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## **Sold a Story: How teaching kids to read went so wrong**

### **Transcript**

#### **Episode 6: The Reckoning**

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Previously on *Sold a Story*...

**Corinne Adams:** I just assumed that the children I sent to school would come back to me literate. 'Cause that's what school does, right?

**Marie Clay:** I recorded exactly what children were saying and doing. And this gave me new insights for building the new theory.

**Teacher:** Let's do our triple check and see. Does it make sense?

**Kenni Alden:** That habit of not looking at the words just continued on.

**Missy Purcell:** He didn't know what the words were.

**Gay Su Pinnell:** We cannot count on science and must accept its findings tentatively.

**Dan Tobin:** It became a very lucrative business.

(Music ends)

**School committee meeting:** I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. And to the Republic for which it stands...

Over the past few years, I've been watching a lot of school board meetings online.

**Meeting:** With liberty and justice for all...Approval of the minutes, April 8, 2019...

This is a meeting in Medford, Massachusetts. The school committee approves budget items and attends to some other business. And then a mother gets up to speak.

**Maureen Ronayne:** There is something very wrong here. No one noticed that my son could not read, write or spell.

The mom's name is Maureen Ronayne.

**Ronayne:** We are told to wait and see. He'll catch up on his own. Trust us. And my favorite, "Have you tried reading to him?"

All over the country...

**Man:** Oh, just hit 7:01, we'll call this meeting to order...

Parents are showing up at school board meetings...

**Mother:** I am the parent of a struggling reader.

**Mother:** She struggles significantly with reading and writing.

...on Zoom. In person.

**Great grandmother:** I have a great granddaughter who is 12 years old...

They're fed up.

**Great grandmother:** But she's reading at a second-grade level. What happened with that?

**Mother:** She couldn't read because you're not teaching her.

(Music ends)

Parents and grandparents all over the country are figuring out that their children can't read because they're not being taught *how* to read.

(Music)

**Mother:** We had no idea that the leveled readers he was bringing home promoted guessing based on pictures, context and sentence patterns, which gave the appearance of reading, but really wasn't reading.

Parents want change.

**Mother:** Science has clearly shown us what all kids need to learn to read. Please, stop ignoring the science at the peril of our children. Thank you. (applause)

(Music)

This is the sixth and final episode of *Sold a Story*, a podcast from American Public Media. I'm Emily Hanford.

I've been thinking about what I've been seeing – at school board meetings, on social media, in my email – as an awakening. People have actually said that. That they're waking up.

Not to the fact that lots of kids can't read very well. They knew that.

What they didn't know is that many kids aren't being taught *how* to read.

They also didn't know that influential people have been selling an idea about reading and how children learn to do it that isn't right.

And now they want answers. From Lucy Calkins, and Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell, and their publisher, Heinemann.

In this episode, we're gonna try to get some answers.

(Music ends)

Every month, Lucy Calkins holds office hours over Zoom.

**Moderator:** Welcome everyone, um, we're joined today with Lucy Calkins, as usual...

These office hours are for teachers to ask her questions.

**Teacher:** Hi Lucy!

**Lucy Calkins:** Hi!

This is Lucy Calkins' office hours on November 21, 2019.

A few months before this, we had released an article I wrote. It was about the cueing strategies and how they're part of the Calkins curriculum. This article was getting a lot of attention. On social media and blogs and in the news. And at the office hours, a teacher asks Lucy Calkins about that.

**Teacher:** My question is around all of these articles I'm reading right now that are claiming "research states" that the Units of Study in Reading are not research-based. I disagree with them. But I need language to support the philosophy we believe in.

**Calkins:** So, um. Couple different things here. Um, first of all, you're not alone, um, the people who are teaching in the primary grades are feeling even more pressured by this science of reading. Ah, one of the things I would say is, no one person gets to own the word science.

(Music)

"No one gets to own the term 'the science of reading'" was the title of a statement that Lucy Calkins had posted on her website earlier in the day.

