

**House Higher Education Committee  
Representative Tom Young, Chair  
Testimony of Dr. Scott Molitor, Interim Provost, The University of Toledo  
and  
Dr. Rebecca Schneider, Senior Associate Dean of Education, the University of Toledo  
Judith Herb College of Education  
June 18, 2024**

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address the Committee today and tell you about The University of Toledo and our Judith Herb College of Education. My name is Scott Molitor, and I serve as the Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs for The University of Toledo. Since 1872, The University of Toledo has been improving lives. Our graduates conduct cutting-edge research, perform onstage, heal patients, teach in classrooms and make an impact in their communities. We offer 200 undergraduate and graduate degree programs across the arts, business, education, engineering, law, medicine, natural sciences, nursing and pharmacy. We are renowned for research in the areas of astronomy and astrophysics; solar energy, water quality and sustainable technologies; and cell architecture and dynamics. Other areas of unique distinction include human trafficking, disability studies, hypertension and precision medicine. We offer students plentiful opportunities to build their skills and resumes through experiential, hands-on learning.

UToledo has 31 academic programs that are nationally ranked by U.S. News & World Report. U.S. News also ranks us as a Best National University and ranks UToledo as a Top Performer in Social Mobility. UToledo is among the highest compared to other Ohio public research universities for graduates' income mobility. At UToledo, we are proud of the educational and lifetime opportunities that we are offering our students.

Our Judith Herb College of Education has a mission to prepare educators, instructional leaders, and scholars who construct and sustain effective learning environments through the development and practice of innovative educational theories and pedagogical approaches. Their vision is to shape the future of education for an ever-changing world.

The graduates of our College of Education go on to serve as leaders in a variety of fields, both academic and professional. Our students and alumni are deeply committed to serving others and to making their communities, their state, their nation, and their world a better place. Our faculty has much to offer and they are committed to supporting our students and the larger community.

The University of Toledo Judith Herb College of Education is fully accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). This accreditation status is effective from fall 2023 to fall of 2030.

I would also like to state for the record how proud I am for the hard work that was quickly completed by my colleagues in the Judith Herb College of Education to ensure our curriculum is fully compliant with the new Ohio standards distributed this past January 2024.

With that, please allow me to introduce you to Dr. Rebecca Schneider of the Judith Herb College of Education to the provide you the details of these efforts.

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak before the Committee today about The University of Toledo Judith Herb College of Education and our implementation of the Science of Reading into our courses and curriculum. My name is Rebecca Schneider and I serve as the Senior Associate Dean of Education, the Judith Daso-Herb Endowed Co-Chair in School-University Partnerships in Teacher Education and professor of science and teacher education. I am joined by Dr. Rhonda Aguiton, Associate Lecturer of Curriculum and Instruction at The University of Toledo Judith Herb College of Education. Dr. Aguiton is an expert in literacy and reading and can assist me in answering any questions you may have.

I would like to start by providing you with some background on our programs. The University of Toledo has both undergraduate and graduate programs in primary, middle childhood, Adolescent/Young Adult, multiage, and special education. We graduate about 120 initial licensure teachers each year. Fifty percent of our graduates stay in area, which is incredibly important to our local school districts. Our programs in primary, middle, and special education contain 12 semester hours of reading coursework, and our literacy faculty work as a team to develop and update all our courses to meet Ohio Standards.

As of today, our literacy faculty have created a carefully planned sequence of four courses that lead preservice teachers through the major components of literacy development. These courses are the Foundations of Literacy, Phonics and Word Identification, Literacy and Reading Development, and Assessment and Remediation. The Ohio Standards, based on the science of reading are embedded in each of these foundational courses as a key component.

#### COURSE SEQUENCE

Undergraduate students complete these courses as part of their program of study. Graduate students complete these courses as a prerequisite to admission to the master's program. The courses are:

*Foundations of Literacy:* Students develop a deep understanding of the central role literacy with evidence-based foundations of reading and writing instruction with specific attention to the needs of English Language Learner and learners with dyslexia. Students complete modules on the *Simple View of Reading* and *Understanding Dyslexia*.

