Minnesota's Immigrant Students

The READ Act, Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness, and Lingering Lessons from the Haitian Community Center (HCC) in Miami, Florida

St. Louis Park Public Schools

Silvy Un Lafayette, PhD
Executive Director of Assessment, Research and Evaluation (ARE)

What happens when states like Minnesota standardize one of the most significant tools for liberation in US history?

reading

How do we move forward?

This paper is **NOT**…

1. …a critique of the entire Minnesota Department of Education
2. …about shame and blame for educators looking for solutions
3. …about reading research debates
4. …a critique of structured literacy instruction
5. …about political parties in the US
6. …about culture wars

ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL!

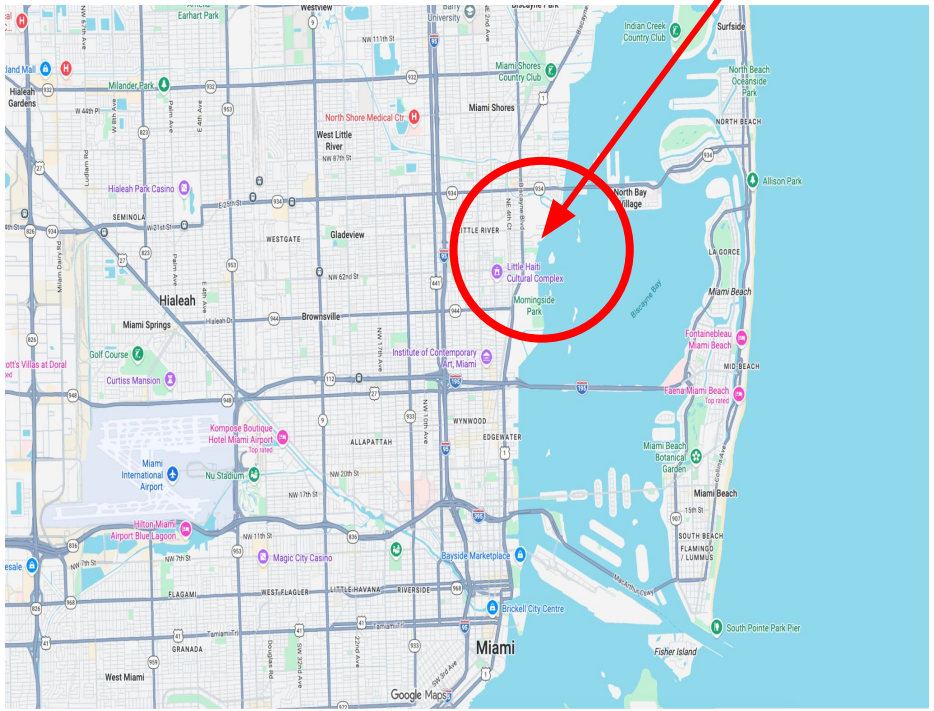
Haitians at the HCC & Minnesota's Immigrant Students

Through the lens of the Minnesota READ Act

- **HCC Lesson 1:** Racialization impacts academic achievement in US immigrant communities
- **HCC Lesson 2:** Standardizing schools through legislation is an example of a racial project
- **HCC Lesson 3:** Scientific racism and the pervasiveness of invisible rules
- **HCC Lesson 4:** Hope in Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR)

Miami (Little Haiti), Florida

2010 - 2011





NBC NEWS POLITICS U.S. NEWS WORLD LOCAL SPORTS BUSINESS HEALTH TIPLINE SHOPPING WATCH SUBSCRIBE

WORLD

Haitian children begin enrolling in U.S. schools

Some of the children arrived with no school records at all, some with only the clothes on their backs. A few still bear scrapes and bruises. All carry terrible memories.

Garvey Fils-Aime, right, sits with a student tutor during class at Silver Shores Elementary School in Miramar, Fla., on Feb. 4. Fils-Aime survived the earthquake in Haiti and is one of hundreds of Haitian citizens enrolled in South Florida public schools. Hans Deryk / AP

Who are Minnesota's immigrant students?

Table 3. Minnesota's Top 12 Languages Other than English for English Learners in 2020 and 2025

Home Primary Language	2025	2020
Spanish	41454	29361
Somali	16212	17012
Hmong	11348	10908
Karen	3419	3268
Arabic	1664	1584
Oromo, Afan Oromo, Oromiffa	1568	1194
Russian	1245	895
Vietnamese	1033	1239
Amharic	948	836
Swahili, Kiswahili	765	567
French	667	459
English, Creolized	649	685

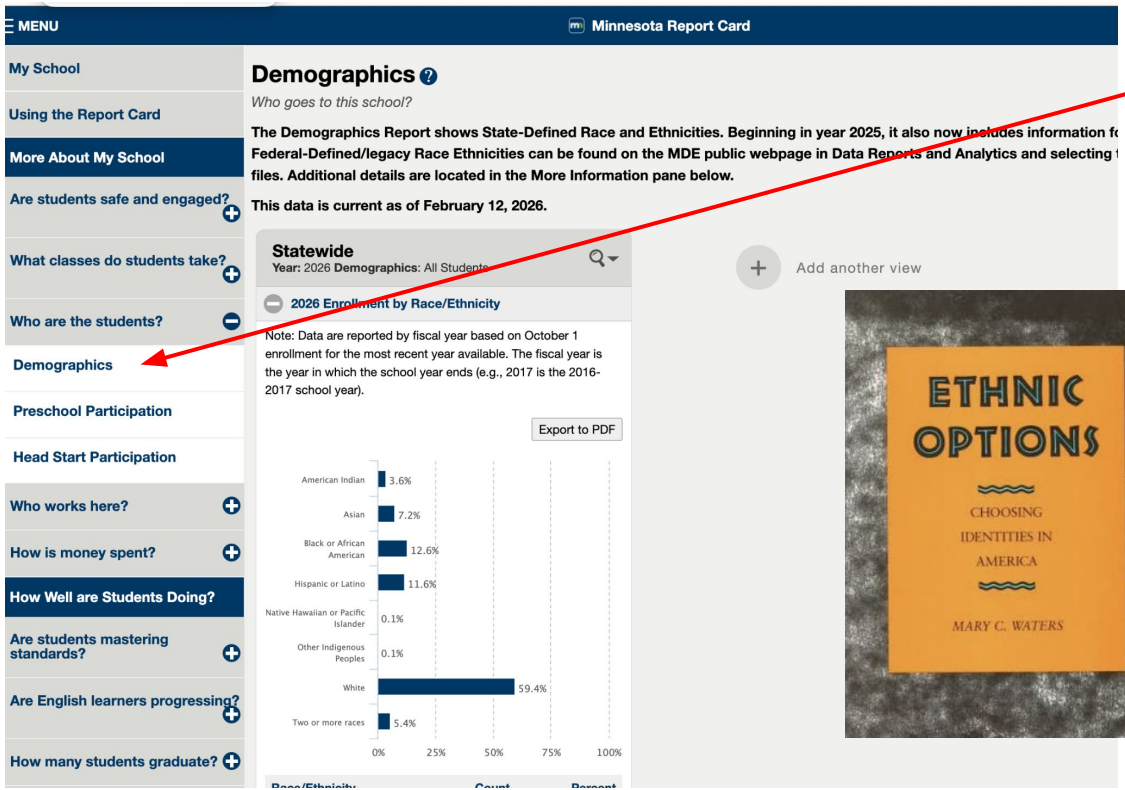
Source: MDE Enrollment Data

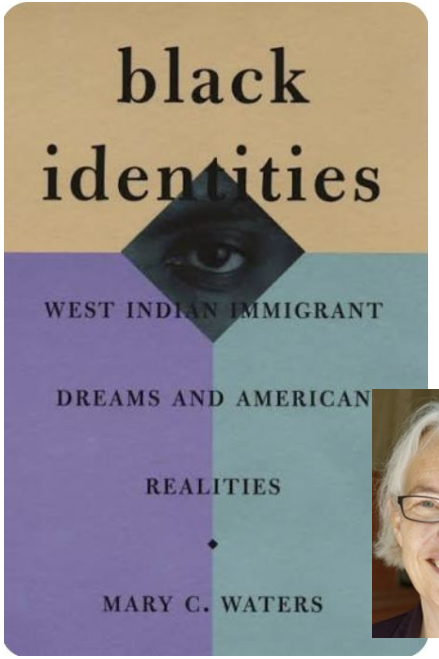
In the 2024-25 school year:

- 348 different languages including English
- 10% of the state's pre-K through grade 12 population are ELs and the numbers are steadily increasing
- Top three languages are: Spanish, Somali and Hmong

Source: Minnesota Department of Education. (2025). English learners in Minnesota report.

Immigrant student identity is invisible due to race.







https://rc.education.mn.gov/

Dr. Mary Waters
Professor of Sociology
Harvard University

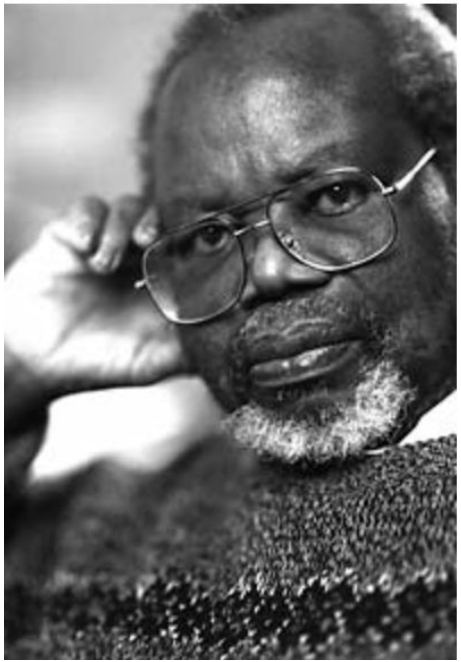
HCC Lesson 1: Racialization impacts academic achievement in US immigrant communities

Research and theories used as frames at the HCC are present in MN schools today…

Theories and research in immigrant education in the US:

- Cultural ecological theory
- Educación
- Culturally relevant pedagogy

Cultural Ecological Theory (1970s)



Dr. John Ogbu
Professor of Anthropology and Education
University of California Berkeley

Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation

JOHN U. OGBU
University of California, Berkeley

This article traces historically the different research approaches in educational anthropology. In doing so, the author presents a theoretical approach to minority school performance based on the important differences that arise from a minority community's experiences in the postschool opportunity structure and how minority community members' perceptions of dismal future opportunities influence their perceptions of and response to schooling. MINORITY EDUCATION, SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, MICROETHNOGRAPHY

Types of Anthropological Study of Minority Education

I have learned from experience that sometimes unnecessary disagreements arise about why minority children do poorly in school because we fail to distinguish between different types and objectives of anthropological study of minority education. Since this issue of *An-*

Educación (1990s)

