one to be used exclusively. (Bond & Dykstra, 1967/1997, p. 416)

Indeed, many large studies have come to similar conclusions. For example, consider the recent findings related to the evaluations of Comprehensive School Reform. Once again the focus was on reading programs and methods, and the findings echo those of the First-Grade Studies, that "no models had uniformly positive effects, and no models had uniformly negative or neutral effects. In other words, no model worked in every case and every situation" (National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform, 2001, p. 2).

Despite many attempts at program studies in the years since the First-Grade Studies, and many claims of program excellence, literacy scholars (e.g., Allington, 2001; Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 1998) argue that careful examination of such studies reveals the use of either flawed designs or selective reporting of the available data. Furthermore, attempts to find the "right program" for large-scale implementation is complicated by the diversity of student needs, teaching styles, and classroom conditions that exist in any school or group of schools.

Whereas efforts to find "best programs" have centered largely on the materials teachers use, attempts to identify best practices have focused on the *actions* teachers take and the *practices* in which they routinely engage students. In contrast to the discrepant findings of studies designed to identify best programs, examinations of best practices have led to highly consistent results when such studies have been rigorously designed and systematically analyzed and compared. The results of the First-Grade Studies again provide a relevant starting place. Although findings failed to show superiority of any particular approach or program, evidence did indicate strong relationships between particular practices and high achievement. Most recently, the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) took a similar approach to its study of effective instruction and provides an effective template for understanding best literacy practices:

1. Teach reading for authentic meaning-making literacy experiences for pleasure, to be informed, and to perform a task.
2. Use high-quality literature.
3. Integrate a comprehensive word study/phonics program into reading/writing instruction.
4. Use multiple texts that link and expand concepts.
5. Balance teacher- and student-led discussions.
6. Build a whole-class community that emphasizes important concepts and builds background knowledge.
7. Work with students in small groups while other students read and write about what they have read.
8. Give students plenty of time to read in class.
9. Give students direct instruction in decoding and comprehension strategies that promote independent reading. Balance direct instruction, guided instruction, and independent learning.
10. Use a variety of assessment techniques to inform instruction. (p. 14)

What resources might be useful when examining evidence to support particular programs or practices?

A list such as the one presented above provides an important starting point in the development of evidence-based reading instruction. But how might we learn more about each of these practices and the steps toward effective implementation? Rigorous, peer-reviewed, comprehensive research syntheses provide an excellent starting place for teachers, administrators, and policymakers who wish to learn more about effective teaching of reading. Such syntheses are important and useful because they are based on comprehensive and systematic reviews of many studies, and allow us to predict outcomes when the practices are used under similar conditions with children similar to those who participated in the reported investigations.

There are at least three types of research syntheses: large-scale reviews conducted by a team of researchers appointed by a funding agency; edited handbooks, generally compiled by a team of researchers who invite professional colleagues to provide comprehensive reviews of particular topics within a series of chapters; and individual analyses of a particular topic. Individual analyses may be published as book-length monographs, as articles in refereed research journals, or as chapters in edited volumes. The following list gives examples of these types of works, as well as names of refereed research journals.

Large-scale, U.S. federally funded research reviews

Anderson, R.C., Hiebert, E.H., Scott, J.A., & Wilkinson, I.A.G. (1985). *Becoming a nation of readers: The report of the Commission on Reading.* Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Bond, G.L., & Dykstra, R. (1997). The cooperative research program in first-grade reading instruction. *Reading Research*

Flood, J., Lapp
Handbook of
(2nd ed.). Mah

Kamil, M.L., M
(2000). *Handb*
Erlbaum.

Neuman, S.B.
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Pearson, P.D.,
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Structured Literacy: A New Term to Unify Us and Sell What We Do

Share This:

July 2014

By Hal Malchow

At its July 1st meeting, the IDA Board of Directors made a landmark decision designed to help market our approach to reading instruction. The board chose a name that would encompass all approaches to reading instruction that conform to ***IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards*** **(https://eida.org/1252-2/)**
. That name is "Structured Literacy."

Today, our successful approach to reading instruction goes by many names: Orton Gillingham, Multi-Sensory, Explicit Phonics. In many schools and districts, our approach is referred to by the name of the organization training teachers. So in Houston, it may be known as "Neuhaus." In New York or Los Angeles, it may be referred to as "Wilson."

A Name: First Step in Building a Brand

If we want school districts to adopt our approach, we need a name that brings together our successes. We need one name that refers to the many programs that teach reading in the same way. A name is the first and essential step to building a brand.

In making this decision, the IDA Board considered input from many sources. To begin the process, we reached out to 300 professional members and asked them to suggest names. Based upon that input, we prepared a list of ten names and asked more than 700 professionals to select the three they most preferred. After that input, we chose the three names that had the most support and polled both parents and teachers. Taking all of that input into consideration, we conducted a long discussion of the merits of each choice at our April board meeting.

> *The term **"Structured Literacy"** is not designed to replace Orton Gillingham, Multi-Sensory or other terms in common use. It is an umbrella term designed to describe all of the programs that teach reading in essentially the same way.*

The Vote: Unanimous

Finally, in a unanimous vote, the board chose "**Structured Literacy**" at a meeting on July 1st.

The term "**Structured Literacy**" is not designed to replace Orton Gillingham, Multi-Sensory, or other terms in common use. It is an umbrella term designed to describe all of the programs that teach reading in essentially the same way. In our marketing, this term will help us simplify our message and connect our successes. "**Structured Literacy**" will help us sell what we do so well.

I want to thank the hundreds of professionals who provided input in this process. I also want to thank our board for reaching a decision that will help us sell what we do, bring best practices into more classrooms, deliver teachers qualified to instruct a student with dyslexia, and raise reading skills for all students as well.

Hal Malchow is a successful businessman and political consultant who has provided fundraising services for groups like the American Red Cross, the Democratic National Committee, the US Olympic committee and many others. He has worked for six presidential candidates. Hal co-authored of The Sword of Darrow, a young adult fantasy novel, with his then eight-year old dyslexic son, Alex. Through that association Hal joined the IDA Board in 2011 and is now the President of IDA.

Paula Kerger, PBS, President and CEO
pakerger@pbs.org

Sara Just, Executive Producer, PBS NewsHour
viewermail@newshour.org

Dear Ms. Kerger and Ms. Just,

We, the undersigned, write to express concern about the PBS NewsHour segment on dyslexia, broadcast on April 30. As experienced senior scholars in the field of reading and literacy education, we found this segment to be inconsistent with the NewsHour's stated aim of balanced and trusted reporting.

Our professional work is devoted to studying literacy and how it can be developed in schools to enrich the lives of all students. So, we well understand and share parents' and others' anguish and frustration when children are identified as experiencing reading difficulties. Competent reading and writing are fundamentally important in and out of school, and difficulties can shape children's concepts of themselves as learners, while affecting virtually every aspect of their everyday experience.

Our concern is that the NewsHour received inadequate and incomplete scientific advice when producing the segment on dyslexia. The result perpetuates inaccuracies, misconceptions, and distortions related to reading, how it is taught, and the complexity of reading difficulties. It suggests erroneously that there is scientific certainty about dyslexia and how it should be addressed instructionally. In fact, the research evidence is equivocal and there is much room for debate about whether dyslexia is an identifiable condition, whether it can be reliably diagnosed, and whether there are instructional approaches that are uniquely effective in ameliorating it.

That ambivalence is reflected in the American Psychiatric Association's decision to drop dyslexia as a diagnostic category in the current edition of its *Diagnostic Statistical Manual*, that field's most respected and widely used reference source. Further, dyslexia is viewed, and often defined, differently in different countries, language groups, and cultures. Ambivalence is also evident in a research advisory [http://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-dyslexia-research-advisory.pdf] about dyslexia posted by the Literacy Research Panel of the International Literacy Association, a respected professional organization that for many decades has served professionals who teach reading. It cautions that many assumptions about dyslexia remain unsettled and that research does not support a single certifiable approach to addressing reading difficulties, including some popular, widely used instructional approaches aimed at children identified as dyslexic. An addendum [http://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-dyslexia-research-advisory-addendum.pdf]
that addresses objections to the advisory from the International Dyslexia Association provides a more detailed glimpse into the uncertainties surrounding dyslexia. One of the most highly regarded, thorough and least biased contemporary analyses goes further. Elliott and Grigorenko (2014), in their book *The Dyslexia Debate*, concluded that the term dyslexia is so misunderstood and misinterpreted that its use may hinder rather than support successful teaching and learning. These are only recent examples of a long history of controversy and debate about dyslexia that have been on-going since its emergence as a hypothesized condition in the late 19th century.

