**Describing Whole Language**

**Natalie Wexler's characterization of the nature and effect of whole language in her article in Forbes (April 12), "Let's not make phonics political," is inaccurate. Whole language is not "memorizing words" but is based on the hypothesis that we learn to read by understanding what is on the page. Knowledge of phonics contributes to comprehension, but so does background knowledge and knowledge of language.**

**Wexler clams that whole language was responsible for a "serious plunge" in California's reading scores in the 1990's. There was no "plunge." In his book The Literacy Crisis, False Claims and Real Solutions, Jeff McQuillan points out that California's reading scores had been low well before whole language was introduced. The low scores were due to high levels of poverty, which means lack of books in the home. Both California school and public libraries were well below the national average in the size of book collections, and well below average in the number of school librarians per student.**

**Stephen Krashen**

**Wexler's letter: https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2022/04/12/lets-not-make-phonics-political-again/?sh=6f20d43a122d**