

HOW GOOD ARE TEXAS' AND CALIFORNIA'S NEW 1ST GRADE READERS?

*Synopses compute, compare
decodability scores*

In four major publishers' new 1st grade Reading programs for California and Texas, a long-overdue national pro-phonics rout of anti-phonics pedagogy is at last in full cry. Our reviews of these two submissions (see inside here) find the Texas editions clearly stronger on decodability than their California analogs, with some flaws still in each. Perversely, textbooks often most lag positive new academic trends. Conversely, they are leading indicators of ultimate success. Adversely, the malpractice that no longer roils Reading methods mires much Math instruction nationwide even yet.

This two-year review project was unusual. First, a train of never-before providential "coincidences" timed Texas' approval of these books in 2009, immediately after California's in 2008. Second, publishers thus had in hand our 2008 analyses of their California texts while preparing their 2009 Texas books, in time to mend in the latter the faults we found in the former. Such quiet self-correction in fact often occurred. Third, we know of no other subject matter-specific comparisons ever of California and Texas match-ups in so great depth as these.

*Rare sequential adoption
benefits Texas versions*

*Math education merits
similar enlightenment*

The litmus test of a pure phonics program is that students should read no phonetically-regular words before learning all the letter-sound correspondences in each of those words. By that benchmark we rank these programs, among which our standard review criteria discriminate a good spread of telling distinctives. Three of these four publishers improved for Texas the same programs they offered in California. Only lowest-ranked Houghton Mifflin Harcourt submitted a different program here than it did there, which complicated and diluted its crafting of full satisfactions to our concerns.

A philosophical shift underlies this change in teaching to read. Look-say whole-language pseudo-"reading" shares with progressive, "constructivist" Math the myth that learning *FIXED* letter-sound correspondences and *STANDARD* algorithms is unnecessary to read or problem-solve. Instead, students should create (guess) their personal meanings from context clues and invent their own (inferior) computational "strategies." These new 1st grade Readers scuttle that failed *SUBJECTIVE, RELATIVISTIC HUMANISM*. More Math materials need this *OBJECTIVE, ABSOLUTE* methodology.

From a former Texas educator,
who now teaches elsewhere:

I CAN REALLY TELL THE DIFFERENCE OF THE INPUT YOUR [TEXAS] PROCESS HAS ON THE ADOPTION OF GOOD TEXTBOOKS NOW THAT I AM OUT OF THE STATE. LOUSY MATH AND READING TEXTBOOKS HERE - ADOPTED BY THE RECOMMENDATION OF TEACHERS.