How the Brain Learns to Read
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Sousa goes beyond the typical discussion of reading instruction to focus on *why* a balanced approach is important. In addition to explaining the science behind learning to read, he provides how-to’s for designing a solid classroom- or school-based program.

His ideal scientifically-based program would include opportunities for students to develop phonological awareness and phonemic awareness, with whole-language activities used as a supplement to ensure students’ reading experiences are both meaningful and enjoyable.

Sousa has another important message for principals: Students of experienced teachers who have a firm understanding of scientifically-based methods typically achieve at higher levels. To help ensure every student has a good teacher, he provides this list of teacher competencies, related to reading, that teachers need to know:

- How the brain learns to read;
- The relationship between spoken language and reading;
- How to provide direct instruction in phonics;
- How to provide direct instruction in the alphabetic principle;
- The relationship between phonology and morphology in relation to spelling;
- How to diagnose spelling and reading skills;
- How to use strategies that help students gain fluency;
- How to help students understand the rules of syntax;
- The dependence of reading comprehension on other aspects of reading and language;
- Procedures for ongoing in-class assessment of children’s reading abilities;
- How to modify instruction, based on in-class assessments;
- Understanding the needs of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency; and
- How to use intervention strategies to address different learning styles and cultures.