Triple R Teaching

Hello, Anna Geiger here from Reach All Readers, and today I'm sharing a conversation

She describes her journey from balanced to structured literacy and how as a professor she had to pivot when she learned what the science truly tells us about how children learn to read. What she learned really impacted the tutoring program that her university's pre-service teachers participate in. Now the teacher candidates are doing more explicit teaching of letters, sounds, and patterns, and have seen how much students improve with this instruction. I know you'll enjoy our conversation.

There's a little bit of a scratchy sound in the background, and if I was a more expert editor, I'd figure out how to take that out. Don't let that distract you, and I hope you enjoy this conversation.

Anna Geiger: Welcome, Dr. Nickel!

Jodi Nickel: Welcome, and thank you!

Anna Geiger: Thank you so much for joining me today. I found you on Twitter, or X, as we call it now. You had made a comment which got my attention because you are in a position of leadership as you are training future teachers, and you made a switch in what you understand about how reading works, and that's changed how you approach teaching it.

I'd like to talk about that today, but we'll start way back in your teacher training and talk about your experience as a teacher.

Jodi Nickel: I'm from Regina, Saskatchewan originally, and I taught grade 1 and 2 in the '90s in Saskatchewan. My teacher prep program was steeped in whole language. I remember reading Nancie Atwell's "In the Middle" and "The Art of Teaching Writing" by

Lucy Calkins. I remember sitting and reading that Lucy Calkins book and actually crying at the joy of children's self-expression and being so excited that I wanted to create that kind of engaging classroom for my students.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, those books are very inspiring, which is why we all were taken in by them, I think. It's not that all of it's wrong, but at the foundation there's a problem.

Jodi Nickel: Yes. Actually, that led to a few years later when I did my master's research and I was researching my students regarding Writers Workshop. The resource teacher at my school was trained in Reading Recovery, and in those early years, Fountas and Pinnell didn't exist. I looked it up, the Fountas and Pinnell leveled book system started in '96, so it was in the years prior to that, but we used a leveling system based on Marie Clay's levels. We had trade books, like "The Carrot Seed" by Ruth Krauss and "It Looked Like Spilt Milk" by Charles Shaw, and all of those books were leveled. It was hard to find leveled books that were appropriate for grade 1 readers.

We also had a basal series called Impressions. I haven't been able to find it to look up what was included in it anymore, but I remember they had a lot of songs and poems that lent themselves to choral reading. Of course we did lots of reading of big books and choral reading, and I would have the poems written on chart paper or we would build the poems in a pocket chart. Then I would create pages of those and put them in a little Duo-Tang and send them home for the children to read to their parents.

Well, interestingly, I replaced a teacher who was recently retired, and she had been using decodable books. The parents came to me because some of the older siblings had been in grade 1 with this previous teacher, and they said, "Well, these were the kinds of books that the teacher was using previously, and we want you to use these too, because the kids aren't really reading these poems you're sending home, they're just memorizing them."

I assured them, "No, no, this is a normal step on the way to fluent reading," and was slightly offended, but I didn't want my students reading those boring phonics books.

As I mentioned, I focused on Writers Workshop for my master's thesis, and the kids loved it! They just relished that time to explore with writing and tell their stories, to tell their cute little stories. I think there was probably some incidental phonics instruction happening during that time, because I was helping them to encode their ideas, but it wasn't systematic.

Now one bright light, I will say, during those years in terms of using evidence-based instruction, was I used a program called The McCrackens Spelling Through Phonics. I don't know if any of your listeners will remember that program, but it was essentially word building and it did progress in a fairly sequential way. I remember the first few consonants and vowels we were looking at were basically spelling "cat, sat, mat," and so on, and progressed to more complex words. That, I think, informed the kind of spelling and coding they were doing during Writers Workshop.

In 2000, I started my doctorate and kind of inexplicably moved away from reading during those years and focused more on educational foundations. While I was doing my doctorate, I was doing some teaching for the university, and those courses were also steeped in whole language and balanced literacy.

