

Episode 14: The Cuts Education research is at a turning point in the United States. The Trump administration is slashing government funding for science and dismantling the Department of Education. We look at what the cuts mean for the science of reading — and the effort to get that science into schools.  EPISODE 14		
Episode Length	Listen to the Episode	Read the Transcript
41:53	https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2025/08/21/sold-a-story-e14-the-cuts	Printable Transcript
Additional Optional Materials	- APM Reports — ‘At what point does it break?’ Nation’s Report Card at risk, researchers say - What Works Clearinghouse — Practice Guides - NPR — The Doctor Who Championed Hand-Washing And Briefly Saved Lives - American Educational Research Association — Feeling Better: A Comparison of Medical Research and Education Research	

Questions and Topics for Discussing “The Cuts”	
Before Listening	- What do you know about the U.S. Department of Education and its role in education research? - What do you know about the Institute of Education Sciences?
While Listening	What surprises you about the federal government’s involvement in education research?
After Listening	<i>From a teaching perspective:</i> Scientists such as Reid Lyon wanted education research to follow the scientific method more closely. As Emily notes in the episode, “standardized measurement, randomized trials, results that could be replicated. More like medical research.” Have you ever been involved in research like that? Would you like to be? Why or why not?

From a parenting perspective:

The episode mentions that in medicine, research often takes decades to change practice; for example, it took doctors years to accept that stomach ulcers are caused by bacteria, not stress.

- Does knowing that medicine also struggles with research implementation alter your perspective on the challenges facing education?

From a community perspective:

Assessment data has played a significant role in education policy decisions. The Trump administration has [cut funding for the National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) (NAEP) — often called “the Nation’s Report Card” — which measures reading achievement across the country.

- What do you think could happen to education reform if there is less reliable data about student outcomes?

The National Institutes of Health became involved in reading because people were unable to read the directions on their medications.

- What are some other reasons why measuring and addressing reading problems are important to public health?

From all perspectives:

Mark Schneider argues that the Institute of Education Sciences “blew the dissemination part” — that is, it failed to effectively disseminate research findings into schools. He suggests that Emily’s journalism did more to change reading instruction than “hundreds of millions of dollars of IES research.”

- Do you agree? Disagree?
- What roles should different groups (researchers, policymakers, journalists, educators) play in helping to get education research into classroom instruction?

Schneider also says:

“The fact of the matter is, there are over 40 states that are now committed to some version of the science of reading.”

- What do you think “being committed to the science of reading” will come to mean in the years to come, given the cuts to reading research?
- What questions do you think still need to be answered by research?

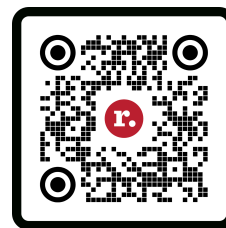
From a student perspective:

Reading researcher Mark Seidenberg says:

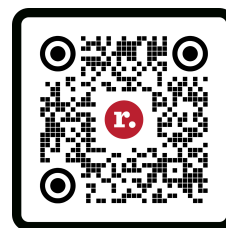
“It is very, very hard to get anyone to actually do the reading assignments. They don’t have to because they can let AI summarize the stuff for them. Well, that has consequences. We need to understand it.”

	Technology is changing how people read and learn, but funding for research on reading is being cut. • What questions do you think scientists should be studying about how your generation reads? • How do you think research cuts might affect the society you'll live in as an adult?
Wrap Up	Emily says this at the end of the episode: “This podcast has helped create a sense of urgency, a sense of ‘enough already, we’ve waited too long for kids to get evidence-based reading instruction.’ But evidence-based instruction is still kind of new in education. The Institute of Education Sciences has existed for just over 20 years. That’s barely a generation. Maybe 20 years isn’t that long when it comes to the complex work of getting research into schools. So yes, there should be urgency about all of this. But maybe things are — or were — just getting started.” • Do you agree? Disagree? Why? • What do you want to remember from this episode? What questions does it leave you with?
Extend	<i>Activity 1</i> Researchers were working to get education research into practice through “practice guides” created by the Institute of Education Sciences. These guides “summarize the most important research and provide tips for teachers based on that research.” They were designed to be “kind of like clinical practice guides that are used in medicine” — a way to translate complex research into practical recommendations for educators. Browse the available practice guides. <i>From a teaching perspective:</i> • Have you used any of these guides? If so, how? • Which ones piqued your interest? <i>From a parenting or community perspective:</i> • Which guides address issues you’ve seen or heard about in your local schools? • How might information from these guides be helpful in advocating for effective instruction in your schools? <i>From a student perspective:</i> • Do any of these guides relate to challenges you’ve experienced in school? • If you could share one of these guides with your teachers, which one would it be and why?  GUIDES

	<i>From all perspectives:</i> • Are there guides you wish existed but don't see listed? Activity 2 Read The Doctor Who Championed Hand-Washing And Briefly Saved Lives. • What similarities do you see between the handwashing story and what you've heard about in <i>Sold a Story</i>? Facts were not enough to convince doctors to change practice, and some of Semmelweis' tactics for spreading the practice of handwashing may have backfired. For example: “Semmelweis was not very tactful. He publicly berated people who disagreed with him and made some influential enemies.” • What does this story make you think about how best to advocate for change in education? Activity 3 Read Carolyn Riehl's article Feeling Better: A Comparison of Medical Research and Education Research. “In the end, although medical research may be better funded, better organized, and considered by some to be more prestigious than education research, the two fields face many similar issues. Even this brief perusal of medical research yields ideas to be borrowed and a comforting realization that the two fields are not always wildly far apart.” • What examples does Riehl provide of delayed adoption of medical research? • How does Riehl's analysis challenge the common assumption that medicine is an ideal model for education to follow?
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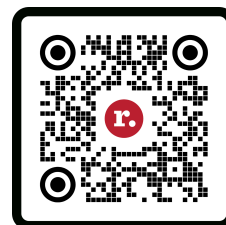


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Concluding questions	
Now that you've listened to <i>Sold a Story</i>	• What's your biggest takeaway from <i>Sold a Story</i>? • Did the later episodes change the way you think about the earlier ones in any way? Read ‘There's a thoughtfulness about reading in the country today.’ • Do you agree that there's a thoughtfulness about reading today? Why or why not? • What are you going to keep thinking about?



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	• What actions might you take based on what you learned from the podcast and your discussion about it?
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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