



Melody Tankersley, PhD

Senior Vice President and Provost

Science of Reading Presentation
To the
Ohio House Higher Education Committee

Melody Tankersley, Senior Vice President and Provost,
Kent State University

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a status update about Kent State University's progress toward meeting our requirements regarding teaching the science of reading. I am Melody Tankersley and I have the honor of serving as Senior Vice President and Provost of Kent State University. I am also a professor of special education and have published on how to identify evidenced-based practices in education.

You have heard from several public and non-profit schools so far, and so I will be brief and to the point. Kent State University will be prepared for the audit process in January, and the audit will show that we are preparing excellent teachers who are experts in the science of reading. How do I know this? Let me tell you where we are now:

Kent State University's educators who teach literacy courses in the Early Childhood, Middle Childhood, Intervention Specialist, Adolescent Education and K-12 Reading Endorsement programs will complete the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Science of Reading Professional Development pathways (22.5 hours for Pathway A) by December 2024. The majority of literacy faculty will complete this professional development as a group this summer via Zoom by the end of July. We chose this professional development because we believe it is vital that we hear the same message as our K-12 partners. After faculty professional development this summer, we intend to develop new assessment and observation protocols to ensure we are specifically targeting structured literacy across all of our teacher education programs. Additionally, we have engaged an outside consultant to review our syllabi to ensure we are following the Science of Reading. Our outside consultant is Lisa Lenhart of the Structured Literacy Center at the University of Akron, who actually presented two weeks ago in this very committee.

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For students, structured literacy was incorporated into coursework beginning in Fall 2023. Through fieldwork observations, we are able to see students becoming adept practitioners of the approach. We are ensuring consistency in pedagogy and content throughout our department by having faculty collaborate on courses with multiple sections, with only small variations in the syllabi. Following our professional development this summer, lead faculty from each program will revise existing syllabi. Once revised, these syllabi will be shared and refined amongst faculty teaching the same courses to ensure consistency. Literacy faculty will continue to meet throughout the year to ensure adherence to Science of Reading principles in courses. All of these measures will ensure that our preservice teachers will be prepared. We are further tracking their progress as all faculty analyze student scores on the Ohio Assessment for Educators in Foundations of Reading.

Further, scores on signature assessments/observation protocols are compared and discussed by each program annually, leading to impactful change in the way we teach and address the Science of Reading. For example, in the K-12 Reading Endorsement, rubric scores on a paper on the Science of Reading are collected and analyzed each year to ensure students are building their knowledge on this body of work. In the Middle Childhood Education program, students with a concentration in English Language Arts spend two weeks in a field experience where they video themselves teaching at least three lessons. A rubric tied to the Science of Reading is used to evaluate the student's action in the classroom with feedback to help them improve. Both of these changes were made in the past two years, allowing faculty to meaningfully assess student learning and application of the Science of Reading.

To be clear, we do not teach three cueing. We do not use textbooks that are not science based nor teach from texts by authors who advocate cueing like Marie Clay, Fountas and Pinnell, or Lucy Calkins. We do not teach running records as part of our literacy coursework. Since 2020, the 1,113 graduates from our program have been fully prepared to teach the Science of Reading. Last academic year, we graduated 386, making Kent State the number one educator of new teachers in Northeast Ohio .

Before concluding, I would like to quickly address Kent State University's recent failing grade on the Fordham National Council on Teacher Quality Science of Reading implementation assessment. After reviewing the results of that assessment, we believe that old and out of date syllabi were reviewed. We have since resubmitted all Early Childhood Education syllabi for review, confident that changes made in the 2023-2024 academic year will reflect positively on KSU's efforts to embrace the Science of Reading.

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the committee, I hope that this update on the great work that Kent State University and our College of Education, Health and Human Services are doing has been helpful, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.