Anna Geiger: What years was that again that you worked in your doctorate?

Jodi Nickel: From 2000 to 2005.

Anna Geiger: Okay. So it was still whole language would you say?

Jodi Nickel: Very much so, yeah.

Then in 2005 I started at my current university. I was initially in an early childhood post and then moved over in 2009 to teacher education, which interestingly is a different department. Early childhood and teacher education are different departments. I think it's probably true in some American universities as well.

For the next few years, I was teaching some more of those educational foundations courses. I had an administrative role for five years, and so literacy was actually a smaller part of what I was doing during those years, but when I was, I was teaching literacy courses following a balanced literacy approach. I was talking about shared reading and guided reading and word work and so on. I would've argued that I taught phonics during those years, and I think that most post-secondary educators and pre-service teachers would say that they do.

I remember specifically using my hands to describe an hourglass. You start with a whole, then you go to part, and then you go back to the whole. Whole-part-whole instruction, I think it's a phrase from Victoria Purcell-Gates. So you might do shared

reading of a story, then you discuss some parts. You might look at the rhyming words in this book or look at how the author used punctuation or something like that, and then return to the whole text perhaps as an inspiration for writing or to just build fluent reading.

I sometimes poke fun at myself now when I'm explaining to my students how I would use a book like "Down by the Bay," and I would teach rhyming words. Did you ever see a whale with a polka dot tail? Well, sometimes a long A word like whale is spelled with a magic e, and sometimes it's spelled with two vowels go walking, but I had no sense of there being a scope and sequence and that CVCE words like whale are easier, and then you progress to vowel teams later. I don't know that I'd even heard the term scope and sequence. I must have, but it certainly didn't inform what I was doing either in my undergraduate education or in my own teaching career.

Anna Geiger: I think that speaks a lot to what I learned and did in the beginning years. I never had thought of phrasing it that way, whole-part-whole, but that's definitely what it was. It was this idea that we were going to start with this text, for me, honestly, it was whatever big books I had. I didn't have very many, so I would just choose one that I had and I would read it and I would just choose something that we would focus on because the book lent itself to that. Then of course they'd recite it again with me.

I think I looked at that as, I didn't see it as haphazard, which is what it was. I thought it was meaningful context, teaching language in a meaningful context. Also, like you, I didn't have a scope and sequence, and I think I would've thought of that as constraining. Also I thought, well, we have to see from our students what they need to learn next. Of course there is something all about assessment, but that's not what I was doing. I was just kind of guessing. I can definitely relate to what you said.

Jodi Nickel: Yeah, that's true. And you're right, it was based on the resources and there were limited resources, like I was describing pre Fountas and Pinnell, we were just using trade books that had been leveled, and there are not very many books that children could read. I think I also remember using "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" and the kids could read the repetitive part, but they couldn't read the beginning of the book words, "One day a caterpillar sat on a leaf." Well, there were lots of challenging words in that introduction part.

Anna Geiger: As you were teaching this way, did you ever feel like there might be something wrong or that there were kids you weren't reaching? Did you have any questions about it as you were doing it?

Jodi Nickel: No, I don't think I did. I think I was quite cocksure that I was right on track.

Anna Geiger: I did the same, unfortunately. I mean, I think I noticed that some things weren't working, but I figured I just had to just keep figuring out this way of doing it, and I made a lot of assumptions about kids not getting read to at home, and that that was the problem and so on.

Moving on, what happened next?

Jodi Nickel: Yeah, so about 2012 or 2013, a woman who's a very close friend of mine now reached out to me. She ran a nonprofit organization called Calgary Reads. Calgary Reads did all kinds of interesting literacy initiatives in the community, but their core program was they would train volunteers to go into schools and help kids learn to read. And the program they used, it wasn't a pure Reading Recovery, but it was based on Reading Recovery principles. These volunteers would go and listen to a child read leveled books. It was called Read Up, because the idea was that you would read up in levels, and they would make some sight word cards and so on. She said, "I don't think teachers know how to teach children how to read, and I can help. Why don't we get your teacher candidates doing tutoring as part of their coursework?"

