

Sent to US News. They just informed me that they no longer publish letters to the editor.

To the editor:

**Re: “National reading emergency” November 12
[<https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2019-11-12/national-reading-emergency-educators-sound-the-alarm>]**

The miniscule changes in reading scores since 2015 are interpreted in “National Reading Emergency” as a reason to embrace “the science of reading,” which is code for heavy phonics instruction. The real “science of reading,” based on a substantial amount of research, consistently shows that intensive phonics instruction produces strong results only on tests in which children pronounce words out of context. It has little or no impact on tests in which children have to understand what they read.

The best predictor of performance on tests in which children have to understand what they read is real reading, especially self-selected reading.

We can improve reading in the US by increasing access to books (e.g. supporting libraries, the only source of books for many children living in poverty) not by more hard-core phonics instruction.

Stephen Krashen

Some sources:

Krashen, S. (2002). The NRP comparison of whole language and phonics: Ignoring the crucial variable in reading. *Talking Points*, 13(3): 22-28. <https://tinyurl.com/ybvlqqwo>

Krashen, S. (2009). Does intensive reading instruction contribute to reading comprehension? *Knowledge Quest* 37 (4): 72-74. <https://tinyurl.com/jc6x8mk>