

Using the Recommendations of the [Right to Read Inquiry Report](#)

to ensure that no student in our care is denied their basic human right to read

Quotes from Right to Read Inquiry Report		
Never, in a million years did I think our public education system would pick and choose which children are worth helping and shrug their shoulders and leave others behind. - Parent	It is our job to get kiddies reading. One of the things we do as educators is teach students how to read. Getting to all students regardless of their profile is a moral imperative. - Board administrator	I have had a front-row seat to see the emotional distress, mental health disorders such as school avoidance, anxiety, depression, and suicidality that are a result of unaddressed reading problems at school...As you know, educational level and literacy are social determinants of health and economic outcomes. We know that a system-wide approach needs to be adopted to inform the development of policies that can adequately solve this problem – and it is solvable. - Pediatrician

The key requirements to successfully teach and support all students are:

1. **Curriculum and instruction** that reflects the scientific research on the best approaches to teach word reading. It is critical to adequately prepare and support teachers to deliver this instruction.
2. **Early screening** of all students using common, standardized evidence-based screening assessments twice a year from kindergarten to Grade 2, to identify students at risk for reading difficulties for immediate, early, tiered interventions.
3. **Reading interventions** that are early, evidence-based, fully implemented and closely monitored and available to **ALL** students who need them, and ongoing interventions for all readers with word reading difficulties.
4. **Accommodations** (and modifications to curriculum expectations) should not be used as a substitute for teaching students to read. Accommodations should always be provided along with evidence-based curriculum and reading interventions.
5. **Professional assessments**, particularly psychoeducational assessments, should be timely and based on clear, transparent, written criteria that focus on the student's response to intervention.

Curriculum and Instruction

There is a large body of scientific research that defines the qualities of effective and ineffective reading teaching methods. Statistically speaking, in areas where ineffective methods are in place, 30% of students will suffer from reading failure. In areas where effective methods are in place, the number of students suffering from reading failure drops to 5%.

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Systematic and Progressive	Teachers' instruction in letter-sound relationships and how to use these to read words should be planned and sequential so that children have time to learn, practice and master them.	
Explicit instruction in phonemic awareness	The National Reading Panel found that teaching two phonemic awareness skills (blending and segmentation) had stronger effects than teaching more and varied phonological awareness skills. Critically, incorporating letters as early as possible, when students have learned grapheme-phoneme associations, into instruction teaching children how to blend and segment phonemes, is more effective for increasing children's phonemic awareness, decoding, and spelling skills.	
Explicit instruction in phonics	<p>Research has shown that systematic and explicit phonics instruction is the most effective way to develop children's ability to identify words in print.</p> <p>Critically, incorporating letters as early as possible, when students have learned grapheme-phoneme associations, into instruction teaching children how to blend and segment phonemes, is more effective for increasing children's phonemic awareness, decoding, and spelling skills.</p> <p>High-quality, systematic phonics work means teaching beginner readers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grapheme/phoneme (letter/sound) correspondences (the alphabetic principle) in a clearly defined, incremental sequence • To apply the skill of blending (synthesising) phonemes in order as they sound out each grapheme • To segment words into their constituent phonemes to spell out the graphemes that represent those phonemes.[669] 	

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Teaching methods to improve fluency.	...practice with reading words in stories to build word-reading accuracy and speed.	
Teaching vocabulary	Teach using explicit instruction, morphology, word families, and multisensory teaching methods	
Teaching strategies for reading comprehension	...teaching cognitive strategies [was found] to be an effective component of reading comprehension instruction.	
Phonological awareness teaching begins in pre-kindergarten	It is taught through methods "such as singing and learning nursery rhymes, learning to recognize and produce rhyming words, and playing with the chunks of sound that make up words, like syllables and beginning sounds."	
Phonological awareness taught in kindergarten	<p>The evidence is clear that instruction in phonological awareness, letter knowledge and sounds, and simple decoding should be included in daily instruction for all Kindergarten students.</p> <p>Students need to develop the critical phonemic awareness skills of identifying phonemes in the beginning, end and middle of words, and then blending and segmenting individual phonemes in words</p> <p>Kindergarten students should "be taught, using engaging and age-appropriate methods, letter names and letter-sound associations, and how to use these to read simple words.</p> <p>instruction in phonemic awareness, sound-letter knowledge and phonics</p>	