So the way our courses are structured, they are in schools a half day week, and they're with us a half day week. They're helping out the teacher and getting to know the kids and so on, but we thought for a half hour a week they could be doing literacy tutoring.

So we started assigning them one child for the entire year, and by the entire year, I mean basically October to March, and they followed that child and wrote a case study about them. I actually think they really learned a lot from that, even though there were some things that we've improved, some challenges with that. I think that by listening to one child read, they really noticed what they needed.

I've written a couple of papers about that. One was called "Tutoring to Build Teacher Candidates' Competence as Reading Teachers" and another is "Learning to Teach Responsively Through Tutoring." I quoted a fellow named Dennis Murphy Odo, who compared tutoring to learning to teach with training wheels, because you can really pay attention to that one child and zone in on what they need.

I remember there was one quote though, where a student was describing a child struggling with a particular concept, and they said, "But I didn't really know how to help them with this because I don't have enough phonics knowledge to do that."

Anna Geiger: Oh, interesting.

Jodi Nickel: Yeah, so I think they were beginning to recognize that they needed more to help them.

Anna Geiger: So what led you to rethink your balanced literacy/whole language approach?

Jodi Nickel: Well, I finally had a sabbatical. It was my first sabbatical in nearly fifteen years after I started academia, and those were really valuable opportunities because I finally had a chance to read more widely.

I have a good friend who's an educational psychologist and we go for walks, and she'd been challenging me on tutoring and was explaining to me that these leveled books left kids guessing and that they needed to be taught more explicitly. She started sending me things to read and to listen to. Of course the first was Emily Hanford's "At a Loss for Words," and I've heard you describe on your podcast, Anna, how you were resistant and defensive at first. I don't know if you want to respond to that.

Anna Geiger: Oh, it's definitely true. Yeah, I'm sure people that listen to my podcast regularly know this story, but that was what got me to the science of reading around 2019 or so, when two people commented on my blog post with that. In a very nice way, they were just like, "What do you think about this?"

I was sure it was wrong. It had to be wrong. It was nothing like what I'd been taught, and I hadn't heard of any of those people she was talking about and quoting, but it did lead me to ask around. Then I realized that actually some people were rethinking what they were doing, and these were the things I needed to read. So yeah, I definitely credit her for getting me started, but it was hard at first.

Jodi Nickel: Yeah. Another was the "Structured Literacy and Typical Literacy Practices" by Louise Spear-Swerling, and I remember looking at the structured literacy practices thinking, "Those look so boring."

She gave me David Kilpatrick's "Equipped for Reading Success," and I think it took me a

while to understand orthographic mapping, perhaps I'm still learning to understand it, but I was beginning to understand the role of phonemic awareness in learning to read. I also started reading Tim Shanahan's blog.

I had a period of a few months where I know that I was ambivalent.

I'm preparing for a presentation at The Reading League next fall, actually, and I found an email that I sent to my colleague. I sent my colleague Tim Shanahan's blog, and this is a quote that I wrote to her in the fall of 2019, "This blog has been helpful in clarifying my thinking about shifts in reading instruction and a balanced understanding of the new 'science of reading' that may be just a bit fanatical about phonics first."

So that was where my head was in the fall of 2019. My colleague thought it was very funny that I was able to find this, to unearth this email.

I remember going to PD event and having a conversation with a local administrator who was a huge advocate of literacy and an advocate of Calgary Reads, and I was saying, "But what about all this stuff they're saying about leveled books?"

She kind of allayed my fears and said, "Oh, no, no, it's okay. I think that it's alright for kids to read leveled books when they're just beginning because it builds their confidence."

