

# Roden: Literacy is a right, not a privilege – and teachers deserve the tools to make it happen

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Across Wyoming, teachers are working tirelessly to help students learn to read — often without the training or tools they truly need.

As the founder of Bloom Literacy Solutions and board member of the Rocky Mountain International Dyslexia Association and Wyoming Right to Read, and member of The Wyoming Reading League, I want to be absolutely clear: our advocacy is not an attack on teachers. It's a call to action to support them — because every child in Wyoming deserves the chance to become a proficient reader, and every teacher deserves the preparation and resources to make that possible.

For too long, our state — like much of the nation — has relied on approaches to reading instruction that were well-intentioned, but not aligned with the scientific evidence of how the brain learns to read. We now know that most children, including those with dyslexia and other reading challenges, need structured literacy: explicit, systematic and cumulative instruction that connects speech sounds to print, builds decoding and encoding skills, and fosters fluency and comprehension. This is not a philosophy or a trend, it's the science of reading, grounded in decades of cognitive, linguistic and educational research.

But knowing this science and being able to teach it effectively are two different things. The reality is that most of us did not receive this kind of preparation in college. I certainly didn't. I became a Certified Dyslexia Specialist and Wilson Dyslexia Therapist only after years of additional training — and only because my own daughter was diagnosed as profoundly dyslexic. Like many parents, I had to learn what I was never taught in my own education courses: how to teach reading to every child, including those for whom it doesn't come easily.

That's why initiatives like IDA-RMB, Wyoming Right to Read, Bloom Literacy Solutions, and Paul's Mountain exist — not to criticize teachers, but to empower them. We want to ensure every Wyoming teacher has access to rigorous, evidence-based training that translates the science of reading into classroom practice. Our goal is not to assign blame; it's to provide solutions.

When we talk about “structured literacy,” we're talking about instruction that benefits all students. Research shows that while about 40% of students learn to read relatively easily, the other 60% need explicit and systematic teaching. For students with dyslexia or other reading disabilities, this approach isn't just helpful, it's essential. But too many children in Wyoming are not receiving this instruction. And when a child struggles, they often don't have access to an intensive structured literacy intervention delivered by a highly trained teacher. That's not a failure of our educators, it's a gap in our system.

We can close that gap by ensuring literacy is treated as a right, not a privilege. Every Wyoming child — regardless of their zip code, background or learning profile — should have the opportunity to read proficiently. That begins with ensuring our teachers are equipped, supported and valued. Rigorous, evidence-based teacher training is not a criticism of current educators; it's an investment in their success.

Across the country, states that have invested in teacher training grounded in the science of reading are seeing results: higher literacy rates, fewer struggling readers and more confident teachers. Wyoming can do the same. We can provide professional learning opportunities that are respectful, accessible and rooted in evidence. We can give teachers the programs, coaching and community they need to feel empowered rather than blamed.

As advocates, we see our role as partners — working with teachers, not against them. We want to build bridges between policymakers, educators and families to ensure every child in Wyoming learns to read. When we equip teachers with evidence-based tools, and when we give struggling readers access to intensive structured literacy instruction, everyone wins.

Teachers want their students to succeed. Parents want their children to read. And advocates want to ensure the system gives both the tools to make it happen.

Wyoming has an opportunity to lead — to make sure literacy is not left to luck, but guaranteed through knowledge, training and commitment. Let's stand together — teachers, parents and advocates — to make reading a right for all Wyoming children.

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