

Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

This is How We Teach Reading...And It's Working

By Heather Willms and Giacinta Alberti

Markham, ON: Pembroke 2022, 272 pages (paperback)

ISBN: 9781551383576

Reviewed by:

Danielle Neer

Teacher, BC: School District 23 (Central Okanagan)

Councillor (British Columbia Teachers' Council)

Vice-President (Learning Assistance Teachers' Association of B.C.)

Motivated in part by the Ontario Human Rights Commission's release of *The Right to Read* report (2019), the current focus in pre-service teacher education and in-service professional development for Canadian teachers is to move away from using a "balanced literacy" approach toward the "science of reading," with a "structured literacy" approach to teaching reading. Willms and Alberti's *This is How We Teach Reading...And It's Working* (2022) provides a succinct manual for supporting one of the five pillars of reading instruction: Phonics. Together with phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, explicit phonics instruction provides specific skills and knowledge so that all students can access learning.

While the opening chapters provide basic background information on this topic, most of the book is a manual for implementation that can be used by classroom teachers

right away. Chapters One and Two provide relevant background information on the paradigm shift underway in reading instruction beliefs and practices without creating a feeling that this work is too hard to take on given the complexities of today's classrooms. The opening section also addresses questions that teachers have and those that they face in answering community members regarding the current shift in teaching reading. The answers provided by authors Wilms and Alberti are clear, concise, and helpful in navigating the complex topic of literacy. By making the connection between decisions in instruction and the results of data collection through initial assessment and ongoing progress monitoring, the authors build teacher capacity to reach all students.

The middle section, which comprises more than half of the book, begins with a planning guideline for teaching a phonics lesson followed by suggestions on ways to incorporate these lessons into daily and weekly planning. Readers are provided with (1) steps for the set up of their program, including the creation of a phonics box with supplies needed to teach each lesson; (2) sample yearly, weekly, and daily plans; (3) and relevant background information on each of the concepts being taught. The format of the daily plans will be familiar to those who have had training in structured literacy teaching (e.g., Orton-Gillingham), while providing sufficient guidance and learning opportunities for teachers who are new to structured literacy instruction.

The final section includes reproducible materials; assessment tools both for initial screening and for ongoing tracking (i.e., progress monitoring) of student learning; and a glossary of terms.

All students need to be given tools so that they can break the code and fully participate in the learning environment. When given these tools, students can decode others' writing and capture their thoughts for others to read. Wilms and Alberti's *This is How We Teach Reading...And It's Working* (2022) is the perfect support for both teacher candidates and practicing teachers to be able to use evidence-based, high-impact phonics instruction in their practice. The authors have designed a program that is simple to implement, but not simple in content because "teaching reading is rocket science" (Moats, 2020).

References

- Government of Ontario. 2019. *The Right to Read: Public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities*. Ontario Human Rights Commission.
Retrieved on October 1, 2023 from <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report>
- Moats, L. (2020). "Teaching Reading Is Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able to Do." In *American Educator*, Summer 2020. Retrieved on October 2, 2023 from <https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2020/moats>