Triple R Teaching

Hello friends. Before we get into this episode, I wanted to add two books I forgot to mention - really essential books for your science of reading journey. One is "Equipped for Reading Success" by David Kilpatrick. He's all about explaining orthographic mapping and helping you understand how to build phonemic awareness with your students. And also Denise Eide's book, "Uncovering the Logic of English," which will teach you about some spelling rules and generalizations you may not have known before, and will help you teach your students reading and writing.

If you're with me on Facebook, you are watching a live recording of the Triple R Teaching Podcast Episode 44: Books to Read on Your Science of Reading Journey. If you've been with me on the podcast for the last couple of months, you know that I've shared quite a lot of episodes all about understanding the science of reading and how to apply that knowledge into the teaching that you're doing in your classroom.

Today I want to take a look at some books that I recommend for those of you that want to learn more. I'm going to start with books that I feel are very simple and an easy way to get into it, then we'll progress to some more challenging books, and we'll finish with very practical books.

The first one I like, and the first one I actually got the whole way through, was "Know Better, Do Better" by David and Meredith Liben. I love this book because it's written in a story format. They talk about how they started a charter school - a public school in Harlem - with a whole language approach. They were really excited about it, they got all the right materials, great teachers, and they were all into it. They thought they were doing a great job... and then their students ranked the bottom of the area's test scores.

So they realized that what they thought was working wasn't working, the students weren't really learning to read very well. So they kept what was good about the whole language approach, but then they moved to a more structured literacy approach. This was way back in the nineties, I believe. And it worked! The students became great readers!

I like this book because it is not judgmental. It's written to people like me who come from a balanced literacy background, or for some of you maybe even whole language,

and they tackle some of the things that might scare you a little bit and help you understand how it worked for them. So you might be scared of switching to decodable books, but they talk about their experience with it and how it actually was very positive. It's quite short and super interesting and helpful, so I would start with "Know Better, Do Better" by David Liben and Meredith Liben.

Another book is a new one that was just recently published, called "Shifting the Balance" by Jan Burkins and Kari Yates. I'm going to go ahead and read to you the summary on the back: "These days, it seems that everyone has a strong opinion about how to teach young children to read. Some may brush off the current tension as nothing more than one more round of “The Reading Wars.” Others may avoid the clash altogether due to the uncivilized discourse that sometimes results. Certainly, sorting the signal from the noise is no easy task. In this leading-edge book, authors Jan Burkins and Kari Yates address this tension as a critical opportunity to look closely at the research, re-evaluate current practices, and embrace new possibilities."

I like this book because, again, if you are in a balanced literacy classroom, this shows you how to start to understand the science of reading and make some changes. It's not judgmental, but is a good way to start integrating the science into more of what you're doing.

Those are the ones I recommend starting with. As you're ready to learn a little bit more, I recommend "Speech to Print" by Louisa Moats. This one helps you understand the structure of the English language, which can then help you teach it. I think you might be surprised at how much you didn't know, that's how I feel about it. I haven't completed this book yet, but I refer to it often. It's got a lot of helpful charts, talks about things like teaching syllable types, talks about phonemes and morphologies, and is really helpful.

Now anytime you ask someone, "What book should I read about the science of reading?" they'll usually recommend one of these books, if not all three. These are Mark Seidenberg's "Language at the Speed of Sight," "Proust and the Squid" by Maryanne Wolf, and "Reading in the Brain" by Stanislas Dehaene. I'm going to be honest with you, these books are hard. I have definitely not gotten through all of them, in fact, I've only read a portion of each one of these books.

I prefer Stanislas Dehaene's YouTube video. There's a presentation that he gave about how the brain learns to read, and I find that much easier to get through than this book. I watched it many times until it made sense to me. I will link to that in the show notes for this episode.

Here's this one, "Proust and the Squid" by Maryanne Wolf. She is a professor of child development, and she's excellent. You can find her doing a lot of interviews all over the place. I found this book hard to get through, but maybe eventually I'll be able to do it.

Of all three, I find Mark Seidenberg's book the most easy to read. He talks about understanding the science of reading and why it's important for our students. He's a cognitive neuroscientist. This book is long and the font is small, but a lot of it's told in, again, sort of a story fashion, so it's easier to get through.

Another book, which I can't wait to finish, is this one, "Overcoming Dyslexia." You might think at first glance, "I don't need to read that. I'm not interested in learning about teaching students with dyslexia because that's not what I do." Or you might think, "What I learn in there can't also apply to the rest of my class." But this is really good because she talks about the science of how the brain learns to read and how the way that we teach students can really help. You may actually read it and find out that some of your students possibly could have dyslexia based on the things that she writes, and that will help you think about how to change what you're doing in the classroom. It has lots of stories, and she has a very nice writing style, I highly recommend it.