We are particularly concerned about the dyslexia segment's suggestion that a narrowly conceptualized instructional approach is unequivocally effective, not only for individuals categorized as dyslexic, but for all individuals learning to read. Such a suggestion perpetuates a view that there is a single approach guaranteed to transcend the incredible diversity of factors and individual characteristics that might explain why learning to read is easy for many but incredibly difficult for some. It is widely accepted that learning to read English texts entails instructional attention to sound-symbol correspondence and other phonemic aspects of reading. But, the amount and form of that attention, how it is balanced with other aspects of reading and learning to read such as motivation, and how it might deal with the orthographic irregularities of English spelling, cannot be reduced to a single, narrow, unquestioned approach. In particular, we worry that such a narrow view might divert teachers from attending to other scientifically based facets of good literacy pedagogy, such as attention to oral language, knowledge acquisition, motivation and self-efficacy, and sheer exposure to print. Again, such issues, in one form or another, have periodically blossomed into public controversies across decades and are often nurtured among the general public by shallow or misleading media reports such as the NewsHour's segment.

We are also dismayed that the NewsHour segment implicitly questioned, even if unintentionally, the professionalism of teachers and American schools in regard to teaching reading. It was suggested that teachers were ignorant of or resistant to the scientific certainty of dyslexia and how reading can be effectively taught, not only to those children diagnosed with dyslexia, but to all children. Beyond the absence of such certainty, as we have explained above, the segment unfairly provided no opportunity for a rebuttal from qualified representatives of those groups. They could have pointed to a complementary body of scientific research that supports alternative explanations of reading difficulties and instructional approaches that have been shown to be effective for a wide range of students with reading difficulties. That lack of balance was exacerbated when the segment included emotional comments about how children's needs were not being met.

Finally, we believe that PBS and the NewsHour missed an opportunity to do more in-depth, balanced, and accurate reporting about dyslexia. Beyond the perspectives we have outlined here, such reporting could examine the conditions that have allowed dyslexia to remain such an amorphous, shape-shifting, yet resilient, explanation for reading difficulties for more than a century. Nuanced and balanced reporting is also needed to critique the increasing number of states passing arguably ill-advised legislation about dyslexia.

We ask that you consider options to rectify what we believe has been an unfortunate disservice to parents, to students, and to professionals dedicated to helping all individuals learn to read. Doing so, we believe, would be an excellent opportunity for PBS and the NewsHour to demonstrate clearly the strength of its commitment to accurate, balanced, and unbiased reporting. We stand ready to assist in such an effort in any way that might be helpful.

Sincerely,

[Note. All of the following senior scholars and leaders in the area of reading and literacy have independently approved adding their names, thus indicating that they agree with this email/letter. Please feel free to contact any of them directly using the emails provided. To send a general response, you may reply to this email and I will forward it to all. On behalf of all of the individuals below, David Reinking, reinkin@clemson.edu]

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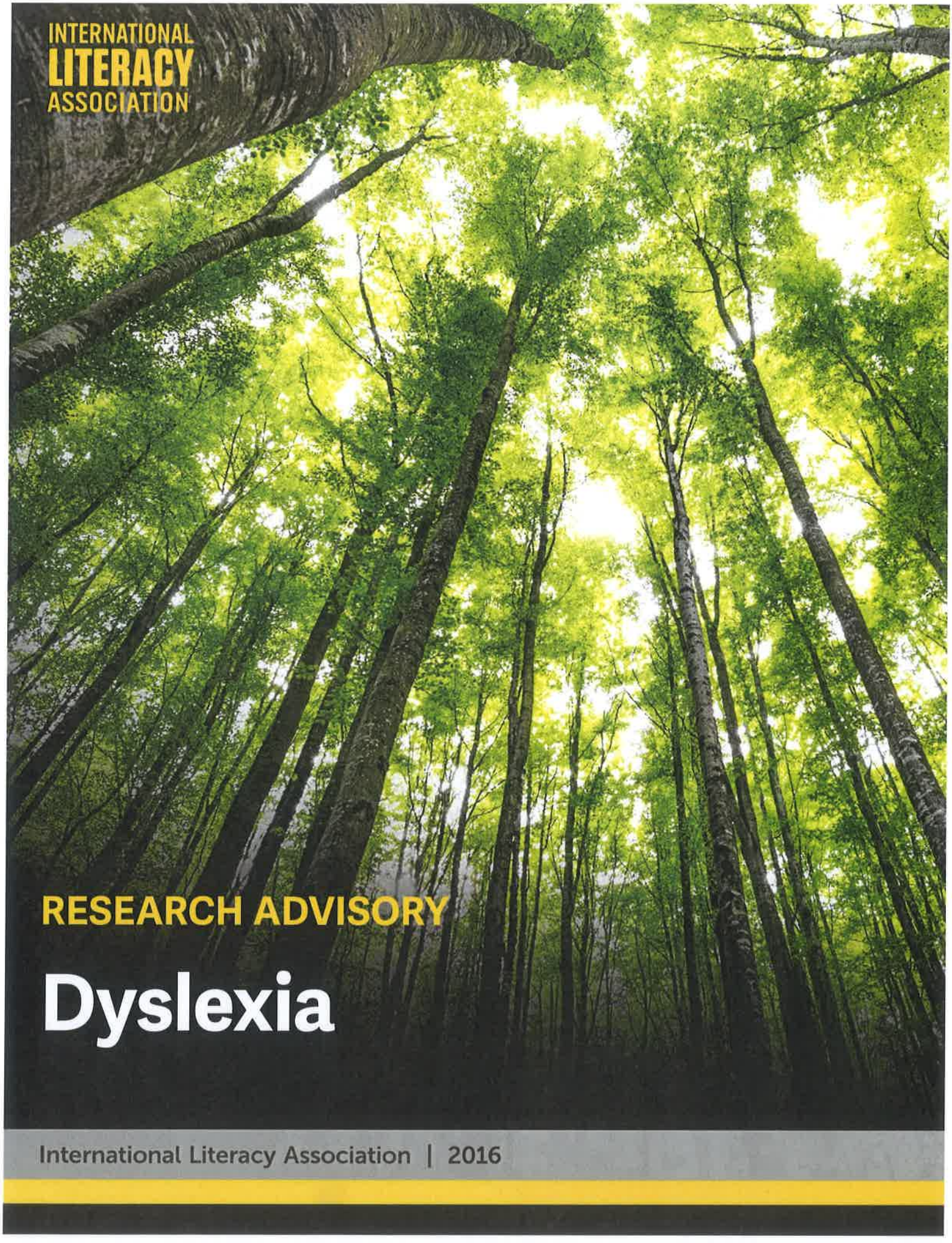
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Dyslexia
International Literacy Association | 2016

Both informal and professional discussions about dyslexia often reflect emotional, conceptual, and economic commitments, and they are often not well informed by research. Our beliefs and practices should be grounded by what emerges from the available evidence (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014; Vellutino, 1979; Washburn, Joshi, & Binks-Cantrell, 2011). Although there are contradictions and uncertainties in the research on dyslexia, there are also important convergences.

First, some children, both boys and girls, have more difficulty than others in learning to read and write regardless of their levels of intelligence or creativity. When beginning literacy instruction is engaging and responsive to children's needs, however, the percentage of school children having continuing difficulty is small (Vellutino et al., 1996; Vellutino, Scanlon, & Lyon, 2000).

