

It is hard to believe that primary school teachers are not explicitly taught at university how to teach reading. This needs to be urgently addressed.

I knew that my daughter was struggling to learn to read - by about March of her grade Prep (foundation) year. The teacher did not know how to help her! And the teacher actively dissuaded us from getting her help. We were told just to read to her and she'll eventually pick it up. We are avid readers in our family and if reading could be picked up just by being read to, that would not have been a problem. Our daughter struggled through the first year, with the teacher mentioning in her report that our daughter needs to work on her writing skills instead of just writing random letters for the middle of her words. She'd get the first letter correct and then have a stab in the dark for the rest of the letters, much in the same way she was taught to read by looking at the first letter of a word and looking at the picture and having a guess. I didn't know how to help her with that. And neither did her teacher! She'll eventually pick it up/ some kids are just a bit slower at getting it and that's normal, we were told.

It wasn't until grade 1 that her reports suddenly showed she was not at level anymore. And I asked her teachers- can we just imagine that she has dyslexia? What would you do to help her and can we just try that? The response was- "I don't know. We are not trained in that".

We have spent a good amount of time and money since then getting speech pathologists to teach my daughter to read and write! I couldn't believe it. Speech pathologists are better equipped to teach this fundamental skill than teachers. Why? How??

Testing showed my daughter lacked phonemic awareness, despite knowing all the graphemes. And she's made good progress through their explicit, structured synthetic phonics program, and the use of decodable readers (she had gotten so good at guessing words based on the pictures that the teachers were surprised her level dropped when decodable words were introduced. She knew even less than they realised because she was motivated and loved books and is quite intelligent and would have a pretty good guess based on the picture cues. But, that is not reading).

Why are teachers not provided with this knowledge in initial teacher education? Evidence based practice instead of a piecemeal arrangement - a bit of phonics here a bit of whole language there and a random list of words to memorise by heart... what a joke!

I felt so angry that my daughter couldn't be supported in learning to read at school. I wanted to be angry at the teachers, but I could not. They are actually really lovely and caring and intelligent, and they are working hard and doing their best. But they don't know how to teach reading explicitly to those for whom reading doesn't come naturally. (And that's a sizeable number of students!) So I want to be angry at the institutions that prepare them for teaching.

A SoundsWrite course can be completed in 4 intensive days as professional development. There surely is time to include something like this within the degree?