Strengthening Texas'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 Texas

In Texas, only **30% of 4th grade students read proficiently** based on the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). That number falls precipitously for some of Texas'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**.

Texas's Reading Data

Student group	# of students in Texas	% who read proficiently in 4th grade
ALL STUDENTS	5,183,478	30%
Hispanic students	2,861,243	20%
Black students	694,629	19%
English language learners	1,021,540	16%
Students with disabilities	605,351	7%
Students eligible for National School Lunch Program	3,310,103	18%

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

Are Texas's teacher prep programs ensuring aspiring teachers learn the most effective methods to teach reading?
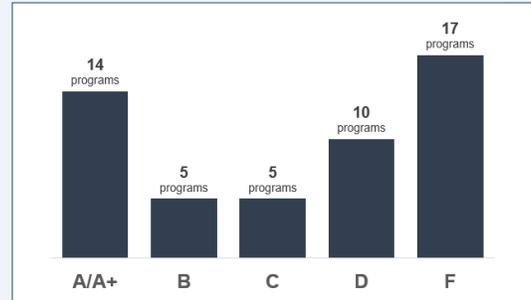
The National Council on Teacher Quality, a research and policy nonprofit, evaluated nearly 700 programs across the country, including 51 in Texas, on how well they prepare aspiring elementary teachers to teach reading.

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 Texas, 27% of the 51 programs evaluated earn an A for preparation in reading, meaning they adequately teach all five components of reading and provide little or no instruction on content contrary to research-based practices.

Texas ranks at the national average for the average number of components of reading its programs adequately address. In Texas:

- Programs are most likely to cover **vocabulary** and least likely to cover **phonemic awareness.**
- **Five of 51 programs provide at least one practice opportunity** in each of these components.
- There are 20 programs (39%) in Texas that teach **multiple** techniques or approaches contrary to research-based practices, which can inhibit the reading progress of many students.
- Thirty-three programs devote some instructional time to supporting **Struggling readers.**
- Twenty-five programs devote some instructional time to supporting **English language learners.**
- **Exemplary (A+) programs in Texas include the undergraduate programs at Houston Baptist University, Sul Ross State University, and Texas A&M University - Texarkana.**

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

State policy question	Answer for Texas
Does Texas 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 Texas require a licensure test that addresses reading?	Yes, the state requires a reading licensure test
What are the required or optional licensure tests that address reading?	The Science of Teaching Reading Exam
Does Texas require the review of reading course syllabi as part of preparation program renewal?	Yes

"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

National Council on Teacher Quality

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 Texas

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
Angelo State University	UG	F	No (6.96 pts)	No (6.6 pts)	No (4.12 pts)	No (7.25 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	3	4 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Dallas Baptist University	UG	A	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	2	8 pts	2 pts	2 pts
East Texas Baptist University	G	C	No (7.93 pts)	Yes (10.53 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	0	2 pts	2 pts	0 pts
Houston Baptist University	UG	A+	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	0	2 pts	6 pts	0 pts
Houston Baptist University	G	D	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	No (4 pts)	No (5 pts)	No (7 pts)	0	6 pts	0 pts	0 pts
Lamar University	UG	F	No (1 pt)	No (7.75 pts)	No (5.25 pts)	No (4.88 pts)	No (5 pts)	0	3.5 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Midwestern State University	UG	A	Yes (9.5 pts)	Yes (9.5 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	1	1.33 pts	2 pts	0 pts

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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
Our Lady of the Lake University	UG	F	No (4.82 pts)	No (7.31 pts)	No (6.94 pts)	No (6 pts)	No (7.12 pts)	2	4 pts	4 pts	4 pts
Prairie View A&M University	UG	D	No (6.64 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (6.81 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (7 pts)	1	4 pts	3.5 pts	0 pts
Sam Houston State University	UG	D	Yes (8.39 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	No (7 pts)	1	7 pts	0 pts	0 pts
Stephen F. Austin State University	UG	F	No (0.64 pts)	No (5.81 pts)	No (1.12 pts)	No (3.5 pts)	Yes (8.5 pts)	0	4 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Stephen F. Austin State University	G	C	No (6.21 pts)	Yes (10.06 pts)	No (6.56 pts)	Yes (8.38 pts)	Yes (8.42 pts)	2	5 pts	5 pts	2 pts
Sul Ross State University	UG	A+	Yes (9.18 pts)	Yes (9.33 pts)	Yes (10.25 pts)	Yes (10.7 pts)	Yes (11.4 pts)	0	2 pts	4 pts	2 pts
Tarleton State University	UG	B	Yes (9.96 pts)	Yes (9.84 pts)	No (7.12 pts)	Yes (10.62 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	2	2 pts	2 pts	2 pts
Texas A&M International University	UG	F	No (7.5 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (6.25 pts)	5	5.33 pts	3.12 pts	0 pts
Texas A&M University	UG	A	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	0	5.67 pts	2 pts	0 pts
Texas A&M University - Central Texas	UG	A	Yes (9.89 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	1	5.5 pts	6 pts	2 pts
Texas A&M University - Commerce	UG	D	No (5.71 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (4.12 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	1	4 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi	UG	F	No (5.45 pts)	No (7.47 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	No (7.88 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	4	0.67 pts	5 pts	2 pts
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi	G	F	No (1.75 pts)	No (2.31 pts)	No (3.62 pts)	No (2.75 pts)	No (2.17 pts)	0	2 pts	1 pt	0 pts
Texas A&M University - Kingsville	UG	A	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	1	6 pts	6 pts	0 pts
Texas A&M University - San Antonio	UG	A	Yes (8.57 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (8.5 pts)	0	6 pts	6 pts	0 pts