Second, the nature and causes of dyslexia, and even the utility of the concept, are still under investigation. Although genetics and neurology appear to play a role in reading difficulties, environment and instruction moderate that role. Evidence does *not* support what many take to be indicators or predictors of dyslexia, including clumsiness, fine motor problems, attention deficits, creativity, or handedness (Barth et al., 2010; Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014; Fletcher et al., 2011; Ritchie, Luciano, Hansell, Wright, & Bates, 2013).

Evidence does not support what many take to be indicators or predictors of dyslexia, including clumsiness, fine motor problems, attention deficits, creativity, or handedness.

Third, dyslexia, or severe reading difficulties, do *not* result from visual problems producing letter and word reversals (Vellutino, 1979). Most children confuse similar-looking letters and words while learning to read. This is partly because some letters are similar in appearance and partly because most objects children learn about are called by the same name no matter how they are oriented in space—a chair is a chair even when it is turned upside down. Letters and words are not like that—a *p* is a *p* in one orientation only. Children need to learn that orientation matters when it comes to print. Children sometimes confuse whole words (such as *was* and *saw*) because they look alike except for the order of the letters. In their early learning, children often do not use the sequence of letter-sounds in the word to help them settle to the word's identity.

Many researchers accept the idea that dyslexia/severe reading difficulties results from difficulties in analyzing and manipulating sounds in words (Vellutino, Fletcher, Snowling, &

Scanlon, 2004). These difficulties, however, do not of themselves allow us to distinguish readers with dyslexia from other readers encountering difficulties, or from younger readers with the same level of reading proficiency. Errors in reading and spelling made by children classified as dyslexic are not reliably different from those of younger children who are not classified as dyslexic. Rather, evidence suggests that readers with similar levels of competence make similar kinds of errors. This does not suggest a greater incidence of dyslexia, but instead that some difficulties in learning to work with sounds are normal.

One disconcerting outcome of the challenges involved in making distinctions is that estimates of the incidence of dyslexia vary widely. In spite of that, research indicates that most students who experience literacy problems in their early years do not ultimately have long-term difficulties when appropriate instruction and intervention are provided. In fact, interventions that are appropriately responsive to individual needs have been shown to reduce the number of children with continuing difficulties in reading to below 2% of the population (Vellutino et al., 2000).

As yet, there is no certifiably best method for teaching children who experience reading difficulty.

As yet, there is no certifiably best method for teaching children who experience reading difficulty (Mathes et al., 2005). For instance, research does *not* support the common belief that Orton-Gillingham–based approaches are necessary for students classified as dyslexic (Ritchey & Goeke, 2007; Turner, 2008; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). Reviews of research focusing solely on decoding interventions have shown either small to moderate or variable effects that rarely persist over time, and little to no effects on more global reading skills. Rather, students classified as dyslexic have varying strengths and challenges, and teaching them is too complex a task for a scripted, one-size-fits-all program (Coyne et al., 2013; Phillips & Smith, 1997; Simmons, 2015). Optimal instruction calls for teachers' professional expertise and responsiveness, and for the freedom to act on the basis of that professionalism.

Some have advocated for an assessment process that determines who should and should not be classified as dyslexic, but this process has been shown to be highly variable across states and districts in the United States, of questionable validity, and too often resulting in empirically unsupported, one-size-fits-all program recommendations. Assessment that gives us

data on how to support instruction that is responsive to individuals' needs and comprehensive in scope is more useful in meeting students' needs (Vellutino et al., 2004). So it may be that not using the term *dyslexia* would, on balance, benefit the teaching/learning process: Professionals' attention would be turned away from an arbitrary cut-off point for making decisions about a learner and toward a focus on what that learner is ready to learn and, from there, on to how to provide beneficial instruction.

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International Literacy Association: Literacy Research Panel

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Suggested APA Reference

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The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers, and experts across 75 countries. With 60 years of experience in the field, ILA believes in the transformative power of literacy to create more successful societies, healthy communities, and prosperous economies. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices, and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students, and inform policymakers. For more information, visit literacyworldwide.org.

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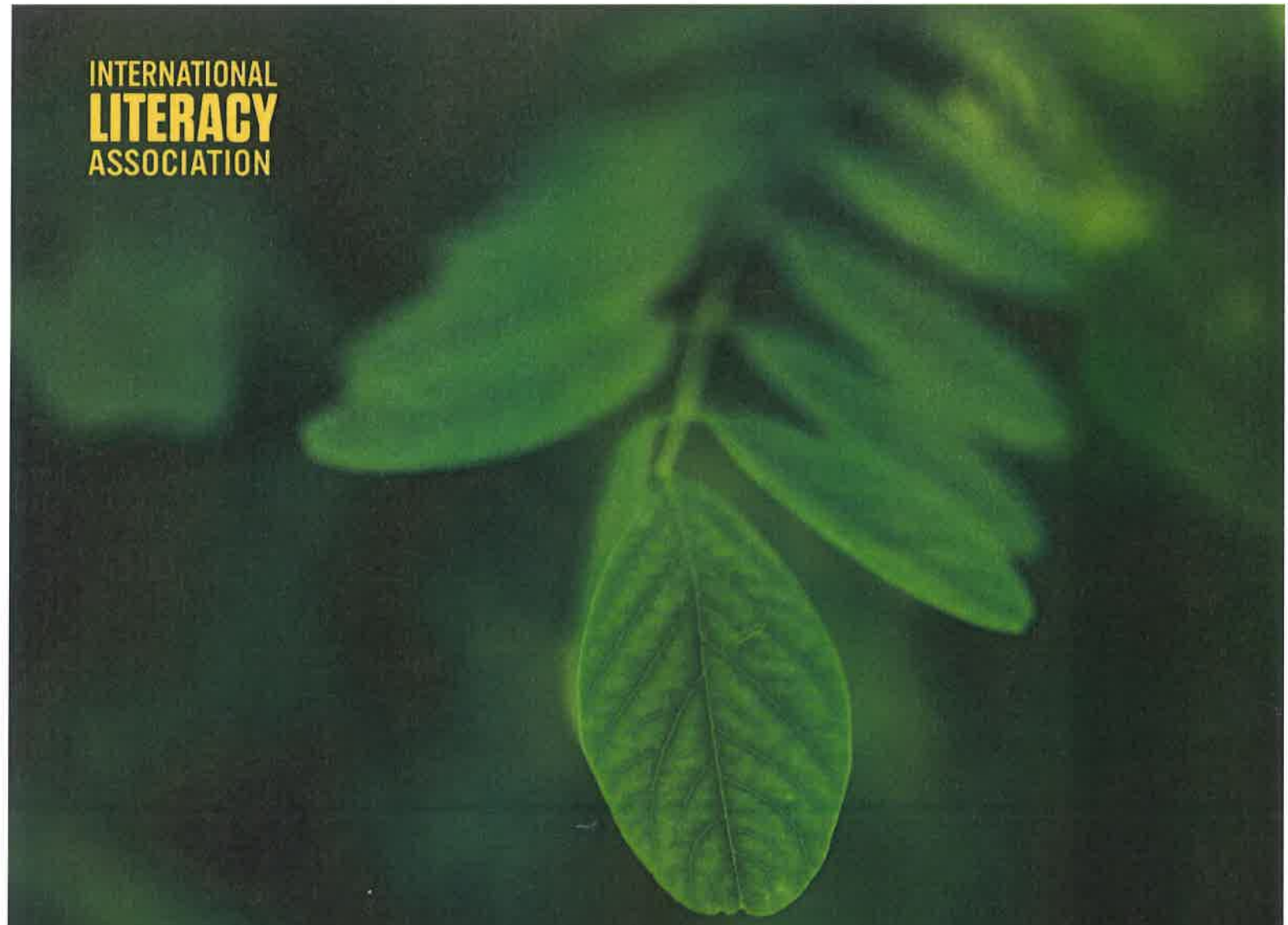

RESEARCH ADVISORY ADDENDUM

Dyslexia

Response to the International Dyslexia Association

International Literacy Association | 2016

In a posting on its website, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA, 2016) has raised questions about the International Literacy Association's (ILA, 2016) research advisory on dyslexia. Because the advisory was intended to be a brief statement, it did not provide details on the breadth of the research on which it is based. Consequently, ILA is grateful for the opportunity to extend the conversation.

