



Bibliography

February 2025 Dawn Miller

Resources that inform our volunteer readers, book distributions, and messages

1. [Hard Words: Why aren't kids being taught to read?](#)



This 2018 audio documentary explores the fact that science-based reading instruction still has not reached many American classrooms. It features the success story of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania schools, where teachers were given instruction on the science of reading. Student reading proficiency increased – even among low-income children. American Public Media.

2. [Sold a Story: How Teaching Kids to Read Went So Wrong](#)



The sequel to "Hard Words," this series explains the how disproven teaching methods caught on in the United States and elsewhere. It offers clear descriptions of common but misguided methods, particularly "three-cueing."

3. [LETRS -- Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling](#)



This is the teacher education that Bethlehem, Pa., offered their teachers before that district's turnaround. It has since exploded in popularity. It is not the only path to knowledge about the science of reading, but it offers a frame of reference. According to this group as of 2019, 95 percent of students can learn to read if they are properly taught, but only 51 percent of college teacher programs in the country include the science of reading.

4. [WVDE Early and Elementary Learning Technical Assistance Center](#)



A helpful extension of the West Virginia Department of Education, these specialists are warm, well-studied in reading science, and will assist any public school or system on their quest to improve. They provide district, school, and classroom-level staff with resources and professional learning to help on social, emotional, and academic learning gaps for PK-5 children, when asked. Formerly known as the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, they are housed at Marshall University's June Harless Center. The link shows a county map and contacts.

5. Leaders of Literacy Podcast



Active from 2020 to 2023, this podcast is still a great way to learn about people who are active in improving reading instruction around West Virginia. It is no longer available on the state Department of Education website, but is available on popular podcasting sites, such as [apple](#) or [Spotify](#). Produced by the former Campaign for Grade Level Reading, it explored reading science, mental health, and everything relevant to teaching reading. Episodes are conveniently paced at 20 minutes or so. Good starting places:

[Episode 32: The Science of Reading](#) with Maggie Luma and Becky Lewis gives an overview of how understanding brain science helps classroom teachers, what scientific reading instruction is (and what it isn't), and references to other resources.

[Episode 33: Interview with Vanessa Harlow](#), who talks about Grant County's experience using LETRS to improve teachers understanding of reading science.

[Episode 24](#), an interview with Silas Kulkarni, a former teacher who, in part, describes the growth children experience when they are given many texts, of various difficulty levels, all on the same subject, rather than texts of the same skill level on different subjects.

6. [Science of Reading: Making the Shift](#)



Free e-book published by Amplify. It is short and easy to read, a good start for anyone looking for concrete examples to explain science-based reading instruction. It is good for anyone who may be called upon to evaluate curriculum or teaching methods. It includes typical previous practices, such as using leveled readers, and contrasts it with what science-based reading instruction looks like.

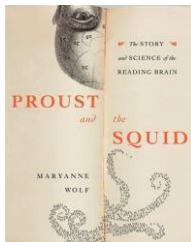
7. [“Are you raising a reader? Pediatrician can tell by looking at a child’s brain”](#)

by Dawn Miller



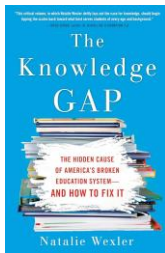
Dr. John S. Hutton, a Cincinnati Children's Hospital pediatrician, used functional MRIs to quantify the effects of reading to children. He shared his findings with educators and physicians at Marshall University in 2019. This readable summary is a good introduction for teachers and caregivers and is available as a free reprint to distribute to parents. Originally published in the Read Aloud West Virginia Newsletter, Winter 2019.

8. [Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain](#) by Maryanne Wolf



"Human beings were never born to read," writes Tufts University cognitive neuroscientist Maryanne Wolf. In prose both literary and scientific, Wolf describes how the brain organizes itself to read, something that has been around for only the last 5,000 years or so. She set out to write a book about dyslexia, and her insights changed the way I think about it. A beautiful book to listen to. Harper Perennial Paperbacks, 2007.

9. [The Knowledge Gap](#) by Natalie Wexler



We need background knowledge to learn to read. But for years, many teachers have been taught exactly the opposite, that small children could not learn and were not interested in science, history, and other knowledge around them. This is an excellent explanation of the role of background knowledge in reading instruction, and an explanation of what has happened over the last 30 years. Avery, 2020

10. [The Science of Reading](#) podcast by Amplify



This podcast has been my teacher since I discovered it around 2018. Susan Lambert conducts interviews with teachers, researchers, and others around the country to help listeners learn about their field. You can start anywhere, but here are a couple of especially good episodes:

[Learning to Read Digitally vs. In Print \(S4-04, or season 4, episode 4\)](#)
Researchers Lauren Trakhman and Patricia Alexander. They wondered if there was a difference, so set out to measure it, starting with college undergraduates. They debunk the “digital natives” assumption and discovered differences in our speed and comprehension when we read on screens vs printed pages.

