

**The PBS News Hour misrepresents the phonics debate.
Stephen Krashen**

The PBS News Hour (April 30) included a segment, “What parents of dyslexic children are teaching schools about literacy.” Unfortunately, these parents (and PBS) are teaching schools the wrong thing.

The segment claims that “explicit” and “comprehensive” phonics instruction is necessary, which means teaching students all the rules of how letters are pronounced.

But very few rules of phonics can be studied and learned: The rules of phonics are often very complicated and have numerous exceptions. Even highly competent readers are usually aware of only the most basic phonics rules.

Also, there are far more phonics rules than any child (or teacher) can master. Most of our knowledge of phonics, that is, our ability to read out loud, is absorbed (or acquired) through reading.

Contrary to the claims made in the National Reading Panel, mentioned on PBS, children in classes with more instruction in the rules of phonics do not do better on tests of reading comprehension. Students who do well on tests of reading comprehension are those who have read more.

“Teaching reading” is not teaching the rules of phonics. It is helping children understand what is on the page, and introducing them to books they will want to read.

Research supporting this view has been published in professional books and journals for decades. Begin with the classics: Frank Smith’s *Understanding Reading* and Kenneth Goodman’s *Phonics Phacts*. I have summarized some of the research here: Krashen, S. Phonics wars 2019. <http://tinyurl.com/y4ob9c9c>

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/what-parents-of-dyslexic-children-are-teaching-schools-about-literacy>