

Sent to Moms

Phonics: Parents, Calm Down.

***Moms* (“10 Tips To Helps Kids With Language & Phonics”, Sept 7) has swallowed the phonics propaganda whole and advocates a life dominated by phonics: For example, children are to sing the alphabet throughout the day (even when washing their hands), have phonics play-dates, and parents are advised to incorporate phonics “everywhere you go.” Phonics does not deserve this kind of attention or respect.**

In their public pronouncements, phonics supporters fail to mention studies that show (1) many children learn to read very well without phonics (2) many phonics rules are complicated and are hard to teach and remember (3) heavy phonics teaching only improves scores on tests in which children pronounce words presented on lists. Heavy phonics teaching does not improve scores on tests in which children have to understand what they read.

Children who hear lots of interesting stories and develop a pleasure reading habit do very well in phonics tests as well as on tests of reading comprehension.

Learning some straight-forward basic rules of phonics may be useful, but most of our knowledge of phonics is the result of reading; the more complex rules of phonics are subconsciously acquired as children read and understand books.

This is the position of Anderson, Hiebert, Scott and Wilkinson, authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, a book widely considered to provide strong support for phonics instruction:

“...phonics instruction should aim to teach only the most important and regular of letter-to-sound relationships ... once the basic relationships have been taught, the best way to get children to refine and extend their knowledge of letter-sound correspondences is through repeated opportunities to read. If this position is correct, then much phonics instruction is overly subtle and probably unproductive.”

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Some suggested reading:

Anderson, R., Hiebert, E. Scott, J. and Wilkinson I. 1985. *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. Center for the Study of Reading.

Coles, G. 2019. Cryonics Phonics: Inequality's Little Helper. *New Politics*, 28(3)

Goodman, K. 1993. *Phonics Phacts*. Heineman

Krashen, S. 2009. Does Intensive Decoding Instruction Contribute to Reading Comprehension? *Knowledge Quest* 37 (4): 72-74, <https://tinyurl.com/jc6x8mk>

Smith, F. 2004. *Understanding Reading*. Sixth Edition, Erlbaum

Original paper: <https://www.moms.com/language-phonics-help-for-kids/>