

I had somewhat of a hard time understanding Gerald Coles argument. From what I understand he does not believe that phonic awareness is an adequate indicator of a student being able to read. From what I understand he believes that phonic awareness is a good indicator that the student will be a good reader in the future but that beginning readers don't necessarily need to have phonics training. Cole's opinion reminds me of Frank Smith's book "Unspeakable Acts Unnatural Practices." Smith talks about reading being the most natural activity in the world and the students will learn to read when they want too. This is what I got from Coles argument that he believes through reading students will learn phonics, that it isn't something that needs to be taught by a certain grade level.

As much as I would love to believe and allow students to learn reading and phonics at their own pace and on their own timeline, this isn't logical. In today's society reading is one of the most important factors of continuing in school, going to college, and getting a good job. If a student doesn't learn their vocabulary or doesn't feel like reading until they are in fourth grade, then those students are going to be four years behind students that decide to read in kindergarten. Being able to read and know your vocabulary and word choice doesn't just affect reading. It affects being able to write, understand mathematics, science, and social studies. This will put students behind in all subject areas.

For example, I currently have seventeen English as a Second Language students. Granted these are not students that CHOSE to not know their phonics or know how to read, they just don't have the experience of language to be able to. However, I have personally seen how not being able to read affects students in all subject areas. It is the greatest struggle for the students and because of it they are failing or close to failing almost all subjects. Dues to the fact that the students can't read, they are unable to understand what is being asked of them to do.

My students are in fourth grade and several are unable to read at a level higher than second grade, because of this they will either stay back and repeat fourth grade or they will struggle even more in fifth grade. This is a never-ending battle for them. In order to keep up in school and be able to move forward with your education a student must be able to read. Therefore I agree with the National Reading Panel that all students must be taught how to read so that they have a fair chance to succeed.