

Episode 13: The List		
Steubenville became a model of reading success. Then a new law in Ohio put it all at risk. In this episode, we look at the science of reading lists some states are making, why the program Steubenville has been using for 25 years isn't getting on many of these lists, and the surprising power of one curriculum review group.		
 EPISODE 13		
Episode Length	Listen to the Episode	Read the Transcript
35:22	https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2025/03/06/sold-a-story-e13-the-list	Printable Transcript
Additional Optional Materials	- APM Reports — New reading laws sweep the nation following Sold a Story - APM Reports — When schools buy new reading programs, they look to EdReports. But some of its reviews don't line up with science - Right to Read Project — The Standards Trap: Why Grade-Level Teaching Fails Our Students	

Questions and Topics for Discussing “The List”	
Before Listening	- Who should decide what reading programs schools use? Why? - Are you familiar with the policies in your state regarding curriculum? What role should state governments play in curriculum decisions?
While Listening	- Why wasn't Success for All initially on Ohio's list? (2:15 to 4:05) - What is EdReports, and how did it become so influential? (4:05 to 7:50)
After Listening	<i>From a teaching perspective:</i> The episode explains that EdReports was designed around Common Core standards, not the science of reading: Christopher Peak: “The Common Core standards basically lay out what kids should know and be able to do at each grade level. ... But the Common Core standards don't say anything about how to do that. They don't say anything about how to teach.” Emily Hanford: “EdReports was basically agnostic on how things were taught. What EdReports essentially wanted to see was that a curriculum was covering everything in that 66-page standards document.”

	• There’s a difference between knowing <i>what</i> students should learn and <i>how</i> to teach it. What support have you received in learning how to teach effectively? • How have EdReports and the Common Core standards influenced instruction in your school or district? Many schools dropped Success for All when a new administration took over. • How has leadership turnover affected instruction within your school or district? • What could be put in place to maintain effective programs when leadership changes? Some schools used only parts of Success for All: “Some schools were using it just as a reading curriculum. They weren't doing all the elements – like the tutoring and the attendance. In some cases, it was because they didn't have the staff to do all that. Those schools didn't see great results with Success for All.” • What does this say about the difference between adopting a curriculum and implementing it well? ◦ What does Steubenville’s experience indicate about what it takes to succeed? • How does your school address the “whole child” needs (like attendance, basic needs) that affect reading achievement? <i>From a parenting or community perspective:</i> Leadership turnover and program churn are common in the American education system. • Have you noticed turnover and churn in your district? How has this affected things that you care about? EdReports has influenced billions of dollars in curriculum purchases, though the organization's CEO says “EdReports is a place to start” rather than a final authority. • Do you know how curriculum decisions are made at your school? • How does your district evaluate whether curriculum purchases have been successful? <i>From a student perspective:</i> • What should adults think about when they are choosing reading programs for your school?
Wrap Up	• What are the unintended consequences of creating approved program lists?
Extend	Activity 1 Read the article New reading laws sweep the nation following Sold a Story. Find your state on this map. (Note: The map shows only states that have passed laws on reading  ARTICLE  STATES MAP  STATES LIST

instruction since *Sold a Story* premiered in late 2022. Some additional states had laws or policies in place before the podcast. This is [another source](#) you could consult.)

- Has your state passed any science of reading legislation?
- Do you think these laws will help improve instruction? Why or why not?

Activity 2

Read the article [When schools buy new reading programs, they look to EdReports. But some of its reviews don't line up with science.](#)

The article says EdReports won't rereview the 86 programs already published under their previous rating methodology.

- What should districts do if they've already invested in programs that received positive EdReports reviews under the previous methodology?
- What needs to happen to help decision-makers evaluate whether a curriculum is likely to result in improved student achievement?



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Activity 3

Read [The Standards Trap: Why Grade-Level Teaching Fails Our Students.](#)

This article provides a teacher's perspective on using a program that was rated positively by EdReports.

From a teaching perspective:

- Did any of what's described in the article remind you of your own teaching experience?
- Have you ever felt pressure to teach lessons that seemed too advanced for your students? How did you handle it?

The article argues that "equity isn't about rushing to grade-level standards — it's about providing the methodical teaching that students deserve."

- Do you agree? How should schools balance high expectations with appropriate teaching for students?
- What does reading this make you think about how a curriculum review process should work?



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We'd love to hear about your *Sold a Story* discussion!

- Email us: soldastory@apmreports.org
- Leave us a voicemail message: (612) 888-7323