<p>Alphabetic knowledge taught kindergarten</p>	<p>Alphabetic knowledge: For children just starting formal schooling, teachers need to provide instruction and activities that help all students learn the letter names, sounds and shapes and to start printing. Teachers can help children have fun with building their alphabet knowledge.</p>	
<p>Access to evidence-based curriculum and programs</p>	<p>Teachers need to be provided with an evidence-based curriculum and programs that lay out the scope and sequence of phonics instruction best suited to developing readers, and instructional routines and lesson plans that can build confidence in their phonics teaching. This frees the teacher from scrambling to develop what and how they will teach each day, to focusing on teaching it well, and gauging students' progress.</p>	
<p>Teachers are trained in effective reading instruction practices</p>	<p>What good reading teachers need to know</p> <p>Dr. Moats identifies a core curriculum for teacher preparation and in-service professional development with four main components:[778]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Knowing the basics of reading psychology and reading development 2. Understanding language structure for both word recognition and language comprehension 3. Applying best practices concerning all components of reading instruction 4. Using validated, reliable, efficient assessments to inform classroom teaching.[779] 	

Ineffective Methods – Remove these if they are in your system

Ineffective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
<p>3 Cueing System -guess word from pictures, the rest of the sentence, and letters (first letter of word)</p>	<p>Reading science does not support approaches that rely on teaching children to read words using discovery and inquiry-based learning such as cueing systems.</p>	
<p>Balanced Literacy</p>	<p>...balanced literacy proposes that immersing students in spoken and written language will build foundational reading skills – but significant research has not shown this to be effective for learning to read words accurately and efficiently.</p> <p>...whole-language derivatives are still popular, but they continue to fail the students who most need to benefit from the findings of reading research</p> <p>...the term “balanced literacy” was adopted to conceal the true nature of whole language programs</p>	
<p>Using levelled books instead of decodable books</p>	<p>Balanced literacy or comprehensive balanced literacy approaches, cueing systems and other whole language beliefs and practices are not supported by the science of reading for teaching foundational reading skills. They have been found ineffective in many studies, expert reviews and reports for teaching all students to read</p>	

Early Screening

Early screening tools are quick tests that can be given to students to determine if they are at risk of reading failure. Early identification of dyslexic students who are struggling with reading is critical because the window for rewiring their brains so that they can reach reading fluency closes with age. Early screening tools tell us which students need to receive more reading instruction or gain immediate access to a proven reading remediation program.

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Evidence-based Screener	<p>These instruments have established reliability and validity standards to increase confidence in their effectiveness.</p> <p>The panel cited three specific screening tools and the corresponding studies that show they include measures that accurately predict future student performance. These tools are DIBELS,[888] Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP),[889] and the Texas Primary Reading Inventory.[890] The Rapid Naming Subtests of the CTOPP could also be included as these predict later word-reading accuracy and fluency difficulties.</p>	
Early – Screening in 2 nd half of kindergarten	<p>Earlier interventions are more effective because students’ response to intervention declines as they become older.[876]</p> <p>Schools must screen every student early (starting in Kindergarten Year 1) using evidence-based screening tools.</p>	
Kindergarten Screener assesses letter knowledge and phonemic awareness	Kindergarten screening batteries should include measures assessing letter knowledge and phonemic awareness	

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Screening in grade 1 at start and at middle of year	Screening students is most effective when evidence-based measures are used at specific intervals" Screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the year	
Grade 1 Screener at start of year assesses phonemic awareness, decoding, word identification and text reading	As children move into Grade 1, screening batteries should include measures assessing phonemic awareness, decoding, word identification and text reading	
On the Grade 1 Screener at mid-year, the decoding, word identification, and text reading includes speed as an outcome	By the second semester of Grade 1, the decoding, word identification, and text reading should include speed as an outcome.	
Screening in grade 2 at start and at middle of year	Screen students in Kindergarten through Grade 2	
Grade 2 screener assesses word reading and passage reading and is timed	Grade 2 batteries should include measures involving word reading and passage reading. These measures are typically timed	
All students are screened	Universal screening makes sure all students, regardless of their family background or being noticed by teachers, are systematically flagged when foundational word-reading skills are not developing as needed.	
Those administering the screener are trained to do so	School boards make sure staff (for example, teachers) administering the screening tools receive comprehensive, sustained and job-embedded professional learning on the specific screening tool or tools that they will be administering, and on how to interpret the results.	