[Ensuring Literacy Success for All \(S4-02\)](#) is an interview with Dr. Tracy Weeden, CEO and president of Neuhaus Education Center, which teaches

teachers how recognize and intervene in students' reading problems. I love the way she talks about the language that our students are "loved in," and bridging the gap between the language of home and school. She thinks about literacy as a moral issue, and talks about getting reading instruction right early as a way of helping a student avoid a lifetime of problems, which can include mental health problems, substance abuse and jail.

Educator voices: Personal journeys through the Science of Reading (S4-06) is a moving interview with Lindsay Kemeny, who taught second grade for 10 years and then discovered the science of reading. She learned that she had been teaching her students with incorrect methods, and her son was diagnosed with severe dyslexia.

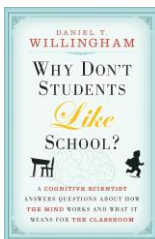
Comprehension is not a skill, with Hugh Catts, Ph.D. (S9-04) Reading comprehension is a result, not a set of isolated skills that can be taught. And the biggest factor in comprehension? Background knowledge, says the Florida State University professor. Good show notes and further reading, too.

11. The 7 Deadly Errors of Teaching Reading by Lindsay Kemeny



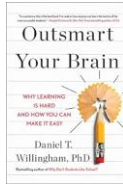
"A kindergarten teacher on a learning journey" is how Lindsay Kemeny describes herself on her blog [The Learning Spark](#). She is now the author of *7 Mighty Moves: Research-Backed, Classroom-Tested Strategies to Ensure K-to-3 Reading Success*. Teacher to teacher, this post identifies explicit things that teachers have been taught to do that are not good for reading instruction.

12. **Why Don't Students Like School? A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom** by Daniel T. Willingham



I love this book because it explains why students who think they "studied" still did poorly when evaluated. It turns out students often mistake familiarity with knowledge. We have to teach students how to work with their brains to study effectively. For example, the very act of making your brain recall something is the trigger to tell the brain that it is important enough to keep. A good audiobook experience. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

13. **Outsmart Your Brain: Why Learning is Hard and How You Can Make It Easy** by Daniel T. Willingham



A newer book by the UVA cognitive scientist, this one speaking directly to students, with plenty for teachers. There is research and practical advice on topics including sleep, interleaving, quizzes, multiple choice, and retrieval practice. Gallery Books, 2023

14. [Language at the Speed of Sight](#) by Mark Seidenberg



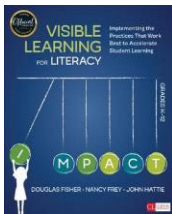
The toughest read on the list, this book from 2017 documents that children are not reading better because so much of their instruction is still not based on science. This was one of early books leading to changes in the last 10 years. The link leads to Seidenberg's website with other publications, notes, and resources. Basic Books, reprinted 2018.

15. [Ready. Read. Write. West Virginia](#)



The state Department of Education's collection of resources for teachers and families. You'll find explanations and tools, including videos you can show parents about supporting literacy at home.

16. **Visible Learning for Literacy, Grades K-12: Implementing the Practices that Work Best to Accelerate Student Learning**, by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, et al.



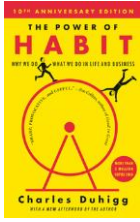
John Hattie does meta-analysis. He evaluated thousands of pages of research on various topics and devised a system for ranking numerically the effect size of different practices. Teacher clarity, for example, ranks high on the effect it has on student learning. This particular volume focuses on the finding related to teaching reading. You can find good introductions to these ideas in podcasts, including Leaders of Literacy. Corwin, 2016.

17. **Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us** by Daniel H. Pink



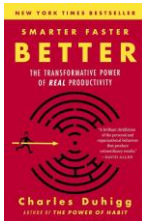
What motivates us is not as simple as economists have long assumed. Once our basic needs are met, we are much more complex than old assumptions about money and prizes would have us believe. (Think Accelerated Reader.) Rewards can break intrinsic motivation, the very thing we want to nurture in young readers. This book, an excellent explanation of that broader phenomenon, is also a good introduction to the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Riverhead Books, 2009.

18. **The Power of Habit** by Charles Duhigg



We want our students to form book habits. Habits are powerful, connected to our brain chemistry. While this book is not about reading or literacy specifically, it is full of insight about breaking bad habits and starting better ones. It explains the parts of a habit: the cue, routine, and reward. Great for both individuals and organizations. Random House, 2012.