Now let's talk about getting some practical books. These would be books that not only teach you about the science, but also give you things to do with it. I'll give you a few of my recommendations here.

I like "A Fresh Look at Phonics." This book is older, from 2017, so about four years old. I really like Wiley Blevins a lot. I like him because he is not the type of person that's going to tell you it has to be one way. He's honest about what the research really says and what people try to make it say. He also shows you how you can be a good phonics teacher, even within maybe a less than ideal setup. Maybe you're in a balanced literacy classroom and you have to be, so you can't quite transition to a structured literacy classroom. He'll still show you how to be a strong phonics teacher. This is extremely easy to read, and has lots of helpful resources. You might also want to check out his book, "Phonics A to Z," which I think is on its third edition.

Here's another book that is actually one of my favorites. I love that Rollanda E. O'Connor in her book, "Teaching Word Recognition," talks about the research. She's constantly backing up what she's saying with research, but it's also extremely practical and I found it very interesting. I read this book in the car while we were on vacation and I just marked it up all over the place. I read it from start to finish. She talks about things like oral language, phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, developing sight words, reading multi-syllabic words. It's just got everything. It's really, really good and is a short read, so you can get a lot out of it in a short time.

I'll share two more books. One is "How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction" by Sharon Walpole and Michael McKenna. This is the book you want if you're trying to figure out how to do needs-based small groups during your reading block; if you're interested in finding out specifically what skills each of your students has and then you're grouping them to help them move forward. This is not going to be teaching you how to group students by reading level, it's going to help you group them by their need. So maybe you could think of it as grouping them by their deficits, like where are they in terms of their phonics knowledge? Where do they need to go next? This book will help you get them there. I love it because, as any of you know, when you have a class of 25 kids they're going to be all over the place, right? They're not all going to be moving at the same pace your phonics curriculum does. And so this is really good for differentiation, and I think you'll love that over half the book is the activities so it's really, really practical. This is a very popular one. If you find it's expensive on Amazon, you should get it from the publisher's website, the Guilford Press.

Here's the last one. This one is on the pricey side, but wow is it an incredible book with lots of resources! I love that each chapter talks about the science and it gives you really practical ideas. This is called "Teaching Reading Sourcebook," from Core. It might be about $80, but look how fat it is, and it's very readable with big font, really nice charts, word lists, as well as specific activities to do with students. I highly recommended it. They also have an assessment spiral-bound book that you can buy, which is also very good.

So let's really quickly review the books we talked about today. The books that I started with, as in books that are going to slowly get you into the science of reading, particularly if you're coming from a balanced literacy background are: "Know Better, Do Better" by David and Meredith Liben and "Shifting the Balance" by Jan Burkins and Kari Yates.

Then if you want to go really deep and read some of those harder books, some of your choices are: Mark Seidenberg's "Language at the Speed of Sight," which is my favorite of these, "Proust and the Squid" by Maryanne Wolf, and "Reading in the Brain" by Stanislas Dehaene.

You also might want to check out "Overcoming Dyslexia" by Sally Shaywitz. This book is not just for teachers of students with dyslexia, it will help you understand how the brain learns to read and how you can apply that to how you teach all of your students.

Finally, I talked about some books that are really practical. Those were: "A Fresh Look at Phonics" by Wiley Blevins (I recommend anything by Wiley Blevins), as well as "Teaching Word Recognition," which talks a lot about the research, but also talks about specific activities. That's by Rollanda E. O'Connor. "How to Plan Differentiated Reading

Instruction" by Sharon Walpole, which I think is a must-own. And then finally, from Core, "Teaching Reading Sourcebook," which is jam-packed with summaries of the research and specific activities that you can do.

I hope this was helpful. I've really enjoyed doing the science of reading series with you. This concludes our official science of reading podcast series, but we're not going to stop talking about these things next week. We're going to start a series about teaching phonics.

I should also let you know that if you're listening to this in real time, when I publish it on the podcast, it will be Monday, May 3rd, and that is the day that Becky Spence and I are opening the door to our online course, "Teaching Every Reader." We're very excited to open it up; we only open it up a couple of times a year. In fact, on Monday and Tuesday, we're going to be giving a live workshop that is going to teach you four simple ways to bring the science of reading into a K-2 classroom. In that workshop, we'll be giving specific details about the course and how, if you join by Thursday of next week, you can get special early bird pricing. So if you haven't signed up for one of the workshops, you can do that by heading to reachallreaders.com/liveworkshop.

If you want to learn more about the course, you can go to teachingeveryreader.com. There's an information page there now, and it will switch over with an option to join us on Monday. I'm also always happy to answer questions; you can email my team at hello@reachallreaders.com. Thanks so much for joining me, and I'll talk to you again