

My name is Braedan Schantz. I am a licensed Ohio educator, certified and endorsed K-12 reading specialist, and a faculty associate at a state university in Ohio. I tutor students, coach and teach preservice teachers and teachers in the field, teach graduate students at the university, and have taught hundreds of children to read during my career. I am a presenter at national literacy conferences. *I am writing on my own behalf, not as a representative of my institution of employment.*

I am compelled to continue to advocate against Section 3313.6028 of HB 33, because I am concerned about the students it will not serve. I am an active reading specialist and have taught many students to read in just the last six months. I believe that learning to read is a right that our schools must provide for children. Children are individuals, and a single, over-simplified methodology is not going to meet the needs of the diverse students who show up in Ohio classrooms every day. **This legislation will tie the hands of teachers and schools to be able to meet students' needs effectively and equitably.**

No one who is advocating for science of reading programs and materials has been able to answer my question, "How will the science of reading support multilingual students and students with differences in speech and hearing?" There is no peer-reviewed research available on this topic. These groups of students need so much more than strong phonics instruction to learn to read and write with their peers.

If HB33 is passed without amendments, it will set a precedent regarding local control. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) may dictate through standards WHAT content schools may teach, but this provision would also allow ODE to dictate what materials and instructional methods local schools are permitted to use. Ohio Revised Code 3313.60 states that Ohio is a local control state, providing for elected school board members to make decisions about curriculum for the students in their districts. The curriculum mandate and ban in House Bill 33 would contradict Code 3313.16 of the Ohio Revised Code.

If passed without revision, HB33 will also permit ODE to generate a list of "acceptable curriculum," which will create a monopoly and funnel money through Ohio schools to corporate curriculum publishers. ODE has not listened to many educators who have tried to provide guidance and bring balance to the board. Only 1 university faculty member was appointed to the Ohio Dyslexia Committee, and they are from a private college. Only 1 classroom teacher was on the committee as well. Considering the number of public universities and schools in Ohio, why were no other faculty members or classroom teachers invited to serve on that committee? I know dozens who volunteered. This committee will have great influence in creating the list of "approved curriculum." The work of the committee reflects an instructional bias that is not present in most Ohio schools. ODE needs more educator and faculty educator input, not less. **If ODE is charged with creating an approved curriculum list and there is currently no law or body to provide oversight, then the board's unchecked bias toward scripted, commercial curriculum programs will continue.**

I am enclosing an article that goes into detail about the known problems with legislating reading curriculum. It will provide the committee with a historical and centrist viewpoint, created by a panel of respected, well-known researchers and literacy experts. The full article is linked after my signature. Below is an excerpt,

“The greater problem is that limiting such legislation to narrowly conceived beliefs and practices related to phonics excludes other important components of early reading instruction, wrongly suggests that students are failing because they are not taught enough phonics (thus the need for legislation) and implies that all difficulties in learning to read can be attributed to insufficient or inappropriate phonics instruction.

It also mutes dissenting views, well-informed by research and by extensive experience, among qualified professionals who are less inclined to engage in polemics and political jockeying, nor organized to do so.”

Learning to read is as complex of a mental task as learning to drive a car. Early on, it requires explicit mental attention that eventually becomes automatic the more it is practiced. The state already recognizes several evidence-based models of instruction for drivers’ education. Why would reading be any different? **We need to provide more options for schools, not limit and ban them.**

Will local schools be forced to abandon teaching practices that are working for their students to spend money on materials and training for a state endorsed curriculum program? If this bill is not amended, that is exactly what schools across Ohio will be forced to do to the tune of millions of taxpayer dollars.

I suggest that the state require ODE to create a task force, with representation from a diverse cohort of Ohio schools and universities, to study current literacy instructional practices in Ohio to determine what works. **Why are we skipping this important step?** Why are we also ignoring the What Works Clearinghouse and Evidence for ESSA databases? These would be important to consider in the creation of a curriculum list.

I am one educator with no lobby and no influence. I have years of experience teaching children and adults, and I have read extensively about evidence-based, effective literacy instruction because of my profession. Please be informed and do not pass HB 33 without 1) removing all of the language that bans three cueing/ MSV, 2) adding language that ODE should include all programs with a strong, third-party evidence base on their list, 3) considering how this legislation will empower ODE to make decisions for local schools, removing local control, contradicting Ohio Revised Code, and with little to no oversight to check them.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,
Braedan Schantz, M.A. Ed.

Evidence for ESSA Website: <https://www.evidenceforessa.org>

What Works Clearinghouse Website: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

Reinking, D., Hruby, G. G., & Risko, V. J. (2023). Legislating Phonics: Settled Science or Political Polemics? *Teachers College Record*, 125(1), 104–131.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/01614681231155688>