The statement begins, "I've been asked to write a response to the phonics-centric people who are calling themselves the 'science of reading.'"

In the statement, Lucy Calkins refers to a "new hype about phonics." She says this hype is coming from people who are concerned about children with dyslexia. She says dyslexia is being used as a "Trojan horse" to bring back an "emphasis on phonics at the expense of everything else." And in her statement, she defends the cueing strategies.

(Music ends)

Cognitive scientist Mark Seidenberg wrote a scathing response to Calkins' statement. He said that she had, quote, "yet to absorb basic findings that contradict tenets of her approach."

About a month later, a group of reading researchers released a review of her curriculum. They said that it was "unlikely to lead to literacy success for all of America's public schoolchildren."

There was other bad news for Calkins. The Arkansas Department of Education had recently said that if a program uses the cueing theory, it would be disqualified from the state's list of approved programs. And the Colorado Department of Education rejected her Reading Units of Study.

And then, almost exactly a year after Lucy Calkins made that first statement about the science of reading, she made another statement. This one was different.

(Music)

In the new statement, Lucy Calkins says that she and her colleagues have been poring over the work of reading researchers. That they have challenged themselves to “understand more deeply the advances in reading science.” And they have determined that aspects of their approach need “rebalancing.”

In this statement, she recommends that all beginning readers have access to “decodable” books – books that contain words with spelling patterns they’ve been taught. And she moves away from her support for the cueing strategies. She says looking at a picture to figure out a word is “inefficient” and might not allow written words to get into a child’s long-term memory.

(Music ends)

**Calkins:** Nothing that we do is ever perfect. You know, it’s only the best that we know.

This is Lucy Calkins in March of 2021. It’s her Zoom office hours. And in this office hours, she announces that Heinemann will be releasing a new edition of her Units of Study for Teaching Reading. She says she and her team have been rewriting the curriculum to reflect what they have learned about the science of reading.

**Calkins:** We fixed up a few of the places where the science of reading has been, you know, pointing out, we, we like, messed up.

She says there are things she “regrets.” Things she should have done “differently.”

I wanted to ask her about all this. I had written to her in 2019 to try to get an interview. She didn’t respond. But when I emailed her last year, she got back to me right away.

**Emily Hanford:** I’m pressing, pressing record.

We did an interview in May of 2021.

**Hanford:** Lucy, are you there?

I was in my home office. She was at her house.

**Hanford:** Can she hear us? Lucy?

We had some technical issues at first.

**Hanford:** Uh oh.

**Calkins:** Can you hear me?

**Hanford:** Yeah.

Then we got started.

**Hanford:** So we're meeting today because there are some things that you are rethinking about how to teach reading. Can you tell me what led to that? Like, was there a particular moment or experience that you can – can you walk me through that?

**Calkins:** Well, I think the important thing to know is that we are always rethinking. So, it's not a new, it's not a new idea that we're rethinking. And the other thing, there's always new research coming, or just research that's new to us.

She brings up research about how readers map the written form of a word into their memory. There's a technical term for that process that I spared you when I was describing it in Episode 2. It's called "orthographic mapping."

**Calkins:** So I think it's really been learning from you and other science of reading researchers – the importance of orthographic mapping and being convinced as we worked with teachers and in classrooms, you know, being convinced that that was something that we could benefit from changing on that account.

**Hanford:** Is this idea of orthographic mapping something that is new to you – like, when, when did you begin to understand that, what that is?

**Calkins:** Well, there's understand and there's understand and there's understand. You know, I find that you learn and you relearn and you relearn and you relearn. But, but um...it's certainly become more important in our writing and our teaching and our thinking. Yeah, and I, and I am grateful to the science of reading research for making it so prominent because, uh, yeah, I think you called attention to it. And we think that you were right about that.

I wanted to understand what she used to believe about how kids learn to read – back in the late 90s, when she was working on her book about how to teach reading.

