

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Testimony before the House Higher Education Committee

Dr. Karla Zadnik
Interim Executive Vice President and Provost
The Ohio State University

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and House Higher Education Committee members. My name is Karla Zadnik, and I am the Interim Provost of The Ohio State University. I have also served in other leadership roles at the university, including as Dean of the College of Optometry for almost 10 years, and currently as Interim Dean of the College of Public Health.

It is a privilege to appear before you to discuss the important work Ohio State is doing to ensure that children in Ohio are learning to read.

The Ohio State University commends the General Assembly and the Governor for their focus on improving the literacy of Ohio's children. As Ohio's flagship, land-grant university, we take our role in helping the state achieve this goal seriously, as demonstrated by our expertise in the Science of Reading and our history of embedding it in our teacher training programs.

The call for universities to align their teacher preparation programs with the Science of Reading has been clear and consistent. The new requirements in HB 33 have spurred activity on our campus and at peer universities across the state. The Ohio Department of Higher Education, through its ongoing engagement with universities, has provided helpful direction and guidance as we seek to work together to give the next generation of teachers the best training possible. Ohio State's goal is simple: to continue to graduate excellent teachers with strong backgrounds in science-based literacy practices that will help all Ohio children.

Today I want to provide some clarity about Ohio State's efforts to improve the training we already provide to Ohio's future teachers and detail some actions we have already taken to align with the Science of Reading.

Ohio State's Educator Preparation Programs draw students from the Colleges of Arts and Sciences; Education and Human Ecology; Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; Nursing; and Social Work.

Since 2020, Ohio State has prepared approximately 400 new teacher candidates annually plus about 100 graduates in other educator licensure areas, such as school administrators and student services personnel.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, Ohio State had 1,478 total enrolled teacher candidates; 479 of those students attended one of our regional campuses. We graduated 439 of those educators into the workforce this year.

Ohio State's educator prep students are well prepared to teach reading. Rather than being trained in a packaged, commercial program, Ohio State teacher graduates are instructed in what's commonly called "the reading core." Our students learn about reading and writing development, reading processes, and instructional practices in alignment with each topic's scientific research base. Our program emphasizes evidence-aligned content and pedagogical knowledge across a number of areas, including the reading process, phonics and word study, fluency and reading comprehension, high-quality children's literature, evidence-based practices, and literacy assessment. In addition, the Ohio Revised Code requires that every Ohio teacher education student complete, at a minimum, 12 hours of coursework in reading. It goes on to specify that one course must be specifically dedicated to phonics.

Beyond the assessment Ohio State faculty use to measure the progress of our educator prep students, Ohio State teacher graduates consistently perform well on the state's rigorous test of teacher content knowledge of reading. Over the past five years they have averaged a passage rate above 88%. Our teachers perform at that level year after year because they are well prepared to teach reading.

Ohio State has a history of incorporating the Science of Reading into our curriculum. Prior to the passage of HB 33 in 2023, Ohio State's coursework was already aligned with what eventually was enacted in the new law. The Reading Foundation sequence our students are required to take was evaluated by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), whose representatives have testified before this committee. They reviewed our syllabi for courses offered between 2018 and 2022 for certain areas aligned with the Science of Reading. Our Reading Foundation courses received a B, which is an indication that our courses included many of the elements of the Science of Reading. We are confident that at the completion of the alignment with the Science of Reading standards that our courses will receive an A.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update the committee on some information that has been shared with you from the NCTQ report related to our Graduate Program at Ohio State. The report that has been shared with you indicates that Ohio State's Graduate Program received a grade of D. In August 2023 we submitted additional materials to NCTQ related to the content of our coursework. NCTQ acknowledged that the additional material demonstrated evidence of scientifically based reading instruction, and the council raised the grade for our Graduate Program from D to B. This change can be seen by visiting its online database.

The Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education and Human Ecology at Ohio State has been working diligently to update our reading core to reflect the new requirements from the state regarding the Science of Reading. This work started in the autumn 2023, and consists of two phases. The first phase was an alignment of the syllabi with the

standards and was completed in late May. Our team has thoroughly reviewed ODHE's new standards for the 12-hour reading core, content in reading courses, and the reading endorsement to ensure Ohio State's courses are in alignment.

ODHE's 12-Hour Reading and Literacy Core Standards spell out the knowledge and skills that teachers must have in order to provide effective reading instruction. These skills and knowledge are divided into nine different categories that reflect Science of Reading research. Examples include Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension, and others.

The revised Reading Endorsement Standards also reflect Science of Reading research. Again, these standards lay out what teachers need to know with an emphasis on staying current with evolving reading research and evidence-based practice. These standards build on the 12-Hour Reading and Literacy Core and prioritize classroom application and implementation in seven components. Examples include Foundations of Language and Literacy Acquisition; Knowledge, Synthesis, and Application of Research; Assessment; and Explicit and Systematic Literacy Instruction. Educators must understand the evolving body of Science of Reading research and be prepared to implement evidence-based practices.

To complete phase one, the Department of Teaching and Learning is in the process of comparing Ohio State's current course syllabi to the state standards in order to identify any uncovered standards.

The second phase will deal with curriculum and get underway later this summer. Where necessary, our team will modify the curriculum to ensure alignment between what is taught in our courses and the content the state has identified for our students to master. This work will ensure that Ohio State is prepared for the audit that will commence in January 2025.

Ohio State views the increased focus on the Science of Reading as an opportunity to ensure the education we provide continues to align with the most recent scientific evidence. We will improve our curriculum if necessary, alter areas of instructional focus where appropriate, and prepare our students to excel as Ohio's teachers.

The university, college, department, and faculty are committed to aligning the reading courses our students take with the Science of Reading.

Finally, let me talk for a moment about Reading Recovery. The Reading Recovery Program is a separate entity from Ohio State's teacher education program. Reading Recovery is a reading intervention program that serves the lowest-achieving first graders who simply are not grasping the key skills necessary for reading and writing. It is not a part of core literacy instruction in the classroom, nor is it a reading curriculum.

Ohio State's undergraduate teacher preparation program is not connected to the Reading Recovery Program and those students do not receive Reading Recovery training. Reading

Recovery is an externally funded operation that provides professional development training to teachers already working in school districts.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and Ohio State looks forward to working with the state to make sure that Ohio's children are not only proficient, but excel in reading.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have, and I am joined by Dr. Antoinette Miranda, Chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education and Human Ecology, to assist me in responding.