

Episode 1: The Problem

Corinne Adams watches her son's lessons during Zoom school and discovers a dismayingly truth: He can't read. Little Charlie isn't the only one. Sixty-five percent of fourth graders in the United States are not proficient readers. Kids need to learn specific skills to become good readers, and in many schools, those skills are not being taught.



EPISODE 1

Episode Length	Link to Episode	Link to Transcript
32:47	https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2022/10/20/sold-a-story-e1-the-problem	Printable Transcript
Additional Optional Materials	An excerpt of the lesson Charlie and his classmates watched during Zoom school: Readers Think about What Kind of Word Would Fit, from Units of Study for Teaching Reading Parents are Watching Like Never Before	

Questions and Topics for Discussing “The Problem”

Before Listening	- What thoughts come to mind as you read the episode description? - What percentage of students in your school district are not proficient readers?
While Listening	What causes the parents in this episode to question the instruction their children are getting in school?
After Listening	<i>From a teaching perspective:</i> Corinne didn't tell the school about her concerns with Charlie's reading instruction: “She drafted an email about all this to the principal of her son's school. But she didn't end up sending it because ... she likes the school, she likes the teachers. She doesn't want to be the problem parent telling them they're doing something wrong.” - Have parents come to you with concerns about reading instruction? How have you responded to their concerns? - Do you know if your students have received help with reading outside of school? The strategies you hear children being taught in this episode are grounded in a theory of reading that will be explored throughout the podcast. In this episode we hear: Teacher: “Let's do our triple check and see. Does it make sense? Does it sound right? How about the last part of our triple check? Does it look right? Let's uncover the word and see if it looks

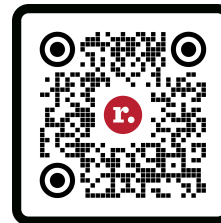
	right.” • Are these strategies familiar to you? Are you aware of the theory they are based on? Corrine says: “Public school should be like this sacred trust. I’m going to give you my child, and you’re gonna teach him how to read.” • As a teacher, there are many things you are expected to do. Where does teaching reading fit into your school’s list of priorities? <i>From a parenting perspective:</i> Lee Gaul says if he hadn’t been watching the instruction on Zoom, he and his wife probably would have thought that their daughter, Zoe, had a reading disability. • Have you had concerns about your child’s reading? ○ Did you think that their difficulties might be connected to the way they were taught? Why or why not? ○ Did you tell anyone at the school about your concerns? How did that go? <i>From a community perspective:</i> When Lee approached other parents at Zoe’s school with his concerns about the reading instruction, many of them responded with disbelief. Lee says: “It was almost like saying, ‘I saw aliens. I saw the ship, and you have to believe me.’ Right? Like, people were like, ‘Oh, yeah, OK.’” • Why do you think people responded this way? Near the end of the episode, Corinne says: “I think a lot of people just expect that some kids will never read.” • Do you think this is true? Why? <i>From a student perspective:</i> • Did Charlie and Zoe’s reading instruction sound familiar to you? • How were you taught to read? Zoe’s dad got her a “decodable” book and she says reading it was “hard.” She also says that it was “the best thing ever.” • Do you remember when you first learned how to read? How did it feel?
Wrap Up	• What is “The Problem” detailed in this episode?
Extend	Activity 1

Kenni Alden describes her son's reading:

"He doesn't look at all the letters in words. He doesn't look at all the words in sentences. And reading is miserable for him. He omits words. He adds words. He'll substitute a word that makes sense in the context, that has a few of the same letters as the actual word, and just cruise right on. ... He got further and further behind as a reader and writer."

[Read an excerpt from the materials](#) that go with the lesson Charlie and his classmates [watched](#) during Zoom school.

- How are students being taught to read the words in that lesson?
- How might this result in a child reading the way that Kenni's son does?



EXCERPT



VIDEO

Activity 2

Read this [article](#) by the CEO of the Baltimore City Public Schools, Sonja Santelises. She writes:

"COVID-19 has blown the doors off our schools and the walls off our classrooms. It has Zoomed educators into homes and parents into classrooms, providing the transparency that parents have long deserved. Watching their children engage in remote learning, Zooming from one class to the next, parents note the differences across classrooms — differences we in education have long noted but have too often sought to minimize when trying to allay parents' concerns. That worrisome thing parents couldn't quite put their finger on — they can see it now ... That simple, 'trust us' is not going to fly anymore."

- How would you describe your trust in schools? Has anything changed? Why?



ARTICLE

Activity 3

Develop a survey to find out if, how and why families in your school or district are providing additional reading instruction outside of school. Consider how you can use what you find to inform discussions about how reading is taught in classrooms.

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

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