So I was in this period of transition, but I had a whole year. I mean, I was doing a lot of other projects that year as well, but a lot of reading. I read all of the key authors. I read "Speech to Print" by Louisa Moats, and I read "Language at the Speed of Sight" by Mark Seidenberg, and "Reading in the Brain" by Stanislas Dehaene and more David Kilpatrick and Daniel Willingham and Maryanne Wolf, and so many podcasts and websites and webinars and social media groups.

One that was very influential, because it had videos attached to helping me see classroom practice, was the Reading Rockets "Reading 101" course. I could actually look at a video and say, "Oh, THAT'S what it looks like to do phonological awareness using felts," for example.

So when I returned from my sabbatical in the summer of 2020, we started shifting the content of the course, and I would say the shifting in the content has been kind of

gradual. That year we were teaching online, and so unfortunately, the teacher candidates didn't have a field experience at schools that year. I really think the experience of learning the content and then applying it to tutoring, and also seeing it in the schools, is really what makes it stick. So what we had them reading that year was the "Put Reading First" little small book by Armbruster et al, and we really started emphasizing the importance of knowing what the research says. We shifted away from some of the balanced literacy readings in that year.

By the next spring, spring of 2021, we knew that the students would be returning to schools in the fall and that we needed to revamp tutoring. Interestingly, Calgary Reads was also going through a similar transition. They were realizing, "Okay, we need to rethink this tutoring program we've been doing." They had an early literacy advisory of teachers and this group were saying, "You know what? We need to shift things away from leveled books and so on," but they didn't have the opportunity or the time to revamp tutoring.

So I thought, "Well, I've got to pull something together on my own," and so with their help and the help of that early literacy advisory, I just pulled together a little Google Site of resources.

Tutoring initially included simply three parts with about ten minutes for each: ten minutes of word work, ten minutes of listening to students reading, and then ten minutes of adult reading. That was kind of the general framework.

We didn't have any money for a resource, and we didn't feel comfortable asking the students to purchase something when we were still in the process of figuring out what would work for them as well, and so it was just kind of cobbled together, those free resources. We gave them a word work folder with the manipulative grapheme tiles, and I think that helped them understand even the fact that the SH digraph is on one tile, and so it's one sound.

Some of those things I think were beginning to build their understanding, and we did give them a scope and sequence, but it was really broad steps. It really just said first CVC words, then magic E words, and so on. It didn't break it down into the really specific steps that I think would have helped them more specifically.

Partway through that year, so this would've been the winter of 2022 or perhaps late in the fall of '21, our provincial government released a document called Reading Intervention Lessons. That was a bit more structured and helped them, but we didn't have access to that when we were first building the tutoring website.

When it came to the student reading to the adult, we recommended some decodable texts and had some access to digital versions like Flyleaf, for example. So some of them were having kids reading leveled books, because that's what the teachers were giving them and recommending, and some were having them read decodable books.

I should say that our province had introduced a new curriculum, and in that year it was being piloted, so teachers were in a time of transition too. They were really just trying to get their head around, what did it mean to shift from leveled books to decodable books and a scope and sequence.

I think the teacher candidates in that first year or two were starting to build some solid routines, but it was still a bit disjointed and unstructured.

After that first year, we knew that we needed a more detailed scope and sequence, and so we gave them the UFLI, the sort of one page scope and sequence, and that was much more detailed. The UFLI handbook or guidebook only came out that summer, and so we didn't have time to really revamp the tutoring site based on that, but even having a more detailed scope and sequence was really helpful.

If a student was, let's say, teaching the /oo/ sound and they were using the word "tube" and the word "spoon" and the word "few," I could show them on the scope and sequence that tube is way over here in lesson 55 or something like that, and spoon is over here, and few is an atypical spelling, and so you want to save that till later.

The other thing that happened in 2022 is we received a donation of Lit Kits from Calgary Reads, and they are labeled on the box, "A box packed with love and bite-size ideas for joyful reading." That had a magazine of resources, and it was originally designed for parents. It was about this time that Calgary Reads decided to wind down, and I'll tell you more about that in a moment, and so they donated about a hundred of these Lit Kits. So then every teacher candidate had a Lit Kit that they could take with them into schools and it had a whiteboard with markers, it had books, it had games, and dice, and all kinds of resources.

