

Chair Neron and Members of the Education committee,

I am writing in support of HB 3198 and HB 3454. Many are testifying persuasively about why the changes to our educational system in these bills are essential and also why they are not sufficient. I applaud these bills as they reflect a commitment to use the best available knowledge to help our children achieve literacy. But we can go further. To summarize my primary concerns:

- Not all school districts will apply for the funding and thus will not be initiating these important changes in their districts.

This is a matter of equity. Children who struggle to read become adults who struggle to fit into society. As a psychologist who has worked in school systems as distinct as Vernonia and Catlin Gabel, I have seen the vast gulf in resources available to teachers and families in different settings. As someone who has worked for Vocational Rehabilitation and Social Security Disability, I have seen illiteracy become a greater barrier for adults as our society becomes more complex. We know how to teach reading effectively - everyone deserves the chance to get the best education possible.

- In many circles, the argument about how to teach reading has become not only divisive, but also reductionistic. We have knowledge of how to do this better.

Too often talk about teaching reading becomes a discussion about whether or not to teach phonics. The Science of Reading is a much broader approach to the whole sweep of teaching literacy - speaking, reading and writing. At its best it encompasses such things as working with bilingual learners and the impact of different dialects. We need to use the decades of effective research to provide clarity in what should be taught. HB 3198 defines the "science of reading and writing". This needs to be made concrete through **defined effective curricula** that is used in these courses. Ten years ago, the legislature tried to accomplish these same goals through establishing the Oregon Early Reading Program which called for "implementing high-quality reading instruction and protocols that identify, support and serve students who are at risk for not reading at grade level early and effectively." That was obviously not prescriptive enough.

- The bill does not require teacher preparation programs to teach comprehension literacy instruction methods and assessment. This leaves us continuing to try to catch up as unprepared teachers enter the teaching profession.

To expand on this point, I did some research to see how Oregon is doing and if other states were doing better in mandating literacy training in educator preparation programs. A summary of that is below.

## **Assuring that the Science of Reading is included in Educator Preparation Programs**

There is much testimony and information being offered to the legislature on what the Science of Reading (SOR) instruction is and why it is important that we use it to improve reading skills in our schools. This brief review addresses the responsibility of the state to make sure that educators have the tools to implement this and tells of the ways that some states are making sure that educators emerge from educator prep programs with these tools.

### **How can we make sure that educators have the tools to teach reading?**

1. Use Professional Development - such as the initiative to teach LETRS in a number of school districts.
2. Adopt curriculum that conforms to the Science of Reading and train educators in its use.
3. Make the theory and implementation of Science of Reading central to the way we teach reading pedagogy in educator preparation programs.

We need all three. However, it is more effective to train educators in SOR and its implementation as part of an educator preparation program. This assures that they have these skills from the beginning of their career and that SOR knowledge is integrated into their overall learning about how to teach. Further training and collaboration can then be implemented as part of professional development.

### **How can we make sure that educators entering the profession have been trained with the knowledge and tools they need to teach reading? <sup>1</sup>**

States use two main approaches if they address this:

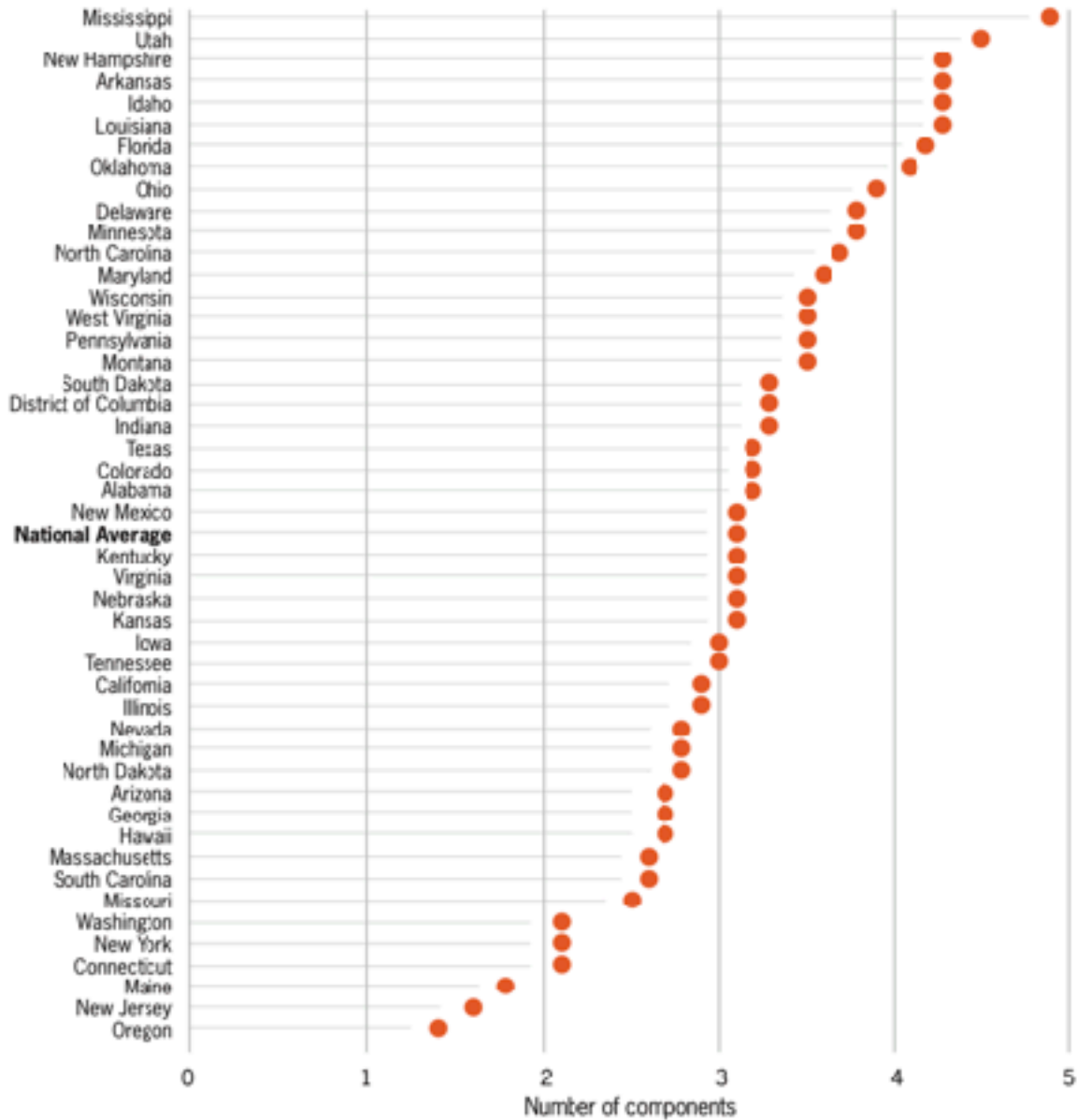
1. Require a test for licensure that broadly measures candidates' knowledge of the science of reading instruction.
2. Have standards that require elementary preparation programs to address the components of the science of reading instruction.