*Phonics and Word Identification:* Students develop instructional skills to support *phonological awareness*, letter-sound correspondence, word identification, *phonics*, *vocabulary*, spelling, and writing.

*Literacy and Reading Development:* Students develop skills in evidence-based approaches aligned with the Science of Reaching including literacy development; practices, and

materials; reading processes; *comprehension*; writing development; and visual literacy. Students practice skills in teaching phonic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, comprehension with early readers.

*Assessment and Remediation*: Students *practice* skills in assessment and remediation for struggling readers. Students engage in *mentored practice* of instructional strategies for word identification, *comprehension*, *fluency*, *vocabulary* and writing with learners in our partner schools. This is the capstone literacy course where students demonstrate proficiency.

#### KEY MATERIALS

All the texts used in our reading course sequence are based on the science of reading and have been identified by National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) as exemplary or acceptable. You can find a list of the materials in my submitted written testimony.

Honig, B., Diamond, L., Gutlohn, L., (2018). *Teaching Reading Sourcebook* (CORE Literacy Library). Third Edition. Academic Therapy Publications. NCTQ rated exemplary, used across all courses.

Hougen, M. & Smartt, S. (2020). *Fundamentals of Literacy Assessment & Instruction, Pre-K-6*. Second edition. Brookes Publishing Co. NCTQ rated exemplary.

Blevins, W. (2023). *Phonics from A to Z: A Practical Guide*. 4th ed. Scholastic, Inc.

Diamond, L. & Thorsnes, B. J. (2018). *Assessing Reading: Multiple Measures for Kindergarten Through Twelfth Grade* (CORE Literacy Library). 2nd edition. Academic Therapy Publishers.

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. K. (2022). *Teaching Reading: A Playbook for Developing Skilled Readers Through Word Recognition and Language Comprehension*. First Edition. Corwin Literacy.

Vacca, R. T. & Vacca, J. L. (2020) *Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum* (13th ed.). Pearson: Allyn and Bacon. (Specialized adolescent level)

Buehl, D. (2017). *Classroom strategies for interactive learning*. Fourth edition. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. (Specialized adolescent level)

Within each of these courses, our students complete individual learning modules that align with the science of reading and were developed by All Ohio Literacy in collaboration with the Ohio Deans Compact. These modules are titled The Simple View of Reading, Understanding Dyslexia, The Why of Teaching Phonics & Word Identification, Explicit Vocabulary Instruction,

and Multilingual Learners. You can find more information on the modules we are using on the Advancing Literacy Learning or ALL Ohio's website. As more modules become available, we will be adding these to our courses as applicable. The link is in my written testimony:

<https://allohioliteracy.org/>

#### READING MODELS

We introduce all our undergraduates and graduate students to reading models that assist in their understanding of the components that form literacy learning and have been demonstrated to support the development of children as readers according to scientifically based research on reading and literacy. These reading models include:

*The Five Pillars of Literacy* (National Reading Panel Report, 2000): These pillars are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

*Scarborough's Reading Rope* (Scarborough, 2001): Scarborough's Reading Rope is made up of lower and upper strands. When all these component parts intertwine it results in skilled and accurate, fluent reading with strong comprehension.

*Simple View of Reading* (Hoover & Gough, 1990): This model shows reading comprehension being the product of two distinct components: decoding and linguistic comprehension. It provides a clear framework for understanding the basic elements involved. Word recognition X language comprehension = independent reading comprehension.

*The Active View of Reading* (Duke & Cartwright 2021): This model builds from the previous model, *Simple View*, to acknowledge the nuanced interactions between decoding and comprehension.

#### KEY ASSESSMENTS

As a critical component of the carefully planned sequence of foundational literacy courses, students undergo rigorous assessments to track their skills and abilities. These assessments consist of:

All Ohio Literacy modules: students must reach 80% threshold on the quiz for each module.

Dyslexia Quiz: students must reach 80% threshold on a quiz related to understanding what dyslexia is and isn't as well as appropriate instructional approaches for learners with dyslexia.