**Hanford:** What was your understanding at that point, do you think, of how kids learn to read? Like, how does that happen?

**Calkins:** Yeah, I really can't go back and recall what, what I, what my, was – I mean I could go back and look at the book again and maybe I could dig it back, you know, dig up what I was thinking then, but I can't really recall it.

What I'm trying to figure out is – why didn't she know about the research that she now knows about? Why didn't she know about it sooner?

**Hanford:** So much of this research isn't new. And this idea that readers use context, multiple sources of information to solve words, identify words as they're reading, that was really taken on by researchers back in the 70s and 80s, as an interesting question. Like, is that what we do? And they showed quite definitively that that wasn't the case. I mean, were you sort of aware of that research and how clear that was already by the 90s?

**Calkins:** Um, again, you're asking me to go back and figure out what was in my mind at one point or another. Um, but I would say that, that you have to remember that that research was not – I don't think that there were classrooms that were doing classroom-based methods that were exciting, and poignant and beautiful, and, you know, getting kids on fire as readers and writers, that were using that that train of thinking. You know, it was part of an entire gestalt that was different than ours.

**Hanford:** Hmm.

**Calkins:** So, and I'm not trying to say if I'm right or not, but I think that was my impression.

I think this impression is one reason that instruction aligned with scientific evidence has had a tough time gaining traction in schools. The impression is that it's boring. But learning how to read isn't boring for little kids.

(Music)

Remember Kah'Marii?

**Kah'Marii:** Smiling! Smiling.

And Zoe?

**Zoe** (whispering): It was like the best. Thing. Ever.

Good reading instruction isn't boring for children. Maybe adults find parts of it boring. But this shouldn't be about what adults want. It should be about what kids need.

And there's no reason that reading instruction aligned with scientific evidence can't be exciting and beautiful. I think Lucy Calkins sees it that way now too. Because instruction aligned with the science of reading is what she says she's now selling.

She's hoping that school districts will stick with her and buy her revised curriculum. Districts that were already using her materials can get it for a discount.

But not everyone's buying.

For example, Palo Alto, California. The district decided last year to look for a new reading curriculum to replace Calkins'. I asked Todd Collins, the school board member there, if he'd consider her revised edition. He said no.

**Todd Collins:** There's a trust issue there. You'd have to decide you could trust her again. Um, that's hard.

(Music ends)

Over the past few years, as Lucy Calkins was making statements about the science of reading and rewriting her curriculum, Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell were keeping pretty quiet. Until last year, November 2021. When they broke their silence in a series of recorded Q and A's posted to their website.

**Interviewer:** Why have you chosen not to participate in the latest debate about how to teach children how to read?

**Irene Fountas:** Gay and I have lived through polarization before, and we simply don't see it as being productive.

This is Irene Fountas.

**Fountas:** We do feel now it's the right time to clarify some mischaracterizations of our work in support of teachers, some of whom are under attack.

In this series of Q and A's, Fountas and Pinnell reiterate their commitment to Marie Clay.



**Gay Su Pinnell:** Marie Clay has said...

This is Gay Su Pinnell.

**Pinnell:** ...if a child has not learned, then we have not yet discovered the way to teach him.

But they double down on the approach they've been promoting for decades. And reiterate their commitment to Clay's cueing theory.

Fountas: Multiple sources of information are combined in a complex and orchestrated way. If a reader says pony for horse, because of information from the pictures, that tells the teacher that the reader is using meaning information from the pictures. His response is partially correct, but the teacher needs to guide him to stop and work for accuracy.

Fountas says that asking a child to just sound out a word is simplistic and analogous to telling the child not to think.

(Music)

**Interviewer:** What advice do you have for teachers who feel caught in the crossfire while this literacy debate intensifies?

**Pinnell:** We would encourage you to remain steadfast to your vision and values...

This is Pinnell again.

