



HEZKUNTZA SAILA

DEPARTAMENTO DE EDUCACIÓN

2019ko EPE. LEHEN HEZKUNTZA

OPE 2019. EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA

ESPEZIALITATEA / ESPECIALIDAD: INGELESA / INGLÉS



Why Are We Still Teaching Reading the Wrong Way?

Teacher preparation programs continue to ignore the sound science behind how people become readers.

By Emily Hanford, The New York Times, Oct. 26, 2018

Our children aren't being taught to read in ways that line up with what scientists have discovered about how people actually learn.

It's a problem that has been hiding in plain sight for decades. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, more than six in 10 fourth graders aren't proficient readers. It has been this way since testing began. A third of kids can't read at a basic level.

How do we know that a big part of the problem is how children are being taught? Because reading researchers have done studies in classrooms and clinics, and they've shown over and over that virtually all kids can learn to read — if they're taught with approaches that use what scientists have discovered about how the brain does the work of reading. But many teachers don't know this science.

What have scientists figured out? First of all, while learning to talk is a natural process that occurs when children are surrounded by spoken language, learning to read is not. To become readers, kids need to learn how the words they know how to say connect to print on the page. They need explicit, systematic phonics instruction. There are hundreds of studies that back this up.

But talk to teachers and many will tell you they learned something different about how children learn to read in their teacher preparation programs. Jennifer Rigney-Carroll, who completed a master's degree in special education in 2016, told me she was taught that children "read naturally if they have access to books." Jessica Root, an intervention specialist in Ohio, said she learned "you want to get" children "excited about what they're reading, find books that they're interested in, and just read, read, read." Kathy Bast, an elementary school principal in Pennsylvania, learned the same thing. "It was just: Put literature in front of the kids, teach the story, and the children will learn how to read through exposure," she said.

These ideas are rooted in beliefs about reading that were once commonly called "whole language" and that gained a lot of traction in the 1980s. Whole-language proponents dismissed the need for phonics. Reading is "the most natural activity in the world," Frank Smith, one of the intellectual leaders of the whole-language movement, wrote. It



30 “is only through reading that children learn to read. Trying to teach children to read by teaching them the sounds of letters is literally a meaningless activity.”

These ideas had been debunked by the early 2000s. It may seem as if kids are learning to read when they’re exposed to books, and some kids do pick up sound-letter correspondences quickly and easily. But the science shows clearly that to become a
35 good reader, you must learn to decode words. Many whole-language proponents added some phonics to their approach and rebranded it “balanced literacy.”

But they did not give up their core belief that learning to read is a natural process that occurs when parents and teachers expose children to good books. So, while you’re likely to find some phonics lessons in a balanced-literacy classroom, you’re also likely
40 to find a lot of other practices rooted in the idea that children learn to read by reading rather than by direct instruction in the relationship between sounds and letters. For example, teachers will give young children books that contain words with letter patterns the children haven’t yet been taught. You’ll see alphabetical “word walls” that rest on the idea that learning to read is a visual memory process rather than a process of
45 understanding how letters represent sounds. You’ll hear teachers telling kids to guess at words they don’t know based on context and pictures rather than systematically teaching children how to decode.

Many teachers learn these approaches in their teacher preparation programs. Publishers perpetuate these ideas, and school districts buy in. But colleges of education — which
50 should be at the forefront of pushing the best research — have largely ignored the scientific evidence on reading.

The National Council on Teacher Quality reviewed the syllabuses of teacher preparation programs nationwide and found that fewer than four in 10 taught the components of effective reading instruction identified by research. A study of early-literacy instruction
55 in teacher preparation programs across the University of North Carolina system found that instructional strategies based on research were mentioned “in a cursory way, if at all, on most syllabuses.” (Some instructors required students to write their “personal philosophies” about how to teach reading.) Kelly Butler of the Barksdale Reading Institute in Mississippi interviewed more than 100 deans and faculty members of
60 schools of education as part of a study of teacher preparation programs in the state and found that most of them could not explain basic scientific principles about how children learn to read.

It’s not just ignorance. There’s active resistance to the science, too. I interviewed a professor of literacy in Mississippi who told me she was “philosophically opposed” to
65 phonics instruction. One of her colleagues told me she didn’t agree with the findings of reading scientists because “it’s their science.”

There is no excuse for this. Colleges of education have to start requiring that their faculties teach the science of reading. Children’s futures depend on it.



Emily Hanford is a senior education correspondent for APM Reports and the producer of the audio documentary “Hard Words: Why Aren’t Kids Being Taught to Read?” This article is based on her reporting for that project.



1.- LINES 26-31: TRANSLATE THE WHOLE PARAGRAPH INTO SPANISH OR BASQUE (AT YOUR OWN CHOICE) TRYING TO CONVEY THE EXACT MEANING AND STYLE FROM THE ORIGINAL (1 POINT)

2.- BRIEFLY EXPLAIN (IN ENGLISH) THE MEANING OF THESE EXPRESSIONS AS THEY APPEAR IN THE PARTICULAR CONTEXT OF THE TEXT (0,2 x 10 = 2 POINTS):

1- plain sight (line 3)

6- rebranded (line 36)

2- figured out (line 12)

7- buy in (line 49)

3- back this up (line 16)

8- forefront (line 50)

4- had been debunked (line 32)

9- cursory way (line 56)

5- proponents (line 35)

10- deans (line 59)

3- CASE STUDY (7 POINTS): You work in an Infant and Primary school (D model) as an English teacher. This school is quite big (around 800 students) and it has four lines (each group class has 23-25 students). Recently, the school has received several new students that come from abroad (Nicaragua, Pakistan and Morocco). The socio-economic level of the families is low-middle.

During the last years the school has developed a learning community approach, which means they foster the participation of all members of the school community: teachers, students, parents, other staff, different associations, council members, etc. They also participate in different programs and projects, such as STEAM, Agenda 21, IK-KI (cooperative approach), Dialogic literary circles, Ullibarri



Program, and they also are taking part in an ERASMUS+ project along with other 4 schools from France, Italy, Romania and Belgium with Primary 6 students.

The students' results in the different external evaluations are quite good, and a significant diversity among students has been detected in the English language area, due to the fact that 50% of the students attend extra English classes after school. Nevertheless a slight downward tendency can be observed in the field of reading comprehension in the three languages (Basque, Spanish and English). There is a lively discussion among teachers about the best approach or methodology to be used to improve these results.

You are the English Language Department coordinator and you belong to the team that coordinates the three languages (Basque, Spanish and English).

- A- Define the legal framework your school should deal with in order to improve the reading comprehension in the three languages (1 POINT)**
- B- How would you achieve the goal of having a coherent reading comprehension plan in the school for the three languages? Define times, content, objectives, methodological principles and evaluation approach of this plan (1 POINT)**
- C- State one of the main objectives regarding reading comprehension in English for Primary 5. Explain your methodological approach and the strategies you would use. You are requested to consider the characteristics of the school as well as those of a particular group (one student has just arrived from Morocco and hasn't been in touch with the English language before; about half of the group attend private English lessons) (1,5 POINT)**
- D- How would you assess these students' progression with reference to the objective stated in the previous question? What kinds of evidences would you gather? Which tools would you use? (1,5 POINT)**
- E- Design a reading comprehension activity in English for a group of Primary 6 in this school, using the CLIL approach (Content and Language Integrated Learning) (2 POINTS)**

