How To Teach Reading the Way Good Readers Read

As you look ahead to another year of teaching reading, are you emboldened or confused? You may have heard that adding some phonics to your "guided reading" instruction isn't making any progress. You may or may not strategize for comprehension as an effective instructional goal. This is the issue for you and me, and we'll explore these key factors in the reading comprehension equation.

The Three Cuing System: How a Flawed Idea is Teaching Kids to be Poor Readers

Over the past few years, the role of systematic phonics instruction has gained more widespread recognition and acceptance. So much so that the International Literacy Association recently endorsed such explicit instruction. This approach teaches readers to guess at words, rather than decoding them. Also known as "hit-or-miss," Goodman's words is incidental to that.

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Does Guessing Really Make Sense? What's a Teacher to Do?

Perhaps you were taught the three-cueing system during your preservice-training. Maybe some will avoid sounding out a word in favor of guessing. A child who primarily relies on guessing strategies—such as using pictures clues and skipping tricky words—will be stymied when faced with higher level texts, no pictures, and harder vocabulary.

Once learned, these habits are hard to break. Since phonics is challenging for many students, some will avoid sounding out a word in favor of guessing. A child who primarily relies on guessing strategies—such as using pictures clues and skipping tricky words—will be stymied when faced with higher level texts, no pictures, and harder vocabulary.

There is ample scientific evidence against three-cueing. According to David Kilpatrick, "The three-cueing system is the way poor readers read." Furthermore, teachers who employ the three-cueing system undermine their orthographic mapping. This essential process enables readers who primarily rely on guessing strategies to pay attention to the details of a written word and link the word's pronunciation and meaning with its sequence of letters. Over time, it becomes automatic.

To empower teaching excellence to ensure that every child learns to read by third grade, Goodman believes. Share the science and your success. Change is hard. Encourage others.

If you already teach decoding as the first line of word attack, talk with three-cueing believers. Share the science and your success. Change is hard. Encourage others.

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Further Learning

- "Is It Time to Retire the Three-Cueing System?" by Emily Hanford, Education Week, August 27, 2019.
- "Guessing Really Make Sense? What's a Teacher to Do?" by Emily Hanford, Education Week, August 27, 2019.
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