



Missouri Language and Literacies Center

University of Missouri

As [Language and Literacies for Social Transformation](#) faculty engaged in the preparation of language and literacy educators, and as co-founders of the [Missouri Language and Literacy Center](#), we stand in solidarity with the comprehensive statement on [Reading and the Teaching of Reading](#) put forth by Reading Committee Members at the Boston College Lynch School of Education and Human Development in the Department of Teaching, Curriculum, & Society. As members of the Department of [Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum](#) in the [College of Education and Human Development](#) at Mizzou, we also share their resolutions to the knowledge, skills and commitments needed to promote [Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity \(IDE\)](#) in the preparation of teachers of reading.

Like our colleagues, we recognize reading as a complex process that extends well beyond a “component” view of reading and comprehension development. We similarly understand reading as a dynamic socio-cultural and socio-political process, “wherein readers construct meaning through lenses of culture and personal experience as much as through decoding and language proficiency.” Alongside our [MO Standards for the Preparation of Educators](#), our language and literacy courses are similarly guided by an expansive and equity focused view of language and literacies that resists binary thinking and “either/or” discourses that too often limit a reading teacher’s toolkit. We embrace the teaching of reading as *both* focused on the skills needed to decode and comprehend print *and* inclusive of culturally, racially, and linguistically responsive approaches that prepare Missouri readers to participate in and contribute to a globally networked, multilingual and multimodal world.

We invite readers to explore relevant literacy research organization statements and resources on reading and the teaching of reading to further inform understanding of reading, the teaching of reading, and the preparation of teachers of reading.

[International Literacy Association Executive Summary on SOR](#)
[International Literacy Association Position Statements and Briefs](#)
[Reading Research Quarterly](#)
[Literacy Research Association](#)
[Literacy Research Association Critical Conversations](#)
[Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals](#)
[National Council of Teachers of English](#)

In solidarity,

Language and Literacies for Social Transformation Faculty
Missouri Language and Literacies Center Co-founders



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development
Department of Teaching, Curriculum, & Society

Position Statement on Reading and the Teaching of Reading

All of our teacher education programs at Boston College are grounded in four unifying themes that represent our shared values: advancing equity and justice, promoting knowledge co-construction, inquiring into practice, and embracing an ethic of care. Our intention in this statement is to clarify the assumptions and research-informed practices *about reading* that are central to our teacher preparation programs at the LSEHD at Boston College.

The teaching of reading has a long history of debate in the United States and elsewhere. With sharply diverging viewpoints, the current discussion is particularly contentious. Key questions include: What does it mean to engage in the act of reading? How should teachers teach reading to various individuals and groups, including young learners, students experiencing reading difficulties, culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and other traditionally under-served students? What professional guidelines or standards should be used to guide and evaluate the way teacher education programs prepare prospective teachers to teach reading? Recognizing the range of communicative technologies and digital practices ushered in by the 21st century, responses to these questions become even more complicated.

Given the many controversies, we offer this general statement about the act of reading and reading instruction to inform our colleagues, prospective teacher candidates, the school-based educators with whom we work, and any others who are interested in our position and approach. We work from the premise that access to literacy is a basic human right of all school students. However, we recognize that some common school practices in the teaching of reading do not advance equity or justice. This statement communicates our view of the act of reading and the teaching of reading in keeping with these ideas.

The Act of Reading

We consider the act of reading, particularly in schools, as a sociocultural and sociopolitical practice embedded in texts and activities. We recognize that the United States is a multilingual nation and yet, the vast majority of reading instruction is delivered in English-only, which disadvantages many multilingual learners. We see reading from a broad perspective, informed by personal experiences, language background, histories of participation, and the settings in which reading takes place (e.g., home, school, houses of worship, communities). Simultaneously, we recognize the role of skill-building in learning to read, and we respect the contributions of past and current foundational reports about the nature of reading and reading instruction. However, we also note that the reliance of these reports on primarily experimental and correlational

research designs necessarily defines reading in a narrow way and thus limits our understanding of the many complexities of the act of reading.

In many languages, reading requires decoding words and comprehending the language of any given text. It also requires making sense of cues from a varying array of graphemic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of language. However, to understand the act of reading in today's world requires an even more complex view of reading. This complexity is grounded in the varied modalities of texts, which are increasingly digital, visual, sonic, and interactive. Given that the act of reading is socio-cultural and socio-political, we understand it as a process wherein readers construct meaning through lenses of culture and personal experience as much as through decoding and language proficiency.

A complex view of reading requires us to recognize the fact that the school-age population in the U.S. today is increasingly multilingual and multidialectal. Many students possess a range of language and literacy skills in many languages and dialects, which they should not be expected to check at the door when they arrive at school. This linguistic range interacts with individual differences and special educational needs, which adds further dimensions to traditionally simple views of reading.

The Teaching of Reading

Only some teachers have teaching reading as one of their primary instructional objectives (e.g., early childhood and elementary classroom teachers, reading specialists, special educators). However, all teachers are teachers of reading in the sense that they support students in navigating a variety of texts, including discipline-specific texts. Effective teachers of reading understand theories of reading and research-informed instruction, and they are skilled in multiple instructional approaches. Given that individuals vary in their development of the skills associated with reading, effective instruction relies on knowledge and use of culturally and linguistically responsive reading assessment practices.

Teachers need to understand reading as a developmental process. All initial readers require dedicated reading instruction with support for language and comprehension extending throughout the school years. For multilingual learners, some of whom are identified as dual language learners or English learners by their districts and schools, instruction needs to include emphasis on the development of language skills, including an explicit focus on vocabulary and comprehension. Additionally, students' multiple language skills and literacy should be considered and used to support the learning of English and English literacy. Further, there is a possibility of shared linguistic knowledge across languages, which may facilitate development of broad literacy skills. For students who struggle with reading, including the approximately 5% who receive special education for reading, effective reading instruction and support includes screening and assessment based on a valid and reliable normed population to inform instruction with progress monitoring.

Essential components of reading instruction, regardless of program model or language of instruction, include:

- Focusing on emergent literacy skills, including opportunities for children to develop language skills, motivation to read, appreciation for literary forms, print awareness, and knowledge of letters and/or symbols
- Integrating the commonly recognized components of reading including: phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency in any language (not just spoken), as well as vocabulary and comprehension strategies
- Emphasizing that reading is more complex than, and extends well beyond, a “component” view of reading and comprehension development
- Supporting reading skills in multiple languages including affirmation and incorporation of students’ cultural, linguistic, and experiential resources
- Considering the larger contexts of literacy, such as the interrelated domains of linguistic expression, reception, and social and community engagement
- Incorporating a range of texts, genres, text structures, and modalities
- Using assessments that are systematic, developmentally appropriate, and based on multiple sources of data

Reading Committee Members

Marilyn Cochran-Smith, Chair
Susan Bruce
Mariela Páez
Patrick Proctor
David Scanlon
Jon Wargo