The spring semester is well underway and moving toward commencement ceremonies at the end of May. The Reading Department will graduate another class of well over 100. For the fall we are planning on starting a new cohort program with Irvine Unified School District.

Department events over the last few months have included a scholarship dinner, the birth of a son to Rosie Ordonez-Jasis, and the Reading Educators Guild dinner. In January four new scholarship recipients were honored at a dinner attended by scholarship committee members, Rosie Ordonez-Jasis and Kathi Bartle-Angus, and Department Chair Ash Bishop. Scholarship donors, Dr. Debbie Osen-Hancock (Lewis and Deborah Hancock Scholarship and the Dorothy C. Klausner Scholarship) and David Reid (Jean Carolyn Brenneman Memorial Scholarship), were able to personally congratulate the recipients listed below. The Reading Department is extremely fortunate to have these scholarships available to Reading Program students.

Jennifer McCully recipient Jean Carolyn Brenneman Scholarship
Jean Ilano recipient Lewis and Deborah Hancock Scholarship
Judy Serrano and Samara Silva recipients Dorothy C. Klausner Scholarship

Rosie Ordonez-Jasis gave birth to Emiliano Francisco on February 10. He weighed in at 7 pounds 15 ounces and was 20 ½ inches. Mother and son are both doing very well. Rosie will return to teaching in the fall.

Ash Bishop was the keynote speaker at the REG dinner in March. His topic, “Phonics in the year 2025: The Great Debate Continues” began with an extremely humorous version of what we might expect if current trends continue and ended with an insightful presentation of research to support a rational, balanced approach to reading education.

“Phonics in the year 2025: The Great Debate Continues”
R.E.G. Winter Dinner, March 9, 2004
Ashley Bishop, Speaker and Guest Contributor

The Debate Today: Quotes, statements, and random thoughts
If we talk about the future, we must talk about the past. In 1955 Rudolph Flesch published *Why Johnny Can’t Read*, and Sputnik went up—the first satellite in space—and it was a *Russian* satellite. Flesch said it wouldn’t have happened if we had taught phonics, a philosophy that caught the imagination of the American public and put his book at the top of the *New York Times* best-seller list for 28 weeks.

2025? The *California Holographic Enquirer* reports, “Chinese Land First Person on Mars,” and Rudolph Flesch III, Phonics Czar, reminds us in no uncertain terms that it wouldn’t have happened if we had been teaching phonics!

What do the real researchers say? P. David Pearson, the most respected person in reading today, a Dean in the College of Education at Berkeley, observes, “But this debate is different. It is sharper, more acute and venomous than any previous iteration.” (1999). Deconstructing the “Reading Wars.” *The New Educator.*
Frank Smith’s latest book is titled, *Unspeakable Acts, Unnatural Practice: Flaws and Fallacies in ‘Scientific’ Reading Instruction.* Heinemann (2003). Now there’s a man willing to compromise!

On the other side is Keith Stanovich (1993/94) “Romance and Reality.” “The whole language movement is currently burdened with, shall we say, entangling alliances—in particular, an alliance with an extreme view of the role of direct instruction of decoding skills that is seriously out of step with current evidence. I would give essentially the same medical advice that Adams is pointing to: Only amputation will save the patients.” *The Reading Teacher.* v 47, n4, p. 286.

[Where does Bishop stand?] Bishop and Bishop (1996). We wrote this book for a very pragmatic reason. We want students, when encountering unfamiliar words, to have all the skills necessary to pronounce and understand them. We do not care if they learn the skills implicitly or explicitly or in a whole language or skill-based classroom. Students need to develop their own logic of how the code process works and have the desire and confidence to use the same when ever it is needed. We do have a bias about the environment in which to best teach students the necessary decoding skills. It is a balanced environment where students are given authentic reasons to read and write and are systematically provided with instruction that allows them to do so. (I wondered, here, if I was the only one whose conscience whispered, “So, are you giving your students authentic reasons to read and write?”) *Teaching Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, and Word Recognition,* Teacher Created Materials, p. 1.

Systematic scripted education cannot meet the educational needs of all students. Each learns in a little different way. Research gives only the slightest edge to explicit phonics. *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1985). “All that phonics can be expected to do is help children get approximate pronunciations. . . . The right maxims for phonics are: Do it early. Keep it simple.” The National Institute of Education, p. 41 & 43.