19. **Smarter Faster Better: The Transformative Power of Real Productivity** by Charles Duhigg



This book is worth it for the chapter on motivation alone, but the other topics are also useful – teams, focus, goal setting, managing others, decision making, innovation, absorbing data. Random House, 2016.

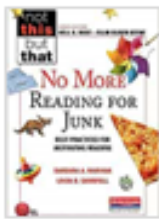
20. **When: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing** by Daniel H. Pink



From the author of *Drive*, this book compiles research on chronobiology – yes, that is a thing. It explains the rhythms of our days, including the peak, trough, and recovery that each of us experiences each day. Different parts of the day or good for different things, from learning math, to taking tests, to burning calories, even our tendency to stereotype people. There are implications for schools, workplaces, and individuals, the argument for recess, and the best times for it. Riverhead Books, 2018.

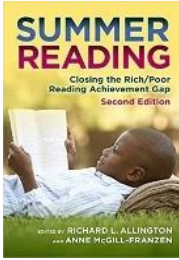
21. **No More Reading for Junk: Best Practices for Motivating Readers**

by Barbara A. Marinak, Linda Gambrell, Edited by Ellin Oliver Keene, Nell K Duke



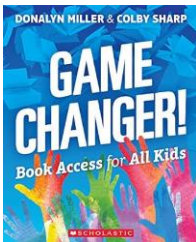
As you can guess from the title, bribing kids with pizza and cheap toys is not supported in the research and does not develop lifelong readers. There is even some evidence that it sours kids who already like to read. These authors outline a research-based approach to helping children develop an intrinsic motivation to read. There are three main ingredients: access, relevance, and choice. Interestingly, choice includes not only choice of texts, but also reading activities. Heinemann, 2016.

22. **Summer Reading: Closing the Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap** (Second Edition), edited by Richard L. Allington, Anne McGill-Franzen



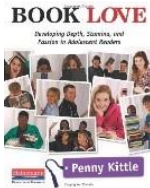
These researchers measured the effect of giving kids freely chosen books at the end of the school year. When done well, the effort can prevent summer learning loss better than summer school. Read Aloud was so taken with this report in 2015 that we've done "Summer Book Binges" in chosen schools each spring. At schools where we could get data, and where we repeated the project at least twice, students' reading proficiency rose, exactly as the research predicted. This book offers research-based guidelines for setting up summer book distributions. Hint: Don't prioritize accountability over students enjoying books. Teachers College Press, 2018.

23. Game Changer! Book Access for All Kids by Donalyn Miller & Colby Sharp



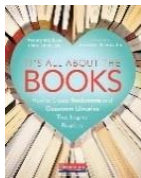
From a couple of teachers, including the author of The Book Whisperer, this is a book of ideas for launching and maintaining book distribution projects in your school and community, including things students can work on themselves. Scholastic, 2018.

24. Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina, and Passion in Adolescent Readers by Penny Kittle



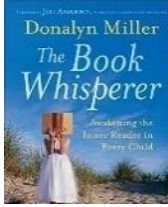
This book is TLC for the big kids. Kittle acknowledges why students don't read and then focuses on matching the right books with kids, setting them up to discover even more challenging literature. "Books matter. Stories heal," writes the publisher. "The right book in the hands of a kid can change a life forever." Heinemann, 2012.

25. It's All About the Books: How to Create Bookrooms and Classroom Libraries That Inspire Readers by Tammy Mulligan & Clare Landrigan



After we learn to read, then it's about volume. The more we read, the better off we are. This book is both practical and inspiring about creating collections that draw your students in, and emphasizing all the things we know matter, such as choice and relevance (and even instructional goals). Heinemann, 2018.

26. The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child by Donalyn Miller



Donalyn Miller discovered there was time for everything but reading in her sixth-grade reading class. So, she remade her plans to require every child to read 40 books during the year, and helped students find books they genuinely enjoyed. She filled her room with a couple thousand books and built her lessons around the students' handling, sorting, and reading them. The kids did it, much to their own disbelief sometimes, and watched grades and test scores rise.

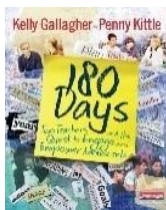
Among the things I love about this book is how it helped me to articulate to myself some of the things that get in the way of children discovering books they love. For example, Donalyn makes it OK for kids to admit choosing a book because it is short. They get to count toward their reading goal the 100 pages they read before abandoning a book. She makes the habits of genuine lifelong readers acceptable in the classroom. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

27. **Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer's Keys to Cultivating Lifelong Reading Habits** by Susan Kelley, Donalyn Miller



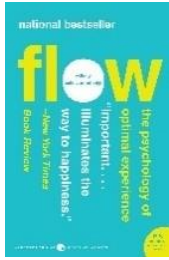
A wild reader is someone who does it on their own, without being assigned, nagged or asked. That's what Donalyn Miller wants for her students, and what she explores in this book. A good follow-up to the Book Whisperer, it acknowledges what happened to her students when they moved on to 7th grade. Jossey-Bass, 2013.

