

Testimony to the Oregon Senate Committee on Education
March 30, 2017

I am writing in opposition to SB 221. In particular, I stand against the provision of this bill that removes alignment of teacher preparation program curriculum with the evidence-based practices embodied in the Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teaching Reading from the International Dyslexia Association (IDA).

Reading research has taught us that reading is a complex behavior that as a human invention is only a few centuries old, does not come naturally, and must be very carefully and systematically taught by a well-prepared teacher. We also know that children who experience dyslexia most often have problems learning to read, not because they do not understand the concepts of meaning that print is intended to relate, but because they struggle with the way that letters represent the sounds of spoken language at the **word reading level**. Fortunately, research has shown that these children can in fact master decoding skills when carefully taught in a very systematic, structured way and given ample opportunities to practice.

Teacher preparation programs have traditionally been very good at imparting ways to teach reading comprehension, analysis, and thinking skills but they continue to neglect basic good instruction in decoding and spelling patterns that must become automatic in good readers. The Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teaching of Reading require evidenced based knowledge of word reading strategies in addition to the structure of written language and text comprehension. They require teachers to be able to assess learners as to what elements of reading are difficult for them and to deliver the targeted instruction that helps.

The IDA standards are the only ones that I know of, that document and translate converging research into how the human brain processes and understands written language into a form that can be readily applied to teacher of reading preparation programs. Teachers well trained in all the elements of these standards will be prepared to start their teaching careers with the tools to successfully face the array of diverse learners filling their classrooms today, including the estimated one in five students that struggle with learning to read write and spell in their first language, those learning English as a second language, and those from language impoverished backgrounds.

Whether it is because of a lack of understanding or failure to apply research principles to the field of education, schools of education continue to base their instructional emphasis and curriculum on teaching philosophies that are more than a century old and in great part long discredited by scientific analysis. The results have been a great disservice to teachers and the children in their charge. The ability to read is central to becoming a successful student, employee, and voter. Without good standards there will be no accountability and teacher preparation will continue to produce the poor results that my bright, motivated child experienced nearly 30 years ago when he failed to learn to read in an Oregon public school.

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Co-Author with Lee Sherman, *The Reading Glitch, How the culture wars have hijacked reading instruction and what we can do about it*. Rowman Littlefield pub. 2006.