In responding to what will be referred to as the IDA document, ILA does not in any way wish to diminish the very real problems and distress faced by children who experience difficulty learning to read and write, or by their families. Nor is the intention to minimize the urgency of the attempts of educators—whether teachers, school leaders, researchers, or policymakers—to address productively those problems. Quite the opposite: ILA represents a large community of professionals who, on a daily basis, face the challenges of teaching the full range of children to become literate.

Although there is a considerable degree of overlap in the arguments and concerns presented in the IDA document, these concerns (foregrounded in italics) will be addressed in the order in which they were raised.

1. Best Method

> *There is no difference of opinion about the best method for teaching children with dyslexia to read. That method is systematic, explicit, phonics-based reading instruction. It is the same approach to reading instruction that was recommended for all children by the National Reading Panel (2000) in its landmark report....[Consequently the] IDA does not agree that the research cited in the ILA research advisory supports ILA's statement that "...there is no certifiable best method for teaching children who experience reading difficulty (Mathes et al., 2005)." (IDA, 2016)*

There is no certifiable best method for teaching children who experience reading difficulty.

This assertion rests on a misinterpretation of the National Reading Panel (NRP) report, so first clarification is needed on what the NRP report really showed:

- The Panel compared three different approaches to phonics instruction (synthetic, larger unit phonics, and miscellaneous phonics approaches) and found no difference between them—thus the approach advocated by IDA cannot be claimed to be preferable:

> The conclusion supported by these findings is that various types of systematic phonics approaches are significantly more effective than non-phonics approaches in promoting substantial growth in reading. (p. 2-93)

- Only 24% of the effect sizes computed for the review had outcomes that measured reading of continuous text. For the rest, the outcome was single word reading or spelling.
- In their report on the effects of specific programs, the Orton-Gillingham (O-G) program had the lowest average effect size (0.23). The remainder of the programs ranged from 0.35 to 0.68 (p. 2-160). Looking further, only two of the O-G studies assessed comprehension, and the average effect size on comprehension was –0.03. Only one study reported a delayed assessment of comprehension, and the effect size was –0.81 (six months after the completion of the intervention). That is *minus* 0.81—thus participation in an O-G program appears to have had a large negative impact on reading achievement in comparison with other intervention methods evaluated in the study.

In [the National Reading Panel] report on the effects of specific programs, the Orton-Gillingham program had the lowest average effect size.

- Phonics instruction had a greater impact for K–1 than for children in grades 2–6. For grades 2–6, the overall effect size, across all types of outcome measures, was 0.27—considered to be small by the Panel. When comprehension was the outcome measure for this grade range the effect size was 0.12 and not significantly different from zero. (p. 2-159)
- Among studies that measured long-term impacts of an intervention (six months to one year after the intervention) only Orton-Gillingham had a net negative effect size (–0.47). All others had a positive effect, ranging from 0.28 to 0.86.
- Phonics instruction for older struggling readers had an effect size of 0.32, and for low-achieving (not IQ discrepant) readers the effect size was 0.15.
- Systematic phonics instruction yielded an effect size of 0.51 on reading comprehension for first graders but only 0.32 for disabled readers above first grade and 0.12 for older low-achieving readers.
- The report calls for teacher education so that teachers can evaluate the evidence of the effectiveness of phonics programs and determine how such programs can be used in their own classrooms.

The conclusion of the NRP's executive summary reads as follows:

> As with any instructional program, there is always the question: "Does one size fit all?" Teachers may be expected to use a particular phonics program with their class, yet it quickly becomes apparent that the program suits some students better than others. In the early grades, children are known to vary greatly in the skills they bring to school. There will be some children who already know most letter-sound correspondences, some children who can even decode words, and others who have little or no letter knowledge. Should teachers proceed through the program and ignore these students? Or should they assess their students' needs and select the types and amounts of phonics suited to those needs? Although the latter is clearly preferable, this requires phonics programs that provide guidance in how to place students into flexible instructional groups and how to pace instruction. However, it is common for many phonics programs to present a fixed sequence of lessons scheduled from the beginning to the end of the school year. Finally, it is important to emphasize that systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program. Phonics instruction is never a total reading program. In 1st grade, teachers can provide controlled vocabulary texts that allow students to practice decoding, and they can also read quality literature to students to build a sense of story and to develop vocabulary and comprehension. Phonics should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor in the significance attached. It is important to evaluate children's reading competence in many ways, not only by their phonics skills but also by their interest in books and their ability to understand information that is read to them. By emphasizing all of the processes that contribute to growth in reading, teachers will have the best chance of making every child a reader. (pp. 2-96–97)

There have, of course, been critiques of both the National Reading Panel (2000) and National Early Literacy Panel (2008) reports (e.g., Pearson & Hiebert, 2010; Schickedanz & McGee, 2010; Teale, Hoffman, & Paciga, 2010), and it is worth noting that those national reports offer some (not all) important parameters for instruction rather than "an approach." Nonetheless, ILA generally agrees with these observations with some caveats.

Students who experience difficulty acquiring literacy require more careful and responsive application of consistent principles by knowledgeable, well-prepared teachers.

First, students who experience difficulty acquiring literacy require more careful and responsive application of consistent principles by knowledgeable, well-prepared teachers who understand how to teach for comprehension, text fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, automatic word recognition, and vocabulary (and, ILA would add, writing) in ways that motivate

children to read (and write) widely. Second, if IDA were truly aligning with the NRP's guidance, it would be calling for a broader, more responsive instructional approach rather than focusing solely on systematic phonics.

The National Reading Panel's guidance [calls] for a broader, more responsive instructional approach rather than focusing solely on systematic phonics.

ILA agrees with Mathes et al.'s observation in the IDA document that their study "was not intended to determine the best method." Although Mathes et al. do not actually use the term *dyslexia* in their study or in their comments to refer to the students who were involved in their study, their study's conclusion is consistent with that of ILA and worth quoting:

> These findings suggest to us that there is likely not "one best approach" and not one right philosophy or theory for how to best meet the needs of struggling readers.... Schools and teachers can be granted some latitude in choosing an approach to providing supplemental instruction.... Both interventions [in the study] provided for instruction in key reading skills, balanced with opportunities to apply reading and writing skills in connected text ... [They] were comprehensive, integrated approaches to reading instruction. (Mathes et al., 2005, p. 179)

ILA agrees with Mathes et al.'s (2005) conclusions that interventions would need to include at least these components but might vary in their "theoretical viewpoints."

To return to the question of the role of phonics in intervention efforts, it should be pointed out that, on the basis of the description of the intervention approaches in Mathes et al.'s study, the students in the Responsive condition appear to have received substantially less phonics instruction but ended up showing the same degree of growth as the students in the Proactive condition on all measures other than Word Attack.

A related study by Scanlon et al. (2005) had a similar outcome. In that study, in comparisons of the phonics skills emphasis and the text reading emphasis conditions, there was no mean difference between the two groups at the end of the intervention study. Students in the Phonics Emphasis condition received three times as much phonics instruction as the students in the Text Emphasis condition.

It is also important to note that Mathes et al. (2005) report that there was little evidence that child characteristics at the outset of the study interacted with the condition to which they were assigned. Theoretically, if intensive and scripted phonics instruction were necessary for the most impaired readers there should have been such an interaction—with those with

the lowest skills at the outset doing better in the Proactive condition than in the Responsive condition.

2. Decoding

> *IDA does not agree that "Reviews of research focusing solely on decoding interventions have shown either small to moderate or variable effects that rarely persist over time, and little to no effects on more global reading skills." (IDA, 2016)*

This concern is puzzling in the context of the IDA document's support of the NRP findings advocating a broader set of instructional imperatives than solely decoding (including automatic word recognition, text fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies). As stated in the research advisory, ILA agrees with the importance of phonological awareness reiterated in the quoted comments from Mathes and Fletcher (2008). Indeed, there is ample evidence for the importance of phonological awareness without the need for comparative use of brain scan technologies. Among other things, failure to attend to phonemic awareness and alphabetic coding would make it very difficult for children to write independently or to learn to read the huge number of words that are not specifically taught but that proficient readers are able to read with automaticity.

