

**Professional Book Review**

Michigan State University

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TE 842

Dr. Erin Jurand

Lindsey, J. A. (2022) *Reading Above the Fray: Reliable, Research-Based Routines for Developing Decoding Skills*. Scholastic Inc.

### **Section A**

I chose to read Julia Lindsey's (2022) book for several reasons. The first reason being that I was interested in it being endorsed as a 'science of reading in practice' book. In my own learning, I have dived deeper into learning more about the science of reading and was happy to see that this book would follow some of the research I had already been following. Secondly, I chose this book because of the focus on developing decoding skills. I know that decoding is the backbone in reading and wanted to learn more about research-based routines to help me in my own teaching practice. Last, I liked the focus on the reliable research that this text claims to have. I want to make sure that all the strategies I incorporate into my practice and utilize with my students are founded in research.

In this text, Julia Lindsey begins by explaining the foundational skills of reading and stating why they are important. This text is filled with cited research to support the ideas that are presented. Lindsey continues to explain the different reading models and how they differ from the model she endorses, the Active View of Reading (as cited in the text, Duke & Cartwright, 2021). This model differs from other models of reading because it emphasizes the importance of active self-regulation, word recognition, bridging processes and language comprehension- all foundational aspects that support reading (Lindsey, 2022, p. 26). I especially enjoy how Lindsey focuses on joy and cultural responsiveness as important factors in reading success.

Lindsey defines decoding next and then introduces the elements of decoding: oral language and vocabulary, print concepts, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge and sound-spelling knowledge. Throughout the rest of the text, Lindsey deeply discusses teach of the

elements of decoding giving examples and instructional swaps. In each of these chapters, Lindsey follows a predictable pattern for teaching the concept well- explicit and systematic teaching, efficient and effective routines, assessment driven responses and support in the selected areas.

After explicitly explaining each of the elements of decoding, Lindsey explains how to use the elements to decode words, how to introduce the concept of chunking words and the relevancy of fluency in context.

Reading this text has positively impacted me as a teacher. With easy-to-use instructional swaps and research-based strategies, both my group and I thoroughly enjoyed this book. It was a special experience for my group to discuss this book with the various grade levels we teach in mind, Kindergarten to fourth grade teaching experience. Overall, the big takeaways that my group will take from reading this text is that decoding should, and can, happen all throughout the day across all subjects. Additionally, my group and I were interested to learn that the phonics work suggested in the book shouldn't take long- with daily practice ranging from 10-15 minutes a day (Lindsey, 2022).

This past school year, I worked hard to learn more about the science of reading and implement some of the strategies that are most beneficial to my readers, developing and successful readers. As I read this text, I noticed that there are a lot of pieces of decoding I was teaching but realized that there were also elements of decoding I neglected to teach. I also never thought about being able to use decodable text in other subjects, for example, rewriting math problems to include decodable words so students can better access the math text (Lindsey, 2022, p. 123). Finally, I plan to introduce morphology earlier on in third grade (the grade I teach).

Lindsey emphasized the importance of morphology in learning to decode. I look forward to including morphology instruction (prefixes, suffixes, root words) into my own teaching.

I highly recommend this book as a professional text to any educator looking to understand decoding fully. *Reading Above the Fray* (2022) provides easy to use instructional swaps, research-based explanations for the elements of decoding and instructional examples throughout the text. My school is on a journey to learn more about the science of reading, and I would recommend this book to any teacher that needs to better understand the importance of decoding and the development of a reader. Furthermore, due to the easy-to-implement practices with sometimes scripted ways to teach an element of decoding, I would recommend this book and its practices to any parent with a struggling reader. Lindsey does a phenomenal job making this text as accessible to all who are willing to learn more about decoding and improve their practice.

## Section B

In reflecting on how TE 842 has impacted me as an educator, I have realized that this class has supplied me with strategies to use, assessments to give and knowledge of what makes a successful reader. Additionally, this class helped me explore how to assess a struggling reader and create goals geared directly to them using a variety of data. I thoroughly enjoyed reading both assigned texts and know that I can refer to them throughout my career to help me support my readers of all levels and abilities. Though I don't believe I am an expert just yet, I do believe that I have a wealth of knowledge to better inform my reading instruction.

In one of my previous undergraduate courses, I read the second edition of McKenna and Stahl's *Assessment for Reading Instruction* (2008). I really enjoyed being able to compare the differences from the more recent version. Additionally, it was nice to have a refresher of the Cognitive Model (Stahl et al., 2020) and to be reminded of all the factors that go into reading comprehension. To look at the data of the students required in this course, I thought that this hands-on, real-world practice was beneficial into helping me with my future students.

One of the biggest shifts this course has challenged me with is the important of quality assessments. In a day when there is only so much time, I am reminded how important progress monitoring is and using data in a positive way to inform instruction. Another way that my thinking has verified is in my push back to provide students with a reading 'level'. I appreciate the conversations had around the shortcomings of assigning students a level. This reaffirmation of thought has inspired me to continue to (respectfully) push back on needing to assign students a level and instead focus on giving students the instruction they need within a pathway from the Cognitive Model (Stahl et al., 2020).

One of the greatest parts of this class was exploring a current text through the Professional Book review project. I enjoyed learning more about decoding and have found a spark in myself to plan out a bit of what my phonics instruction will look like.

Finally, I plan to use all that I have learned from this course to broaden my understanding of what a successful reader looks like, and the many elements that go into creating a joyful, reflective reader. Specifically, I plan to discover where each of my students are in their journey to reading comprehension to provide them with the instruction most beneficial to them. I plan to do this using whole group and small group assessments as outlined in Stahl, Flanigan & McKenna (2020) and to focus my phonics instruction in practices Julia Lindsey explains (2022). I will continue to learn about, and advocate for, the science of reading and research-based reading practices and routines. I hope to one day become an instructional literacy coach.

### References

Lindsey, J. A. (2022) *Reading Above the Fray: Reliable, Research-Based Routines for Developing Decoding Skills*. Scholastic Inc.

McKenna, M. C., & Dougherty Stahl, K. A. (2008). *Assessment for Reading Instruction* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Guilford Publications.

Stahl, K. A. D., Flanigan, K., & McKenna, M. C. (2020). *Assessment for reading instruction* (4th ed.). New York: Guilford.