

Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup> 2022 4:00pm – 5:00pm EST

## The Ontario Human Rights Commission 'Right to Read' Report: An Important but Flawed Call to Action

Presenter: Dr. James Cummins (University of Toronto, Canada)



The presentation will discuss the Ontario Human Rights Commission *Right to Read* report, published in late February 2022, which highlighted the fact that children who experience dyslexia are not being adequately supported in Ontario schools. The report's call for the establishment of a more effective identification and intervention infrastructure within the school system is timely and persuasive. Unfortunately, the *Right to Read* report advances two unsubstantiated claims to explain the reading difficulties some children experience in the early grades. Specifically, it argues that Ontario schools are failing to teach reading skills effectively for all students, not just those with specific reading disabilities. Second, it attributes this general failure to the fact that most Ontario schools implement a balanced approach to reading instruction, which the report claims, pays insufficient attention to teaching sound/letter correspondences in a systematic, explicit, and intensive way. Neither of these claims is supported by the scientific data. Ontario students are consistently among the top performers in cross-Canada and international comparisons of reading performance. Furthermore, the empirical research is fully consistent with the implementation of a balanced or contextualized approach to literacy instruction that integrates the teaching of sound/symbol relationships with a more general commitment to immerse children into a literacy-rich instructional environment.

---

### About the Presenter:

Jim Cummins is a Professor Emeritus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. His research focuses on literacy development in educational contexts characterized by linguistic and socioeconomic diversity. In numerous articles and books, he has explored the nature of language proficiency and its relationship to literacy development, with particular emphasis on the intersections of societal power relations, teacher-student identity negotiation, and literacy attainment. His most recent book *Rethinking the Education of Multilingual Learners: A Critical Analysis of Theoretical Concepts* (Multilingual Matters) was published in fall 2021. He is the recipient of the International Reading Association's 1979 Albert J. Harris award and has received honorary doctorates from five universities in North America and Europe in recognition of his contributions to issues of educational equity and multilingual education.