There is ample evidence for the importance of phonological awareness.

Mathes and Fletcher's (2008) reference to brain scan studies does not shed additional light on the problem. So far these studies simply suggest that when struggling readers have engaged in more reading in the course of an intervention, they shift to processing print in a way that is more like the processing done by more proficient readers, and thus brain activity is more like that of proficient readers. This does not mean that the same advantage would not accrue from some other form of intervention that got the participants doing more reading.

3. Unitary Approach

> *IDA does not agree that the research cited in the ILA research advisory supports ILA's statement, "Rather, students classified as dyslexic have varying strengths and challenges, and teaching them is too complex a task for a scripted, one-size-fits-all program (Coyne et al., 2013; Phillips & Smith, 1997; Simmons, 2015)." (IDA, 2016)*

The alternative to this statement is that children classified as dyslexic all have the same strengths and weaknesses that can readily be addressed by a scripted program. No study has

shown that all students' literacy difficulties can be adequately addressed by such a program, even within the bounds of the sample of students included in a given study. In the Coyne et al. (2013) study on any given measure, students sometimes varied by 50 or more percentile points, suggesting that a standard, relatively scripted program would not readily accommodate such differences. In addition, it seems likely that individual profiles across measures varied considerably. Indeed, one of the resources cited in the IDA document (Bowers & Wolf, 1993) also makes this argument, noting,

> As Wolf cautioned, we are by no means arguing here for a unitary explanation of reading breakdown: 'The history of dyslexia research, the heterogeneity of dyslexic children, and the very complexity of the reading process' (1991: 137) argue against any unitary view. (p. 78)

4. Teachers' Professional Expertise

> *IDA does not agree that the research cited supports the statement, "Optimal instruction calls for teachers' professional expertise and responsiveness, and for the freedom to act on the basis of that professionalism." (IDA, 2016)*

It is not clear why IDA rejects the need for professional expertise, particularly because the referenced IDA resource "Effective Reading Instruction for Students With Dyslexia" includes the following:

> **Diagnostic Teaching.** The teacher must be adept at individualized instruction. That is instruction that meets a student's needs. The instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment, both informally (for example, observation) and formally (for example, with standardized measures).

Teachers need to have the expertise and resources to teach early literacy effectively.

However, ILA concedes that it should perhaps have offered a clarification regarding professional expertise. It is certainly the case that teachers need to have the expertise and resources to teach early literacy effectively. As is indicated in the IDA document, and noted earlier, teachers should understand children's literacy development, how to notice and responsively adapt to differences in that development, and how to teach for comprehension, text fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, automatic word recognition, vocabulary, and writing in ways that motivate children to read and write widely.

5. The Dyslexia Construct

> *Dyslexia is, above all, a condition that impedes reading acquisition. (IDA, 2016)*

This is the final claim in the IDA document. However, it would be more accurate to say that some children experience difficulty acquiring literacy, which is often related to inadequate phonological analysis skills along with instruction that does not address comprehension, text fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics, automatic word recognition, vocabulary, and writing in ways that motivate children to read and write widely.

There is no evidence for the value of inserting the construct *dyslexia* into this claim. Indeed, the empirical studies cited in the IDA document (including Coyne et al., 2013 and Mathes et al., 2005, as those authors note in their comments), either do not identify their subjects as dyslexic or arbitrarily describe students having difficulty acquiring literacy as dyslexic. None of the intervention studies has a control group of students having difficulty acquiring literacy but not classified as dyslexic.

Stanovich and Siegel (1994) distinguish between "poor readers" and "children with reading disabilities," but the conclusion of their study was the validation of the "phonological-core variable-difference model of reading disability" along with discrediting the IQ-Achievement discrepancy definition of disability. In other words, there is no empirical basis for the use of the term *dyslexic* to distinguish a group of children who are different from others experiencing difficulty acquiring literacy.

There is no empirical basis for the use of the term dyslexic to distinguish a group of children who are different from others experiencing difficulty acquiring literacy.

Conclusion

Like IDA, ILA hopes to be able to work with other organizations to optimize literacy learning for all children. ILA's position is that teachers do not need to spend substantial amounts of time learning about dyslexia, which, as has been argued, is a construct of questionable utility. Nor should teachers be obligated to learn a specific and poorly researched approach to preventing and remediating reading difficulties. As documented in the NRP report, phonics instruction is an important component of comprehensive literacy instruction, but there is no evidence that the form of phonics instruction IDA advocates is better than or even as effective as other approaches to literacy

instruction and intervention. Any research published after the NRP report and the review by Ritchey and Goeke (2006) that contradicts the NRP conclusions could not be found.

On the other hand, there is abundant research documenting that teachers, not programs, are the most powerful in-school influence on student success (e.g., Konstantopoulos & Sun, 2012; Nye, Konstantopolous, & Hedges, 2004; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2005). Teachers need to know how to teach literacy well and how to respond when students do not develop literacy as quickly as expected. Teaching well requires being able to plan and provide instruction that is responsive to what students know and are able to do across the many aspects of literacy learning. As the NRP summary on phonics instruction states:

> Phonics should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor in the significance attached. It is important to evaluate children's reading competence in many ways, not only by their phonics skills but also by their interest in books and their ability to understand information that is read to them. By emphasizing all of the processes that contribute to growth in reading, teachers will have the best chance of making every child a reader. (pp. 2-96–97)

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International Literacy Association: Literacy Research Panel

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Suggested APA Reference

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About the International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers, and experts across 75 countries. With over 60 years of experience, ILA has set the standard for how literacy is defined, taught, and evaluated. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices, and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students, and inform policymakers. ILA publishes *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*, which are peer reviewed and edited by leaders in the field. For more information, visit literacyworldwide.org.