<p> Screener results lead quickly to a proven evidence-based intervention for those in need</p>	<p> Screening tools should be used to identify students at risk of failing to learn to read words adequately, and to get these children into immediate, effective evidence-based interventions.</p>	
---	---	--

Ineffective Methods – Remove these if they are in your system

<p>Ineffective Methods</p>	<p>Reference from Right to Read Report</p>	<p>In Place? No, Partially, Yes</p>
<p>Wait-and-See”</p>	<p>Waiting to see if a student has difficulty learning to read does not work.</p>	
<p>Running Records</p>	<p>There is no evidence to support the validity of running records or related approaches. Their psychometric properties^[982] are questionable, and they fail to identify many children at risk for word-reading failure.^[983] This assessment approach does not measure the skills students should be taught to learn to read. Beginning readers should not be using meaning, structural and visual cues to read words.^[984]</p>	

Reading Interventions

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Early interventions are provided	Kindergarten to Grade 1	
Early intervention program used is evidenced based	Early, evidence-based interventions targeting the foundational skills of sound-letter knowledge, phonemic awareness, decoding and word-reading accuracy and fluency, including more advanced orthographic patterns, syllables and morphemes	
Later interventions are provided (Grades 2–5; 6–8; 9 and above)	Grades 2–5; 6–8; 9 and above	
Effective Instruction is happening in the regular classroom	A science-based curriculum builds solid foundational word-reading, fluency and spelling skills for all students. Curriculum that promotes a different approach results in too many students needing interventions and confusion for students receiving those interventions.	
Small group instruction in Tier 2	Tier 2 should be completed with a small group of students, with sufficient time and intensity for an explicit, evidence-based foundational skills program/intervention	
Student progress is monitored and used to inform programming decisions	School boards should collect valid and reliable data on students' immediate and long-term outcomes, to inform their decisions about individual student programming and efforts to evaluate program effectiveness	
Educators are properly trained	Educators providing interventions need thorough and effective training in program delivery, with initial and ongoing coaching	
Interventions are available to all students who require them	School boards should make sure every school has at least one evidence-based reading intervention that can be implemented with students in each grade level and for each tier, and interventions are available to all students who require them. Students should not have to change schools to receive evidence-based interventions.	

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Use R.T.I. framework	School boards should provide small-group early and later interventions (tier 2) for students when evidence-based classroom instruction (tier 1) is not adequate for them to develop average-level foundational word-reading skills. School boards should provide more intensive and individualized interventions (tier 3) to students who do not respond adequately to tier 1 instruction and 2 interventions, based on progress monitoring with standardized measures of reading. At tier 3, a professional (psychoeducational or speech-language pathology) assessment could be used to fully assess the learning challenges, but should not be required or delay tier 3 intervention (see recommendations in section 12, Professional assessments).	
Mandate Accountability Measures	School boards should make sure clear standards are in place to communicate with students and parents about available interventions. If a student is receiving a reading intervention, the school should communicate details about the intervention such as information about the program, the timing, expected length of the intervention, results from progress monitoring and what steps the school will take if the student does not respond well to the intervention	
Collaborative Teams	School boards should build collaborative teams from personnel with knowledge and experience in the science of reading. Interdisciplinary teams may bring together special education and elementary teachers, psychologists and SLPs who have advanced their knowledge and experience in this area. These teams can develop and provide comprehensive, sustained and job-embedded professional learning on the fundamental processes related to reading, early reading skills and the needs of learners with reading difficulties.	