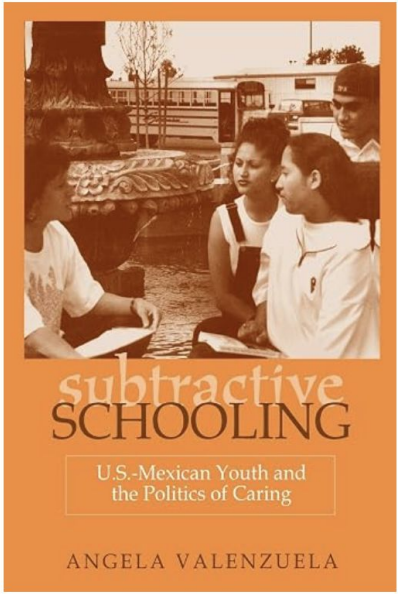


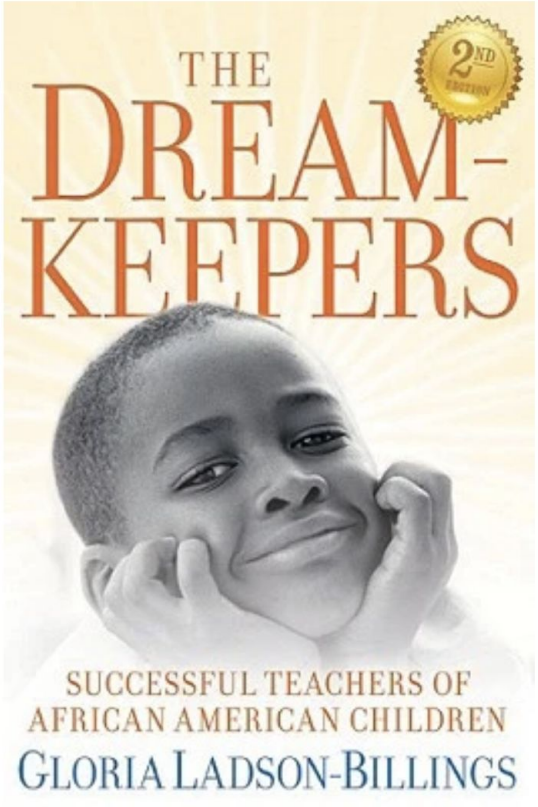
Dr. Angela Valenzuela
Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy
University of Texas - Austin

1. Educación is NOT the same thing as education: community knowledge, values, assets, identity are critical factors that lead to student achievement and shapes an "educated" identity

Example: A student can earn a high GPA, graduate from college and not be considered "educated"

2. Schools approach teaching in two ways that can help or harm students from immigrant backgrounds
   a. Aesthetic care: skill building, test scores, attendance rates - does not help students succeed
   b. Authentic care: seeing and caring about students for the individual, cultural, community and familial assets they bring to schools and using this as an entry point for learning and relationship-building leads to academic success





Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (1990s)

1) **Academic success:** teachers know their standards, lesson plan intentionally and have high expectations for themselves and their students

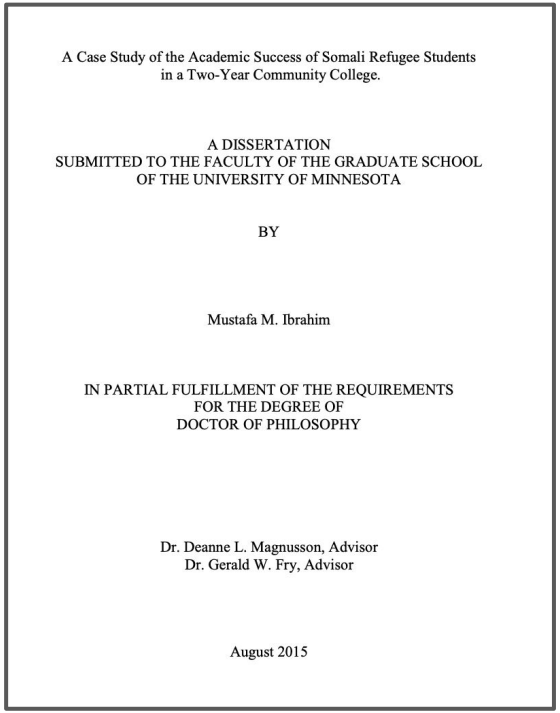
2) **Cultural competence:** educators know who they are racially, culturally, linguistically, etc. and learn about who their students are racially, culturally, linguistically, etc.

3) **Sociopolitical / critical consciousness**: teachers are able to help students understand structures of power in current and historical contexts and connect student learning to purpose and liberation - *learning with purpose goes beyond skill-building*



Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings
Professor of Urban Education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction & Educational Policy Studies
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Minnesota Example: Racism in the learning environment impacts students' academic success in postsecondary too



A Case Study of the Academic Success of Somali Refugee Students
in a Two-Year Community College.

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

Mustafa M. Ibrahim

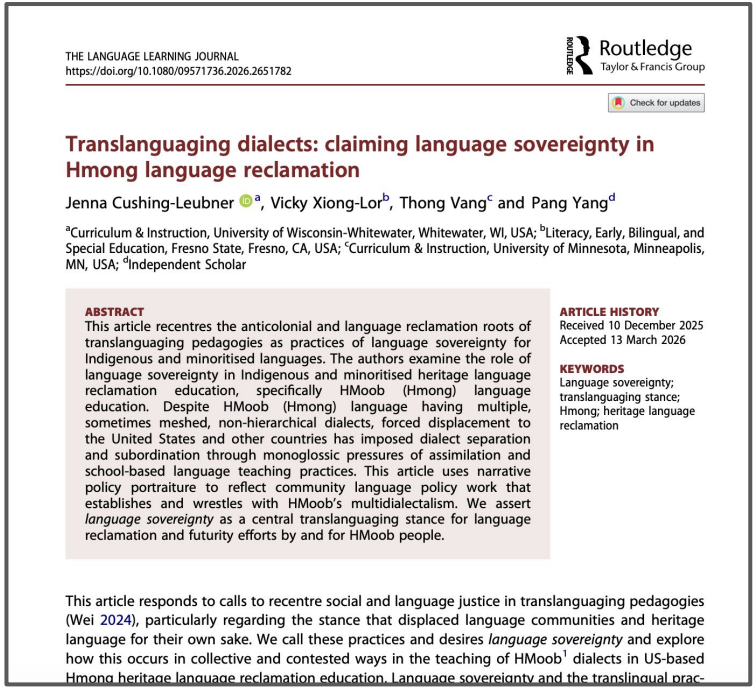
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Deanne L. Magnusson, Advisor
Dr. Gerald W. Fry, Advisor

August 2015

Ibrahim (2015): "Assimilation has been much more challenging for people in the [post-1960s immigration] for several reasons: 1) many were involuntarily forced to flee with little else other than their lives from Somalia; 2) many have suffered the multiple traumas of war, loss, torture, family disintegration, geographical dislocation, violence, and personal depredation; 3) many were unprepared for the cultural, educational, and logistical challenges and differences they encountered in the US, such as social stigma…(p. 33)." (Lafayette, 2026, p. 10).

Minnesota Example: Families navigate subtractive schooling practices by enrolling their children in programs/schools that are culturally affirming



THE LANGUAGE LEARNING JOURNAL
https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2026.2651782

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Translanguaging dialects: claiming language sovereignty in Hmong language reclamation

Jenna Cushing-Leubner [a], Vicky Xiong-Lor[b], Thong Vang[c] and Pang Yang[d]

[a]Curriculum & Instruction, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Whitewater, WI, USA; [b]Literacy, Early, Bilingual, and Special Education, Fresno State, Fresno, CA, USA; [c]Curriculum & Instruction, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA; [d]Independent Scholar

ABSTRACT

This article recentres the anticolonial and language reclamation roots of translanguaging pedagogies as practices of language sovereignty for Indigenous and minoritised languages. The authors examine the role of language sovereignty in Indigenous and minoritised heritage language reclamation education, specifically HMoob (Hmong) language education. Despite HMoob (Hmong) language having multiple, sometimes meshed, non-hierarchical dialects, forced displacement to the United States and other countries has imposed dialect separation and subordination through monoglossic pressures of assimilation and school-based language teaching practices. This article uses narrative policy portraiture to reflect community language policy work that establishes and wrestles with HMoob's multidialectalism. We assert *language sovereignty* as a central translanguaging stance for language reclamation and futurity efforts by and for HMoob people.

ARTICLE HISTORY
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Accepted 13 March 2026

KEYWORDS
Language sovereignty; translanguaging stance; Hmong; heritage language reclamation

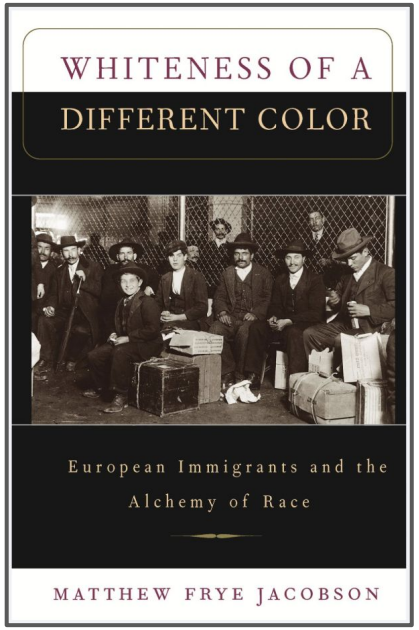
This article responds to calls to recentre social and language justice in translanguaging pedagogies (Wei 2024), particularly regarding the stance that displaced language communities and heritage language for their own sake. We call these practices and desires *language sovereignty* and explore how this occurs in collective and contested ways in the teaching of HMoob[1] dialects in US-based Hmong heritage language reclamation education. Language sovereignty and the translingual prac-

Xiong-Lor et al.'s article (2026): In 2023

- 19,778 school-aged children in Minnesota who identified HMoob (Hmong) as a home language
- 11,679 HMoob children attended nine Minnesota public charter schools or districts
- 59% of HMoob home language children in Minnesota have access to HMoob language and culture education in their school or district
    - Immersion programs
    - Dual language programs (HMoob & English)
    - Language and culture heritage course options
    - Schools with HMoob-centric mission statements

HCC Lesson 2: Standardizing schools through legislation is an example of a racial project

“Race” was built through exclusion



“…between the 1870s and the 1920s, US courts played an important role in creating the White racial category **According to Jacobson (1998): In the nation’s legal epistemology of race, the “Caucasian race” traces its origins to *In re Ah Yup* (1878), ‘the first application made by a native [Chinese man] for naturalization’** in the United States…[Judge] Sawyer’s reasoning in the matter single-handedly established ‘Caucasians’ as a legally recognized racial group (p. 227).” (Lafayette, 2026, p. 17)



Dr. Matthew Frye Jacobson
Professor of American Studies, History, and Black Studies
Yale University

Racial projects reinforced White dominance

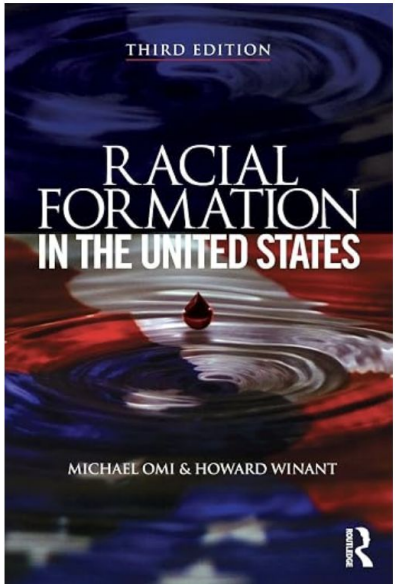


Dr. Michael Omi
Professor of Ethnic Studies
University California-Berkley

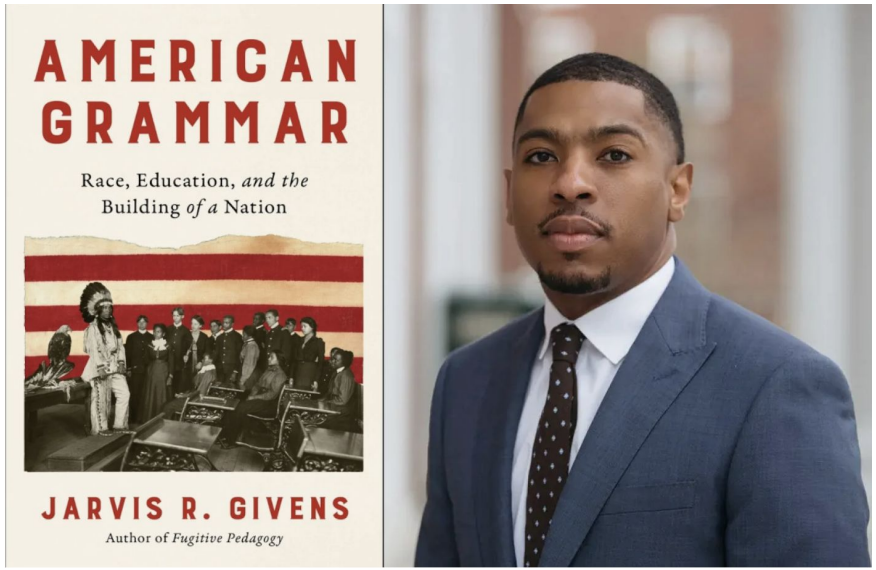


Dr. Howard Winant
Professor of Sociology
University California-Santa Barbara

"A racial project can be defined as *racist* if and only if it *creates or reproduces structures of domination based on essentialist categories of race*. Such a definition recognizes the importance of locating racism within a fluid and contested history of racially based social structures and discourses. Thus there can be no timeless and absolute standard for what constitutes racism…" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 71).