Course exams where students demonstrate ability to define, recognize and explain ideas related to core models and the Science of Reading;

Reading Assessments, where students demonstrate the ability to use appropriate pre- and post-intervention assessments;

Diagnosing, where students demonstrate the ability to evaluate a struggling reader and develop an intervention plan with measurable goals;

Remediating, where students demonstrate the ability to develop plans, tutor a developing reader, and identify strengths and areas for improvement in their plans based on sessions with a developing reader;

Developing reader work, where students demonstrate the ability to support phonics, writing, and reading comprehension through their student reader's work samples.

Finally, we train our students for the Ohio Assessment for Educators (OAE) Foundations of Reading test that is required for licensure approval.

#### WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

I'm proud to report that the Judith Herb College of Education has already made great strides in integrating the science of reading into our curriculum. We worked hard and have already mapped the curriculum in our reading courses to the new Ohio Standards that were released in January 2024. We have also reviewed our course syllabi for completeness of addressing all aspects of the science of reading.

We have combined our reading courses into one set of 12 semester hours for all programs. This facilitates course management and improvement, provides scheduling flexibility, and supports instructional consistency.

We have recently updated our affiliation agreement to include language about the science of reading.

We have adopted new materials – texts, modules etc.

#### WHAT WE ARE WORKING ON

Going forward, there are several areas that we continue to work on. With support of the Ohio Deans Compact, faculty are currently working to improve our adolescent content area literacy courses to better align with the science of reading. Improvements include more focused attention to developing fluency, vocabulary, spelling, comprehension, and writing using evidence-based practices within subject matter. The work of this project includes learning community sessions with college and PK-12 faculty to support curricular improvement.

Our faculty are also involved in important community projects associated with the science of reading. For example, we received funding from an Ohio Department of Education Statewide Mathematics and Literacy Tutoring Grant to provide “high-dosage” math and literacy tutoring programs to students from Toledo Public Schools (TPS). Through this two-year program, UToledo students work as paid tutors with students from two local TPS schools, Old Orchard Elementary and the EscuelaSMART Academy. The UToledo tutors work with the students at a very low tutor-to-student ratio of no more than three students per tutor, and students meet frequently with the same tutor — this is why the tutoring is called “high-dosage.” By the time the program concludes, these public school students will have received almost 18,000 tutoring hours from trained University of Toledo Students. This summer, in its final session, the tutoring program is serving over 60 students from across 18 Toledo Public Schools with tutoring in math and literacy. We’re very excited that the literacy support that all our tutors provide is based in the science of reading.

Literacy faculty continue to work as a team and engage more explicitly with colleagues in primary, middle, secondary, and special education to support their understanding of teaching reading. All faculty will need to be familiar with the set of reading courses and how they map to the set of reading standards and the science of reading. Reading faculty and all reading instructors need to identify the role of each course in meeting reading standards that aligns with the science of reading.

Our faculty is working to ensure that the most current and approved syllabi are available on our Curriculum Inventory Management System (CIM). This includes updated course descriptions, student learning outcomes aligned with Ohio standards, required key assessments, weekly schedule, and pre-requisites to ensure sequence. Courses are also being coded as professional education to ensure enrollment during the professional sequence and will require a grade C or higher.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

I also want to identify some areas where we know we will have to focus additional efforts. Michigan schools do not require the science of reading training. Because of our geography, several of our partner schools are across the border in Michigan (8 of 32 school partners, 25%). We also want to make sure that we are ensuring consistency while at the same time providing flexibility for our students in their scheduling.

Our new assessment and reporting system (Watermark) needs to be implemented to support record keeping - mentor teacher preparation, student completion of modules and key assessments. Faculty, mentor teachers, and supervisors need training in how to use this new

system in order for us to use it in the way we will need to in order to appropriately track student progress.

We are also working to address multiple changes at one time, from changes to pre-service permits and the grade bands to updated standards and new assessment and reporting systems. We are excited by these opportunities but need adequate time to ensure we can implement these initiatives effectively.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk to you and for your interest in our teacher preparation programing. While there are a lot of moving pieces right now, I want to assure you that The University of Toledo is ready to meet the requirements for teaching the science of reading and have all the necessary changes in place by January 2025. Please let me know if I or any of my colleagues can help answer your questions.

#### REFERENCES

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