Ineffective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
"Wait and See"	<p>Research has clearly shown the benefits from intervening earlier.[1004] For example, in one study, students who received interventions in Grades 1 and 2 made gains in foundational word-reading skills at almost twice the rate of students receiving the intervention in Grade 3, relative to control groups.[1005]</p> <p>When students in Kindergarten and/or Grade 1 are not keeping up through classroom instruction and differentiation, tier 2 interventions should be used to prevent long-term reading difficulties. Waiting to see if these students will catch up without an effective foundational skills intervention is not following evidence-based practices.</p>	
Reading Recovery Program	<p>The OHRC is concerned with school boards' use of Reading Recovery® because it focuses on cueing systems, levelled readers and running records. There has been more research on Reading Recovery® than LLI. However, the adequacy of the program and research has been consistently contested.[1021]</p> <p>Programs without a strong evidence base or that are based on the three-cueing approach should not be used for students with reading difficulties. Ineffective programs will delay student progress.</p>	
Prioritizing students with learning disability designation	<p>Many students face barriers to accessing effective interventions. In some cases, boards prioritize interventions for students with a learning disability diagnosis, which can be difficult to receive, or get in a timely way, unless obtained privately at significant cost. Other problematic criteria include requiring students to have average to above-average intelligence and/or no other disability (such as ADHD, ASD, MID). These entry requirements are based on a mistaken belief that interventions will only be effective or be more effective for these students, which research has consistently contradicted.[1070]</p>	

Reading Intervention Program Suggestions from OHRC

SRA Open Court Reading

Wilson Foundations®

Firm Foundations

Remediation Plus Systems

SRA Early Interventions in Reading Skills

Empower™ Reading (spelling and decoding)

SRA Reading Mastery and Corrective Reading

SpellRead™

Wilson Just Words®

Wilson Reading System® 4th Edition

Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing® (LiPS®)

Online programs and resources

Some boards use online programs that either have research evidence or are aligned with the approaches outlined in this report. The inquiry does not recommend online programs in place of teacher-led classroom instruction and tiered interventions. Rather, school boards should explore how online programs can be used to enhance effective, teacher-led instruction and interventions in tiers 1 through 3.

ABRACADABRA

PlayRoly

Parker Phonics

Lexia® Core 5® Reading

Accommodations

Accommodations do not teach students to read. Instead, they enable students who are suffering from reading failure but to access their learning in the regular classroom. Accommodations are not a substitute for effective classroom teaching or reading interventions. Schools must provide accommodations **alongside** evidence-based curriculum and intervention strategies.

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Use transparent and efficient accommodation procedures	Schools must never provide accommodations as a substitute for interventions that provide highly systematic and explicit reading instruction. If students need accommodations, schools should provide them together with interventions. Providing assistive technology without reading interventions is damaging, because students lose the opportunity to learn to read. It is also damaging in a more insidious way: it can mask the student’s reading difficulties. [1094]	
Assistive technology is available to all students	Assistive technology (AT) accommodations, including devices like a computer tablet or smartphone, and software such as screen readers	
Non-AT accommodations are available to all students	Non-AT accommodations, including, for example, extra time for tests or assignments and assistive services such as a note-taker.	
Appropriate training on accommodation tools is provided	Appropriate training for the student and/or their teacher may be necessary to successfully implement accommodations	
Monitoring in Place	educators should regularly monitor and evaluate them to make sure they are helping to improve the student’s learning experience and performance	
Accommodations respect students’ privacy, dignity and individuality	Accommodations should not isolate or stigmatize students. Students with learning disabilities are at increased risk of bullying, victimization, rejection and social isolation, [1097] and there is evidence that children and youth with learning disabilities are significantly more likely to be bullied than their peers. [1098] Schools must account for these circumstances when developing respectful accommodations by making sure there are proactive and reactive strategies to address bullying.	

Ineffective Methods – Remove these if they are in your system

Ineffective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Students who need extra time must give up their free time to get it	Accommodations can also be ineffective if students feel they are punitive. For example, we learned from educators and other professionals that teachers struggle with accommodating students with "extra time." To receive extra time for an assignment or test without missing out on other lessons, students usually have to give up part or all of their recess or lunch, and "feel like they are being punished and are missing out."	
Accommodations are hard to use	Some students and parents noted that text-to-speech software with a computerized voice can be hard to understand. One parent said that voice-to-text software can be "sloppy in a classroom setting" because it "picks up all noise in the room" and "students are not shown how to use it effectively to communicate in writing."	
Use of long passwords	Sometimes passwords assigned to students for their devices are unchangeable and "are something in the neighbourhood of 18 nonsense characters long," which is "impractical/obstruction[ist]" for students with reading difficulties	

