



Testimony on the Implementation of the Science of Reading

Dr. Jim Denniston, Dean, College of Health, Education, and Human Services

Ohio House Higher Education Committee

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Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee. I am Jim Denniston and I serve as the Dean of the College of Health, Education, and Human Services at Wright State University. With me is Betsy Crites, Educational Liaison from our Lake campus.

Wright State University is fully committed and focused on preparing future teachers to be successful educators for our future generations.

Wright State offers various degrees and licensures in K-12 education, including Elementary Education P-5, Intervention Specialist, Middle Childhood Education, Adolescent/Young Adult Education, and Multi-Age Education. We also offer certificates in Dyslexia and endorsements in Gifted Intervention, Reading, and Teaching English as a Second Language. Our Dyslexia Certificate Program is 1 of only 4 programs in the State of Ohio and 1 of only 24 programs nationally that has been accredited at the Accreditation PLUS level by the International Dyslexia Association. This level of recognition demonstrated the program's alignment to the science of reading, structured literacy, and with the International Dyslexia Association Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading. We are especially proud of this achievement and our commitment to serving students with learning difficulties.

At this Spring's commencement, 147 candidates completed the requirements for an initial teaching license and will begin educating our region's students as early as this Fall. Over 80% of Wright State University prepared educators continue to teach in Ohio's public schools three years after being licensed, with nearly 75% of them teaching in the Miami Valley.

To ensure the preparation we provide our future educators meets all state standards and fully meets the needs of the students that we serve, the implementation of the Science of Reading into our curriculum is paramount to enhancing our K-12 students' reading performance. We are especially appreciative of the support of the Governor and the Legislature in this endeavor.

I would like to share with you the current status of the efforts of Wright State to impact the literacy teaching skills of our teacher education students using the key concepts of the Science of Reading: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) has been tracking the implementation of the Science of Reading in teacher preparation and state policy for over a decade. In their recent May 2023 report, Wright State University received a B grade for our collective coverage of the concepts of the Science of Reading in our Teacher Preparation programs.

To accomplish our goal of receiving an A by implementation, we have been committed to continuously improving our efforts and are 100% dedicated to aligning our reading core curriculum with the Science of Reading. I would like to highlight some of the recent work we have been doing to enhance our reading core.

First, our faculty have been staying current on the latest best practice in the Science of Reading - many have completed Ohio's dyslexia modules, Dyslexia certification coursework, and they will complete the Science of Reading modules that were recently made available through the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. Faculty are engaging in monthly professional development as a department and have discussed the research and best practices regarding the teaching of reading. They have discontinued teaching instruction counter to the Science of Reading. Professional development on the Science of Reading will be continued this summer for all faculty teaching Reading Core courses, as part of the ODHE Science of Reading Alignment grant received Spring 2024.

Last fall, several literacy faculty members worked together to host a "Literacy Launch" event for our preservice elementary education teachers to introduce them to the Science of Reading. A keynote speaker and literacy expert from Montgomery County Educational Service Center kicked off the event. This was followed by an introduction to Ohio's dyslexia modules and several breakout sessions on related topics. We are planning a second event for fall 2024 and will expand it to include middle childhood and intervention specialist teacher candidates.

Wright State was one of the first universities to request and gain access to Ohio's Dyslexia modules for its candidates. We initiated this request in April of 2023. These modules focus on the Science of Reading, and we saw the importance of ensuring our candidates completed this training. Since the training can only be accessed by those with educator licensure accounts, obtaining special access was necessary. The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce provided us with the modules in December of 2023, and all candidates responsible for teaching reading in PK-5 were required to complete these modules and pass a related assessment with a score of 80% or higher before April 2024 graduation. Candidates reported that completion of the modules reinforced what they had learned in their reading core courses, encouraged them to engage in meaningful conversations with their cooperating teachers about research and best practices, and assisted them with the job search process. As we move forward to the 2024-2025 school year, all candidates in Elementary Education, Middle Childhood Education, Adolescent/Young Adult Education, Multi-age Education, and Intervention Specialist programs

will be required to complete the more recently made available Science of Reading Professional Development modules.

As part of our curricular improvement efforts, we are also focusing on ensuring consistency between courses regarding the Science of Reading. For example, we are being intentional in having the same faculty member teach multiple sections of courses or team planning if multiple instructors are teaching the same Reading Core course. All programs meet monthly to promote common course content and instructional approaches. Meeting minutes and announcements are shared with all, including adjuncts who may not be able to attend. We also ensure that adopted textbooks are aligned with the Science of Reading and are consistent across different sections of courses.