**Pinnell:** ...and keep doing what works for your children, the children you teach, and rely on observable reading and writing behaviors to guide your moment-to-moment teaching.

**Seidenberg:** They really illustrate they still don't get it.

This is Mark Seidenberg. The cognitive scientist at the University of Wisconsin. I called him to get his reaction to Fountas and Pinnell's series.

**Seidenberg:** They clarified for me that they just haven't really benefited much from the ongoing discussion about what are the best ways to teach kids to read so that the most kids succeed. I think they're, they're just trying to hold the line and um, you know, hoping that this stuff will blow over.

Which brings us to their publisher, Heinemann.

(Music ends)

One of their star authors, Lucy Calkins, has moved away from the cueing theory.

Their other star authors, Fountas and Pinnell, have not. Where does Heinemann stand in all this?

**Hanford:** Hi Vicki.

**Vicki Boyd:** Hi, Emily, very nice to meet you.

I talked to Vicki Boyd. She was the executive vice president and general manager of Heinemann when we did an interview last April. She'd been with the company since the early 2000s.

I pointed out to Vicki that Fountas and Pinnell are sticking with the cueing theory. And Lucy Calkins is not.

**Hanford:** Both of those things can't be right. Where does Heinemann stand on that?

**Boyd:** Yeah, you know, thank you for that question. Um, you know, our, uh – our authors disagree. And, uh, and we think that's good. We think debate, uh, is a good thing.

But there's lots of evidence against the cueing theory. And there's been lots of evidence since the '90s.

(Music)

**Hanford:** And now it's 2022. And you just said that there's a difference of opinion among your authors. But I think this is bigger than a difference of opinion. Um, Fountas and Pinnell are holding fast to something that has been shown, uh, decades ago, to not be a good idea.

**Boyd:** Yeah, I'm not sure that I agree that they're holding fast to something that has been, uh, disproven. These authors are leaders in the field. We rely on their many years of research and interpretation of that research into real classrooms. Research backs many approaches and teachers need a range of options.

(Music ends)

I tell her that we have interviewed reading scientists and parents and teachers who say that the cueing strategies are actually harming some kids.

**Hanford:** What's your response to people who say that Heinemann products that still have those strategies in them are harming children?

**Boyd:** Yeah, you know, that's, that as you might imagine is, um, it's disturbing. And it, it gives us pause. It, uh, inspires a lot of reflection. It has us, uh, you know, interrogating our own ideas and the work that that we're doing in the world. We never stop learning. We never stop listening to the critics. And we never stop considering any research that can help teachers help students move forward... You know, you've, uh, really helped to elevate conversation around something that's called the science of reading, and, you know, I'm grateful for that. It's, um, put us a bit in a troubling place because some of the talk about what our authors do and about what Heinemann is about has not rung true to me and to a lot of the folks who know Heinemann.

About three months after our interview, Vicki Boyd left Heinemann.

(Music)

The company has a new president. I haven't talked to him. After he took over this summer, he said in a blog post that the company would be focusing on "clarifying and formalizing" its curriculum development practices. And last month – just before the first episode of this podcast – he said that Heinemann would be working with Fountas and Pinnell to increase the emphasis on foundational skills and decoding in their materials.

I emailed a spokesperson and asked what would be changing about the curriculum review process at Heinemann. And I asked if Fountas and Pinnell would be dropping the cueing strategies. I didn't get a response.

I've told you before that based on the reporting I've done, I don't think Lucy Calkins knew there was anything wrong with the cueing theory. I think she made that clear in our interview. But I think she should have known. All the evidence was there. And she didn't know.

And Fountas and Pinnell – I think they still believe in cueing. I think they made that clear in those Q and A's I played for you.

And I think they believe in cueing because they have a particular idea about reading and how it works. An idea that I watched in action four years ago at a Reading Recovery conference.

It kind of blew my mind, and I want to tell you about it.

(Music)

After a break.

