

Special Collection of *Reading Research Quarterly*: The Politics of the Science of Reading (SOR)

Full manuscripts due: March 2, 2026

The concept of the Science of Reading (SOR) has become increasingly politicized, with its advocates often using the term to develop, promote, and/or justify resultant policy mandates, curriculum reform, research foci, and instructional practices. This special collection, *The Politics of the Science of Reading*, calls for a critical inquiry into the conceptions of SOR and how specific interpretations might have a unifying, diversifying, marginalizing, and/or polarizing impact on our approaches to literacy development. This special collection is intended to follow and build on the research that takes a critical perspective on reading (e.g., the *Science of Reading and Equity* special collection, led by Courtney Hattan and Natalia Kucirkova, Spring 2026) and is framed around an introductory article that systematically reviews the past eight years of publications on reading and reading instruction.

This focus on the politics of SOR marks a call for a fourth *Reading Research Quarterly* special collection to critically examine how SOR shapes educational mandates, practices, and politics. Given the dual role of SOR as both a construct and a rhetorical tool, the special collection call emphasizes the need for ongoing critical inquiry into the politicization of SOR and its impact on literacy education, advocating for inclusive and evidence-informed approaches to reading instruction.

In *An anatomy of the SOR: A systematic review of the conceptualizations and instrumental uses of the Science of Reading*, written for the special collection on the Politics of SOR collection, authors Cheryl McLean, Tiffany Gallagher, & Courtney Hattan contend that the various understandings of and approaches to SOR are influenced by and influence internal and external forces, which individually and collectively can have a tangible impact and far-reaching consequences, especially in terms of our understanding of and approaches to how children learn to read and are taught to read. Whether the influence lies in funding allocations, curricular mandates, professional development opportunities, research directions, instructional approaches, performance measures, etc., these realities do in fact alter how researchers, educators, policymakers/legislators, curriculum designers, and the media eventually respond to, interpret, apply, and promote SOR.

Consequently, given its social and educational currency, SOR has become increasingly politicized, with its advocates often using it to develop, promote, and/or justify resultant policy mandates, curriculum reform, research foci/directions, publication opportunities, and instructional practices. It is against this backdrop that we ask: *How is the science of reading (SOR) shaping policies, practices, research, mandates, and politics?* We recognize that there is a greater need than ever for critical inquiry into the conceptions of SOR and of how specific interpretations of SOR might have a unifying, diversifying, marginalizing, and/or polarizing impact on our views of and approaches to children's literacy development.

In this special collection, we invite authors to examine the politics of reading research and educational policy, as well as how they inform practice and research on practice. We ask: *Who or what is informing how we think about reading and reading instruction? How are these forces shaping or influencing how (a) researchers approach or interpret reading research; (b) educators implement reading instruction in schools; and (c) educational laws, mandates, and curricula are developed and applied?*

We, therefore, invite authors to explicitly consider how the various conceptions of SOR (and their own) influence the framing of educational policy, mandates, and classroom practices around the teaching of reading, as well as research on reading in and across schools, districts, states, and countries. In doing

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so, we aim to bring a critical lens to the various aspects of reading research by uncovering the perspectives and agendas behind them, as well as how these are manifested in diverse educational contexts.

We invite submissions of manuscripts for empirical studies and literature reviews by **March 2, 2026**.

When **submitting your manuscript**, please select Article as your article type, and select this special issue in the Additional Information section.

Expected Timeline:

- **Deadline for Full Manuscript Submission:** March 2, 2026
- **Peer Review Round 1:** March 3–April 27, 2026
- **Decision to Authors:** May 11, 2026
- **Revision Period:** May 12–June 14, 2026
- **Resubmission Due:** June 15, 2026
- **Editorial Review of Resubmission:** June 16–June 23, 2026
- **Peer Review Round 2:** June 24–August 5, 2026
- **Decision to Authors:** August 7, 2026
- **Final Manuscript Submission:** August 25, 2026
- **Copyediting/Proofing period:** August 26–September 16, 2026
- **Publication:** October 2026

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