Racial projects and reading: African Americans



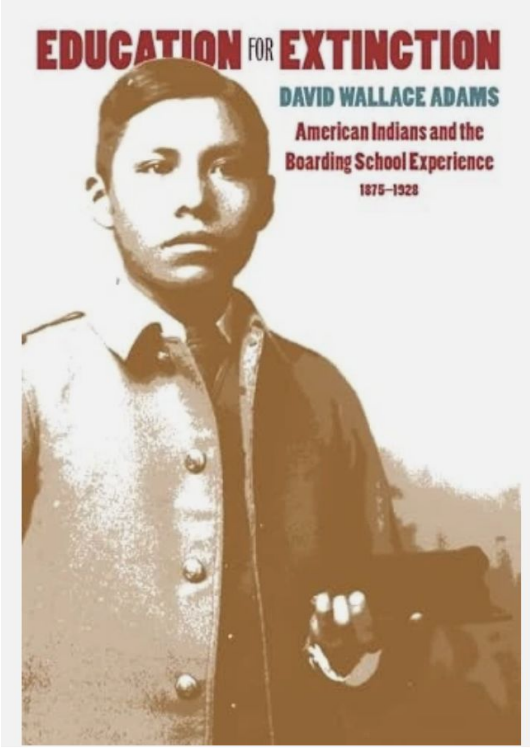
Dr. Jarvis R. Givens
Professor of Education
Professor of African and African American Studies
Harvard University

- Anti-literacy laws for enslaved and free African Americans
  - **South Carolina Act of 1740** - fined White people for teaching enslaved people how to write/scribe
  - **Virginia Revised Code of 1819** - threatened corporal punishment (up to 20 lashes) for teaching reading to a group of free African Americans or enslaved people at any time of day; meetings in school or at a meeting house was an unlawful assembly

Racial projects and social engineering: American Indians

"In 1881, the former Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Carl Schurz, argued that 'Indians were confronted with [a] stern alternative: extermination or civilization" (Lafayette, 2026, p. 18)

The last wars were waged against American Indian youth, their families and communities in classrooms…





Dr. David Wallace Adams
Professor of Education
Cleveland State University

The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the "White" Problem in American Studies

GEORGE LIPSITZ
University of California, San Diego

SHORTLY AFTER WORLD WAR II, A FRENCH REPORTER ASKED EXPATRIate Richard Wright his opinion about the "Negro problem" in the United States. The author replied "There isn't any Negro problem; there is only a white problem."[1] By inverting the reporter's question, Wright called attention to its hidden assumptions—that racial polarization comes from the existence of blacks rather than from the behavior of whites, that black people are a "problem" for whites rather than fellow citizens entitled to justice, and that unless otherwise specified, "Americans" means whites.[2] But Wright's formulation also placed political mobilization by African Americans in context, attributing it to the systemic practices of aversion, exploitation, denigration, and discrimination practiced by people who think of themselves as "white."

Whiteness is everywhere in American culture, but it is very hard to see. As Richard Dyer argues, "white power secures its dominance by

"Whiteness is everywhere in American culture, but it is very hard to see. As Richard Dyer argues, 'White power secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular.' As the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, Whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations. (Lipsitz, 1995, p. 369).



Dr. George Lipsitz
Professor of Sociology
UC Santa Barbara

Is the MN READ Act a racial project?

CHAPTER 125--H.F.No. 4492

An act relating to education; modifying the Read Act; requiring early literacy field experience for certain teacher candidates; establishing a high school diploma for veterans; requiring rulemaking; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 120B.119, subdivision 7, by adding a subdivision; 120B.123, by adding a subdivision; 122A.092, by adding a subdivision; Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, sections 120B.119, subdivision 10; 120B.12, subdivisions 2, 2a, 4a; 120B.123, subdivisions 1, 5; 120B.124, subdivision 5; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 127A; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 120B.124, subdivision 6.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

ARTICLE 1

THE READ ACT

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.119, subdivision 7, is amended to read:

Subd. 7. **Literacy specialist.** "Literacy specialist" means a person licensed by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board ~~as a teacher of reading, a special education teacher, or a kindergarten through grade 6 teacher,~~ who has completed professional development approved by the Department of Education in structured literacy.

Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 120B.119, subdivision 10, is amended to read:

Subd. 10. **Oral language.** "Oral language," also called " expressive language" ~~or~~ and "receptive language," includes speaking and listening, and consists of five components: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Oral language also includes sign language, in which speaking and listening skills are defined as expressive and receptive skills, and consists of phonology, including sign language phonological awareness, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.119, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 10a. **Parent.** "Parent" means a student's parent or legal guardian.

Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2025 Supplement, section 120B.12, subdivision 2, is amended to read:

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/

MN READ Act policy & implementation

A. **Educator Preparation:** Ensure new teachers learn how to teach reading correctly.

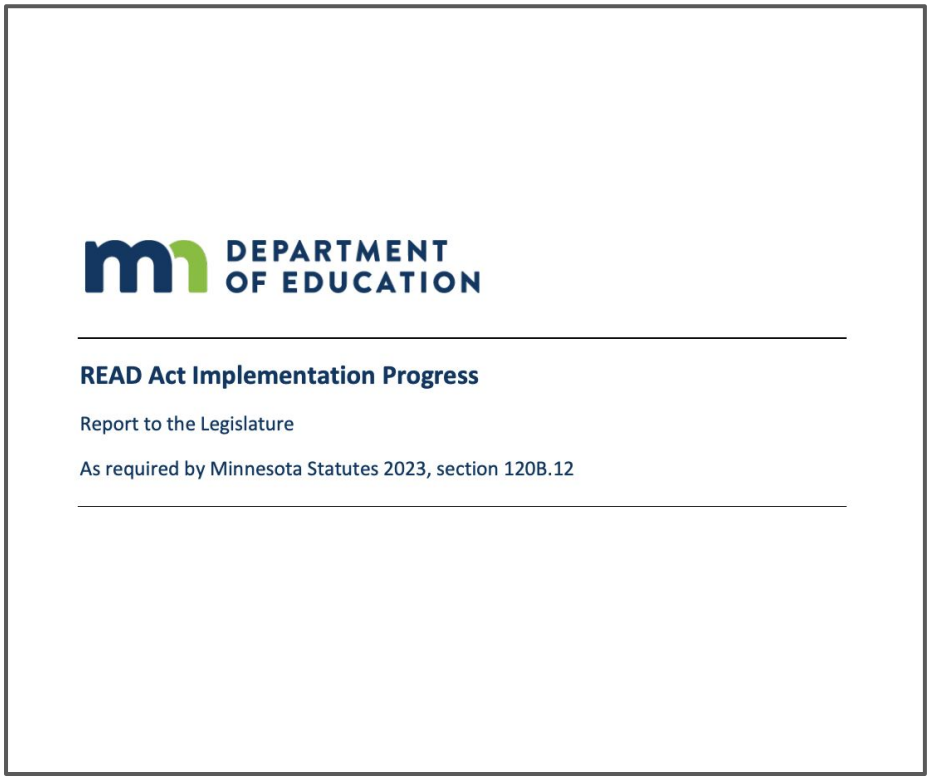
B. **High-Quality Professional Learning and Development:** Ensure that sitting educators understand the science of reading and receive ongoing coaching support.

C. **High-Quality Instruction Materials:** Ensure that educators have access to instructional materials that align with the science of reading.

D. **Screening and Intervening:** Ensure that educators use screeners and interventions that align with the science of reading to help identify and support struggling readers.



Source: Minnesota Department of Education. (2026). *READ Act implementation progress legislative report*.

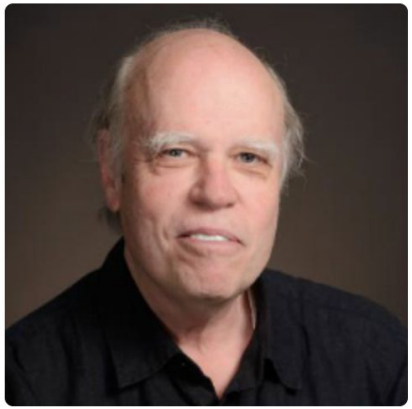


MN READ Act is unique because…

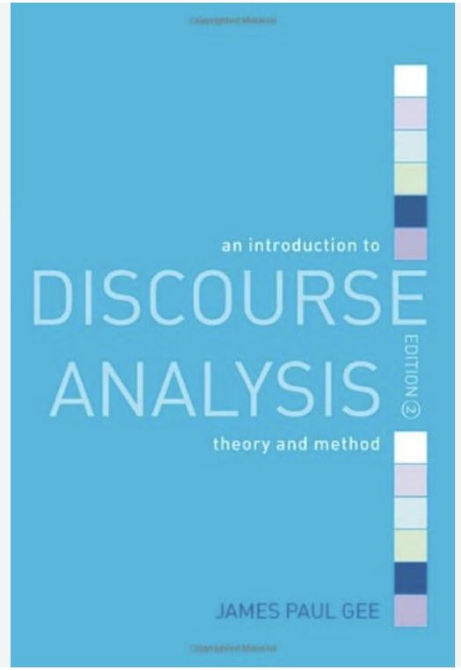
- Prioritizes multilingual and students with disabilities
- Requires training for secondary educators and support staff
- Requires annual Local Literacy Plan (LLP) review
- Requires screening for characteristics of dyslexia

Source: Minnesota Department of Education. (2026). *READ Act implementation progress legislative report*.

