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What's Missing?

Governmental views of literacy

learning in England ... and some responses

Henrietta Dombey

University of Brighton, UK

England's Reading Scores

In **PIRLS 2011**, England's **reading score** rose to 552 (Mullis et al., 2011)

- But other countries were also scoring higher than in 2006: 31 countries also improved their reading scores.
- So England's rank order was only 11 out of 44, (not nearly as good as 3 out of 36 in 2001).

England's score in terms of **attitude** to reading was down to 26, making her 26th out of 36 countries.

- Children in 25 countries (including the US, Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and Canada) liked reading more than children in England.

What had we been doing?

Between 2001 and 2010, the Labour Government

- placed an increasing focus on the technical aspects of learning to read in the early stages;
- commissioned and accepted *The Rose Report*, a review of the teaching of early reading, led by Jim Rose HMI (Rose, 2006)

Which, despite the submission of much evidence on the superiority of a balanced approach, concluded that:

The knowledge, skills and understanding that constitute high quality phonic work should be taught as the prime approach in learning to decode (to read) and to encode (to write/spell).

Synthetic Phonics became the approved route to reading.

From 2010 to 2015, the Coalition Government

- placed an increasing focus on the technical aspects of learning to read in the early stages
- introduced '*match funding*' for schools to buy strict phonics texts
- From September 2011 to October 2013 a total of £23,593,109 match-funding was provided for schools, approximately £22 million for materials on the list issued by the Government and a further £1.3 million for training courses.
- At least a similar amount was spent by schools.

And they introduced the Phonics Screening Check (PSC).

Results of the Phonics Screening Check

In the first year, 58% of England's Year 1 children reached the pass mark of 32 correct responses out of 40 items.

In 2013 the figure rose to 69%.

In 2015 (the last year for which we have the data) the percentage of children passing rose to 77%.

The DfE stated on March 3rd 2016:

The latest figures show that 3 years on from the introduction of the phonics reading check, 120,000 more children across the country are now on track to become excellent readers.

(DfE, 2016)

But has children's reading really improved?

The Government-commissioned evaluation of the PSC states:

- Overall, however, analyses of pupils' literacy (reading and writing) scores in the national datasets over four years were inconclusive: there were no improvements in attainment or in progress that could be clearly attributed to the introduction of the check, nor any identifiable impact on pupil progress in literacy for learners with different levels of prior attainment.
(Walker et al., 2015, p. 67)
- Key stage 1 attainment has risen in mathematics and writing, whilst reading remains unchanged.
(Department for Education, 2015)

Evidence from studies of effective teaching of reading

Studies of schools and classrooms where children are taught to read most effectively, where they actually like reading and do plenty of it, show consistently that high achieving classes are characterized by:

- a *balanced approach* with attention to word recognition matched by attention to comprehension.
- *attention to individual children as literacy learners;*
- high levels of *engagement* in reading.

(Anderson et al., 1988; Guthrie et al., 1996; Cunningham and Stanovoch, 1998; Medwell et al., 1998; Pressley et al., 2001; Taylor and Pearson 2002,)

Learning from successful young readers

Young readers of English don't process every new word one letter at a time. They move between different sizes of unit.

- Sometimes they work words out letter by letter,
- sometimes they look at familiar groups of letters, such as 'all',
- sometimes they look at whole word patterns, such as 'little' or 'bottle'.

They are also guided by expectations, based on what they have read in this and other texts and on their knowledge of language and the world.

(Goodman and Goodman, 1994; Brown and Deavers, 1999; Goswami, 2010)

What we've been doing in

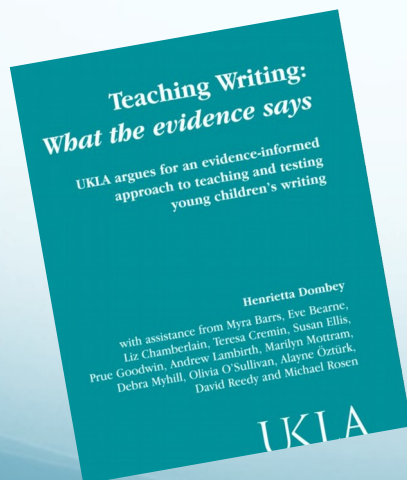
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Presenting a different, research-based view of literacy learning through:

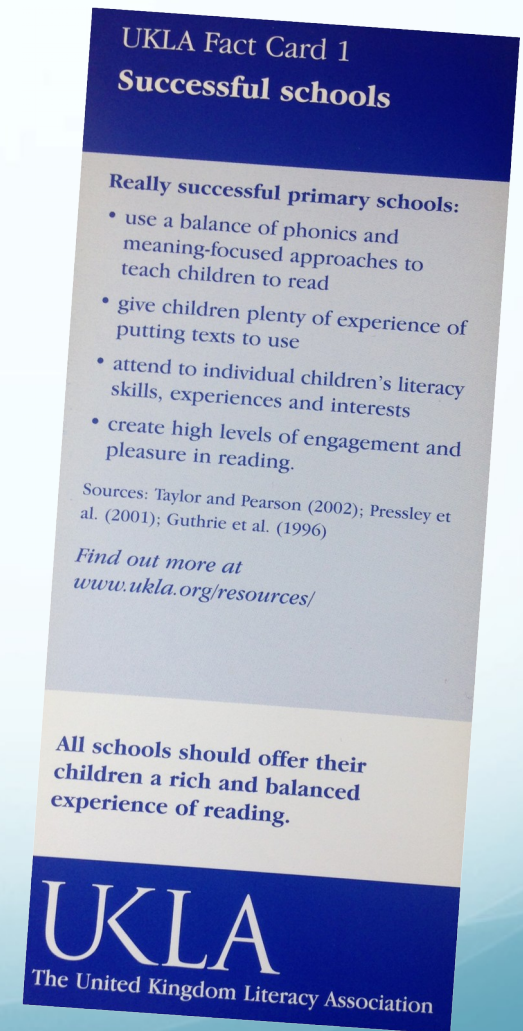
- Publishing
- Holding conferences
- Writing blogs and letters to newspapers
- Working with other UK organisations to present alternative views to government
- Taking an active part in international collaborations.

In particular I have been instrumental in:

producing 2 booklets –
Teaching Reading: What the evidence says
Teaching Writing: What the evidence says



producing 2 sets of
“Fact Cards” on the
teaching of reading
and writing





LITERACY IN England

COUNTRY REPORT

Children, Adolescents & Adults

writing
the
Country
Report
for
England
in the
Elinet
project



producing an alternative assessment instrument



UKLA has worked with the National Association for the Teaching of English, the National Association for Advisors in English, and the English and Media Centre on a project initiated by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) to update CLPE's *Reading and Writing Scales*.

The scales are:

- based on observations of children in London classrooms;
- tools for formative assessment, primarily to help teachers in the classroom;
- maps that show the way forward.



English
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Downloadable free of charge, from a number of websites, including www.ukla.org and www.clpe.org.uk the scales mark the progression of children becoming readers and writers *richly*, as they use reading and writing to:

- entertain themselves and others
- organise their lives in practical ways
- learn more about the world and their place in it
- develop a joy in their use of the written word.

Of course, the scales also mark children's progressive mastery of word identification.



The scales are underpinned by research evidence



Key principles derived from research evidence

- On behalf of UKLA, as well as contributing to the wording of the scales, I have made a major contribution to the construction of the set of *Key Principles Derived from Research Evidence* that accompanies the scales.

UKLA

The United Kingdom Literacy Association

Through active participation in UKLA's activities, I hope I have contributed to widening and deepening the debate around literacy learning and teaching in the UK in general and England in particular.

Thank you!

www.ukla.org

h.dombey@brighton.ac.uk

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Further information on the Phonics Screening Check

The PSC was:

- *designed to check that children are on track and to help schools to identify those who need more support.*

(DfE, Nov 2010 p. 43, paragraph 4.18)

The Department for Education stated:

- *Academic research has found that the best way of teaching early reading is to teach systematic [synthetic] phonics. This is the most appropriate way of preparing children for the screening check.*

(DfE, March 2010)

This statement has been strongly disputed. The evidence cited in the report either says something different, or does not exist.

Screening Check: Response sheet

- **Screening check responses:** Please tick the appropriate box for each word. The use of the comment box is optional.

Word	Correct	Incorrect	Comment
tox			
bim			
vap			

Word	Correct	Incorrect	Comment
shin			
gang			
week			
chill			