**\*\* BREAK \*\***

(Music)

**Hanford:** testing 1-2-3.

I think the idea for this podcast started here.

**Patricia Scharer:** We are at the national Reading Recovery and classroom literacy conference held in Columbus, Ohio every year...

This is Patricia Scharer. She was a Reading Recovery teacher and a professor at Ohio State. I met her in 2018 at this Reading Recovery conference. I'd recently made an audio documentary about kids with dyslexia. And it was parents of kids with dyslexia who told me about Marie Clay's Reading Recovery program. Many of their kids had been in Reading Recovery. And the parents I was talking to didn't think the program worked. In fact, some parents told me they thought Reading Recovery made things worse for their kids.

So I'm here in Columbus in 2018 to learn more about the Reading Recovery program. I'm in the conference exhibit hall with Patricia Scharer.

**Scharer:** And, you see, we want our children to be flooded with text. We send texts home...

She's showing me the kinds of books that Reading Recovery teachers use in their lessons. This was my first introduction to those little leveled books.

**Scharer:** "This insect can jump. This insect can climb." Now, they can read this because you've introduced the pattern to them. And they can use the picture to try and figure it out.

This was the only thing at the conference I was allowed to record.

But I did go to a bunch of the conference sessions and I took notes.

(Music)

Most of the sessions I went to focused on trying to figure out what cues kids were neglecting when they were reading. Presenters played videos of children trying to read. And I kept waiting for someone to say – they’re neglecting the letters. They’re not sounding out the words. But that didn’t happen. In one of the sessions, a presenter said: “Research shows young readers do not sound out words letter by letter.”

And I thought that was strange because I had been reading a lot of research that said the opposite. It said that sounding out written words is a critical part of the process of becoming a good reader.

(Music ends)

The strangest part of the conference for me was the Sunday morning keynote. I got a recording of it later.

**Mary Fried:** So here we are in 2018, and Reading Recovery’s been going strong for 34 years.

The keynote speaker is Mary Fried. She was a Reading Recovery teacher trainer who was taught how to do Reading Recovery by Marie Clay herself, in Ohio in the 1980s. In the keynote, Mary Fried does a little reading lesson.

**Fried:** Today you’re going to be a beginning reader...

There’s a projector set up so the audience can see the pages of the book they’re going to try to read. The book is about a puppy. The audience can see his picture. But the words are unfamiliar to them – because the book is not written in English.

**Fried:** This is his name, Plet.

She points to the puppy’s name, Plet. She then goes through the entire book, previewing the story, pointing to some of the words and saying what they mean. This is before the audience tries to read the book themselves. Just like in a Reading Recovery lesson.

**Fried:** So now it’s your turn, and you get to read the whole book...

She turns back to the first page, and the audience starts...reading.

(Audience reading)

This is where things get weird.

(Music)

You can't hear the audience very well, but they're speaking English. Even though they are trying to read a book that is written in another language.

**Fried:** Very good. You almost got it. That word looks like "hop."

Mary Fried stops the audience because she says they made an error. There's a picture of Plet the puppy and one of his friends, an alligator named Tom. They're on a trampoline. And there's this sentence:

**Man reading:** "Tom og Plet hopper på trampolinen."

The audience read that sentence as: "Tom and Plet hopped on the trampoline." But Mary Fried tells them that wasn't right.

**Fried:** Let's try that again. "Tom..."

**Audience:** "Tom and Plet jumped on the trampoline."

The audience says: "Tom and Plet jumped on the trampoline."

**Fried:** You did it! (man laughs)

But actually, they didn't.

(Music ends)

It turns out the book is written in Danish. And the sentence doesn't say, "Tom and Plet jumped on the trampoline." It says:

**Man reading:** "Tom og Plet hopper på trampolinen."

Even if you *translate* the sentence, it doesn't say "Tom and Plet jumped on the trampoline."