Critical Discourse Analysis: Making the invisible visible



Dr. James Paul Gee
Professor of Literacy Studies at Arizona State University



- **<u>“d” discourse</u>**
  written words, spoken words, words in use
- **<u>“D” discourse</u>**
  mental models, mindsets, values, beliefs situated in context and connected to the words being used
- **<u>Poststructural theory</u>**
  words have the power to make themselves true when they are supported by power (e.g. laws and Minnesota Dept. of Education)

Minnesota READ Act: Required vs. aspirational

Code	Definition	Indicators in statute
MUST — Required District Action	The district has a legal obligation to perform the action.	*must, shall, required, must provide, must use, must administer, must implement*
MAY — Aspirational/Encouraged District Action	The district is encouraged, strongly encouraged, or permitted to adopt an approach, but the approach itself is not mandatory.	*encouraged, strongly encouraged, may, may adopt*

Parent code	What the district does	Status
MUST	Administer approved K–3 screeners three times/year	**Required**
MUST	Progress-monitor students not reading at grade level	**Required**
MUST	Use EVIDENCE-BASED curriculum/materials	**Required**
MUST	Use only EVIDENCE-BASED literacy interventions	**Required starting 2026–27**
MUST	Provide required EVIDENCE-BASED literacy training	**Required**
MUST	Provide trained-teacher oversight of intervention	**Required**
MUST	Employ/contract with or develop a literacy lead	**Required**
MUST	Adopt/update/submit Local Literacy Plan	**Required annually**
MUST	Notify/involve parents in specified ways	**Required**
MUST	Collect/report literacy and implementation data	**Required**
MAY	Use MTSS/data-based decision-making framework	**Encouraged**
MAY	Use MDE-approved intervention materials	**Strongly encouraged**
MAY	Pursue culturally/linguistically responsive materials beyond minimum requirements	**Encouraged/aspirational**

The READ Act & culturally relevant teaching for multilingual and immigrant students

Demonstrators Participate In Haitian Immigration Protest

August 11, 2011 / 11:04 AM EDT / CBS Miami

Add CBS News on Google

MIAMI (CBS4)- Hundreds of demonstrators, along with human rights organizations and activists, are joining forces to rally outside the Department of Homeland Security office in Miami Thursday.

Protestors said they are demanding changes in U.S. immigration policy for Haitians. More than 200 demonstrators are calling attention to what they say are the "discriminatory policies that continue to treat Haitian immigrants to the U.S. by standards differently than immigrants from other countries, most notably Cuba."

https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/demonstrators-participate-in-haitian-immigration-protest/

2011



8 Cambodian Refugees in Minnesota Prove Why Deportations Must be Stopped

Huffington Post, April 1, 2017

https://minnesota8.org/

2017

2026

POLITICS & POLICY

Federal judge denies bid to end ICE Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota

PUBLISHED SAT, JAN 31 2026•2:11 PM EST

Natalie Wu
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SHARE



Protestors march during a "Nationwide Shutdown" demonstration against ICE enforcement on Jan. 30, 2026 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Stephen Maturen | Getty Images

HCC Lesson 3: Scientific racism and the pervasiveness of invisible rules

Scientific racism

"Scientific racism includes notions of merit, objectivity, and science that are used to defend, justify, and maintain White supremacy"

Journal of Literacy Research
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https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X19877463

Article

Race, Response to Intervention, and Reading Research

Arlette Ingram Willis

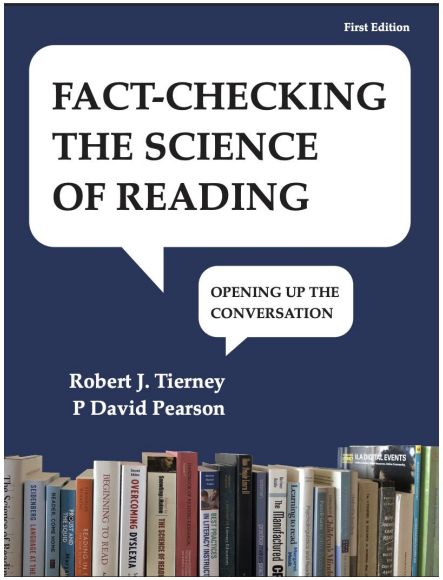
Abstract

In this critique, race is centralized to draw attention to the role it plays in the complex evolution of response to intervention, past and present. I use a critical race theory analytical lens to focus on how the dominant narrative serves as a framework within institutional and political structures in support of the approach. A brief overview of anti-discrimination laws and policies is followed by several historical narratives that are used to convey the intersecting nature of early reading and special education research. The body of research is employed to articulate the goals and purpose of the intervention, sans a clear commitment to addressing racial disproportionality. This critique particularly exposes how response to intervention has neither improved reading achievement nor curtailed racial disproportionality, and emphasizes that reading research is complicit in the reproduction of racial inequality in education. I conclude with a call to action.



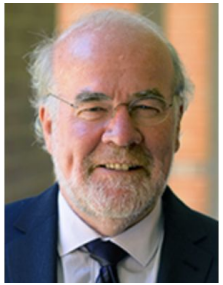
Dr. Arlette Willis
Professor of Curriculum & Instruction
University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign

“Science of Reading” is not a settled science





Dr. P David Pearson
Professor & Dean
in School of Ed.
University of California - Berkeley
(Literacy history and policy)

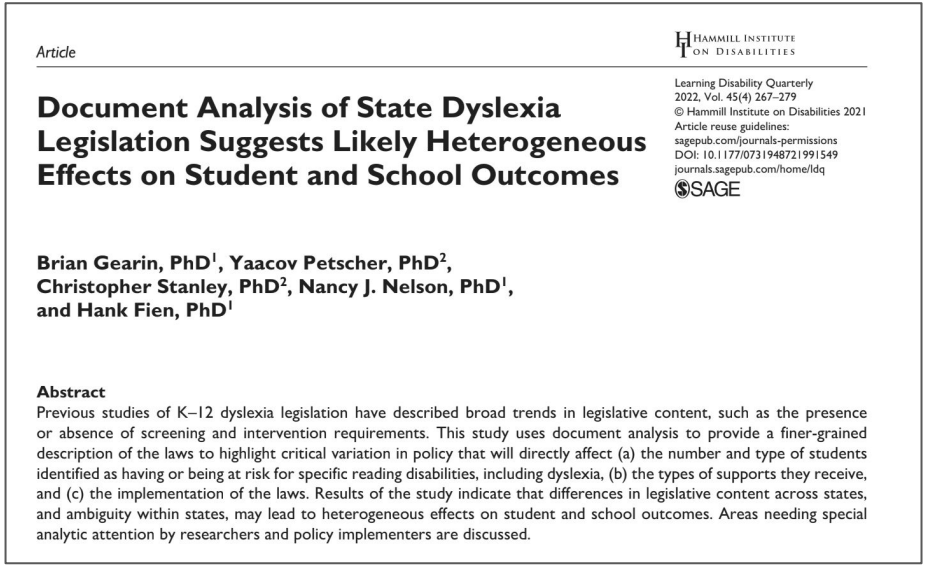


Dr. Robert Tierney
Professor & Dean
University of British Columbia, Canada
(Literacy education)

<u>Simple view of reading</u>

- Theoretical model that describes reading comprehension as the product of decoding ability and linguistic comprehension
- Language difference and multilingualism are not important factors

Simple view of reading, dyslexia & pedagogy (claims)



Article

HAMMILL INSTITUTE ON DISABILITIES

Learning Disability Quarterly
2022, Vol. 45(4) 267–279
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Document Analysis of State Dyslexia Legislation Suggests Likely Heterogeneous Effects on Student and School Outcomes

Brian Gearin, PhD[1], Yaacov Petscher, PhD[2], Christopher Stanley, PhD[2], Nancy J. Nelson, PhD[1], and Hank Fien, PhD[1]

Abstract

Previous studies of K–12 dyslexia legislation have described broad trends in legislative content, such as the presence or absence of screening and intervention requirements. This study uses document analysis to provide a finer-grained description of the laws to highlight critical variation in policy that will directly affect (a) the number and type of students identified as having or being at risk for specific reading disabilities, including dyslexia, (b) the types of supports they receive, and (c) the implementation of the laws. Results of the study indicate that differences in legislative content across states, and ambiguity within states, may lead to heterogeneous effects on student and school outcomes. Areas needing special analytic attention by researchers and policy implementers are discussed.

<u>Dyslexia & simple view of reading</u>

- Dyslexia refers to a phonological weakness that blocks decoding, which in turn interferes with word identification
- 19th century: Introduced to describe word blindness
- 1910s: researchers and physicians in Europe and the US extended the concepts of word blindness and dyslexia to include congenital reading difficulties

Even neuroscientists don't agree that there is enough scientific evidence to link phonics instruction to brain research

1930s & 1940s

Samuel Orton (neuropsychiatrist) & Anne Gillingham (psychologist)

- argue that foundational reading skill development can be linked to brain research
- therefore, neuroscience supports a phonics-first approach to reading

(Tierney & Pearson, 2024)

Critics of the use of neuroscience to support the Science of Reading expressed major concerns, including:

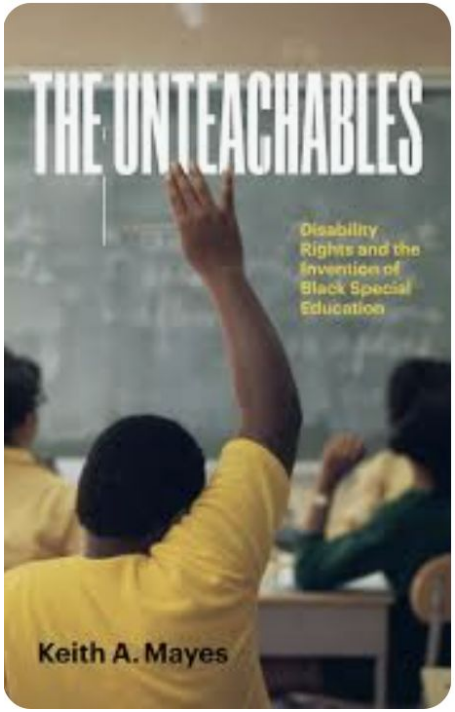
1) The extent to which fMRI's yield images can or should be viewed as discrete images of learning responses associated with teaching specific foundational skills

2) The reliability of such research, especially considering the difficulty replicating data from brain scans

3) The extent to which data from brain scans can serve as evidence or the basis for educational practices

(Tierney and Pearson, 2024, p. 98).