28. **180 Days: Two Teachers and the Quest to Engage and Empower Adolescents** by Kelly Gallagher, Penny Kittle



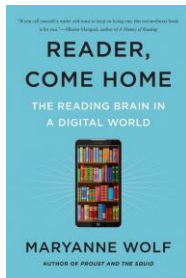
Kelly Gallagher, who warned teachers against committing “readicide” in his book 20 years ago, teamed up with Kittle. On opposite coasts, they collaborated for an entire school year to plan and teach. The result is a model for prioritizing what you believe is important for your students. They ask themselves, “Who will these students be as readers and writers after a year under our care?” Heinemann, 2018.

29. **Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience** by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi



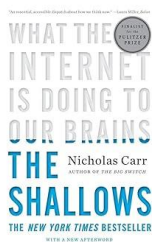
If you want to go beyond those who cite him straight to the source, this is a good place to start. In a flow state, we experience deep enjoyment, creativity, and a total involvement with life. It's the feeling when visiting old friends and the hours disappear, or even working and suddenly you can't believe how late it is. We want our students to experience deep enjoyment and creativity. The more we learn, the more we can create opportunities for it. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.

30. Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World by Maryanne Wolf



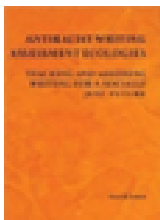
Maryanne Wolf finished Proust and the Squid and looked up from her work to discover that the world had changed with social media and the amount of screen time children and adults were experiencing. Here she documents how the brain learns to read and how reading changes the way we think and feel. We really do “get lost” in a good book. We really do develop empathy and miss favorite old characters. She also explains what is happening to our reading brains as we swim in this sea of digital media. Harper Paperbacks, 2019.

31. The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to our Brains by Nicholas G. Carr



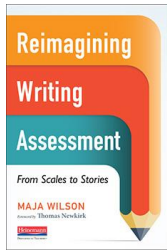
An earlier attempt to compile the evidence that our exposure to digital media is actually changing the way our brains function, both adults and children. This 2010 book was updated in 2020. W.W. Norton

32. Anti-racist Writing Assessment Ecologies by Asao B. Inoue



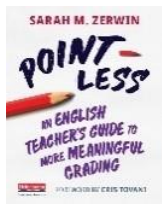
Good, but dense little book. It's not necessarily bad people who are harm traditionally marginalized students, but bad systems. This book helps teachers to be a force for good. Parlor Press, 2015. A good introduction to Inoue's book is an interview with the author on [Episode 209 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast.](#)

33. Re-imagining Writing Assessment: From Scales to Stories by Maja Wilson



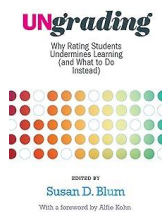
Grades are a relatively recent addition to education. Numerical grades look authoritative but often aren't. When students receive grades, they look at the the number or letter and ignore meaningful feedback. Most grading systems are for categorizing students, not for assisting learning. This book provides much of the research base for Zerwin's how-to book on getting away from harmful grading systems. Heinemann, 2017.

33. Point-less: An English Teacher's Guide to More Meaningful Grading by Sarah M. Zerwin



A how-to book on eliminating destructive point/grade systems in a high school English class, while working within your existing requirements and LMS. Zerwin's approach is that changing the whole school or district is too much. There is a lot you can do in your own class to great effect for your students. I found this practical book first, and then worked my way through Inoue and Wilson afterward. Heinemann, 2020.





34. Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)



Professor Susan D. Blum, the editor of this book, has been “ungrading” for decades. This is a collection of chapters by educators working at all levels who explain how they do it and why, what is challenging and what has worked for them. It includes professors, but also K-12 pioneers in ungrading. WVU Press, 2020.

35. Audiobook sources

I find audiobooks a handy way to keep up while driving or doing housework. Then I get the physical book if I need it for more careful study. I exhaust library possibilities before buying. In West Virginia, free audio and e-book sources include:

 <p>Hoopla Digital. Find it through your library, which pays a fee each time you borrow. It allows multiple borrowers to use a title at the same time. Readers have a monthly limit on borrows.</p>	 <p>This app is pleasant and easy to use. It is used by both West Virginia library groups to check out and play/read electronic borrows.</p>
 <p>WVDELI – A consortium of libraries share a collection that can be borrowed by patrons of all the member libraries. See if your library is a member here.</p>	 <p>WVREADS – This is another consortium of libraries that share a collection. Browse the members here.</p>