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			Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9)	Struggling readers	ELLs	Speakers of language varieties
Texas A&M University - Texarkana	UG	A+	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (11.25 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	0	6 pts	2 pts	0 pts
Texas Lutheran University	UG	A	Yes (8.46 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	2	8 pts	7 pts	2 pts
Texas Southern University	UG	A	Yes (10.25 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (10.25 pts)	1	2 pts	2 pts	2 pts
Texas State University - San Marcos	UG	F	No (4.98 pts)	No (6.98 pts)	No (6.84 pts)	No (6.94 pts)	Yes (8.62 pts)	4	2.38 pts	0.38 pts	0 pts
Texas State University - San Marcos	G	C	No (6.64 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (8.81 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	0	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
Texas Tech University	UG	B	Yes (8.55 pts)	Yes (9.39 pts)	Yes (9.43 pts)	Yes (9.8 pts)	Yes (9.25 pts)	4	2.2 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Texas Woman's University	UG	D	No (5.79 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	No (6 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	3	3.5 pts	4 pts	4 pts
Texas Woman's University	G	F	No (1.5 pts)	No (6.19 pts)	No (5.25 pts)	No (4.5 pts)	No (5 pts)	0	4 pts	4 pts	0 pts
Trinity University	UG	F	No (0 pts)	No (0 pts)	No (0 pts)	No (0 pts)	No (0 pts)	0	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of Houston	UG	F	Yes (8 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	No (7 pts)	No (6.62 pts)	No (7 pts)	7	4 pts	3.5 pts	0 pts
University of Houston - Clear Lake	UG	D	No (3.96 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	No (1.12 pts)	No (4.25 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	2	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of Houston - Clear Lake	G	D	No (7.79 pts)	No (6.69 pts)	No (7.62 pts)	Yes (12 pts)	Yes (8.5 pts)	2	3.5 pts	2 pts	2 pts
University of Houston - Downtown	UG	A	Yes (9.21 pts)	Yes (11.25 pts)	Yes (8.12 pts)	Yes (10.62 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	3	5 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of Houston - Victoria	UG	B	Yes (9 pts)	No (7.67 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	1	1 pt	2 pts	0 pts
University of Houston - Victoria	G	F	No (3 pts)	No (5 pts)	No (3 pts)	No (3 pts)	No (3 pts)	0	6 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of North Texas	UG	F	No (0.8 pts)	No (4.69 pts)	No (0.56 pts)	No (2.12 pts)	No (1.12 pts)	3	2 pts	0 pts	0 pts

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			Phonemic Aware-ness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocab-ulary	Compre-hension	Count of Contrary Practices (out of 9)	Struggling readers	ELLs	Speakers of language varieties
University of North Texas	G	F	No (6.32 pts)	No (2.91 pts)	No (3.56 pts)	No (6.5 pts)	No (3.5 pts)	0	0 pts	3 pts	2 pts
University of North Texas at Dallas	UG	C	No (5.93 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	No (6 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	0	2 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of St. Thomas	UG	F	No (0 pts)	No (6 pts)	No (6 pts)	No (4.5 pts)	No (6 pts)	0	0 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of Texas at Arlington	UG	A	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	3	6 pts	6 pts	2 pts
University of Texas at Arlington	G	F	No (0 pts)	No (3 pts)	No (0 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	1	0 pts	6 pts	0 pts
University of Texas at Austin	UG	C	No (7.18 pts)	No (6.75 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	2	0 pts	0.5 pts	2 pts
University of Texas at Dallas	UG	D	No (5 pts)	No (7.12 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	No (7 pts)	0	2 pts	2 pts	0 pts
University of Texas at El Paso	UG	B	No (7.61 pts)	Yes (10.12 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	1	6 pts	6 pts	0 pts
University of Texas at San Antonio	UG	B	Yes (9.71 pts)	No (7.71 pts)	Yes (8.81 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	Yes (10 pts)	1	5 pts	6 pts	6 pts
University of Texas at Tyler	UG	F	No (4.72 pts)	No (6.17 pts)	No (6 pts)	No (7.88 pts)	No (6.5 pts)	2	3.5 pts	0 pts	0 pts
University of Texas of the Permian Basin	UG	D	No (6 pts)	Yes (10.3 pts)	Yes (8.88 pts)	Yes (8.88 pts)	No (6.25 pts)	4	3 pts	5 pts	0 pts
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley	UG	D	No (7.29 pts)	No (6.75 pts)	No (7.5 pts)	Yes (8 pts)	Yes (8.25 pts)	0	5.5 pts	4.5 pts	2 pts
West Texas A&M University	UG	A	Yes (10.89 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	Yes (9 pts)	Yes (11 pts)	1	8 pts	2 pts	0 pts

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