I asked my brother-in-law, who speaks Danish. He's the guy you heard reading the sentence. And he told me it says, "Tom and Plet ARE JUMPING on the trampoline."

It's a small difference.

The audience still got the meaning of the story.

But they were not reading.

**Fried:** Was it fun to read?

Mary Fried tells them they *were* reading.

**Fried:** And your very first lesson in reading in Danish you made accelerated progress. So that's very good. (audience laughs)

At this moment, I realize something.

I realize that the people in this room have bought into a definition of reading that isn't really reading. They've bought the idea that reading is making meaning from a story using whatever strategies you can think of. You can look at the pictures, you can look at parts of the words, you can think about what would make sense.

They've bought into the cueing idea. The idea that a child can read a book without being able to read the words.

(Music)

And here's why I think they bought that idea.

They want kids to be able to make meaning from a story. Everybody wants that. That's the goal. To understand what you read.

The question is: how does a little kid get there?

And the answer is: they have to learn how to read the words. They have to get good at that.

But learning how to read words is hard for a lot of kids. They need explicit instruction. Repetition and practice. Before they can curl up in a cozy nook and read a book on their own.

And I think people with good intentions wanted to get kids curled up with books in cozy nooks as fast as they could. They wanted to get kids to the good part.

And they ended up teaching them shortcuts that don't get a lot of kids to where they need to go.

And now, even in many schools where kids *are* getting some phonics instruction, they are also being taught the cueing system.

Kids are being taught two different ways to read. And one of those ways isn't really reading.

(Music ends)

**Christine Cronin:** I am sorry.

This is Christine Cronin.

**Cronin:** It is very painful. It is embarrassing.

Christine Cronin was the teacher in Boston who wanted her classroom to look like what she saw in books by Fountas and Pinnell and Lucy Calkins. And what she just said – about being sorry and embarrassed and all of this being really painful – it's what I've been hearing from a lot of teachers.

**Cronin:** It's hard to recognize that you believed in something so much that now the research is like blowing out of the water. It makes you feel gullible. It makes you feel sort of played in a way.

**Sarah Gannon:** No one wants to be told that what they're doing is wrong. Or that you've harmed kids. Like, that's a really...it's terrible to feel.

This is Sarah Gannon. She's a teacher you met in Episode 3. She trusted Fountas and Pinnell and Lucy Calkins

**Gannon:** I trusted that they're experts. I trusted that this is the way you teach reading.

She believed in the cueing and the leveled books. The first time she encountered criticism of that approach was in 2019, after one of my articles came out.

**Gannon:** Teacher friends were like, "Did you read this Emily Hanford? And I was like, "I read it." And we were like, "What is she talking about?"

She was outraged. Because a journalist was questioning the way she taught reading.

And then, her daughter, Maeve.



(Music)

Maeve wasn't learning how to read. Sarah tried to teach her. But it wasn't working. So Sarah went looking for answers. And discovered the research.

**Gannon:** I changed because I had to. There was no choice. I couldn't ignore it. I couldn't keep doing what I was doing with Maeve.

The same thing happened to Carrie Chee. She was one of the Lucy Calkins fans you met in an earlier episode. The one who didn't like George Bush.

One day, when Carrie's daughter was in elementary school, she came to her mother and she said, "I have something to tell you."

**Carrie Chee:** My child looked at me and she was really nervous and anxious, and she just says, "I can't read."

The school hadn't said there was a problem. Carrie hadn't noticed a problem either. But her daughter knew.

**Chee:** She knew. They know. You know, the kids know first. The parents know second. The teacher chimes in third. And then, you know, the hunt is on for help.

Some kids try to keep it a secret when they're struggling. They can look like they're reading for a while. But as the words get longer and the pictures go away, it all kind of falls apart.

(Music ends)

Carrie Chee was a 7th grade English teacher before she had her daughter. She says she always had struggling readers in her class. A lot of them. And the only thing she knew to do was to try to find them books about things they were interested in.