With the funding support through the ODHE Science of Reading Alignment grant, Literacy faculty, including adjunct faculty, will meet this summer to revise and develop new courses for the 12-hour Reading Core that are aligned to the new reading standards that were published just six months ago. Master syllabi will be developed and chosen textbooks will be rooted in the Science of Reading and aligned with the structured literacy approach. Faculty have worked to create an aggressive timeline to begin this work as soon as the grant allows, beginning in July of 2024. While developing the new courses, we will focus on the structured literacy approach within our Reading Core curriculum.

In March of 2024, our university was one of only a few universities awarded an ODHE grant for Student Teacher Placement related to the Science of Reading. Our fall 2024 pre-service teacher placement requests sent to area school district partners featured additional requirements for cooperating teachers. These requirements will ensure that our candidates are placed with cooperating teachers who are trained in the Science of Reading and who use approved Science of Reading instructional materials. The grant allows us to provide an extra financial incentive to these teachers to further their training and/or to purchase materials, which benefits our teacher candidates as well. We are eager to engage in educational conversations with our candidates about what they see in schools and the impact that the Science of Reading aligned instructional approaches have on our P-12 learners.

We have strong relationships with our P-12 school partners. Stakeholder meetings (known as our CHEH Partnership Advisory Council) consisting of school administrators, cooperating teachers, alumni, current students, and faculty are held twice per year on campus, and our field experience faculty meet onsite annually with all formal school partners. Recent meetings have focused on the new Science of Reading legislation to ensure all parties are clear on the needs and expectations. The outcomes of these meetings have included robust discussions about collaboration as well as suggestions focused on program improvement. It is due to these

meetings that we required all elementary education candidates to complete the Ohio Dyslexia modules, as discussed earlier, this past school year. This request came from one of our school partners and was echoed by the other partners and supported by the faculty.

For the 2024-2025 school year, our Literacy Assessment and Intervention course, which is required for candidates in the Elementary Education, Middle Childhood Education, and Intervention Specialist programs, will be taught by faculty who have completed the Science of Reading modules. During the summer prior to the 2024-2025 school year, this course will be realigned to the new reading standards, contrary practices to the Science of Reading will be removed, and the current textbook will be reviewed for Science of Reading compliance. Students in this course are required to pass key assessments to be eligible for placement in their student teaching internships, thereby assuring that they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to employ the science of reading approach in their classrooms.

As part of our efforts to continuously improve our programs, we have been monitoring student first-attempt pass rates on the 190 Foundation of Reading Test since its introduction in 2023. An action item in our summer realignment initiative is to review the course sequencing of the 12-hour reading core, including when students take the 190 Foundations of Reading assessment, assuring that they are exposed to the content covered by the assessment before attempting the assessment for the first time. To support students who do not pass this assessment on their first attempt, we require these students to complete tutorials through Mometrix or 240 Tutoring to support their retake. We are confident that these efforts will enhance student's first-time and overall pass rates.

In closing, we are confident that current and future efforts will ensure that our curriculum is fully aligned with the Science of Reading. To date, we have required all Elementary Education students to complete the dyslexia modules and we held a Literacy Launch event for these same students during the Fall 2023 semester featuring a keynote address by a Science of Reading expert. We have received an ODHE grant to align our reading courses with the Science of Reading, and we have reviewed our reading core course syllabi for alignment with the new 2023 standards. This summer, our faculty team will revise and/or create new courses for the 12-hour Reading Core based upon the new 2023 Reading standards, and these courses will be required of all elementary education, middle childhood education, and intervention specialist students. All faculty teaching these courses will receive professional development training to ensure they have appropriate expertise in the Science of Reading before the Fall 2024 semester. This upcoming fall, we will begin the curricular approval process for these new or revised courses, and we will infuse these modifications into existing coursework while we await formal approval of the new curriculum. In Fall 2024, we will hold a second Literacy Launch event for all elementary education, middle childhood education, and intervention specialist students that will be focused on the Science of Reading. These same students will also be required to complete their respective Pathway

modules on Ohio's Introduction to the Science of Reading. Next spring, we will continue to infuse the curricular modifications into our coursework, and we will pursue additional grant funding as it becomes available. Finally, our Office of Partnership and Field Experiences has obtained grant support to ensure that our students are placed with cooperating teachers who have been trained in the science of reading and who practice a structured literacy approach using approved science of reading materials. We strongly believe that these efforts will ensure compliance with the new reading standards and that our teacher candidates will have a positive educational impact on all learners.

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and House Higher Education Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on Wright State University's implementation of the Science of Reading. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.