Anna Geiger: Neat.

Jodi Nickel: So then they took our little website and gave them some tools to use with it.

Then the bigger changes I would say happened just this past summer in 2023. As I said, Calgary Reads had decided to wind down and disperse of their assets in something called the dandelion strategy, and part of what they were doing was wanting to take the programs that they had and allow them to grow. So think of blowing off the dandelion seeds and letting those seeds grow in bigger organizations. We were fortunate to be one of the seven organizations that were selected to be gifted some of those funds and the programs.

One of the beautiful things that came from that was the support from some professional web designers. We developed the content, taking what we'd learned in those first two years with our little cobbled together Google Site, and took those resources and beefed them up and improved them and gave them to these web designers. They didn't know anything about literacy, and so they were asking such great questions, "Well, what do you mean by this? What do you mean by orthographic mapping? What do you mean by heart words?" They really helped to clarify the content and created great visuals to really bring it to life.

I had the support in building the content from a local teacher, and interestingly, she's now running her own tutoring company and she has been hiring a bunch of our students, so students go and work with her in her afterschool reading clinic. She knows, "What does a 20-year-old like, and what do they need to know in order to be an effective tutor?" Having her wisdom to help me with developing the content was really, really powerful.

Now in terms of developing the content, we only could really give them half hour a week, so we knew we couldn't be doing a full-blown UFLI lesson with all of the steps, but we borrowed some of the core routines, and we had some of the students that had been working for this teacher come to the university and we had professional videographers and they did videos of them demoing some of the activities with kids.

Anna Geiger: Oh, wonderful.

Jodi Nickel: I think those really bring the tutoring website to life for students because you can say, "Well, this is what a visual drill looks like," or "This is what word work looks like." I think that they're really making those powerful connections when they learn the ideas in class and then get to try them out with the students.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, that's excellent. So tell me more about how you help them learn

to teach reading in this short setting.

Jodi Nickel: So sadly, we can't really supervise all of them directly, because there are about 90 teacher candidates in 25 or 30 different schools, and so we have to do what we can on campus and then depend on the schools to support them.

We start with tutor training. That was about six hours back in September where we really worked through what does the lesson plan look like, what does the tutoring session look like, worked through the videos, practiced it in pairs, and then practiced designing lessons in pairs. Then they share their tutoring logs that they're doing in schools with me in Google Doc format so that I can add comments. I provide feedback as often as I can, and often they'll email me and say, "What do you think I should do here?" or they'll stay after class and ask advice.

We also get them together in grade groups to share their tutoring plans with their peers and they support one another. In some schools, they are even beginning to lead small groups and some whole class lessons with teachers who are using some of those materials. That's been a really cool experience for them to see that this isn't just a one-to-one intervention, this could be whole class instruction as well.

One of the things that we tried last spring that was really exciting is in the past, even from 2013 on, we had them write a case study about the child they were tutoring and submit it as an assignment where they would make the theory practice connections and so on.

This past April, we had them do a visual showcase. Picture kind of like a research paper or a science fair kind of experience, where everybody created a visual. We had them displayed on smart boards and some on these giant visualization walls in our space, and they had about ten minutes each to tell the story of the child they were tutoring. We invited mentor teachers, invited community members, and we had about six presentations happening consecutively, and every ten minutes a new person started sharing. The visual essentially was a story.

When they were overwhelmed wondering what do I put on this, I said, "Think of a story having a beginning, middle, and an end. The beginning is the child that you met. Who was this child? Were they quiet and reserved? Were they rambunctious and energetic? Were they in ELO? What were they experiencing as readers? What were they like? Then the middle is, what did you do? What happened in your story?" They had been encouraged to take photographs of some of the activities they'd been doing, and then the end was, "What happened? What was the end of your story?"

