

P20 Literacy Collaborative
Thursday, September 10, 2020
Meeting Notes

Prepared by James Clifton, WordFarmers Associates

Dr. Mary Murray began the meeting at 9:05 by asking attendees to sign in using Zoom's chat box feature. She and Dr. Dottie Erb welcomed the Collaborative's new members.

Dr. Melissa Weber-Mayrer, Presentation

The first speaker—Dr. Weber-Mayrer, Director, ODE Office of Approaches to Teaching and Professional Learning—addressed the state's commitment to improving literacy achievement for every learner. She noted that her office oversees the state's Learning Management System and also discussed the state's strategic plan, *Each Child, Our Future*. Strategy 9 of the plan relates to literacy specifically, but she also singled out other strategies that her work impinges on: Strategy 2, supporting principals; Strategy 3, improving targeted supports; Strategy 7, working with parents to help meet needs; and Strategy 8, promoting the importance of early learning.

Dr. Weber-Mayrer then discussed the ODE's role in organizing literacy initiatives, and the many grants and programs under *Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement*. These included building a regional system of supports (a professional learning series on evidence-based practices), dyslexia grants, P20 grants, the development of a statewide family engagement center, running Ohio's What Matters Now network, and others. Dr. Weber-Mayrer stressed the interrelated nature of the ODE's many programs. Across these, Weber-Mayrer pointed to the centrality of the science of reading and noted the ODE's role as policy implementer. She stressed the ODE's intention to move from being a department of compliance to one of quality support.

Next, Dr. Weber-Mayrer discussed the role that institutions of higher education (IHEs) play in preparing teachers. She mentioned Louisa Moats' presentation at Walsh University's recent Read-A-Palooza, which discussed the science of reading. Weber-Mayrer then intended to show a video of Dr. David Brobeck, but technological issues prevented this, so she moved on. Building on her discussion of the ODE's and IHEs' roles, Dr. Weber-Mayrer discussed other roles—the regional (SST) role is to bridge the gap between research and practice while the local (district) role is to implement the science of reading.

With the technological issues resolved, Dr. Weber-Mayrer showed the video of Dr. Brobeck speaking about the science of reading's infusion into higher ed. He discussed partnerships between districts and IHEs as well as professional development. Dr. Weber-Mayrer reflected on the video clip and then played another video where school district personnel discussed their connections with IHEs, the need for evidence-based practices, and the importance of teaching reading across all subjects.

Finally, Dr. Weber-Mayrer discussed the importance of collaboration and teamwork and elaborated on "Ohio's Literacy Vision: Commitments." These included the simple view of reading, support for all learners, specific recommendations for struggling learners, collaboration

among educators, and enhanced state infrastructure. To close, Weber-Mayrer reviewed the \$42M Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant, with 95% of the total going to districts in four-year subgrants that will help to develop model comprehensive literacy sites.

Ms. Michelle Elia, Ohio Literacy Lead at SST 5, ODE Literacy Team

Ms. Michelle Elia—one of Ohio’s two literacy leads—delivered the next presentation. She discussed supporting educators in providing reading instruction in a digital environment (clearly a response to COVID). Ms. Elia noted that literacy is a civil right (paraphrasing Phyllis Hunter) and that it’s the language of opportunity. Elia argued that students learn to read because of good teachers, and that her goal for the next hour was to review evidence-based interventions for teaching remotely.

Ms. Elia reviewed many suggestions, including using sheet protectors to turn handouts into dry erase boards and presenting slideshows in notetaking mode rather than presentation mode to enable manipulation of the content. She also provided many resources including the UFLI Virtual Teaching Hub and the Teach Reading Virtually website. She also suggested that participants watch Anita Archer’s *Magic is the Instruction* video online.

Next, Elia focused on MTSS, noting that “you can’t intervene your way out of a tier 1 problem.” This means that solid core instruction is necessary, and that tier 2 and 3 interventions are in addition to (not instead of) core instruction. Elia noted that interventions need to specifically address weaknesses and that the simple view of reading can help pinpoint where to intervene (i.e., students could have weaknesses in word recognition, language comprehension, or both). Elia noted that the simple view of reading aligns with Scarborough’s Rope.

After a short poll asking what to look for first when planning interventions (i.e., decoding), Elia noted that vocabulary is the next place to focus; on this, she cited Kilpatrick’s book *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*. Elia then turned her attention to phonemic awareness, noting that highly successful interventions target phonemic issues. Elia conducted an exercise on segmenting the word “stove,” demonstrating how to do this remotely using the notetaking features of a slideshow. Elia also covered the articulation of phonemes and demonstrated the use of cards showing correct mouth positioning.