“Science of reading” ignores race and racism



1900s: Compulsory education

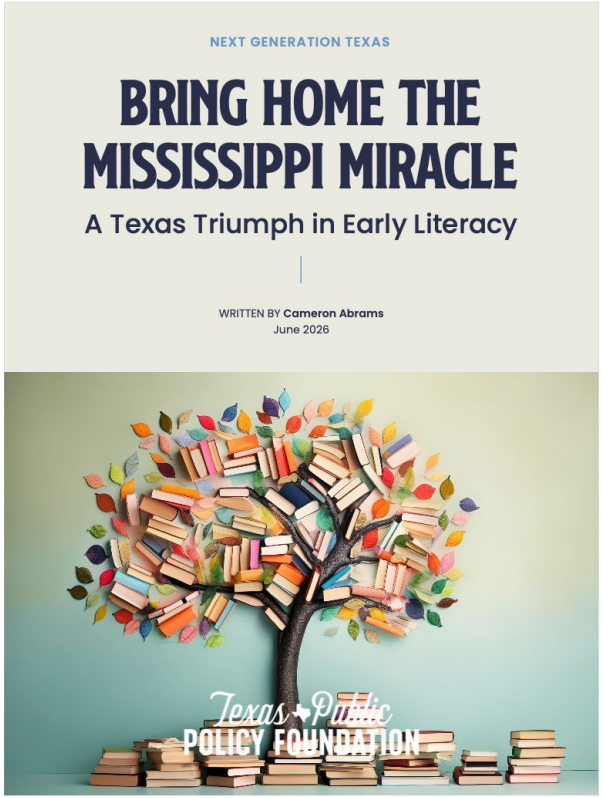
1950s: School desegregation

- Creation of new disability labels supported by scientific claims
- Created a rationale for “spatial rearrangement in schools built on racial exclusivity and family privilege”
- New disability categories were created and supported by scientific claims in order to explain why some students learned differently than others, and therefore needed to learn in a different environment



Dr. Keith Mayes
Professor of Black Studies
University of California-Santa Barbara

Invisible narrative in MN READ Act: “Mississippi Miracle”

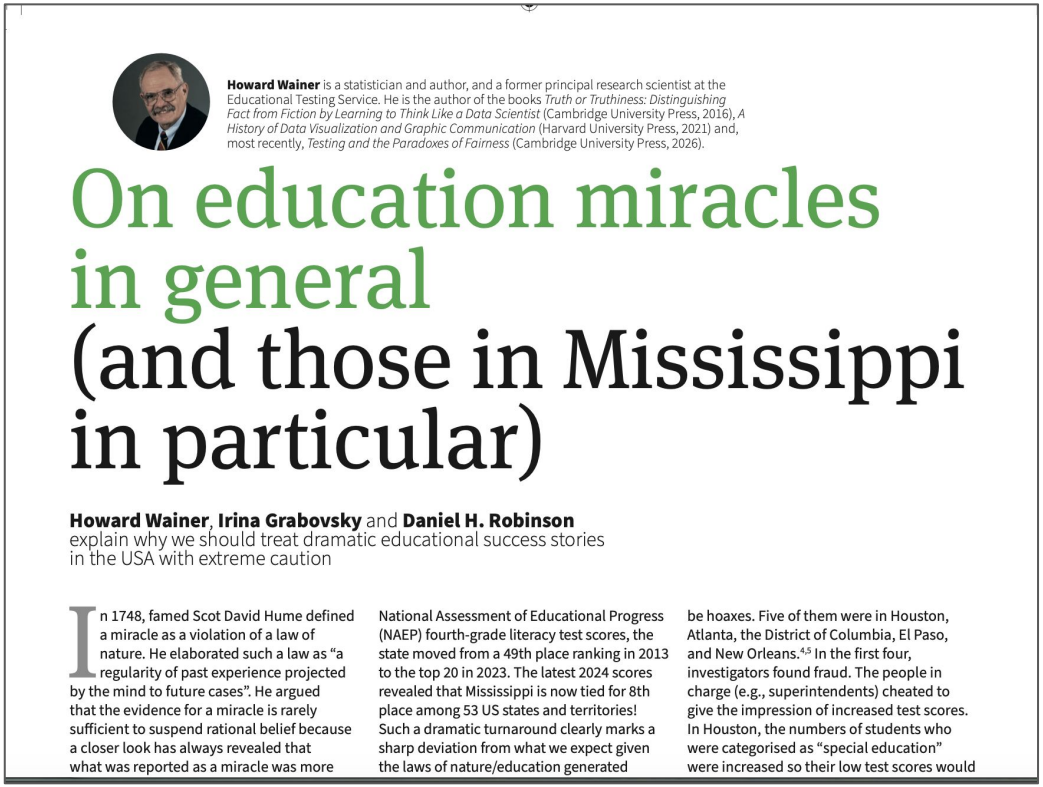


- In 2013, Mississippi 4th grade students ranked 49th in reading and 50th in math based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)
- In 2024, Mississippi’s 4th grade students ranked 9th in reading according to NAEP

<u>Mississippi’s Literacy Based Promotion Act (2013)</u>

- Requirements for professional development aligned to the “science of reading”
- Literacy coaches placed in schools
- Retention of 3rd grade students who did not meet proficiency in reading. *These students were not allowed to take the 4th grade NAEP test.*

“Mississippi Miracle” debunked



Howard Wainer is a statistician and author, and a former principal research scientist at the Educational Testing Service. He is the author of the books *Truth or Truthiness: Distinguishing Fact from Fiction by Learning to Think Like a Data Scientist* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), *A History of Data Visualization and Graphic Communication* (Harvard University Press, 2021) and, most recently, *Testing and the Paradoxes of Fairness* (Cambridge University Press, 2026).

On education miracles in general (and those in Mississippi in particular)

Howard Wainer, **Irina Grabovsky** and **Daniel H. Robinson**
explain why we should treat dramatic educational success stories in the USA with extreme caution

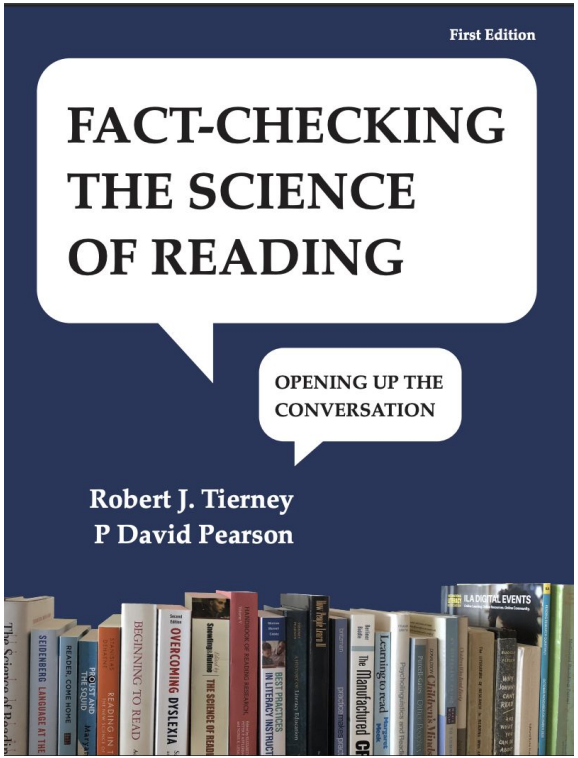
In 1748, famed Scot David Hume defined a miracle as a violation of a law of nature. He elaborated such a law as “a regularity of past experience projected by the mind to future cases”. He argued that the evidence for a miracle is rarely sufficient to suspend rational belief because a closer look has always revealed that what was reported as a miracle was more

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth-grade literacy test scores, the state moved from a 49th place ranking in 2013 to the top 20 in 2023. The latest 2024 scores revealed that Mississippi is now tied for 8th place among 53 US states and territories! Such a dramatic turnaround clearly marks a sharp deviation from what we expect given the laws of nature/education generated

be hoaxes. Five of them were in Houston, Atlanta, the District of Columbia, El Paso, and New Orleans.[4,5] In the first four, investigators found fraud. The people in charge (e.g., superintendents) cheated to give the impression of increased test scores. In Houston, the numbers of students who were categorised as “special education” were increased so their low test scores would

- Grade-level retention in 3rd grade based on reading scores drove 4th grade results for NAEP in Mississippi
- 2024 NAEP reading scores for 8th grade Mississippi tied for 42nd place (out of 53 US states and territories)

“Science of reading”: Excludes LOTS OF RESEARCH



EVALUATING THE SETTLED CHARACTER OF KEY SOR CLAIMS

CLAIM 1

Explicit systematic phonics instruction is the key curricular component in teaching beginning reading 21

CLAIM 2

The Simple View of Reading provides an adequate theoretical account of skilled reading and its development over time 38

CLAIM 3

Reading is the ability to identify and understand words that are part of one’s oral language repertoire 46

https://literacyresearchcommons.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Fact-checking-the-SoR.pdf

“**Leading indicator: Screening assessment** provides data on foundational reading skills to understand if we are on track to reach desired, long-term student reading comprehension proficiency outcomes…”
(Read Act Implementation Progress, 2026, p. 4)



mCLASS:Early Literacy Measures Research Overview

Whose data are we using?

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to examine the reliability and validity of the vocabulary, spelling, and rapid automatized naming measures, and to inform improvements and changes to each measure based on item analysis.

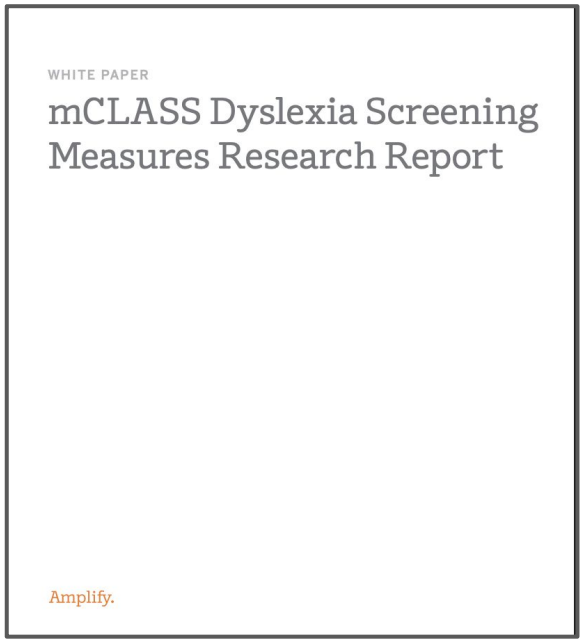
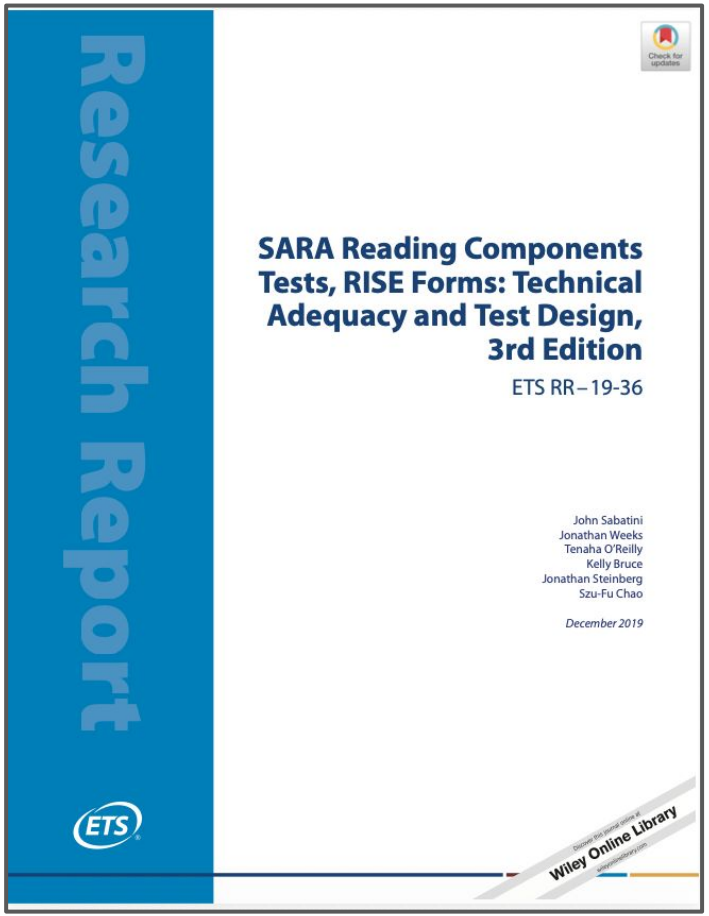


Table 1: Sample Size and Demographics by Grade

	All	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Sample Size (n)					
Districts	2	2	2	2	2
Schools	3	3	3	3	3
Students	584	146 (25%)	165 (28%)	129 (22%)	144 (25%)
Gender (n)					
Female	302 (52%)	76 (52%)	87 (53%)	58 (45%)	81 (56%)
Male	282 (48%)	70 (48%)	78 (47%)	71 (55%)	63 (44%)
Ethnicity (n)					
White	548 (94%)	139 (96%)	153 (93%)	122 (96%)	134 (94%)
Black	11 (2%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)
Asian	3 (0%)	0	1 (0%)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)
Multiracial	4 (1%)	0	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
Ethnicity Not Specified	18 (3%)	5 (3%)	6 (4%)	2 (1%)	3 (2%)
Other Demographics (n)					
FRL Eligible	497 (85%)	127 (87%)	138 (84%)	112 (87%)	120 (83%)
FRL Not Eligible	87 (15%)	19 (13%)	27 (16%)	17 (13%)	24 (17%)

https://amplify.com/research-and-case-studies/mclass-research/



Whose data are we ignoring?

