

From Robert J. Tierney and P David Pearson’s *Executive Summary of Fact-checking the Science of Reading*

Three Versions of SoR Claims

1. The SoR headline version (what shows up in the media).
2. The SoR research version (what shows up in books & journals).
3. The version of the claim we think is supported by the available research.

| The SoR Headline Version | The SoR Research-Based Version | Our Version |
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| <p>The Science is settled: Phonics-first leads the way to better reading.</p> | <p>There is a substantial body of evidence from basic and applied research to support widespread adoption of key practices, including phonics.</p> | <p>Science is never settled; it -Changes with evidence & theory; -Continues to unearth contextualized interactions; and -Is best enacted as situated practice.</p> |
| <p>1. Phonics-first instruction should be a uniform policy.</p> | <p>Teaching phonics is necessary, but not sufficient, for success. It is best embedded in a comprehensive reading curriculum, wherein phonics instruction is one of many key pedagogical supports. While some contend that it should be taught synthetically, there are many ways to learn the code, and it is better learned early rather than later on.</p> | <p>We concur that phonics is a crucial component of reading, but so are various other elements. We don’t see an appropriate level of nuance and flexibility reflected in recommendations for teaching and learning phonics, especially in some state policies and legislation.</p> |
| <p>2. The Simple View of Reading (SVR) facilitates our capacity to understand and teach reading.</p> | <p>The SVR, if adapted to include greater complexity, accounts for the internal processes that comprise skilled reading, and its development over time.</p> | <p>-The SVR is a useful heuristic that distills a great deal of complexity into a manageable, albeit linear, model; -however, it fails to account for the external social and cultural influences that shape reading.</p> |
| <p>3. Recognizing words is the first order of business in learning to read.</p> | <p>Reading, as separate from literacy, is the ability to identify and understand words that are part of one’s oral language repertoire.</p> | <p>Recent developments in the science of learning and development demand a more contextualized, sociocultural definition of reading.</p> |

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| 4. Phonics enables orthographic learning (i.e., the identification of unknown words that, over time, become recognizable at sight). | The self-teaching attribute of decoding facilitates the identification of unknown words that, with multiple iterations, become immediately recognizable. | We agree, with one addition: -The systematic application of context clues in word solving also contributes to orthographic learning. |
| 5. The Three-Cueing System has been soundly discredited. | Cueing systems may support comprehension and monitoring but are misleading when used for word recognition. Reserve them for verifying orthographic attempts to solve words. | Students taught to consult a full range of cues (i.e., both code- and meaning-based strategies): -Develop a set for variability in solving unknown words -Outperform phonics-only students -Gradually rely more on orthographic cues as the initial strategy for solving words. |
| 6. Learning to read is an unnatural act. | Children come wired to learn oral language, but they must be taught to read—to decode written into oral language. | Learning to read may not be “wired” like oral language, -but learning to read is as natural as learning anything else; -it’s all about kids being intrinsically wired to make sense of their world. |
| 7. Balanced Literacy and/or Whole Language are to blame for falling NAEP scores. | Balanced Literacy and/or Whole Language approaches bear responsibility for the low or falling NAEP scores in the U.S. in the past decade or so. | NAEP performance is shaped by a multitude of educational, social, economic, and political factors, making it impossible—and dangerous—to attribute trends in scores to any single factor. |

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| <p>8. Neuroscience demonstrates that the pathway from orthographic learning to reading for meaning is found in phonics.</p> | <p>Recent neuroscience research bolsters our confidence in the central role of phonological processing and phonics instruction in supporting early reading development.</p> | <p>-The current accounts don't reflect the significant limitations of fMRI findings and other counter evidence. -Extrapolating instructional practices from observations of basic brain processes is a risky activity—one likely to yield errors. - The classroom is the proper site for validating practices.</p> |
| <p>9. If reading is recognizing and understanding words, then contextual factors have little if any role in reading development.</p> | <p>Broad contextual perspectives, such as sociocultural models of reading and literacy, are not needed to explain reading development. They may bear on literacy and learning, broadly construed, but not on reading.</p> | <p>Recent advances in the science of learning and development implicate social, cultural, and contextual factors as key drivers of the cognitive and biological bases of learning, including learning to read.</p> |
| <p>10. Literacy Teacher Education Programs (LTEPs) are not preparing teachers in the Science of Reading.</p> | <p>The SoR is marginalized as LTEPs continue to privilege practices associated with discredited versions of Balanced Literacy or Whole Language.</p> | <p>LTEPs need should: -Emphasize a broad swath of reading and learning science, including foundation skills and other SoR propositions; -Reflect the science of teacher development for supporting diverse learners; -Nurture the knowledge needed to make situated and differentiated decisions to facilitate students' learning.</p> |

