



Update on the reading wars

SUSAN B. NEUMAN, PROFESSOR, CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND LITERACY
DEVELOPMENT, NYU

Are we at war (in reading)?

- ▶ Not yet, but teetering
- ▶ A conflicted profession
 - ▶ Science of Reading
 - ▶ Framed by the Simple View of Reading: Decoding + Language Comprehension=Success in Reading
 - ▶ Guided reading
 - ▶ Framed by the Three-cue system (children read using grapho-phonemics; syntax, semantics—if one system fails the other 'picks up the slack')
 - ▶ Best known the Teachers College Approach; Fountas and Pinnell; Reading Recovery

The problems...

- ▶ The science of reading
 - ▶ Based on cognitive science; not necessarily a roadmap for 'teaching the science of reading'
 - ▶ Can lead to a cafeteria like approach to reading: phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension taught as isolated skills

The problems

- ▶ Guided reading

- ▶ Based on a failed 'three-cue' system of reading, shown repeatedly in research not to work
- ▶ Bases its work on 'Reading Recovery'—and is heavily language-based—a source of difficulty for second language learners and struggling readers
- ▶ Inconsistent approach—heavily dependent on the skills of the teacher; onboarding new teachers difficult.

Recommendations

- ▶ Fix the inconsistencies: Adopt a core reading program
- ▶ Understand where the gaps in the program are and fill them with a systematic supplemental program
- ▶ Make district-wide decisions, not curriculum decisions that are school-by-school
- ▶ Create a coherent professional development plan, which includes information on the science of reading, but on the implementation of the selected program
- ▶ Create rubrics, pacing charts to ensure that teachers are following the program

Recommendations

- ▶ Children need:
 - ▶ Systematic program that teaches skills in sequence
 - ▶ Opportunities to practice those skills repeatedly
 - ▶ Builds through content rich instruction
 - ▶ Opportunities to independently practice reading in and out of school

Stay with it!

- ▶ Remember the problem of the pendulum!