Manzo and Manzo (2003). “. . . for this reason a little bit of phonics instruction tends to go, and grow, a long way.” *The California Reader,* v37, n4, p. 13. A little bit is all they need; they internalize it. [And who can forget the day we discovered Clymer’s study of the utility of phonics “rules”? Even our most sacred phonics tenets “work” only about 30 to 60% of the time.] Stahl, Steven. “Good phonics instruction should not teach rules, need not use worksheets, should not dominate instruction, and does not have to be boring.”

**IN ESSENCE, WE ARE ARGUING OVER WHETHER WE SHOULD, OR SHOULD NOT, TEACH STUDENTS THAT THE LETTER “T” MAKES THE /T/ SOUND AND, IF WE SHOULD, SHOULD WE TEACH THE SOUND/SYMBOL RELATIONSHIP EXPLICITLY OR IMPICLITLY?**

**Ronald P Carver: pioneer, educator, mentor**

My friend and colleague of over 30 years, Ronald P. Carver, passed away on January 19th of a heart attack while in the hospital for a minor and unrelated problem. Only days earlier he had sent me an uncharacteristically touching note to buck me up after my brush with the eternal. Permit me to tell you now why we all should mourn this humble and sincere man.

Following a stint as a captain in the army, Ron began his professional career as a research engineer at the American Institutes for Research in Washington, D.C. He had received his Ph.D. (1965) in Experimental and Educational Psychology from Washington University in St. Louis. At my strong urging, he joined the faculty of the University of Missouri, Kansas City in 1974 where he taught courses in statistics and research design. He taught in ways that stirred terror in math-phobics, but almost always transformed them into emerging statisticians. A pioneer in the recovery of scientific reading research, he authored three books and over one hundred journal articles. He founded the Society for the Scientific Study of Reading in 1994 and served as President. He served on the editorial boards of many journals of many professional organizations.

To me Ron was small town Jimmy Steward with the courage portrayed by John Wayne. He possessed an attribute unusual of most human beings: he was able and willing to seriously question and conduct research that might disprove his own theories. He also was a tireless worker in bringing along new scientists. Despite our different styles, we actively sought to work with one another on many doctoral committees. Some students who initially tried to sidestep his rigorous courses, later actively sought him as a doctoral mentor. He did not emanate warmth and sentimentality, but rather the rare qualities of high competence and dedication to scholarship, equity and painstaking human progress. The world is a better place, with many smarter and more seriously compassionate and objective people in it, as a result of his brief time with us. While I never said it to him, I’m sure that he knew that I admired and loved him dearly.

Tony Manzo
My wish: That the great debate of 2025 not be on whether we should teach the letter “t” and the sound associated with it, but on how best to guide students to gather, evaluate, and use knowledge productively.

“In 1978, irritated with extremist positions in both phonics and whole language, Ash wrote the article, “Neither simpleminded nor muddleheaded be.” Simpleminded=skills only; muddleheaded=whole language “hug, love, read.”] “My daughter learns to read,” The Reading Teacher, v 32, n1, p. 5.

“Knowledge is power.” Francis Bacon. How do we gather knowledge? READ.

[His young son already knew how and where to gather knowledge, Ash was most gratified to hear, when Chad Bishop advised his father, who was determined to fix the broken toilet himself.

“Go to the library, Dad. The answer’s there.” August 7, 1991.] Now eschewing do-it-yourself plumbing, Dr. Bishop continues to inspire all of us to promote balance, comprehension, and the ability to go out and gather knowledge.

Reading Educators Guild Grant

The Reading Educators Guild grant was established in 2004 to provide financial support to an REG member. This non-repayable grant is intended to be an adjunct to a typical classroom or professional materials budget. An applicant must submit a typed request for funding on the official form. Forms may be requested from Kathi Bartle-Angus by email or phone (kangus@fullerton.edu or 714-278-3735). The request must include a budget that does not exceed $300. A committee of the current REG board will make all decisions as to whom, and for what, funds will be granted. All decisions will be final. The award recipient will purchase the requested materials and turn in the receipts for complete funding. All materials purchased through this grant become the property of the recipient.

Criteria:

- Applicant must be an REG member.
- Funds are to be used for classroom books or professional materials only.
- A maximum of one $300 grant will be awarded each year.
- To complete the application, type or produce a document identical to the following format. Complete the entire application without the use of “see attached.”

All applications must be submitted by May 15, 2004, to be considered for this funding round.

“Approximately two years of phonics instruction is sufficient for most students. If phonics instruction begins in kindergarten, it should be completed by the end of first grade. If it begins in first grade, it should be completed by the end of second grade.” The Partnership for Reading: National Institute for Literacy; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; US Department of Education.