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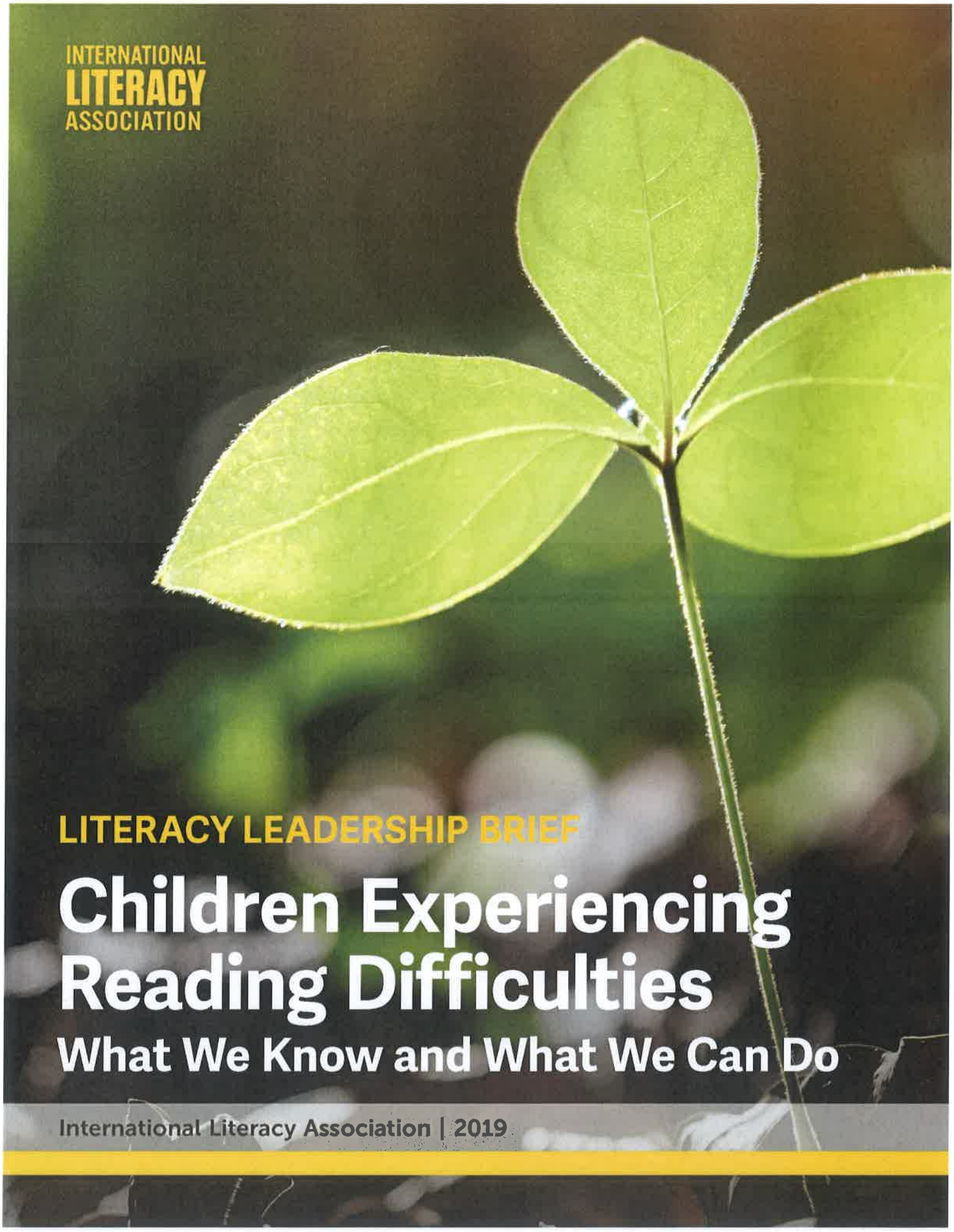
INTERNATIONAL
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Children Experiencing Reading Difficulties
What We Know and What We Can Do
International Literacy Association | 2019

In the last year, there has been a resurgence of articles and reports in media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *PBS NewsHour*, *EdWeek*, and *The Atlantic* about students experiencing reading difficulties. Many of these pieces have created confusion and provided misinformation by oversimplifying both the sources of reading difficulties and how to address them.

Some articles have reignited old debates, often referred to as the "reading wars," about how to teach children to read and the role of phonics in early reading instruction. Others raise issues about specific types of reading difficulties such as dyslexia. Some critics place the blame for reading problems on teachers and teacher education programs that fail to advocate for a specific type of phonics instruction for all students, even when the available evidence points to multiple contributing factors.

As reading researchers and teacher educators, each with more than 30 years of experience working on the ground in schools, reading clinics, and universities, we are compelled to set the record straight regarding what we do and do not know about reading difficulties.

We are especially concerned because some of the discussions have included emotionally charged personal stories of frustrated parents and use alarmist language such as "early warning signs" and "no cure," even implying that reading difficulties may lead to outcomes such as depression, imprisonment, or suicide. Such claims are likely to induce unfounded fear and anxiety for families, educators, and policymakers and impede positive actions to improve the prospects for all students to learn to read.

We need to be clear about the nature of the reading problems some children face, regardless of their intelligence.

Our goal is to share what we know from decades of research that provides more in-depth understanding of the complexities of reading difficulties and to help families, teachers, and policymakers make sound decisions.

Understanding the Problem

Certainly, too many children in the United States are not learning to read as well as they might. To begin, we need to be clear about the nature of the reading problems some children face, regardless of their intelligence. Researchers from many fields have concluded that children can have difficulty in any one or more of the areas needed for successful reading and that these difficulties can change over time.[1]

Reading difficulties are not inevitable, permanent, or, as some have claimed, "incurable."

Catherine Snow and her colleagues provided a review of early reading difficulties more than two decades ago in the comprehensive *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*.[2] Areas that are specifically important to reading development are phonemic awareness (discriminating individual sounds in words), phonics (linking letters and sounds), comprehension (making sense of text), vocabulary (knowing what the words mean), and writing (composing and spelling). In addition, listening and speaking (oral language development) lay the groundwork for students' use of language to understand others and communicate meaningfully.

More recently, research has revealed the importance of students' development of independent, self-regulating behaviors in using both code-based and meaning-based strategies such as knowing when and how to focus attention, how to intentionally use a variety of strategies to read and write unfamiliar words, and how to monitor and regulate the meaning of text.[3]

Recognizing that interest, motivation, background knowledge, culture, socioeconomic status, and past experiences all play a critical role in learning to read is also important. Differences in any of these areas can influence students' success. In short, skilled reading is about more than reading the words correctly. It involves both reading the words correctly and making sense of the text ideas while confirming and building knowledge about the world.

The Downside of Labeling

Many labels are used to describe reading difficulties including *dyslexia*, *disabled readers*, and *struggling readers*. Although labels may be useful in some situations (e.g., to qualify a student for additional support), they have not proven helpful in identifying specific learning strengths and needs, nor do they typically indicate exactly what types of support and instruction will lead to successful reading. That information is critical because research shows that reading difficulties can be addressed or even prevented with appropriate instruction and intervention.

Reading difficulties are not inevitable, permanent, or, as some have claimed, "incurable." In fact, researchers such as Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon have shown that instruction that is targeted to the specific needs of individual students can significantly reduce the incidence of reading difficulties.[4]

Appropriate Instruction

Both research and clinical/classroom experience confirm that appropriate instruction can improve the odds of success for all students learning to read. What is appropriate reading instruction?

First, teaching students to read must start with high expectations for *all* students—a belief and understanding that whoever the students may be or whatever their reading difficulties, there are well-documented and effective instructional practices that help children become successful readers.

Second, effective reading instruction is comprehensive. It addresses all the dimensions of reading and is responsive to the strengths and needs of individual students, which include intentional instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics. However, a comprehensive instructional approach also involves oral language development, writing and spelling, and a focus on comprehension—all of which are necessary to support and assist students in becoming independent readers. Despite a widely held belief that a narrow focus on word reading is a necessary starting point, the evidence indicates otherwise. Instruction that focuses on word reading alone contributes to the knowledge gap that is now known to be at the root of later reading difficulties.

Both research and clinical/classroom experience confirm that appropriate instruction can improve the odds of success for all students learning to read.

As the highly regarded RAND report *Reading for Understanding* revealed,[5] students who learn to decode words accurately and quickly may, nevertheless, have comprehension difficulties. Within a comprehensive approach focused on word reading, oral language development, writing, comprehension, and self-regulation, students must have many opportunities to practice and apply their developing skills and strategies while engaging in meaningful reading and writing.

Third, appropriate instruction requires a flexible range of instructional tactics. Research by Carol Connor and her colleagues has deftly shown that both teacher-directed and independent work in both large-group and small-group settings are required to meet the needs of diverse beginning readers. How much time is devoted to each depends on a student's strengths and needs, which should be determined by ongoing, informative assessments.

Fourth, effective instruction focuses on both strengths and needs. Skillful teachers adjust instruction on the basis of what students know and can do as well as on what they need to learn

next. We are concerned that the current emphasis on dyslexia and direct phonics instruction is far too narrow, even when students are experiencing difficulty with phonics. The comprehensive studies of Reading First interventions that had an intensive focus on decoding indicated positive effects for decoding ability but not for comprehension.[6]

Even more concerning is the unsupported claim in some recent articles that all students should receive the same decoding content in the same sequence and in the same way, which is not supported by research. In fact, this practice can actually have negative consequences. Isolated phonics instruction is often justified by the argument that "it can't hurt," even when students have already acquired the knowledge and skills being taught.

Even more concerning is the unsupported claim in some recent articles that all students should receive the same decoding content in the same sequence and in the same way, which is not supported by research.