In most cases, they, I would say, used the CORE Phonics Survey, and so they had little graphs showing how their CORE Phonics Survey results changed over time. In some cases, they had qualitative information like the child said, "I love reading now," or those kinds of things.

It was a really high energy event, and they were pretty excited to be able to talk about all they had done and felt a really great sense of efficacy about what a difference they had made in the lives of these kids. So that was really exciting. That's going to be a keeper. We'll stick with that in the future.

Then what we had them submit in addition to that was what I called an evidence base. What we've been using for the last two or three, I guess this is our third year, we've been using the "Teaching Reading Sourcebook."

Anna Geiger: Yes.

Jodi Nickel: As you know, it's a wealth of research-based information. I ask them to choose five quotes or ideas from the text and then describe how that was evident in their practice. It's really getting them to tie what they're doing not to activities, but to what research is informing the activities that they're doing.

Anna Geiger: I love that so much. That is definitely not something I knew how to do. If someone would've asked me as a teacher, "What research is your work based on?" I would've said, "Well, it's based on the work of Lucy Calkins and Fountas and Pinnell." I didn't know what the research said about it, I just trusted what they told me. That's excellent that they're getting into that so early.

Is the "Teaching Reading Sourcebook" their core textbook, their main textbook?

Jodi Nickel: Yes, that's right.

Anna Geiger: Yeah. Excellent. I know I've mentioned this before on the podcast that it's pricey, but it is worth it. It's very comprehensive and it has the sample lessons all throughout, which is just really wonderful and very, very readable too. It's very nicely laid out as well.

So you've talked about how this one colleague opened your eyes to the science of reading, you got into it, you made some changes, then you realized that the tutoring that you were offering could be changed and improved, and you talked about how your teaching of your pre-service teachers has shifted. If you would go back into teaching in the classroom, how would your approach to teaching reading look different from when you were a classroom teacher years ago?

Jodi Nickel: Yeah. So Margaret Goldberg has a visual, it's on the Reading Rockets site, where she talks about going from activity-focused to targeted instruction. On the left-hand side, it's shared reading, Reading Workshop, word study, read-alouds, Writers Workshop. Those are the activities we're doing, which as you said, we tend to do those activities with the resources that we have. Then on the other side it's more of a focus on word recognition, spelling strategies, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

It's possible that some of the activities we're doing are the same activities, but they're informed with a different lens. Now I'm not just doing the shared reading because I have a big book to read, but I'm doing shared reading because I actually want to build fluency or I want to work on these specific comprehension strategies. I think being guided by those specific goals is really what would shift for me if I was a classroom teacher now.

Anna Geiger: When I look back to your experience learning about the science of reading, can you remind me what your colleague was, was she a classroom teacher or was she a professor?

Jodi Nickel: No, she was an educational psychologist, so she was working with kids who had complex learning needs.

Anna Geiger: Whatever she did, it didn't make you run away or retreat or not want to be her friend anymore, so do you have any thoughts for us about what did she do right that got you interested in learning about it?

Jodi Nickel: I think she was patient with me, and I do think that we need to give people time to process the ideas.

I had coffee recently with somebody who's in that space right now where she's

processing ideas. What she said was, "When I first heard Mount Royal University was doing science of reading, I thought, 'Oh, no!'" And she was alarmed by this, but she said, "But now I look at what you're doing and I'm realizing that maybe it's not so far off base."

I think we need to give people time. So think about my view, my email that I sent to my colleague only four years ago saying, "This might be a bit fanatical." To the skeptics, I think it does look fanatical at the beginning.

I also think that some of those critics, they think that phonics instruction would make them feel like a drill sergeant. In fact, that's what this person said. She said, "You're not a drill sergeant getting kids to just chant out words." I think we need to help them see explicit instruction as fun and engaging.

I also think that the critics would argue that they ARE teaching phonics. As I said, I thought I was. I think I would ask them, what is guiding those instructional decisions about which phonics concepts they're going to teach, and how?