And these are the phonics people—a very conservative group!

“Anyone who tries to identify a long word by sounding out its individual letters would run out of memory space long before he or she was done.” Adams, M. J. Beginning to Read: Thinking and learning about print. (1990) p. 128.

This is Marilyn Adams, senior editor of Open Court. In other words, phonics works best with short words.

In view of the importance of syllabication skills, one might infer that they ought to be taught. Is this inference supportable? Opponents of syllabication training have argued that it is circularly unproductive. In order to break a word down into syllables, they argue, the reader must first sound the word out. But being able to sound the word out was the goal of breaking it into syllables in the first place. Consistent with this argument, various efforts to teach children to divide words into syllables have generally produced little measurable improvement either in children’s ability to divide new, untrained words into syllables or in their overall vocabulary and reading comprehension scores.


Instead, get kids to “chunk”—to recognize familiar chunks of meaning. And fluency should not be measured with speed, but with understanding. Comprehension is the goal.

Rasinski, T. (2003). “If we only focus on quick reading as a means to fluency, we will end up with readers who read quickly, but who still may not comprehend well.” The California Reader, v37, n2, p. 3.

What to do today to influence the “great debate” in 2025.

Instead, get kids to “chunk”

“Knowledge is power.” Francis Bacon. How do we gather knowledge? READ.

In other words, phonics works best with short words” Marilyn Adams, senior editor of Open Court.

“Knowledge is power.” Francis Bacon. How do we gather knowledge? READ.
The study’s purposes were to determine which elements of classroom instructional practice accounted for the greatest growth in student reading achievement and to evaluate the efficacy of a framework of teaching for cognitive engagement, which would provide teachers with information about what they must do to improve teaching, learning, and reading achievement. Findings include:

- The more that explicit phonics skill instruction was observed in grades two through five, the lower the growth in reading achievement.
- In this study, across all grade levels, students were more often engaged in passive responding (turn-taking, listening to the teachers, recitation) than active responding (reading, writing, manipulating).
- Assessment results indicated that teachers who emphasized higher-order thinking either through questioning or assigned tasks, even at modest levels, promoted greater student achievement in reading.
- Across all grades, greater amounts of time were spent on vocabulary than comprehension skills and strategies.
- Across all grades, little higher-level questioning or writing related to texts was observed. Lower-level questioning was observed at higher rates. (The literal level being who, what, where, when questions that produce passive readers.)

Pearson tells us the real purpose of teaching reading is to engage children at all levels with the big ideas so that reading from the beginning is thinking. (“Reading is thinking.” Thorndike, 1917.) In California, our emphasis has been on decoding, not comprehension. Every major educator says that the early grade levels must also be “reading to learn”:

“Effective reading comprehension instruction starts before children read conventionally. Children in preschool and kindergarten develop their comprehension skills through experiences that promote oral and written language skills . . . “Improving the reading Comprehension of America’s Children: 10 Research-Based Principles.” Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA).

“Comprehension strategy instruction can begin in the primary grades. Teachers should emphasize comprehension from the beginning rather than waiting until students have mastered ‘the basics’ of reading.” Pressley, M. Reading Online (2001). In this paper he reviews his chapter on comprehension instruction in the Handbook of reading research: Volume III.

How do we want the students of today to teach phonics in the year 2025? A possible, but certainly not fixed, progression:

Phonological awareness→phonemic awareness→an awareness of the alphabet→a sense of the alphabetic principle→a working knowledge of high-utility sight words→developing a personalized “logic of the code”→the desire and ability to use all this knowledge during the writing process→the desire to read an abundance of written material, to practice and appreciate the gained skills→to achieve fluency, or, better yet, strategic reading→to focus on making meaning, constructing and evaluating knowledge→to become informed decision-makers→to contribute to society in positive and productive ways.

Phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle are not ends; they are tools to get to constructing knowledge. Phonics and structural analysis practice are one important step in the journey to constructing knowledge.

If we can lead students to understand this, then phonics is seen as an important but not sufficient component in the reading process—not unlike a jump shot in basketball or a putting stroke in golf—important, but certainly not the whole game.

“Stated differently, future developments in reading depend on the people who carry on (us!)—their background of experience, their technical preparation, their insight, the motives that prompt them, and the extent to which they rely on tested experience and the results of research in making decisions.” Gray (The “Dick and Jane” Gray.) (1960) in Education Looks Ahead, Scott, Foresman, p. 63.