

# SCIENCE of READING

## What IS the Science of Reading?

The **Science of Reading** is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically based research about reading from the fields of education, developmental psychology, and neuroscience, that explains how individuals learn how to read and best practices for reading instruction.

## What the Science of Reading is NOT:

- An ideology, philosophy, or political agenda
- A fad, trend, new idea, or pendulum swing
- A program of instruction or curriculum
- A one-size-fits-all approach
- A single component of instruction (e.g. – only phonics)



### EVIDENCE-BASED

Evidence-based practices are those whose effectiveness is supported by rigorous research. In other words, research shows that the practice or program works.



### WHOLE LANGUAGE

This literacy approach is based on the assumption that reading develops naturally through exposure to whole words, as opposed to learning the parts of words (phonics) when acquiring language. This approach lacks support from evidence-based research on effective literacy instruction.



### BALANCED LITERACY

Balanced literacy is an approach to teaching reading that combines whole language and phonics. Many balanced literacy programs, however, do not provide direct and explicit instruction in word recognition (phonics and phonemic awareness). This approach does not align with how students should develop strong foundational reading skills.



### 3-CUEING OR “MSV” (MEANING, STRUCTURE, VISUAL)

An instructional method where teachers prompt students to use various cues—such as pictures, context, and the first letter of a word—to identify unfamiliar words. This approach often leads students to guess rather than decode words accurately. Research shows that skilled readers learn to read by sounding out words using phonics, not by guessing from pictures or context.

## The FIVE Building Blocks of Reading:

1

### PHONEMIC AWARENESS

2

### PHONICS

3

### VOCABULARY

4

### FLUENCY

5

### COMPREHENSION

*In 2000, the National Reading Panel identified these concepts as the core of effective reading instruction.*

*Section 59-155-110 (2) of Act 114 excludes the use of materials that employ the three-cueing system model of reading as the primary basis for teaching word recognition.*

# SOUTH CAROLINA'S MOMENT of OPPORTUNITY

## South Carolina Follows National Trend in Strengthening Foundational Reading Skills

Reading is the essential foundation of all other learning. According to the most recent state data, only 54% of 3rd grade students in South Carolina are reading on grade level. The situation requires urgent action. Thankfully, we know real progress is possible.

In 2014, South Carolina enacted Act 284, the Read to Succeed legislation, to improve literacy across the state. The law aimed to ensure that all students reached reading proficiency by the end of third grade, acknowledging the critical role early reading skills play in long-term academic achievement. This comprehensive strategy involved assessments and interventions for students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, with a focus on identifying struggling readers early and providing targeted support to help them succeed.

In 2024, South Carolina passed Act 114, the revised Read to Succeed legislation, which requires K-3 educators to receive specialized training in the science of reading to ensure they have the skills needed to teach foundational reading skills to all students. This intensive training, Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) equips educators to know what literacy skills to teach, the background research supporting those methods, and how best to teach them. The state's dedication to high-quality professional learning through LETRS has allowed teachers to deepen their understanding of the cognitive processes involved in reading, while emphasizing the importance of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

By moving beyond traditional teaching approaches, LETRS helps educators implement a more systematic, data-driven method to literacy instruction, resulting in improved student outcomes. This shift has empowered teachers to better identify struggling readers early and apply targeted interventions. As a result, South Carolina is making significant progress toward ensuring all students have the opportunity to master essential literacy skills, ultimately closing achievement gaps and guaranteeing long-term academic success for every child.

## SOUTH CAROLINA'S CURRENT LETRS INVESTMENT



19,000+ EDUCATORS



ALL SC SCHOOLS

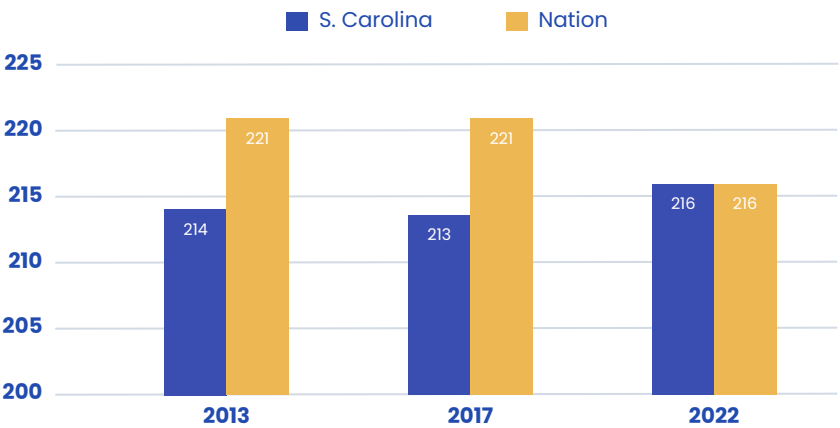


ALL SC DISTRICTS



\$60 MILLION

## NAEP 4TH GRADE READING SCORES



Data extracted from: Profiles for Grade 4 Reading Scores

SCDE's FY2025 budget request allowed ALL K-3 teachers and ALL 4K CERDEP teachers to participate in LETRS or Early Childhood LETRS training and receive an honorarium for successful completion.

