

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I thank you for this opportunity to express my support of SB 928.

I have provided you with my testimony. It is meant to provide you with a history of the events that have brought me here. The story of my daughter's journey in learning to read via the public education system can be told and retold by countless parents across this state, and indeed across this country.

I have heard it stated, and I agree, our children are in CRISIS---a large number of them are NOT being taught to read! Yet many parents are blissfully unaware that when they place their beautiful Kindergartner onto that shiny yellow school bus, full of all the promise that a good education can bring to their future, that child has an automatic 40% chance of failing to learn to read.

In order to fix the problem we, the lay people, must first understand it. Teachers throw around terms like DRA, DRP, Reading Comprehension, SRBI- it's enough to make the eyes of parents, and even legislators, glaze over and roll back!

The simplest thing for you to know and understand about how children are currently being taught to read is that they are no longer being taught to break a word apart using the sounds of the letters-30 years ago when I was taught to read, and probably many of you as well-that was called Phonics.

As of about 30 years ago, arguably the beginning of the legacy that Commissioner Coleman referred to in his testimony, the Phonics teaching approach has been abandoned, although that was apparently, never the intention of the authors of the next trend in teaching reading instruction. For over thirty years our children have been taught what educators refer to as Reading Comprehension. The children are taught to 'infer'-in laymen's terms-guess at what the passage means by using the salient clues available to them such as pictures or any other words that they might have been able to infer. Children are not taught to read with accuracy, they are

taught to 'Read for Meaning'. Make no mistake about it-children are not actually reading when they do this they are simply been taught to Fake it til They make it!

One example that I would like you to consider:

Suppose you are a second grader and you have a book placed in front of you with a picture of a dog crossing the road on the left-hand side and the sentence on the right-hand side. Simply using the pictures-do you know which words you might 'infer' correctly in the sentence? Perhaps 'Dog', maybe 'Road'. What about "The"? What about "Crossed"? What do those words look like? I cannot tell you how many times my daughter got the word 'The' wrong!

So now we have the research and we know so much more about the effects of this type of reading approach. We now know that it is effective only in 60% of children and that 95% of them could have been successful if we had given them the tools to read at the word level first. We now know that 40% of our children must be given the tools and strategies to break down a word and, thus, are failing to learn to read. We know that if they don't reach a level of proficiency by the end of Third grade they will never become strong readers. This is why we cannot wait until the high school grades to identify struggling readers. Since teachers are not taught how to actually teach reading, children that struggle usually continue to do so unaided. This can also be called the "Sink or Swim approach". So how is it that in a state that prides itself on innovative thinking and quality education for its children, the most effective practices for the greatest number of children have not been incorporated into our teaching colleges?

As a society we have expected our education system to teach all children irregardless of their disabilities, so why then are we allowing 40% of our state, and nation's, children to slip through the cracks and into the dust of society this way?

I am in support of this bill and would ask that you include experts in the field of reading instruction in attempting to remedy this problem and, with all due respect, not necessarily rely solely on individuals in the teaching profession.

Thank you!

Cindy Bankoski