However, Connor's longitudinal studies clearly show that when students spend time in instructional programs that are implemented as one-size-fits-all, and not matched to students' individual abilities and needs, those students can actually lose ground relative to their peers.[7] Other researchers have found that even "successful interventions" that work for most students can lead some students to lose ground when those interventions are continued when they are not needed.[8]

Teachers and Schools

Since the early First-Grade Studies of the 1960s, and in many studies since, we have known that teachers are likely to make a bigger difference in students' progress than any specific program of instruction.[9] Teachers need to be knowledgeable about all aspects of reading instruction and use that knowledge to adjust their practice, whether they are using a commercial program or school-based curriculum.

Many novice, and some experienced, teachers across the United States are not as well prepared as we would like. Improving teacher preparation should be a priority for all stakeholders. However, this additional rigor needs to be associated with all aspects of learning to read that we have detailed earlier. Professional learning focused only on phonics is misguided at best and dangerous at worst.

However, the responsibility to provide high-quality instruction and intervention does not rest on the shoulders of teachers alone. Recent research suggests that schools—how they are structured and coordinated—powerfully influence student learning.[10] For example, teachers who are well mentored during

Students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, family expectations, socioeconomic situations, and personal experiences are all related to success in school—including learning to read.

their teacher preparation programs and who are systematically supported by school colleagues during their first years of teaching are more likely to be effective, especially when working with students experiencing reading difficulties.[11]

Schools that are organized to provide effective instruction and intervention have coordinated processes for following and supporting students over time. They have comprehensive assessment systems that go beyond a single assessment or a specific area of reading instruction, and they have support staff with ongoing professional development so they can continue to learn and build shared understandings.

Today's schools and classrooms are more diverse than ever before. Students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, family expectations, socioeconomic situations, and personal experiences are all related to success in school—including learning to read. Successful teachers use their deep understanding of students and of effective reading instruction to attend to these important aspects of students' lives.

In sum, learning to read is about more than letters and sounds, more than smooth fluent reading, and even more than solid reading comprehension. It is ultimately about providing students with the academic tools, such as learning to read successfully, that allow them to learn what they want and need to learn and to aspire to the life they want to create for themselves and their communities. To achieve that, we need to use the extensive research base on effective reading instruction available today to ensure that teachers, schools, and students are all getting the help they need.

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Suggested APA Reference

International Literacy Association. (2019). *Children experiencing reading difficulties: What we know and what we can do* [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author

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5440-00 Elementary Education

(Revised March 2013, Reviewed June 2018 to revise the instructional range)

The holder is authorized to teach grades K-6. Upon the request of a Superintendent the VSBPE or office can extend the instructional range and issue a K-8 restricted license for a particular location if the individual is working in a PK/K-8 school.

The candidate shall demonstrate the following knowledge and performance standards for four major content areas of the elementary curriculum in conjunction with the Vermont *Core Teaching Standards.* This requires elementary teachers to develop and implement appropriate instruction so that all students have access to a high-quality curriculum, effective teaching and learning, high expectations, and the support and resources needed to maximize their learning potential. This also requires teachers to hold themselves and their colleagues accountable for the success of every student and for their personal and collective professional growth toward effective teaching and learning. In order to qualify for this endorsement, teachers must show evidence of the following:

1. English Language Arts Knowledge Standards

1.1. The educator demonstrates knowledge of research-based principles and processes underlying literacy development, and the components of effective instruction, as reflected in the standards approved by the State Board of Education for students. Specifically, the educator understands:

1.1.1. Foundational Skills

- The developmental progression of print concepts phonological and phonemic awareness fluency phonics and word recognition
- The factors that influence fluency
- The developmental stages of spelling and morphological awareness

1.1.2. Development of Oral Language and Literacy

- The development of emergent and early literacy processes principles and dimensions of oral language and stages of second language acquisition
- The impact of physical emotional and cultural factors on language development and acquisition of reading and writing the relationship between oral language development and literacy development

1.1.3. Literature, Informational Text, and Media

- The quantitative and qualitative dimensions used to measure text complexity levels
- Text structures genre features and critical reading strategies for text analysis
- Techniques for incorporating fine and performing arts as expressions of human emotion culture communication and as vehicles for enhancing learning opportunities across the curriculum

1.1.4. Speaking and Listening

- The elements of effective verbal and non-verbal communication in a variety of settings for a variety of purposes including grammar and usage point of view reasoning and effective use of evidence and rhetoric

1.1.5. Vocabulary Development

- The purposes of language and approaches to analyzing language
- Vocabulary development and its relationship to literacy acquisition
- Knowledge of the distinction between general academic and domain specific vocabulary
- Strategies to determine word meaning (i.e. contextual and morphological analysis)

1.1.6. Reading Comprehension

- Reading as the process of constructing meaning through interactions with text factors that influence comprehension
- Typical elements and features of literature and informational texts and how readers' awareness of these features supports comprehension
- Cognitive and metacognitive strategies and instructional approaches for supporting reading comprehension

1.1.7. Written Expression

- Writing as symbolic representation; the stages of early writing development; the writing process including appropriate planning organization and style for task purpose and audience
- The characteristics of quality writing and types of writing including but not limited to narratives informational text and arguments focused on domain specific content
- The conventions of written English (i.e., grammar, usage, mechanics, punctuation, and spelling)
- Methods for conducting research to build and present knowledge the process of citing evidence from multiple sources

2. English Language Arts Performance Standards

2.1. The educator implements a language arts curriculum that is responsive to the individual needs of students by designing interdisciplinary instruction that provides students with the communication skills necessary to understand and influence their own lives and to learn about the world. Specifically, the educator:

2.1.1. Foundational Skills

- Uses a variety of explicit and interactive approaches to assess and teach foundational skills including concepts of print phonological awareness fluency phonics and word recognition
- Uses instructional strategies to help students apply skills in authentic reading and writing tasks

2.1.2. Development of Oral Language and Literacy

- Uses active instructional strategies to promote various dimensions of oral language development
- Facilitates conversation and collaboration

2.1.3. Literature, Informational Text, and Media

- Uses a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction textual materials including ~~digital text and~~ student self-selected material to increase students' motivation to read independently for information pleasure and personal growth
- Purposefully select a wide variety of quality developmentally and instructionally appropriate texts across genres eras perspectives and cultures

- Selects and reads quality literature and informational text aloud and applies critical thinking skills and tools of analysis to facilitate discussions of central themes and ideas
- Integrates visual information and technology with authentic reading writing speaking and listening tasks
- Teaches students how to identify and analyze the credibility of print and non-print communications

2.1.4. Speaking and Listening

- Models and teaches the elements of effective verbal and non-verbal communication;
- Models and facilitates active listening conversations and collaborations
- Models effective methods of discourse

2.1.5. Vocabulary Development

- Employs effective instructional strategies for the development of general academic and domain specific vocabulary to improve the quality of comprehension and communication

2.1.6. Reading Comprehension

- Provides explicit instruction in how to use cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies flexibly to understand analyze and interpret a variety of texts
- Provides opportunities for students to cite evidence from text to support conclusions when responding to literature and informational text orally and in writing
- Models how to interpret author's purpose craft point of view and rhetoric
- Provide opportunities to distinguish fact opinion and reasoned judgment in a text;
- Encourages students to makes connections between reading writing and literacy across content areas

2.1.7. Written Expression

- Provides opportunities that are developmentally appropriate for writers to learn that print carries meaning to practice writing with purposefully and to apply sound-symbol relations in written tasks
- Promotes high quality writing using a variety of instructional strategies and topics to teach structures and composition
- Uses exemplars as instructional models for all types of composition (i.e. creative/narrative informational/expository and opinion/ argumentative)
- Models and teaches appropriate conventions of English
- Implements strategies to build fluency accuracy and automaticity in written communication
- Models methods of conducting short and sustained research to build and present knowledge
- Employs a range of instructional approaches to support writing across the content areas
- Employs instruction in proper letter formation.