Oregon is moving away from use of a singular test to assess educator preparation and skills as a requirement for licensure. The realization that tests are inherently inequitable and don't align fully with classrooms skills have led us to look at other approaches to educator licensure. This places increased demands on educator preparation programs to assure that their graduates have the essential skills to teach SOR. In the case of Oregon, this is not happening in many of our programs.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nctq.org/yearbook/national/Teaching-Reading-90>

Average number of components taught by traditional programs in each state



- Even where SOR is part of educator prep curriculum, many programs don't teach this fully. Oregon is ranked at the bottom in the completeness of our educator preparation in science of reading instruction. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQ\\_2020\\_Teacher\\_Prep\\_Review\\_Program\\_Performance\\_in\\_Early\\_Reading\\_Instruction](https://www.nctq.org/dmsView/NCTQ_2020_Teacher_Prep_Review_Program_Performance_in_Early_Reading_Instruction)

## What are other states doing?

Many states are passing legislation to require SOR be included in educator preparation programs. These are usually coupled with extensive requirements for school districts to align with SOR in their curriculum and teaching. A few examples of recent bills addressing educator preparation:

- In 2016, Mississippi passed SB 2157<sup>3</sup> that mandated SOR reading instruction and resulted significant gains in reading scores. An overview of the law and its impact: <https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ExcelinEd.MSGatewaytoSuccess.March2019.pdf>
- In 2021, North Carolina passed a SB 387<sup>4</sup>, the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021 which, among other things, requires:
  - elementary educators to get at least three CE credits in the science of reading before licensure renewal
  - Educator Preparation Programs to include coursework in the Science of Reading for all elementary education candidates
  - school districts to develop a literacy intention plan aligned with the SOR.
- In 2021, Tennessee passed SB7003<sup>5</sup>, Tennessee Literacy Success Act, that includes requirements that all educator preparation programs provide training on reading instruction focused primarily on the foundational literacy skills standards of SOR.
- In 2021, Connecticut passed Public Act 21-2, section 402<sup>6</sup> which establishes a center for literacy charged, among other things, with:
  - (7) serving as a collaborative center for institutions of higher education and making available to the faculty of educator preparation programs (A) the science of teaching reading, (B) the intensive reading instruction program, and (C) samples of available reading curriculum models or programs reviewed and recommended pursuant to section 395 of this act; and (8) reviewing and publicly reporting on progress made by educator preparation programs to include reading curriculum models or programs reviewed and recommended pursuant to section 395 of this act.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://legiscan.com/MS/text/SB2157/id/1390375>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncleg.gov/Sessions/2021/Bills/Senate/PDF/S387v4.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://legiscan.com/TN/text/SB7003/2021>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/act/pa/pdf/2021PA-00002-R00SB-01202SS1-PA.pdf>

## **What next?**

It appears to be hard for the legislature to mandate curriculum for Oregon's educator preparation programs. Some states have gotten around this by requiring a rigorous test of SOR skills as a condition of educator licensure, forcing programs to address this in their curricula. However, as discussed above, this has drawbacks.

Yet, it is essential that we find ways to assure that the Science of Reading is taught in all of our teacher preparation programs. I hope we move forward immediately to try to make these changes in as many ways as possible. Some thoughts:

- Involving educator preparation programs in a meaningful Center for Literacy such as that established in Connecticut might help bring them into better alignment with the push to implement SOR within the preschool-12 system. Participants in such a group should include the Department of Education, Teacher Standards and Practices personnel and the Higher Education Coordination Commission as well as representatives of educator and parent groups.
- Just as our teachers need to learn how to teach reading, our professors in teacher prep programs need to learn about these methods. I expect that this helps explain the resistance that is encountered in making changes. We need to give them the tools to pass on to those they mentor.
- Increased public and legislative advocacy to decision makers within the University system, especially the schools of education, could help highlight the need to give their graduates the skills and knowledge of SOR to move our young people forward.

## **The need for change**

We have all heard about the impact that a failure to employ the science of reading in the classroom has on Oregon's students. Equally devastating is the impact it has on the educators who work each day to help their students succeed. Without the knowledge, tools, curriculum, or administrative support to most effectively help their students, they are frequently inappropriately blamed for this failure. It is no wonder that some of those who care most are leaving the profession. We need to give them the tools so that all of our students can thrive.

Thank you for your attention to this important problem,

Carol Greenough Ph.D.