**Chee:** And I just kept saying, "Well keep trying." And then when they couldn't, I just thought they didn't want to try. And what I'm haunted by is, when it wasn't working, I blamed it on children.

Carrie Chee isn't sure she would have learned anything about the science of reading if it weren't for her experience with her own child. Sarah Gannon too. If everything had been fine with her daughter, she thinks she might still be dismissing all of this science of reading stuff.

**Gannon:** I don't know if I could be convinced and that's what worries me. You know, I have good friends who are very smart, incredibly talented educators who, it's just like, hold fast to old beliefs. And I think, I, honestly, I think I would be one of them. You know. But I guess you have to say, like, it's OK to be wrong. Like, I was wrong.

Sarah quit her job. She was a reading specialist in Winchester, Massachusetts, a wealthy suburb outside Boston. She quit because her district is still using Lucy Calkins and Fountas and Pinnell. And she says she can't teach that way anymore.

(Music)

But there are school districts making changes. For example...

Fort Worth, Texas is getting rid of the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. The chief academic officer told us: "We got our fleet of trucks and picked up the materials and took them out of there."

In New York City, a Lucy Calkins' stronghold, the new schools chancellor said last year that he wants to change how children are taught to read. He says the current approach is "fundamentally wrong."

And remember Charlie and his mom Corinne in Rhode Island? The school Charlie went to was using the Lucy Calkins curriculum. But the school district recently decided to adopt a different reading program. There's a new law in Rhode Island that requires most districts to choose a program from a state-approved list. The Calkins reading curriculum is not on that list.

We found that since 2019, at least 26 states have passed laws that are intended to get schools to follow the research or help teachers learn about the science of reading.

And the very first school district in the United States to use Marie Clay's Reading Recovery program has gotten rid of it. The executive director of teaching and learning for the Columbus, Ohio public schools told me last spring that the district's decision to drop Reading Recovery is part of a larger effort to bring "the science of reading" to the city's schools.

(Music ends)

I wanted to talk about this with someone from the organization that advocates for Reading Recovery in the United States. And I wanted to know whether they'd changed anything about

how they teach kids to read since I was at their conference in 2018. They wouldn't give me an interview.

(Music)

Since we began releasing this podcast last month, my inbox and social media feeds have been flooded.

I'm hearing from people who are saying – I know, I know. This cueing stuff. I've been trying to tell people about it for years.

And I'm hearing from teachers who are saying – I didn't know. I feel terrible. I'm gonna do better.

And I'm hearing from a lot of parents. They're saying, wow, this is me. This is my kid. This is our story.

I'm hearing from critics, too. People who are saying I've gotten it wrong. I've misunderstood Marie Clay. I'm attacking teachers. I'm creating controversy.

And I'm hearing from another group of people: children.

Kids are listening to this podcast. I'm not sure I was really expecting that.

Last week, I got this from the mother of a boy who's in 4th grade. She wrote:

Today when I dropped him off for basketball and we were mid Episode One, he said, "Turn it off and don't listen again until I get back in the car."

I love that kids are listening to this. This is about kids. It's about doing what's right for them.

**Chee:** This has been too long. It's not working. You know, don't dig in. It's not working.

This is Carrie Chee again. The teacher whose own daughter said, "I can't read."

**Chee:** You know, there's kids sinking everywhere. And they're looking for help. And, it's, you know, it's on us.

(Music ends)

This is where we originally planned for *Sold a Story* to end. But we have more, because a lot has happened in response to the podcast – much more than we ever imagined. So we are continuing to report on this story. We have more episodes, and they are available in this feed right now.

(Music)

Now it's time for the credits. And I'm going to get some help...from some kids you've met.

Charlie and Zoe.

**Charlie:** *Sold a Story* is a podcast from American Public Media. It's reported and produced by Emily Hanford and Christopher Peak.