Table 4 Participant Characteristics (Phases I and II): By Grade and Limited English Proficiency

Grade	Total students	Receiving English language learner services (%)	Not receiving English language learner services (%)	Exited services within past 2 years (not currently receiving services) (%)
5	20,159	1.6	94.1	4.2
6	37,416	1.4	95.9	2.7
7	36,407	1.2	96.8	2.0
8	33,746	1.1	97.3	1.5
9	26,063	0.8	98.3	0.9
10	10,299	0.9	98.3	0.8

Table 5 Participant Characteristics (Phases I and II): By Grade and Special Education Status

Grade	Total students	Receiving special education services (%)	Not receiving special education services (%)	Code 504 (%)	Exited special education and placed in Code 504 (%)	Exited services within past 2 years (%)
5	20,159	14.9	81.9	1.7	0.1	1.3
6	37,416	16.5	79.9	2.2	0.2	1.1
7	36,407	17.3	79.3	2.2	0.2	1.0
8	33,746	17.2	79.4	2.2	0.2	0.9
9	26,063	16.8	80.3	1.9	0.2	0.9
10	10,299	15.7	81.5	1.7	0.2	0.8

(Capti ReadBasix: Approved screener for grades 4-12)

What do we believe about the students being tested?

Capti ReadBasix: MDE approved screener for grades 4-12

According to Capti ReadBasix (2024):

In 2004, Dr. Sabatini joined the Educational Testing Service and began working to create the RISE (Reading Inventory and Scholastic Evaluation) assessment, the predecessor to ReadBasix. This work was spurred by a collaboration with the Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP), a group that works closely with numerous school districts across the U.S. Those school districts noted that many of their middle school students were arriving at 6th grade with weak reading skills, but the schools were not equipped to identify exactly where their weaknesses were—or what to do about them. RISE was initially designed specifically for middle school students, to give schools the information they needed to help struggling readers. (Capti ReadBasix, 2024, p. 2)

Table 2 Grades Tested During Each Wave

Wave	Grades
1. WINSPR 2011	6–9
2. FALL 2011	6–9
3. SPRING 2012	6–9
4. FALL 2012	5–10

Table 3 Participant Characteristics: By Grade and Gender

Grade	Total students	Female (%)	Male (%)	Not reported (%)
5	2,947	49.2	50.8	0.0
6	3,540	48.8	51.2	0.1
7	3,477	48.4	51.6	0.1
8	3,114	49.0	51.0	0.1
9	2,885	54.3	45.6	0.1
10	1,420	58.5	41.4	0.1

Table 4 Participant Characteristics: By Grade, Ethnicity, and Race

		Ethnicity (%)	Race (%)					
Grade	Total students	Hispanic/ Latino	American Indian/ Native Alaskan	Asian	Black/ African American	Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	White	Other/ not reported
5	2,947	5.2	0.1	0.6	87.2	0.1	11.7	0.3
6	3,540	4.3	0.3	1.0	86.0	0.2	12.3	0.2
7	3,477	4.1	0.2	0.8	86.4	0.2	12.2	0.1
8	3,114	3.6	0.3	1.1	86.5	0.3	11.6	0.1
9	2,885	2.3	0.4	1.1	89.3	0.2	8.8	0.1
10	1,420	2.0	0.3	1.7	90.6	0.0	7.3	0.1

Example of Minnesota's characteristics of dyslexia data

2025-2026						
% of students displaying characteristics of dyslexia based on screening data						
School District	SPPS	Brooklyn Center	MPS	Waconia	Elk River	Orono
% students of color in the district	77.6%	84.2%	63.6%	12.5%	24.6%	13.3%
Kindergarten	16.4%	66.0%	64.7%	23.5%	14.3%	4.8%
1st	29.5%	46.8%	65.2%	15.5%	26.7%	7.0%
2nd	53.8%	82.8%	80.2%	21.2%	6.7%	17.7%
3rd	43.2%	83.1%	75.8%	15.5%	2.3%	27.8%

Source: https://pub.education.mn.gov/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=580 & MN Report Card

Fall 2025 Capti Read Basix & READ Act 4-12

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Extensions Help

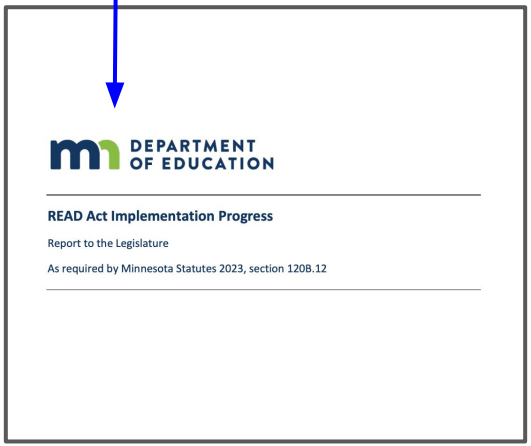
D4 Does this child already receive services for either MLL or have an IEP goal related to reading?

Determine Students Not Meeting Grade-Level Benchmarks: Determine which students are not meeting grade-level benchmarks in a locally determined manner using a valid, reliable, and standar
ension benchmark in step 1 while still demonstrating decoding difficulties or falling below the decoding threshold (please see below for more information about the decoding threshold). For this reasc
in the higher grades. https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/READ/scr/scrguide4_12/ Multilingual Learners and ReadBasix.docx (1).pdf

The READ Act: Grade... education.mn.gov/MDE/d...

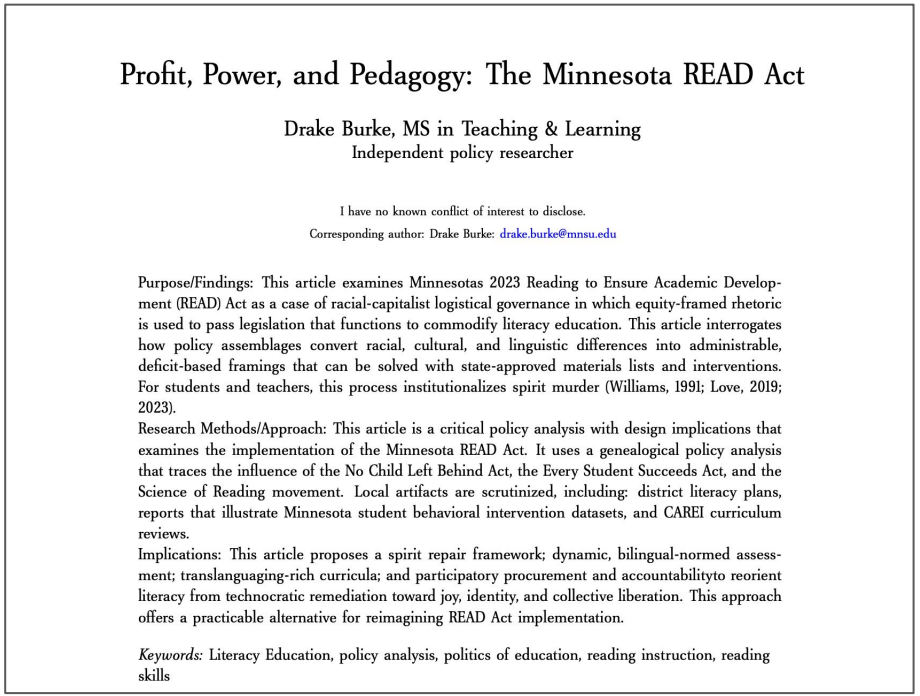
	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
4		IEP goal related to reading?	Is this child an MLL student whose composite score is below a 2.3? (Capti guidance) Only ACCESS levels of 2.3 or higher are	Was MAP READING Fall 2025 below 20th percentile? Opt out should be entered as NA	Was MAP Reading Fall 2024 Percentile below 20th percentile? Opt out should be entered as NA	MCA Reading SY25 Does Not Meet?	Was MCA Reading SY24 Does Not Meet?	Fall 2025 FastBridge risk level
5	10	MLL	Entering	Y	No score	No score	No score	NA
6	11	MLL	Entering	Y				NA
7	4	MLL	2.3 composite	Y	NA	Yes	NA	Some risk
8	11	MLL	3.1	Y	NA	Opted out	4/7 MCA-Readings were DNM	NA
9	10	MLL	2.0	Y	NA	NA	7th & 8th grade MCA-R was DNM	NA
10	7	MLL	2.9	Y	NA	DNM	DNM	NA
11	4	MLL	2.6	Y		DNM	NA	Some risk
12	4	MLL	3.1	Y		DNM	NA	High Risk
13	5	MLL	2.1	Y		DNM	DNM	High Risk
14	5	MLL	2.9	Y		DNM	NA	High Risk
15	6	MLL	3	Y		DNM	DNM	NA
16	7	Yes: IEP/SLD; Need to look up IEP	No	Y		DNM	DNM	NA
17	4	MLL	2.3	Y		DNM	NA	High Risk
18	4	MLL	1.7	Y		DNM	NA	Some risk
19	7	MLL	3,0; was not in Minnesota for grades 4, 5 & 6	Y		DNM	NA - no record	NA
20	6	Yes: IEP/OHD	No	Y		DNM	DNM	NA
21	6	Yes: IEP/SLD; Need to look up IEP	No	Y		DNM	DNM	NA
22	5	MLL	1.8	Y		DNM	NA	High Risk
23	4	MLL	1.8	Y		DNM		Some risk

Multilingual learners have the lowest proficiency rates in [MCA] reading (MDE, 2026)



- MN: Do we believe MLs are more likely to be dyslexic?
- MN: Will phonics instruction help MLs gain access to educación and culturally relevant teaching?

Is the READ Act creating White language supremacy?



Profit, Power, and Pedagogy: The Minnesota READ Act

Drake Burke, MS in Teaching & Learning
Independent policy researcher

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.
Corresponding author: Drake Burke: drake.burke@mnsu.edu

Purpose/Findings: This article examines Minnesotas 2023 Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act as a case of racial-capitalist logistical governance in which equity-framed rhetoric is used to pass legislation that functions to commodify literacy education. This article interrogates how policy assemblages convert racial, cultural, and linguistic differences into administrable, deficit-based framings that can be solved with state-approved materials lists and interventions. For students and teachers, this process institutionalizes spirit murder (Williams, 1991; Love, 2019; 2023).
Research Methods/Approach: This article is a critical policy analysis with design implications that examines the implementation of the Minnesota READ Act. It uses a genealogical policy analysis that traces the influence of the No Child Left Behind Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act, and the Science of Reading movement. Local artifacts are scrutinized, including: district literacy plans, reports that illustrate Minnesota student behavioral intervention datasets, and CAREI curriculum reviews.
Implications: This article proposes a spirit repair framework; dynamic, bilingual-normed assessment; translanguaging-rich curricula; and participatory procurement and accountabilityto reorient literacy from technocratic remediation toward joy, identity, and collective liberation. This approach offers a practicable alternative for reimagining READ Act implementation.