3. Social Studies Knowledge Standards

3.1. The educator demonstrates knowledge of the historical and social science content, concepts, and skills of history, government, geography, and economics, as reflected in the standards approved by the State Board of Education for students. Specifically, the educator understands concepts and processes related to the four core disciplines within social studies and social studies inquiry, including skills related to

- Developing questions and planning inquiries
- Applying disciplinary concepts and tools
- Evaluating sources and using evidence including data
- Communicating conclusions
- Civic engagement

3.1.1. History

- Major developments and significant events and perspectives in U.S. and regional history and how they are relevant to life in the twenty-first century
- Major eras events and perspectives in the development of world civilization

3.1.2. Civics

- Major concepts and processes of local and national government including features and concepts of the social contract citizenship and civic responsibility in a democratic society and how to engage in the government process and advocate for a particular cause that benefits society

3.1.3. Geography

- Major features and processes of cultural and physical geography including physical and human environmental interactions
- Map reading and creation
- Human population trends migrations
- How people of different cultural backgrounds interact with their environment family neighborhoods and communities
- Current events
- Global interconnections

3.1.3. Economics

- Basic principles of economic decision-making the local national and global economy and how they relate to historical and contemporary issues

4. Social Studies Performance Standards

4.1. The educator implements history and social sciences curriculum by designing interdisciplinary units of instruction that integrate social studies skills and content and enables development of the habits of mind that support inquiry within social studies specifically the educator

4.1.1. Models how historians, geographers, and other social scientists view research analyze and interpret the world

4.1.2. Incorporates instructional activities that enable students to make connections among themselves their classroom their community their environment and the larger world by sharing and experiencing community-based service by exploring content and texts that represent the varied perspectives of people currently and historically by participating in the arts and by reading informational texts

4.1.3. Recognizes common historical preconceptions

- Predicts and seeks out likely student misconceptions
- Proactively plans to address and correct those misconceptions

4.1.4. Provides opportunities for students to

- Examine and interpret historical and contemporary events and issues using historical geographical and social science research methods tools and technologies including accessing and using local historical resources and data

4.1.5. Creates or adopts instructional and assessment tasks that teach students to:

- Analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources
- Identify webs of cause and effect
- Differentiate between fact opinion and interpretation
- Develop claims with supportive evidence

4.1.6. Integrates strategies for identifying and analyzing central ideas assumptions and questions in social studies resources and for seeking out and respecting multiple perspectives during social studies inquiry

5. Math Knowledge Standards

The educator demonstrates knowledge of the standards for school mathematics. These standards, cited from the National Council of Teacher of Math, describe the mathematical understanding knowledge and skills that students should acquire from prekindergarten through the grades. Each Standard consists of two to four specific goals that apply across all the grades.

5.1. Numbers and Operations

- Understand numbers ways of representing numbers relationships among numbers and number systems
- Understand meanings of operations and how they relate to one another
- Compute

5.2. Algebra

- Understand patterns relations and functions
- Represent and analyze mathematical situations and structures using algebraic symbols
- Use mathematical models to represent and understand quantitative relationships
- Analyze change in various contexts

5.3. Geometry

- Analyze characteristics and properties of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes and develop mathematical arguments about geometric relationships
- Specify locations and describe spatial relationships using coordinate geometry and other representational systems
- Apply transformations and use symmetry to analyze mathematical situations
- Use visualization spatial reasoning and geometric modeling to solve problems

5.4. Measurement

- Understand measurable attributes of objects and the units systems and processes of measurement
- Apply appropriate techniques tools and formulas to determine measurements

5.5. Data and Probability

- Formulate questions that can be addressed with data and collect organize and display relevant data to answer them
- Select and use appropriate statistical methods to analyze data
- Develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based on data
- Understand and apply basic concepts of probability

6. Math Performance Standards

The educator implements these standards through

6.1. Problems Solving

- Building new mathematical knowledge through problem solving
- Solving problems that arise in mathematics and in other contexts
- Applying and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve problems
- Monitor and reflect on the process of mathematical problem solving

6.2. Reasoning and Sense Making

- Recognize reasoning and proof as fundamental aspects of mathematics
- Making and investigating mathematical conjectures
- Developing and evaluating mathematical arguments and justifications
- Selecting and using various types of reasoning and methods of justification

6.3. Communication

- Organizing and consolidating their mathematical thinking through communication
- Communicating their mathematical thinking coherently and clearly to peers' teachers and others
- Analyzing and evaluating the mathematical thinking and strategies of others;
- Using the language of mathematics to express mathematical ideas precisely

6.4. Connections

- Recognize and use connections among mathematical ideas
- Understand how mathematical ideas interconnect and build on one another to produce a coherent whole
- Recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics

6.5. Representation

- Creating and using representations to organize record and communicate mathematical ideas
- Select apply and translate among mathematical representations to solve problems
- Use representations to model and interpret physical social and mathematical phenomena

7. Science Knowledge Standards

7.1. The educator demonstrates scientific knowledge that supports the development of scientific proficiency in both science as a body of knowledge and science as a process This includes

- The development of students' scientific thinking
- The scientific inquiry process
- The engineering design cycle and the skills of science and engineering design process and application within the following domains
    - life sciences physical sciences earth and space sciences and engineering as reflected in the standards approved by the State Board of Education for students

7.1.1. Specifically, the educator understands the central practices of scientists and engineers including

- Asking questions in sciences and defining problems in engineering
- Developing and using models
- Planning and carrying out investigations

- Analyzing and interpreting data
- Using mathematics and computational thinking
- Constructing explanations in science and designing solutions in engineering
- Engaging in argument from evidence
- Obtaining evaluating and communicating information

7.1.2. How science is related to other ways of knowing including

- How science and technology affect our society
- The relationship of scientific study to contemporary historical technological and societal issues and how the concepts and processes of science pertain to current controversies

7.1.3. Crosscutting concepts across disciplines including

- Patterns
- Cause and effect
    - mechanism and explanation
    - scale proportion and quantity
    - systems and system models
    - energy and matter
        - flows cycles and conservation
        - structure and function
        - and stability and change

7.1.4. Physical Science

- Fundamental concepts including the structure properties and interactions of matter
- Force and motion
- Energy waves and their interactions with matter

7.1.5. Life Science

- Fundamental concepts including
    - The structures and processes of molecules and organisms
    - Ecosystems and their interactions energy and dynamics
    - Heredity inheritance and variation of traits
    - Biological evolution unity and diversity

7.1.6. Earth and Space Science

- Fundamental concepts including
    - earth's place in the universe
    - the solar system
    - earth's history
    - earth's materials and systems
    - weather and climate
    - earth and human activity

7.1.7. Engineering Design Process and Application

- Fundamental concepts and applications of science including
    - engineering design and design solutions
    - the interdependence and influence of science engineering and technology on society and the natural world

8. Science Performance Standards

8.1. The educator implements science curricula by designing interdisciplinary units of instruction that integrate skills and content and enable development of the habits of mind that support effective scientific inquiry specifically the educator

8.1.1. Models how scientists and engineers work

8.1.2. Provides opportunities for students to

- Locate appropriate resources
- Design and conduct inquiry-based open-ended scientific investigations
- Solve specific engineering challenges
- Interpret findings communicate results/solutions in words pictures and with graphical representations
- Make conclusions based on evidence

8.1.3. Designs a variety of activities so that all students use inquiry to

- Learn about the world
- Design and conduct investigations using appropriate methodology and technology
- Learn from books and other sources of information
- Communicate their findings using appropriate technology
- Reconstruct previously learned knowledge

8.1.4. Understands and maintains safe science practices including but not limited to the ethical and appropriate use and care for living organisms and scientific equipment and the safe storage use and disposal of chemicals

8.1.5. Recognizes common prescientific notions and preconceptions

- Predicts likely student misconceptions and proactively plans to address and correct those misconceptions

8.1.6. Creates a spectrum of scientific investigations for students including simple investigations and experiments in the classroom using everyday materials field studies outside the classroom and student-designed investigations

8.1.7. Structures integrated lessons using crosscutting concepts

9. A minimum of a practicum or the equivalent in elementary education at both the primary (K-2) and upper elementary (3-6) instructional levels is required

10. REQUIRED TESTING: Praxis II Subject Assessment in Elementary Education – Test Code 5001 series (5002-5005)