I think the biggest shifts for me in the last few years have been, first of all, that you need a scope and sequence, that you need to teach things in a sequential way, and that leveled texts are not productive.

I found the "Purple Challenge" videos quite compelling by telling that story, and I show parts of those to the students, because they just introduce words that are too complex. Like in those videos, why would you expect a 6-year-old to be able to read the word "fence" and "paint", and even "purple"?

Then the third thing is the idea of mapping sounds, the Elkonin boxes and mapping sounds to graphemes, and I think even that came later.

I would say that recognizing that we need a scope and sequence and that leveled texts are not productive, I think I was understanding that early in my journey. Understanding the process of things like Elkonin boxes or that type of strategy to map sounds to graphemes, that came a bit later.

I think we also have to show the skeptics that they can continue to use all those beautiful books. We always go back to authentic reading and writing from a balanced literacy perspective. The language comprehension strand doesn't go away, we're still

doing those rich and meaningful tasks, and we want to engage kids with those beautiful books, and we want them to be writing about authentic topics.

We just have to do some of the explicit work to help them to access those rich topics, that they can't read those complex texts unless we've given them the tools to access them, and they can't write meaningfully unless we've given them some of the tools that will help them to do that.

The other thing I would say about the "Teaching Reading Sourcebook" is that I love that it's structured with the what, why, when, and how. For example, what is vocabulary, why is it important, when do you teach it, and then how do you teach it?

One wish that I have, especially in those vocabulary and comprehension sections, is lessons that are based on actual trade books. I think that that would help teachers to see how you can make them engaging.

I've often taken examples from Reading Rockets, for example, and shown a classroom video of a teacher using those strategies. So here's semantic gradients, and we look at the video of the teacher teaching semantic gradients on the Reading Rocket site, and she does it based on "A Seed is Sleepy," so she's using a real text.

I think maybe that's a growth area for science of reading to show how to integrate explicit instruction with authentic texts.

One source that I think does a nice job of that is ReadWorks. I was looking at the novel studies recently, for example, and they've taken the "Wonder" story, and then they're showing how you could embed some really explicit instruction with a rich text like that.

I think that the message needs to be, explicit instruction doesn't take away kids' creativity, it actually gives them the tools to communicate successfully.

There's also just the energy that efficacy brings. I think science of reading can have a huge boost for teacher efficacy because they finally feel like, "Oh, I'm succeeding here," and for student efficacy. It feels good to be successful. I think it's more empowering for kids when they feel skillful, and it's more empowering for teachers when they understand what kids need and really how to help them succeed.

I guess that would be my message to those who are still holding onto a balanced literacy approach and are skeptical.

Anna Geiger: Well thank you so much for sharing your story, and also that's so exciting about how your tutoring program continues to evolve and improve.

Do you have any specific resources you want to share before we close out for if someone's trying to reach out to a colleague? Do you have any good starting points?

Jodi Nickel: To figure out what to read, I actually followed a video by David Pelc, where I think he called it a Scope and Sequence for Teachers. It tells you here's what you should read first, and it lists a lot of those sources that I read.

Heidi Beverine-Curry, she actually came and spoke to our teacher candidates as part of the teachers' convention last year, and somebody came up to the mic and said, "I'm at another university where we're not learning about this. Where do you think I should go?" It surprised me actually. She recommended they go to social media, and I think in part because it's the conversations on social media where you see people wrestling with issues and pointing each other to the right sources. I feel like I've really been steep in that world for the last few years.

Anna Geiger: Well, wonderful. Thank you so much for sharing. I'll make sure to share those links in the show notes. Thanks again!

Jodi Nickel: Thank you!

Anna Geiger: You can find the show notes for today's episode at reachallreaders.com/episode159. Talk to you next time!

Closing: That's all for this episode of Triple R Teaching. For more educational resources, visit Anna at her home base, reachallreaders.com, and join our teaching

episode of Triple R Teaching.