Strengthening South Carolina's Implementation of the Science of Reading through Teacher Preparation

Literacy is critical for success in school, work, and civic engagement. Research finds that reading failure can be reduced to fewer than 1 in 10 students when teachers provide scientifically based reading instruction.[1] In the wake of learning loss experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic, now more than ever, we must ensure aspiring teachers are prepared to teach children to read using scientifically based reading instruction.

The stakes for students in South Carolina

In South Carolina, only **32% of 4th grade students read proficiently** based on the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). That number falls precipitously for some of South Carolina's historically underserved students. This dismal data has nothing to do with the students and families and everything to do with **inequities in access to effective literacy instruction**.

South Carolina's Reading Data

Student group	# of students in South Carolina	% who read proficiently in 4th grade
ALL STUDENTS	755,629	32%
Hispanic students	93,780	17%
Black students	250,236	15%
English language learners	45,871	12%
Students with disabilities	106,315	11%
Students eligible for National School Lunch Program	497,221	20%

Teacher prep programs are key to implementing and sustaining the science of reading at scale.

Are South Carolina's teacher prep programs ensuring aspiring teachers learn the most effective methods to teach reading?

The National Council on Teacher Quality, a research and policy nonprofit, evaluated nearly 700 programs across the country, including 13 in South Carolina, on how well they prepare aspiring elementary teachers to teach reading.

This review considered attention to **the five core components of scientifically based reading instruction**—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—across four different instructional approaches (instructional hours, background materials, objective measures of knowledge, and opportunities to practice).

The review also deducted points when programs teach aspiring teachers content contrary to research–based practices; and considered whether programs provide instruction in how to support a range of learners (struggling readers, English language learners, and students who speak language varieties other than mainstream English).

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1   See appendix for citation for this statement and data included throughout.

In South Carolina, one of the 13 programs evaluated earns an A for preparation in reading, meaning it adequately teaches all five components of reading and provide little or no instruction on content contrary to research-based practices.
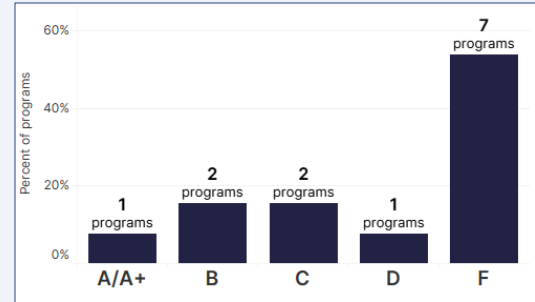
South Carolina ranks below the national average for the average number of components of reading its programs adequately address. In South Carolina:

- Programs are most likely to cover **comprehension** and least likely to cover **fluency.**
- **None of 13 programs provide at least one practice opportunity** in each of these components.
- There are 10 programs (77%) in South Carolina that teach **multiple** techniques or approaches contrary to research-based practices, which can inhibit the reading progress of many students.
- Six programs devote some instructional time to supporting **Struggling readers.**
- Five programs devote some instructional time to supporting **English language learners.**

Better teacher preparation is essential to ensure all students effectively learn to read.

State policy question	Answer for South Carolina
Does South Carolina have standards for teacher prep programs that address all five core components of scientifically based reading?	Yes, the standards address all five core components with details related to the knowledge and skills needed to teach them
Does South Carolina require a licensure test that addresses reading?	Yes, the state allows multiple tests that address reading
What are the required or optional licensure tests that address reading?	Praxis Multiple Subjects Test 5001; Praxis Elementary Education: Content Knowledge for Teaching (7811)
Does South Carolina require the review of reading course syllabi as part of preparation program renewal?	No

"Every child has the right to read. Sending teachers into the classroom without the science behind how kids learn to read puts everyone in an unfair position. As teachers, we are in this profession to always do what is best and necessary. If we aren't properly taught by the institutions we put our trust and dollars into, we are made ineffective."