Elia’s next demonstration involved a five-step process for teaching letter sound correspondences remotely (adapted from the 95 Percent Group). She also stressed the importance of teaching decoding, not memorization, because once connections are made, automatic retrieval is possible (again based on Kilpatrick). Elia provided several resources on this principle including Heart Word Magic and the Word Work Mat from the UFLI app.

This segment led to a discussion of how to do one-on-one tutoring remotely, using a video from Tiffany Peltier. The video showed students practicing blending and segmenting words.

If the first step in planning interventions is to look at decoding, the second is to look at vocabulary. In this vein, Elia demonstrated a simplified four-step version of Anita Archer’s work: Step 1—introduce the word’s pronunciation and orthographic features; Step 2—introduce

the word's meaning; Step 3—illustrate the word with examples (and non-examples); and, Step 4—check students' understanding. Elia then led the group through these steps with the word “uxorious.”

To finish, Elia provided several more resources related to vocabulary and reading. These included: Interactive Vocabulary Slides, Flipgrid, teaching vocab before reading (e.g., using sentence anagrams), Jamboard, and Loom. Elia then discussed strategies for scaffolding more complex texts and using alternatives to round robin reading. To end, Ms. Elia asked if anyone had questions, but no one did.

Dr. Erb then introduced the next section of the agenda.

Improving Literacy Partnership Grant Team Project Updates

Laura Northrup, Ph.D. (Cleveland State) provided the first update about her department's partnership with Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD). Her team's first goal was to participate in a community of practice with CMSD to identify gaps between preservice teacher preparation and district practice; the team completed this goal in spring 2020. Their second goal was to revise the IHE's 12-hour reading core courses, which they undertook over the summer. Their third goal (creating instructional materials for use in field-based courses) will be completed this fall and their fourth goal (implementing a field-based course in CMSD) will be carried out in spring 2021. Dr. Northrup noted the creation of products including case studies and simulations to use in asynchronous online courses. She stressed the pandemic as a major challenge, but noted that it provided an opportunity to think about remote instruction.

Dr. Raven Cromwell (Marietta College) provided an update on her team's Alliance for Literacy Project. Her team worked with Washington Elementary (Marietta City Schools) to redesign their courses, provide materials and PD to teachers, create field experiences, and to create a STREAM summer camp for students. The team worked with Michelle Elia to create PD opportunities using the Higher Ed toolkit. Dr. Cromwell highlighted the four courses they've worked on redesigning (Foundations of Reading, Phonics, Developmental Literacy, and Reading Assessment and Diagnosis) and discussed the textbooks her team selected. She also noted that her team developed a new template for lesson plans that focuses on evidence-based practices and the science of reading. Cromwell tied her group's work back to *Each Child, Our Future* and discussed the challenges they faced—namely school reorganization in her partner district and COVID. The pandemic resulted in cancellation of the summer camp, but her team instead created “Reading Adventure Packs” for the students to use at home.

Dr. Amy Murdoch (Mount St. Joseph) discussed her team's collaboration with Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS). Her team used a train-the-trainer model in their work with the partner district. Their goals included creating a meaningful partnership with CPS and fostering professional learning together—this centered on a four-part book discussion series of Kilpatrick's works. This proved successful enough that the goal is to expand the book study to other schools. Another goal was to strengthen the reading core at MSJ—this involved aligning their syllabi and improving their practicums and student teaching to ensure that preservice teachers experience the science of reading in the field. Dr. Murdoch demonstrated a tool her team created for reviewing

course content and noted that John Hattie (*Visible Learning*) and Anita Archer (*Explicit Instruction*) guided their work. While the pandemic proved to be a challenge, there were also challenges with scheduling due to administrative issues in the partner district. Murdoch also noted that Dr. Stephanie Stollar had started a national alliance to further the science of reading in higher education.

Dr. Allison Gunter (Muskingum University) was supposed to present next, but she was not in attendance.

Dr. Sara Helfrich (Ohio University) discussed her team's project, CREATinG Readers. Her team partnered with Athens City Schools and Alexander Local Schools. They worked to create new syllabi for all reading courses and aligned these courses with her department's revamped early childhood program. All courses—including a new phonics course—have newly-selected textbooks, activities, and so on. The team's second product was a website, designed to provide space for candidates, mentor teachers, graduates, and other partners to remind themselves about best-practices for teaching reading. Dr. Helfrich discussed challenges related to COVID as well as with changes in her team's membership.