Accommodation Suggestions

AT accommodations for students with reading difficulties include:

- Audio books and alternate format publications
- Optical character recognition/scanning devices
- Personal listening systems
- Portable devices (laptops/tablets)
- Proofreading programs
- Speech-to-text devices/speech recognition programs
- Talking spell-checkers and electronic dictionaries
- Text-to-speech devices/speech synthesizers/screen readers
- Word prediction programs.[1100]

Non-AT accommodations for students with reading difficulties include:

- Agendas or graphic organizers
- Chunking (assignments broken into smaller tasks)
- Early notice for tests
- More check-ins by the teacher or other educators
- More space for written answers
- More time to complete assignments or tests
- No penalties for spelling errors
- Oral instruction and evaluation
- Quiet area to complete work
- Receiving class notes and other study materials in advance
- Repeating/re-phrasing instructions where needed
- Scribing
- Submitting answers in point form.

Professional Assessments

Professional assessments are called psychoeducational assessments or psychological assessments. They are done by psychologists and speech-language pathologists.

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Professional assessments can happen as early as Grade 1 or 2	Universal early screening will flag students who need evidence-based structured literacy interventions (explicit and systematic programs that target phonemic awareness, decoding and accurate and quick word reading). If a student is not responding appropriately to such interventions, a professional assessment referral may be appropriate. This can happen as early as Grade 2, or following intense intervention in Grade 1. In the meantime, schools should provide more intensive interventions.	
Professional assessments is done AFTER intense intervention is tried if student is not responding	If a student is not responding appropriately to such interventions, a professional assessment referral may be appropriate. This can happen as early as Grade 2, or following intense intervention in Grade 1. In the meantime, schools should provide more intensive interventions.	
Assessment is not needed to get access to reading intervention	Professional assessments should not be a pre-condition for a student to receive intervention, accommodation or other special education supports. Yet, the inquiry found that they are often required, even if official board policies do not say so	
Use the term "dyslexia"	The Ministry should amend PPM 8 to encourage identifying the subtypes of learning disability/academic areas that are impaired, and explicitly recognizing the term "dyslexia" for learning disabilities that affect word reading and spelling.	
Clear, transparent referral process documents	School boards should create clear, transparent, written criteria and formalize their processes for referring students with suspected reading disabilities for psychoeducational assessment based on the young student's response to intervention (RTI)	
Tracking by learning disability/academic area that is impaired	School boards should track students by the learning disability/academic area that is impaired, and should explicitly recognize the term dyslexia for learning disabilities that affect word reading and spelling.	

Effective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
Manage Wait List and establish reasonable timelines	<p>Assessments are completed in an equitable and timely manner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish reasonable timelines for completing psychological and speech language assessments b. Maintain centralized, electronic wait lists at the board level c. Use the centralized, electronic wait lists to monitor and manage wait times, and where necessary, reassign assessments to specialists who have smaller workloads d. Implement a plan to clear backlogs. 	

Ineffective Methods – Remove these if they are in your system

Ineffective Methods	Reference from Right to Read Report	In Place? No, Partially, Yes
No assessment until grade 3 or 4	For example, there is a common, but incorrect, belief that a student must be in at least Grade 3 before they should be considered for a psychoeducational assessment for a reading disability	
Long waits	Long waits for students to be assessed or served by psychology and speech-language professionals	
No system to manage wait times	A failure to implement systems for centralizing and managing wait times, which prevents boards from prioritizing students for assessment	
Ban on summer testing	A failure to conduct assessments in the summer months, which would help bring down wait times	
Students with highest behavioural needs placed first	Students with the highest behavioural needs are placed first.	
Students with reading challenges are recommended to seek private assessments	Students with reading challenges are recommended to seek private assessments as the wait is indefinite	

Works Cited

Government of Ontario. (2022, February). Right to read inquiry report. Right to Read inquiry report | Ontario Human Rights Commission. Retrieved May 2, 2022, from <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/right-to-read-inquiry-report>