

# Editor's Note

Valerie Norville  
Editorial Director

As anyone knows who remembers learning to read, or has taught their own or others' children to read, young readers pick up different literacy skills in different orders and at different rates. I have been struck, for example, by the fluency with which some English learners I've encountered can read, and equally struck by their inability to understand what most of it meant. My son, however, who was a whiz at phonics and content knowledge, struggled with fluency.

State boards of education would be well advised to step out of the line of fire in any discussion of reading that lines up behind a single approach or intervention. In this issue, Nell K. Duke compares teaching reading to running an E.R. in its complexity. For both, the stakes are high. So good preservice teacher preparation and continued professional development must be priorities for state boards of education, she writes.

Barbara Davidson contrasts two approaches that characterize today's classrooms: one puts the first foot on attainment of reading skills; the other stresses building content knowledge while learning to read. The latter camp argues that it is a mistake to spend so much time on skills that context is neglected. "And the burden of this lost opportunity," Davidson writes, "falls most heavily on children living in poverty and English learners, who tend to have the biggest knowledge gaps."

States that keep tabs on their disaggregated data cannot fail to note the stubborn reading gaps that persist for English learners. Tim Shanahan and Jana Echevarria point to the outsized impact of vocabulary instruction, and the lesser impact of phonics instruction, for this population. They call for better

professional development for teachers and more recognition of the value of including parents and maintaining dual-language use.

Sen. Bill Cassidy and Dr. Laura Cassidy bring the unique perspectives of policymaker and physician to their work on behalf of students with dyslexia. The Cassidys urge schools to screen for the condition, remove stigma, and get busy with evidence-based approaches to instruction for dyslexic students. One solution Dr. Cassidy puts forward: a charter school she helped found in Baton Rouge, where all the students have been diagnosed with dyslexia.

Two articles based on teacher surveys ask whether college- and career-ready standards have a role in creating proficient readers and writers. The work of Julia Kaufman and Darleen Opfer suggests that many teachers have only glancing familiarity with reading standards, nearly a decade after most states adopted the Common Core. An interesting exception is Louisiana, which succeeded in aligning its learning standards, teachers' understanding of them, and curriculum materials where other states have not.

Gary Troia's survey of teachers examines their attitudes about the Common Core. It finds that teachers were generally positive about the standards but that they did not believe they had received sufficient preparation to help students meet the writing standards in particular.

Finally, NASBE President and CEO Robert Hull interviews longtime literacy duo Meredith and David Liben, who urge state boards of education to wield their authority so that the country can finally move the needle on proficiency in reading and writing. ■

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