

LITERACY TODAY

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Focus on Reading

- Understanding the role of research in reading instruction
- Looking at what we can all do to eliminate book deserts
- Examining third-grade reading laws
- Finding more time for reading instruction





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READING UNITES US

*i*n the January/February issue of *Literacy Today*, we included coverage of our 2020 What's Hot in Literacy Report, which—in addition to determining the most critical topics for shaping the future of literacy—gave voice to more than 1,400 respondents around the world regarding the greatest challenges they face and what supports they desire.

In this March/April issue, we focus on one critical aspect of the report: ensuring excellence in reading instruction.

Reading is what unites us, and so this issue spotlights both the joys and the mechanics involved in the act of reading. In doing so, we focus on how reading shapes us as well as the tools and building blocks needed for that to happen.

Although reading unites us, in some cases—and only because we're rightfully so passionate about the topic—it can seemingly divide us. That's why we can't

put out a special issue on reading without acknowledging the conversations taking place in the literacy field about evidence-based reading instruction. I encourage you to read Amanda Goodwin's article on page 14 about how ILA and our *Reading Research Quarterly* journal are responding to help add clarity to these discussions. Also be sure to keep an eye out for the September/October issue of *Literacy Today*, which will be an additional special issue focusing on the role of research in reading instruction. Do you have a topic you want to see included, or are you interested in contributing? Let us know by emailing literacytoday@reading.org.

Warmly,

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Here's to Teachers: A Reaction to ILA's What's Hot Report

The new What's Hot [in Literacy] Report reads like a history of my work as a teacher, instructional coach, staff developer, adjunct professor, literacy specialist, and now literacy consultant. The common thread that unifies my work is a focus on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and, more recently, 21st-century literacy. Like many of the respondents, I believe that all students have a right to literacy. I also have been fortunate to participate in learning opportunities resulting in the building of deep teacher knowledge and I know it is what teachers want for themselves and their students. However, with knowledge comes agency and advocacy. And that is not welcome in settings where a focus continues to rest on short-term strategies for improving standardized tests scores. For this reason, I work to bring teachers the professional learning they want and need outside of the large bureaucratic structures that make this kind of learning difficult, if not impossible.

Yes to equity and early intervention! Yes to teachers empowered to identify their own professional learning needs! Yes to an end to the endless debate over balanced literacy vs. systematic phonics when we all know kids need both! Yes to culturally relevant texts and teachers who know how to select and use them! Yes to research-based culturally relevant teaching! And here's to teachers bravely breaking away from the status quo and finding their true colleagues and peers who will help them be successful with all students!

—Mary Morgan, ESL Teacher and Literacy Specialist, Louisville, KY