Kristen Italiano (Youngstown State University) provided the report on behalf of PI Dr. Marcia Matanin. She discussed her team's partnership with Youngstown City Schools. Her team redesigned its four core reading courses and selected new texts and new activities; their courses are currently under review with the goal of piloting them in spring 2021. Italiano also discussed the creation of a Literacy Repository that would house information on the science of reading, best practices for literacy PD, and related topics. She reviewed resources that would be relevant for the site and noted that her team would also like to create their own video lessons eventually. While their team experienced challenges due to COVID, the challenges ultimately brought them closer to the partner district. Italiano noted that her team will eventually collect evaluation data from teachers, students, candidates, and faculty involved with the project.

Dr. David Brobeck (Walsh University) discussed his team's "Dive In, Learn, and Change" model. His team partners with two SSTs and one school district and studied classrooms to see what was needed and then to provide support via the SSTs (LETRS training). The large event that their team had planned, the Read-A-Palooza, needed to be converted to a remote event due to COVID. The change enabled them to redirect resources to provide prominent speakers and to invite a greater number of people. One thousand people registered, 972 attended in total, with up to 472 people simultaneously online; the attendees were from 48 states and 15 foreign countries. Brobeck shared a YouTube channel from the Read-A-Palooza with 25 videos related to the science of reading.

The meeting adjourned for 30 minutes (12:00 to 12:30 pm) for lunch.

Dr. Mary Dahlgren, President and Founder, Tools4Reading

Dr. Dahlgren provided the keynote talk. She began with introducing several models for how students learn to read and noted that understanding reading and writing depends on oral language

abilities. Dr. Dahlgren discussed the science of reading and moving from theory to practice, pointing to recommendations for syllabi that she would make later in the presentation.

Citing Dr. Mark Seidenberg's *Language at the Speed of Sight*, Dr. Dahlgren argued that typical children learn in the same way (i.e., they are the same neurologically), thus what they need for learning to read is the same. This argument prefaced a warm-up activity where she asked participants to think about frameworks that guide their understanding of reading development. Dr. Dahlgren then explained Gough and Tunmer's (1986) so-called simple view of reading, and explained that despite being simple it's actually very complex (citing Valentino).

Dr. Dahlgren then explored Scarborough's rope—explaining its components in some detail. She reflected on meeting Scarborough, who had explained that her model was not based on the simple view, but that the two models do dovetail. Dahlgren also explained Scarborough's training as a developmental psychologist, noting that her model was intended to be *dynamic*. What this means is that language comprehension becomes “increasingly strategic” and word recognition becomes “increasingly automatic.” While these are not separate domains, teaching them separately leads to skilled reading. Dahlgren also noted that the relative influence of these components changes over time—e.g., as students become proficient with word recognition, teachers should not continue to teach it.

Dr. Dahlgren next asked, “What distinguishes a proficient reader?” She explained that proficient readers: (1) can identify and manipulate speech sounds in words at the phoneme level; (2) can recognize a new printed word with few exposures; (3) can link sounds with symbols accurately; (4) can process larger chunks of print; and (5) they can recognize words with fluency (automaticity). She then challenged the participants to think about whether teacher candidates leave their programs with the ability to answer the question of how students recognize words after only one or two exposures.

Next, Dr. Dahlgren introduced the Four-Part Processing Model for Word Recognition (often used in LETRS). She noted its grounding in the works of Seidenberg and McLellan as well as Marilyn Adams. Dahlgren explained that research demonstrates that multi-component approaches to literacy instruction (as in the four-part model) work best, but that the particular emphasis on each component should vary according to student needs (citing Aaron and Joshi; Connors, and colleagues). Dr. Dahlgren also explained that content, instructional design, methodology, and intensity of instruction all matter for student outcomes.

In order to make good instructional decisions, Dr. Dahlgren argued, educators need a framework. This framework translates research into practice. Dahlgren explained that the science of reading, as an interdisciplinary approach, provides this framework and enables educators to find the best practices for teaching. Furthermore, Dahlgren argued, the implications of cross-disciplinary collaboration need to be pursued—it is not enough to summarize findings, teams need to translate reading science into effective instructional practices and such teams are more likely than individuals to be successful at finding insights (citing Seidenberg, 2020).

Dr. Dahlgren then explained the role of functional MRIs and other scans in showing where reading takes place in the brain. She explained the science behind recognizing increased neural

activity, where oxygenated blood flow leads to a greater concentration of iron in the blood, which in turn appears on the imaging. She also argued that building neural networks leads to storing more words (citing Dehaene, 2013); once such networks are built, one does not forget how to read. Dahlgren used this science to explain that brain imaging of struggling readers shows they have little activation in the left hemisphere of the brain (where reading occurs). For an intervention, struggling readers are often told to look at a text's accompanying picture to help them make sense of words they do not know. But, as Dahlgren argued, this teaches them to use the right side of the brain when we know that reading is a left brain activity.

