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What Works in Teaching Children to Read: Whole Language or or Phonics?

"Whole language" is embraced by some, cursed by many. For whom is it appropriate and for whom is it inappropriate? (Is it possible to tell in advance for whom it will work or won't work?) - David E. Rubin, MD, Medical director of Laboratory, Saint Anthony Community Hospital

Reid Lyon Answers

It is unfortunate that the debates surrounding whole language versus phonics continues to detract from the critical issue - what instructional approaches, strategies, and programs are most beneficial for which kids at which phases or reading development?

We are trying to help people move away from simplistic dichotomies like phonics versus whole language by ensuring that they fully understand:

- (1) what it takes for kids (and adults) TO LEARN TO READ;
- (2) WHY SOME KIDS HAVE DIFFICULTIES; and
- (3) how can we prevent and remediate reading failure.

To answer these questions, we have to go to the converging scientific evidence. This is what the conclusions are at this time.

Learning to read is an extremely complicated process that requires many skills and abilities.

For example, kids need to understand the sounds of their language, how sounds

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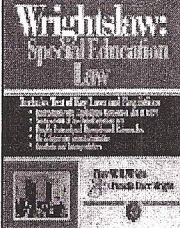
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