**Zoe:** The editor is Catherine Winter. Addy Kruse.

**Lee Gaul:** Andy

**Zoe:** Andy.

**Charlie:** Andy Kruse and Dave Mann are the digital editors.

**Zoe:** Reporting and production help from Will Callan, Chole Marine.

**Charlie:** Marie Rivera.

**Zoe:** And Angela Capato. Caputo!

**Zoe:** Fact checking by Betsy Towner

**Charlie:** Betsy Towner Levine.

**Zoe:** Mixing and sound design are by Chris Julian.

**Gaul:** Julin.

**Zoe:** Julin.

**Gaul:** Julin, say Julin.

**Zoe:** Julin! and Emily Havik?

**Gaul:** Haavik.

**Zoe:** Haavik.

**Charlie:** With original music by Chris Julian.

**Zoe:** The theme music is by Jim Bergen-bergen... (laughter)

**Hanford:** You put a lot of extra letters in there.

**Gaul:** This is Jim Brunberg and Ben Landsverk

**Charlie:** ...of Wonderly. The final master of this episode was by Derek Ramsey.

**Zoe:** Derek Ramirez.

**Gaul:** Ramirez.

**Zoe:** Ramirez.

This podcast wouldn't have been possible without support from Chris Worthington.

**Zoe:** Some great interns helped with this project. Katelyn Vo. Vue

**Charlie:** And Farrah Minna. Minna

**Hanford:** Yup.  
**Charlie:** and Alondra Serra.  
**Hanford:** Sierra.  
**Charlie:** Sierra.  
**Hanford:** Excellent.

Thank you to the people who listened to early versions of episodes and provided valuable feedback: Anna Canny, Molly Bloom, Maja Beckstrom, Camila Kerwin and Margaret Goldberg. Jill Barshay provided editing help. Mark Anfinson provided legal advice.

We have lots of other people to thank.

**Charlie:** Lauren Humpert  
**Zoe:** Lauren Humpert and Kristine Hutchens.  
**Charlie:** This is a lot of names.  
**Hanford:** I know.  
**Charlie:** Holly Korbey, Grace Stockton  
**Hanford:** Gracie, Gracie.  
**Charlie:** Gracie. Derrick Stevens, Sarah Sparks, Sarah White ...  
**Hanford:** This is hard, let's try this one. Sarah Whites-Koditschek.  
**Charlie:** Sarah Whites-Koditschek, Marvi  
**Hanford:** Marvi  
**Zoe:** Marvi Hagopian  
**Hanford:** Excellent, yes! Marvi Hagopian.  
**Zoe:** Joseph Wycoff.  
**Hanford:** Yes, Joseph Wycoff.  
**Zoe:** Melanie Esplin  
**Gaul:** Look at it.  
**Hanford:** Melanie, Melanie  
**Zoe:** Melanie  
**Emily:** Esplin  
**Charlie:** Cooper Marsden  
**Hanford:** Yup  
**Charlie:** Marsden  
**Hanford:** Yes!  
**Zoe:** Lyn Stone  
**Hanford:** Oh, this is one of the hardest ones. David.  
**Charlie:** Yeah, David  
**Hanford:** I'm going to help you with this one. David Strathairn.  
**Charlie:** David Strathairn.

**Zoe:** Clark Young and Jeremy Android.

**Hanford:** Try that again.

**Zoe:** And Jeremy, Jeremy Arnold

**Charlie:** We have a website where you can find transcripts of all the episodes.

It's SoldaStory.org. There's a recommended reading list there. As well as links to our previous articles and documentaries about reading. That's SoldaStory.org.

**Charlie:** Support for this podcast comes from the Hollyhock Foundation, the Oak Foundation, and Wendy and Stephen Gal.

**Hanford:** Wendy and Stephen Gaal.

**Charlie:** Wendy and Stephen Gaal.

**Hanford:** Really good!

**Charlie:** That's it.

**Hanford:** That's it!