Keywords: Literacy Education, policy analysis, politics of education, reading instruction, reading skills

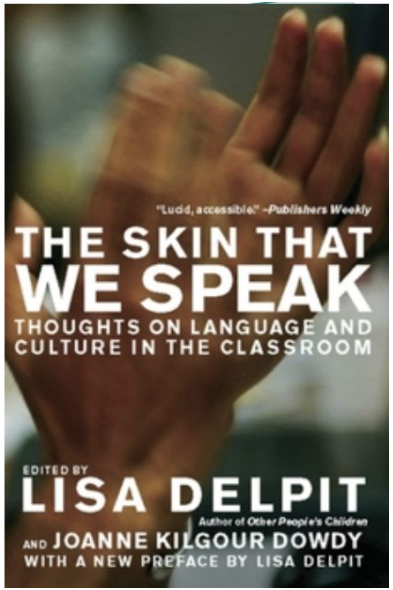
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/396391890_Profit_Power_and_Pedagogy_The_Minnesota_READ_Act

Scientific racism treats language difference as deficit

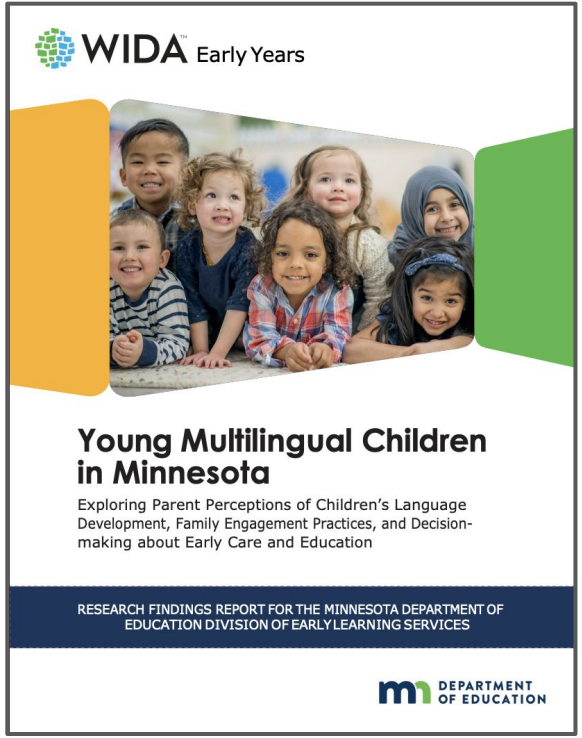


Dr. Asa Hilliard, III
Education Psychologist
Professor & Dean at San Francisco State

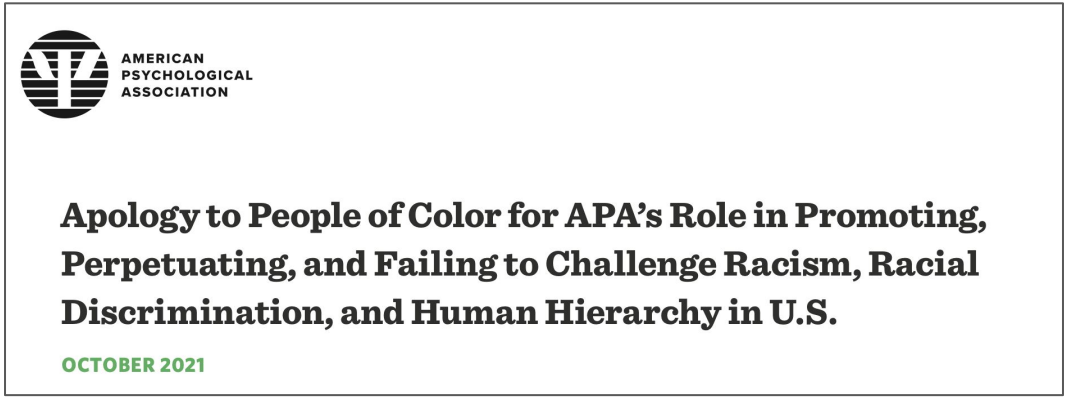
The ignoring of language differences in native English speaking communities across the US, as a result of geographically diverse speech patterns, then creates a facade of "correct" and "incorrect" sounds of English. For example, retained features of different African languages, like the Bantu family of languages from West African nations, found today in many African American communities cause "African American children to be labeled as 'poor readers,' 'dumb' (low intelligence), or as 'speech impaired'" when they are tested with these tools (Delpit, 2002, p. 97). (Lafayette, 2026, p. 24)



Minnesota Example: English monolingualism in schools threatens children's linguistic and cultural identity development



"With my first child, he was more exposed to [Spanish]...Kids didn't play with him as he didn't speak English. He seems ashamed to speak Spanish now. He understands Spanish and he is ashamed as nobody wants to play with him. When we are out, we speak in English…All his friends will speak English. Classes will be in English. He is living here. Nothing I can do…" - *mom originally from Colombia w/ a child in a MN early learning program (p. 11)*

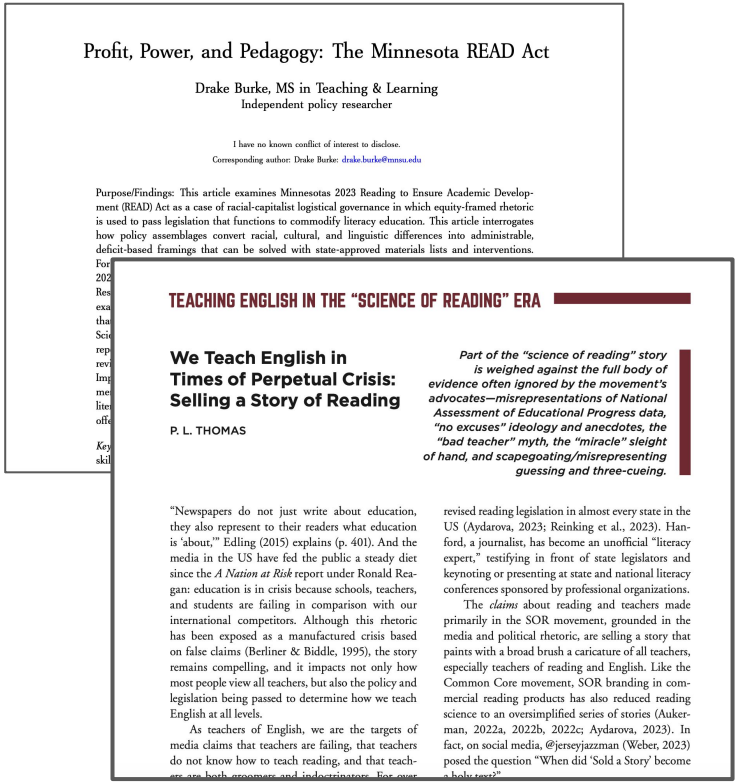


WHEREAS psychology cannot harness its potential to disarm and dismantle racism without addressing its own history of racism and support for human hierarchy (APA, 2021c). Since its origins as a scientific discipline in the mid-19th century, psychology has, through acts of commission and omission, contributed to the dispossession, displacement, and exploitation of communities of color.

This early history of psychology, rooted in oppressive psychological science to protect Whiteness, White people, and White epistemologies, reflected the social and political landscape of the U.S. at that time.

Psychology developed under these conditions, helped to create, express, and sustain them, continues to bear their indelible imprint, and often continues to publish research that conforms with White racial hierarchy (Cummings Center, 2021; Helms 2003; Luther et al.,1996; Santiago-Rivera et al., 2016).

Who benefits from scientific racism?



Profit, Power, and Pedagogy: The Minnesota READ Act

Drake Burke, MS in Teaching & Learning
Independent policy researcher

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.
Corresponding author: Drake Burke: drake.burke@mnsu.edu

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TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE "SCIENCE OF READING" ERA

We Teach English in Times of Perpetual Crisis: Selling a Story of Reading

P. L. THOMAS

Part of the "science of reading" story is weighed against the full body of evidence often ignored by the movement's advocates—misrepresentations of National Assessment of Educational Progress data, "no excuses" ideology and anecdotes, the "bad teacher" myth, the "miracle" sleight of hand, and scapegoating/misrepresenting guessing and three-cueing.

"Newspapers do not just write about education, they also represent to their readers what education is 'about,'" Edling (2015) explains (p. 401). And the media in the US have fed the public a steady diet since the *A Nation at Risk* report under Ronald Reagan: education is in crisis because schools, teachers, and students are failing in comparison with our international competitors. Although this rhetoric has been exposed as a manufactured crisis based on false claims (Berliner & Biddle, 1995), the story remains compelling, and it impacts not only how most people view all teachers, but also the policy and legislation being passed to determine how we teach English at all levels.

As teachers of English, we are the targets of media claims that teachers are failing, that teachers do not know how to teach reading, and that teach-

revised reading legislation in almost every state in the US (Aydarova, 2023; Reinking et al., 2023). Hanford, a journalist, has become an unofficial "literacy expert," testifying in front of state legislators and keynoting or presenting at state and national literacy conferences sponsored by professional organizations.

The *claims* about reading and teachers made primarily in the SOR movement, grounded in the media and political rhetoric, are selling a story that paints with a broad brush a caricature of all teachers, especially teachers of reading and English. Like the Common Core movement, SOR branding in commercial reading products has also reduced reading science to an oversimplified series of stories (Aukerman, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c; Aydarova, 2023). In fact, on social media, @jerseyjazzman (Weber, 2023) posed the question "When did 'Sold a Story' become a holy text?"

- "In 2014, the International Dyslexia Association established a campaign to create 'structured literacy' as a marketing brand" (Thomas, 2024, p. 17)
- Burke (2025), "the approval–reimbursement–reporting triad…channels adoption and implementation toward a narrow set of vendor-approved materials and training" (p. 7)

How much profit has been made since 2023 in Minnesota alone for:

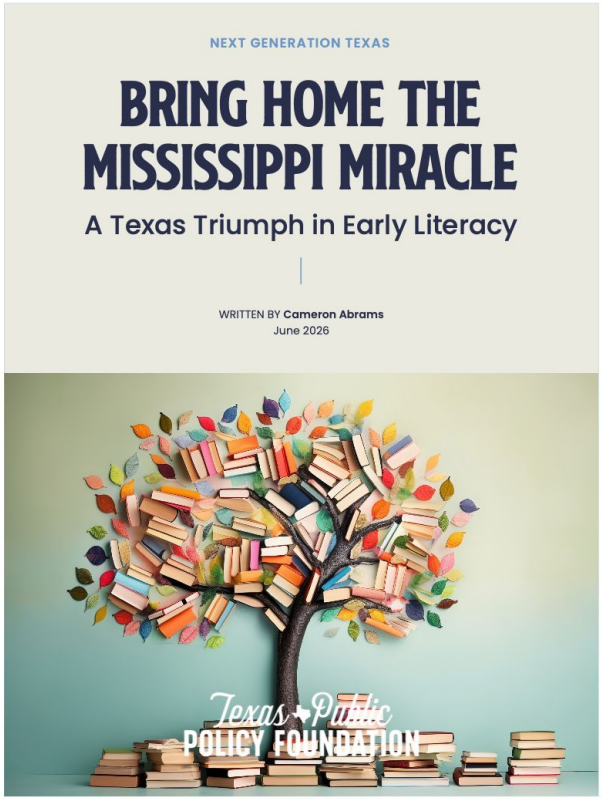
- Curriculum companies
- Testing companies (DIBELS, Illuminate Education, Capti)
- Journalists (in place of education scholars)
- Podcasters (in place of education scholars)
- Organizations partnering with MDE to approve tools (in place of education scholars)

