



INQUIRY QUESTION:

- What is the science of reading?
- What is the debate known as "The Reading Wars"?
- What strategies can educators use to teach students to be successful readers?

TOPIC FOCUS:

This project will focus on understanding the science of reading (SOR), examining the debates surrounding effective methods for teaching reading, and identifying strategies that teachers can use to support the development of reading skills. By exploring research from cognitive science, education, and linguistics, the project aims to provide a comprehensive framework for effective reading instruction.

TPEP CRITERION:

Criterion 2: Demonstrating effective teaching practices.

Descriptor: The teacher uses research-based instructional practices to meet the needs of all students.



Rationale:

- Reading skills lay the foundation for academic success (Baker, 2022).
- Students who don't read proficiently by 3rd grade are 4x more likely to drop out of school. (Pajor, 2022).
- 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade are more likely to end up in jail or on welfare (Pajor, 2022).
- By developing a strong understanding of research-based strategies, I can confidently support my students' literacy development, providing them with the opportunity to become successful readers and lifelong learners.

THE SCIENCE OF READING:

The science of reading (SoR) has long been a priority in education, with early efforts focusing on correct pronunciation and basic literacy skills. Over the years, various methods and approaches, such as phonics and whole-language instruction, were developed and debated, shaping the foundational practices for teaching reading. Today, the SoR refers to a comprehensive body of research that explores how people learn to read and how reading should be taught. It draws from cognitive science, neuroscience, linguistics, and education to provide a deep understanding of reading development (Shanahan, 2020).

The SoR covers a broad range of topics, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Phonemic awareness involves the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words, serving as a basis for phonics, which focuses on the understanding of letter-sound relationships. These skills are critical for students to decode words correctly and quickly, contributing to improved fluency and comprehension (Brown, 2014).

The SoR also includes the systematic teaching of these skills in a structured and sequential manner, highlighting the importance of evidence-based instructional practices for literacy development. It recognizes that reading is not a natural skill but an acquired one, requiring explicit instruction to help students understand how speech sounds are represented by written letters (Moats, 2020).

The overarching goal of the science of reading is to provide a research-based framework for understanding and teaching reading, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills.

STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES:

Teachers can integrate phonemic awareness activities, teaching students to hear and manipulate sounds in words, which is crucial for reading development. Activities that enhance this skill should be a regular part of instruction (Brown, 2014). Additionally, teaching the relationship between letters and sounds in a structured sequential manner helps students decode words correctly and quickly, contributing to improved fluency and comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Ensuring students understand how speech sounds are represented by written letters before they start decoding words is essential in foundational knowledge for reading success (Moats, 2020). Readers progress by gradually learning how print represents sounds, syllables, and meaningful word parts, applying this knowledge during reading. On top of foundational literacy skills, outlined by the science of reading, teachers can provide some whole language practices. This includes providing students with access to a variety of rich texts and opportunities to read for meaning. This includes integrating both phonics instruction and immersive reading experiences to ensure students not only decode words but also understand and enjoy reading (Burkins, 2021).

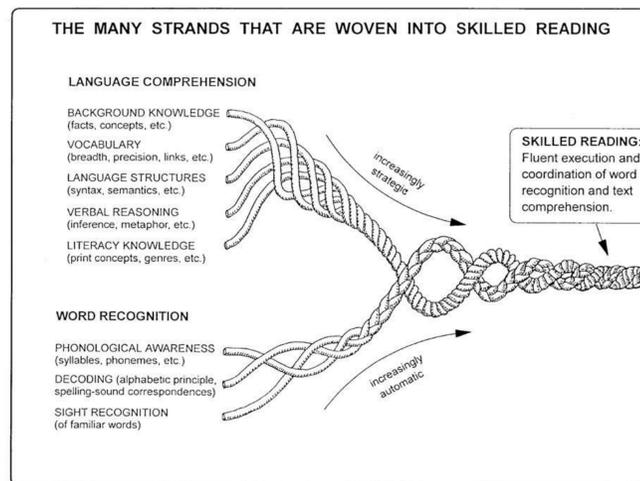
THE READING WARS:

The "reading wars" refer to a long-standing debate between educators and policymakers about the most effective ways to teach reading. The two main sides of this debate are: phonics (which teaches word-decoding skills before textual meaning) or whole language (emphasizes textual meaning).

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, whole language is a method of teaching reading and writing that emphasizes learning whole words and phrases through meaningful contexts. It emphasizes reading for meaning and comprehension rather than breaking down words into their phonetic components. These advocates fear that an overemphasis on phonics might ignore other critical aspects of literacy development, such as reading comprehension and engagement with texts (Williams, 2023).

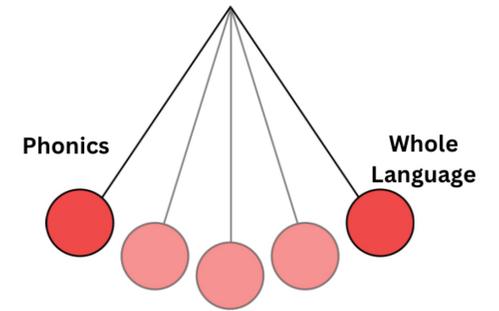
In contrast, a phonics-based approach believes that explicitly teaching the relationship between letters and sounds is more effective. They criticize approaches that prioritize whole-word learning and believe that a strong foundation in phonics leads to better reading outcomes. They believe that whole-language neglects systematic phonics instruction, leading to a large disadvantage for students who struggle with reading (Williams, 2023).

According to Burkins, all children need to access both the foundational skills of phonics instruction and relevant experiences with books. They need both the explicit information about how reading works and meaningful experiences with texts that show them the power that reading and writing offers (Burkins, 2021).



SCARBOROUGH'S READING ROPE:

Scarborough's Reading Rope, a model developed by Hollis Scarborough, illustrates the complexity of skilled reading through two main strands: word recognition and language comprehension. This model integrates both sides of the "Reading Wars," combining explicit phonics instruction with meaningful interactions with various rich texts. Word recognition includes components such as phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition, while language comprehension encompasses background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. These strands intertwine to create proficient reading skills.



THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING (SVR):

The SVR theory explains that reading comprehension is the product of word recognition and language comprehension. Word recognition involves decoding and recognizing written words accurately and fluently. Phonemic awareness and phonics are crucial parts of this process. They help students understand the relationship between letters and sounds. Language comprehension is the ability to understand spoken language, including vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge and syntax. Effective comprehension allows students to understand the meaning of the words and sentences they read (Williams, 2023). The SVR shows that both components are key for reading comprehension. A lack in either word recognition or language comprehension can impact a student's ability to understand text. This theory supports the argument that balanced literacy approaches are crucial for effective reading instruction (Williams, 2023).

ACTION:

- Implement comprehensive literacy instruction: combine explicit phonics instruction with meaningful reading experiences.
- Systematic Phonics Instruction: Use letter tiles, phoneme-grapheme cards, and decodable books to teach the relationship between sounds and letters.
- Create a literacy-rich environment: Have a diverse library of books and provide access to digital platforms.
- Engage Families: Provide resources and strategies for parents to support reading at home, maintain regular communication about student progress, and offer flexible and accessible options for family involvement.

Works Cited