- Virginia Quinn-Mooney, First grade teacher

Recommendations for state leaders:

- Set specific, explicit, and comprehensive preparation standards for scientifically based reading instruction.
- Incorporate a specific evaluation of reading instruction in program renewal or reauthorization processes, and take action if programs are not aligned to the state's standards for scientifically based reading instruction.
- Require a reading licensure test aligned with scientifically based reading instruction for any PK–5 teachers to earn licensure, and publish the pass rates.
- Deploy a comprehensive strategy to implement scientifically-based reading instruction, and prioritize teacher prep.
- Use the bully pulpit to draw attention to the importance of teacher prep to sustain implementation of improved reading instruction.

For more detail on these recommendations, visit **www.nctq.org/review/standard/reading-foundations**.

Questions? Contact Shannon Holston, NCTQ Chief of Policy and Programs at shannon.holston@nctq.org.

Program grades in South Carolina

School	Program Level	Grade	Adequate coverage of core components: Graded (Up to 12 points per component; 8 points for adequate coverage; 4 or more contrary practices results in letter grade deduction)						Support for a range of learners: Ungraded (Up to 8 points per group)		
			Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9)	Struggling readers	ELLs	Speakers of language varieties
Charleston Southern University	UG	B	No (7.71 pts)	Yes (9.33 pts)	Yes (10.81 pts)	Yes (9.25 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	3	7.33 pts	5.5 pts	2 pts
Clemson University	UG	C	Yes (8 pts)	No (6.97 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	0	1.5 pts	7 pts	3.5 pts
College of Charleston*	UG	F	No (5.5 pts)	Yes (8.5 pts)	No (0 pts)	No (3 pts)	No (3.5 pts)	4	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
College of Charleston*	G	F	No (5.5 pts)	Yes (10.5 pts)	No (0 pts)	No (3 pts)	No (3.5 pts)	4	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
Columbia College	UG	F	No (3.96 pts)	No (6.75 pts)	No (5.25 pts)	No (5.88 pts)	No (5.5 pts)	4	4 pts	1 pts	0 pts
Converse College	UG	F	No (3.32 pts)	No (4.13 pts)	No (1 pts)	No (3.38 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	3	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
Francis Marion University	UG	F	No (3.32 pts)	No (1.78 pts)	No (5.63 pts)	No (6.38 pts)	No (7.75 pts)	3	1 pts	1 pts	2 pts

View this data online at nctq.org for more details. An asterisk by an institution name indicates that additional materials for consideration were provided after the review deadline, but prior to publication; scores for these programs may change pending review of those materials.

National Council on Teacher Quality

School	Program Level	Grade	Adequate coverage of core components: Graded (Up to 12 points per component; 8 points for adequate coverage; 4 or more contrary practices results in letter grade deduction)						Support for a range of learners: Ungraded (Up to 8 points per group)		
			Phonemic Aware-ness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocab-ulary	Compre-hension	Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9)	Struggling readers	ELLs	Speakers of language varieties
Lander University	UG	B	Yes (8.57 pts)	No (7.31 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	Yes (8.5 pts)	Yes (8.5 pts)	2	3.5 pts	2 pts	0 pts
South Carolina State University	UG	C	No (3.5 pts)	Yes (8.03 pts)	No (7.84 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	1	6 pts	2.75 pts	0 pts
University of South Carolina - Aiken	UG	F	No (1 pts)	No (1 pts)	No (2 pts)	No (1 pts)	No (2.5 pts)	1	0 pts	2 pts	0 pts
University of South Carolina - Columbia	UG	F	No (5.09 pts)	No (6.6 pts)	No (3.5 pts)	No (6.44 pts)	No (1.35 pts)	3	0 pts	1.5 pts	0 pts
University of South Carolina - Upstate	UG	D	No (4.82 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	No (6.56 pts)	No (7.13 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	3	6 pts	0 pts	0 pts
Winthrop University	UG	A	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	2	5.33 pts	8 pts	2.38 pts

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