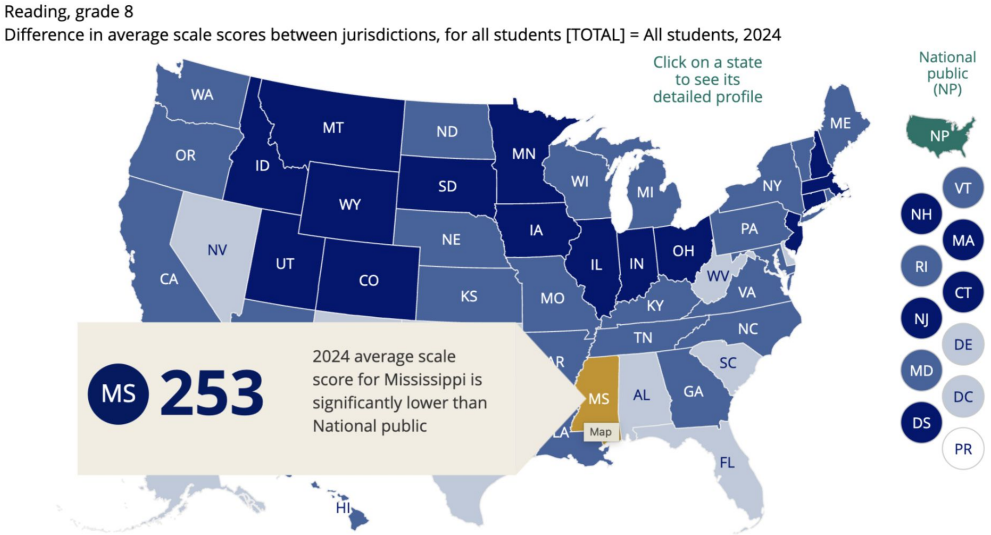
What are Minnesota's immigrant students learning about themselves?

In SLP…

Who do we want to be?

Do we want Minnesota to become Mississippi?

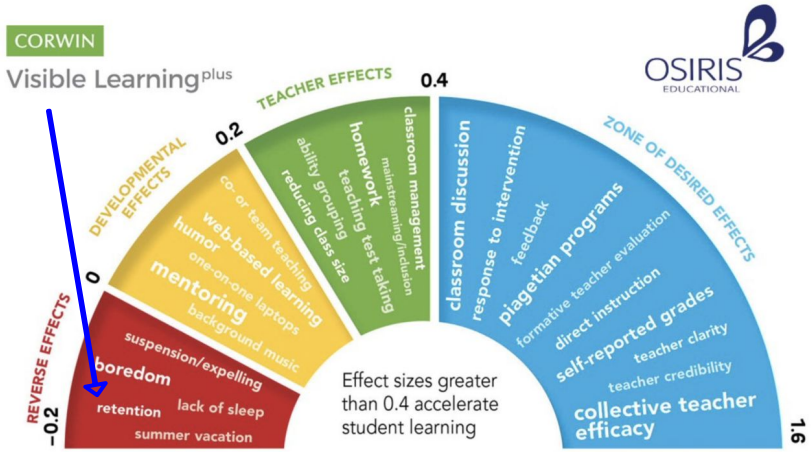




Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/

Hattie's Barometer of influence – Infographic

Throughout his Visible Learning journey John Hattie has used the "barometer" to visualize the effect size of an influence on student achievement. It has also also been on the cover of several Visible Learning books. The barometer scale is divided by the hinge point d = 0.4, which represents according to Hattie the mean of all effect sizes in the underlying meta-studies. Hatties "barometer of influence" goes from red (negative effects), to yellow (developmental effects), to green (teacher effects) and finally over the hinge point 0.4 to the blue zone (desired effects).



Retention has a negative impact on student achievement based on over 80,000 studies in John Hattie's research…


MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Home

Literacy-Based Promotion Act

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction is responsible for supporting and training K-3rd grade teachers, curriculum specialists and other educators by providing research-based instructional strategies on literacy and guidance on the implementation of the Literacy-Based Promotion Act. Passed during the 2013 legislative session, the Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA) places an emphasis on grade-level reading skills, particularly as students progress through grades K-3. Beginning in the 2018-2019 school year, a student scoring at the lowest two (2) achievement levels in reading on the established state-wide assessment for 3rd grade will not be promoted to 4th grade unless the student qualifies for a good cause exemption

The LBPA was amended in 2016 and includes changes such as an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) and increased expectations for 3rd grade students beginning in 2018-2019.

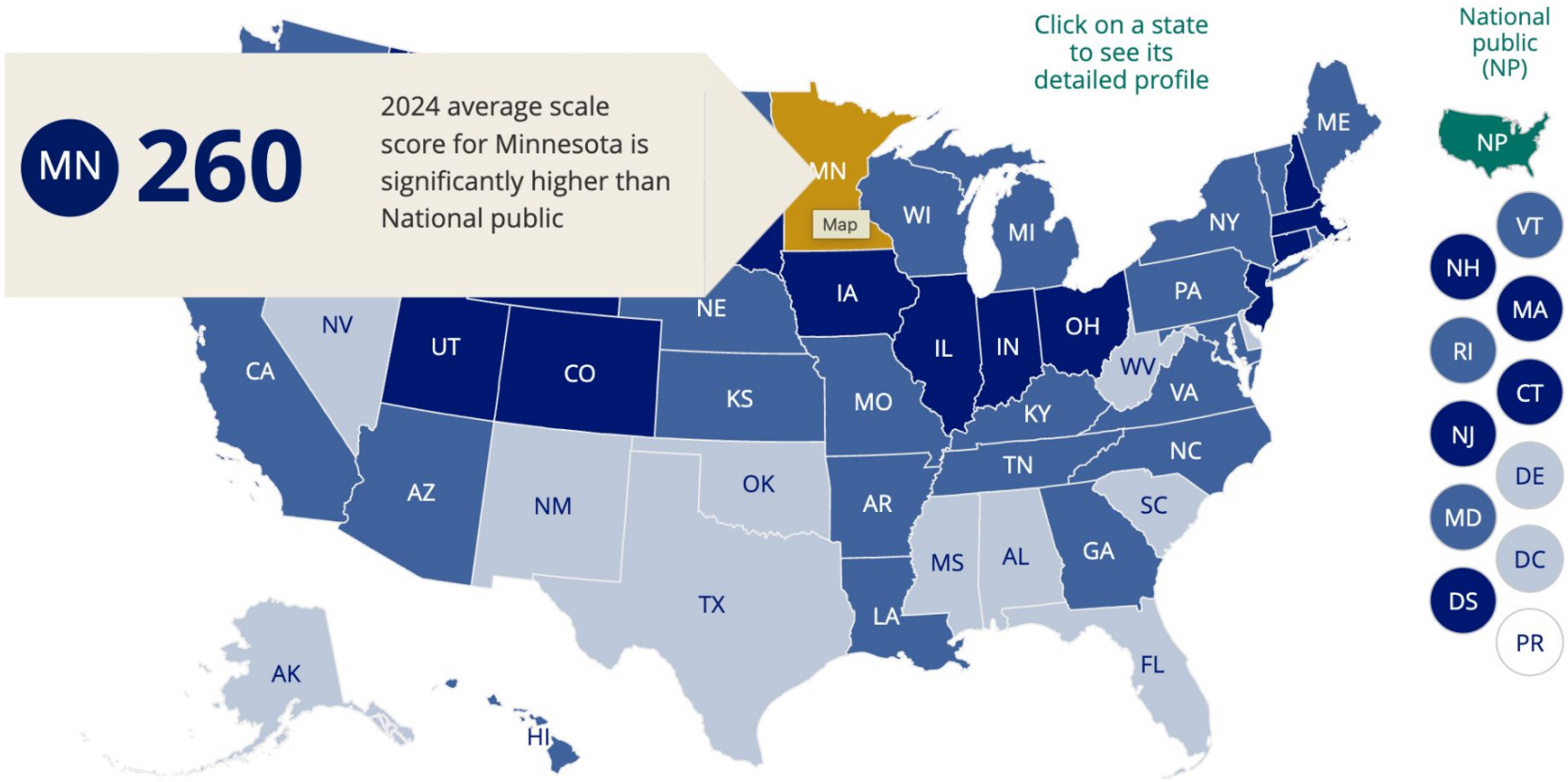
Tools and Supports

- Job Description
- EIR Literacy Coach FAQs
- Universal Screener Companion Guide

Source: https://mdek12.org/literacy/lbpa/

Reading, grade 8

Difference in average scale scores between jurisdictions, for all students [TOTAL] = All students, 2024



Source: https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/

Intent vs. Impact

What door did we unintentionally open w/ the MN READ Act?

Next steps?

MN HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

H.F. 877

As Introduced

Subject	Literacy
Authors	Mueller and others
Analyst	Cristina Parra
Date	March 4, 2025

Overview

This bill modifies Read Act definitions, ends the Department of Education's partnership with the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) on June 30, 2025, and makes other changes.

Summary

Section	Description
1	**Title; the Read Act.** Adds subdivision establishing legislative intent of the Read Act.
2	**Read Act definitions; evidence-based.** Modifies definition of "evidence-based" to include "science of reading" and strike some portions of current definition.
3	**Read Act definitions; science-based reading research.** Defines "science-based reading research."

H.F. 877
As Introduced

Section	Description
7	**Teacher licensure assessment; tests.** Requires the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to adopt rules requiring applicants for Tier 3 and Tier 4 licenses in elementary education to pass the examination or performance assessment of knowledge, skill, and ability to teach the science of reading.
8	**CAREI.** Modifies a 2023 session law appropriating funding for CAREI; appropriation would cancel back to the general fund on July 1, 2025.
9	**Culturally responsive materials.** Modifies a 2024 session law appropriating funding for culturally responsive materials; appropriation would cancel back to the general fund on July 1, 2025.
10	**CAREI paraprofessional and volunteer training.** Modifies a 2024 session law appropriating funding for CAREI to develop training for paraprofessional and volunteer training; appropriation would cancel back to the general fund on July 1, 2025.

READING & LITERACY

Federal 'Science of Reading' Legislation Passes the House

By Sarah Schwartz — September 17, 2026 3 min read



Members of the U.S. House of Representatives leave the Capitol after a session on Sept. 16, 2026 in Washington, D.C. The House passed legislation that would make the "science of reading" a priority in some federal literacy grants.
— Roberto Schmidt/Getty Images

A bipartisan bill making the "science of reading" a priority in some federal literacy grants passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Wednesday, signaling Congress' growing interest in a movement to reform reading instruction that has so far been driven primarily by state legislation.

The bill would revise the $194 million Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant program, which 23 states currently receive.

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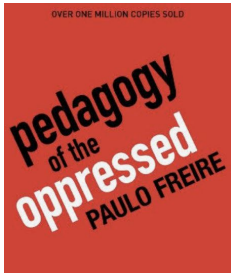
The bill would revise the $194 million Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant program, which 23 states currently receive.

Conclusion: *Sleep*

Sub-oppressors: "Almost always, during the initial stage of struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors" - *Paulo Freire*

Compliance-based leadership: Though well-intentioned, I believe that compliance-based leaders like me perpetuate oppressive practices for many students in our communities.

Praxis: "Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. That can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" - *Paulo Freire*



https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/federal-science-of-reading-legislation-passes-the-house/2026/09

Questions?