Despite the apparent conclusive nature of knowledge codified by the science of reading (in Dahlgren's view), there are many barriers to transferring research into practice. Many professors are not familiar with the science of reading or the concept of evidence-based practice, and scientists have not contributed to a pipeline of knowledge. Dahlgren also noted that publishers do not include the science of reading in their instructional materials and reflected that there is also a societal cynicism towards science and a general lack of understanding of the scientific method.

Dahlgren observed that many people confuse the science of reading with phonics, but that in reality there is an overlap of theoretical models of which phonics is one. Well integrated instruction matters, she argued. Dahlgren suggested that we need to work towards a new science of teaching, to figure out what needs to be learned and how, and when learning of a particular kind needs to occur and for whom.

Returning to the idea of what needs to be on syllabi, Dr. Dahlgren pushed for the inclusion of: (1) foundational concepts about oral and written language learning: how language and reading are related, and why learning to read is not natural; (2) how the process of learning to read unfolds over time (development); and (3) the ways in which good readers differ from poor readers.

Dr. Dahlgren then led the participants in an activity designed to replicate what it is like to read without being able to recognize all the words on a page. She instructed participants to guess at filling in 20 blank words missing from a paragraph. Iteratively, Dahlgren added more words to the text to demonstrate that even when only a few words are missing, reading accurately is incredibly challenging and thus difficulty with reading can be very frustrating for students. Dahlgren gestured to research that shows only one in 10 words can be guessed from context—and that if we can guess the word, it is probably due to having relevant background knowledge.

This activity led to the assertion that word recognition depends on fast, accurate phoneme-grapheme mapping. Dahlgren noted that every step in word-reading development requires deep, secure phonologic integration (citing Kilpatrick, 2015). Dahlgren also asked, why is code emphasis instruction important? To answer, she quoted Dr. Joseph Torgesen (cited in Stainthorp and Tomlinson, 2002) that “there is no comprehension strategy powerful enough to compensate for the inability to read the words.” Dahlgren contended that 95% accuracy is necessary for reading, but that 98% is better.

Dr. Dahlgren then explored the concept that reading is based on oral language. To read, she argued, you need to know about the structure of language—phonology/phonemes, orthography,

morphology, semantics, syntax, discourse, and pragmatics. Dahlgren gestured to Louisa Moats (2009), who argued that language is at the center of all of these. Dahlgren continued that when we read, we go from speech to print—we are wired to process language unconsciously, but we need to learn to read. This led to a discussion of a sound wall with the 44 English phonemes. Dahlgren singled out the vowels (AEIOU) in particular, noting that those five letters correspond to 18 vowel sounds. Phoneme-grapheme mapping is helpful for teaching these correspondences. Dahlgren also considered words' meaning. Addressing semantics and syntax, Dahlgren observed that words are typically remembered through their relationships to other words (to teach this we can give antonyms or synonyms). Understanding this, she argued, helps with planning vocabulary lessons. Importantly, one needs to get students to a place where they can learn new words themselves without direct instruction.

Dr. Dahlgren also noted that knowledge of dyslexia and other learning disabilities is key—educators need to match symptoms to the supports that poor readers need. In this vein, she addressed the various subgroups of poor readers, showing a Venn diagram of phonological deficits, language comprehension issues, and issues with fluency and naming speed (citing Fletcher et al., 2007; Aaron, Joshi, et al., 2008). Dahlgren argued that educators need to find out which area a student struggles with in order to successfully plan interventions. Concurrently, Dahlgren showed a slide illustrating the skilled reading continuum: Only 5% of students learn to read easily; 35% learn with broad instruction; 40-50% of readers need code-based explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction; 10-15% of readers are well below average (often dyslexic) and, for them, instruction needs to be diagnostic, relying on assessments, and have more repetition.

To conclude, Dr. Dahlgren highlighted the importance of assessments for planning instruction. She also covered several “fallacies about differentiation.” Dahlgren argued that there is no research to support: (1) differentiation according to learning style, (2) the cueing system, (3) “level” of reading, (4) interest and motivation, (5) gender, or (6) IQ. As Dahlgren noted, we need to move away from these fallacies and toward science and structured literacy. Such structured literacy includes phonological skills, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and so on. Dahlgren reminded teachers to be smarter than your program, to understand how language works, and to use assessments to combine these elements into good daily instruction.

At the end of the presentation, Dr. Dahlgren shared her website (www.tools4reading.com) and email (mary@tools4reading.com). To close the meeting, Dr. Murray reminded participants to complete the survey (which they will receive via email).