



How to Teach a Child to Read

According to a recent task force chaired by Joel Klein, former head of New York City public schools, and Condoleezza Rice, former U.S. Secretary of State, and sponsored by the influential Council on Foreign Relations, "Education failure puts the United States' future economic prosperity, global position, and physical safety at risk."



According to the report, we spend more money on education than virtually any other developed nation, but our students have ranked 14th in reading, 25th in math, and 17th in science in the International Student Assessment tests. But what the task force doesn't provide is an answer to the question of why our schools do so poorly. Why? Because no one in the establishment elite dares to criticize the Progressives. Their leader, John Dewey, is considered a saint, and has an army of dedicated disciples throughout the education system, from kindergartens to colleges of education in our most prestigious universities. But to criticize Dewey or even call him a Socialist would label you a right-winger, a conservative, an anti-communist.

Thus, no liberal who actually would like to reform the public schools dares criticize the Progressive curriculum. The curriculum is sacrosanct. They may believe that better teachers in the public schools and charter schools free of union control are the answer. However, the best teachers in the world teaching the worst curriculum in the world is not a solution. It's a travesty.

The simple truth is that the only way to fight the system is to leave it, and when you do, you become a maverick, a dissenter. Curiously, the word maverick comes from a Texas rancher by the name of Samuel Maverick whose unbranded cattle ran at large. To be branded is the opposite of maverick. In other words, those of us who leave the system refuse to become the branded cattle of the Progressive overlords. And our numbers are growing.

But I knew nothing about what was going on in the public schools until sometime in 1960 when a conservative lawyer friend of mine, Watson Washburn, came to my office at Grosset and Dunlap, where I was editor of the Universal Library, and asked me to become a member of the National Advisory Council of the Reading Reform Foundation, which he had just formed. I asked him what was the purpose of the foundation, and he told me that it was to get phonics back in the schools. I was quite



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surprised. When did they take phonics out of the schools, I asked, and how could they possibly teach reading without it? He then advised me to read Rudolf Flesch's book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, which I did.

Flesch, born in Vienna, Austria, in 1911, came to the United States in 1938 when the takeover of Austria by the Nazis became imminent. He enrolled in Columbia University as a graduate student and got a Ph.D. in English. He became aware of the American reading problem when he began tutoring children who were having a great deal of trouble learning to read. Flesch discovered that these problems were being caused by the way these children were being taught to read in school. They were being taught by the look-say or sight method, which had replaced the traditional alphabetic-phonics method. His book, published in 1955, exposed the professors responsible for imposing this irrational form of educational malpractice on all the schools of America. His book was trashed by the Progressives, but the public knew for the first time the cause of this epidemic of dyslexia that was afflicting their children. Flesch urged the schools to return to phonics, but the professors resisted and so we still have the problem today, more than a half-century later.

In 1972, 18 years after the publication of *Why Johnny Can't Read*, Johnny still couldn't read. Apparently, the professors had circled the wagons and went on dumbing down Americans, with no intention of ending their socialist agenda. So I decided to find out who had invented the sight method and why the schools were still using it. My book *The New Illiterates* was published in 1973. Through my research, I discovered that the sight or look-say method had been invented by the Rev. Thomas H. Gallaudet (1787-1851), director of the Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford, Connecticut. Since the deaf could not hear the sounds of the language, he taught them to read by juxtaposing a picture with the word. And since the deaf could learn a modest reading vocabulary by this method, he thought that it could be used to teach hearing children to read.

In 1837, Gallaudet's primer, the first sight primer written for hearing children, was adopted by the primary schools of Boston and proved to be a disaster. The schools went back to alphabetic phonics. So it was already known back then, that the sight method did not work with hearing children. And probably that's why the Progressives adopted it in the 20th century, because they knew it would dumb down the population.

It was one thing to criticize the way reading was being taught in the schools, but what could parents do if they wanted to teach their children to read at home in the proper phonetic manner? So I decided to add a final chapter to the book: *How to Teach Your Child to Read at Home: A Primer*. The *Primer* was comprised of 101 lessons that any parent could use to teach their child to read. I had studied the English alphabetic system, and devised a way of teaching it in a manner that any parent could easily use. The program was then published in a subsequent book, *How to Tutor*, in which I taught parents how to teach the three R's in the traditional manner. Finally, after I had tested the program by tutoring students with reading problems, I was able to get the program published in 1983 as *Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers*. At that time there was practically nothing available for parents who wanted to teach their children to read at home, and so it became a favorite of homeschoolers. Today, almost 30 years later, despite much competition, it is still selling.

Over the years I have received many testimonials from parents praising the program for its effectiveness. In fact, two years ago I received an eight-page letter from a high-school teacher in Florida who teaches potential dropouts. The program, he said, produces reading "miracles." He has had incredible success with students who were considered uneducable — which means that there exists in



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America a reading program that can restore high literacy to this nation. But the lock the Progressives have on the public schools will never permit that program to be used.

That Americans tolerate such a situation is understandable since they've been lied to by the educators for years and cannot believe that professional educators have built their Progressive empire on a stack of lies. Even though we know that school-induced dyslexia is a reality, no one in the establishment will dare admit it.

Meanwhile, the American people have been led to believe that 30 percent of our children are incapable of learning to read because of something that's wrong with them. The Progressives not only control the schools, they also control the mainstream media. None of my 10 books that expose this Progressive fraud are ever referred to or mentioned in academic journals. None of the establishment approved books on literacy ever admit that I exist. In other words, we have censorship in this country as effective as anything you will find in a dictatorship.

Being illiterate, dyslexic, or reading disabled in America is no fun. It ruins lives, stunts intellectual growth, deprives individuals of careers they would have been successful at had they been taught to read. It deprives them of the knowledge and wisdom of the ages. I know illiteracy well. My mother was illiterate. She had been born in Poland and orphaned at an early age. No one bothered to teach her to read. So when I was in college, I decided that I would teach her to read. I taught her the alphabet, which she learned quite well. But then I didn't know what to do next. So I wrote short sentences, such as, "My name is Sara, Sara is my name" and I asked her to repeat them. I was using the look-say method, and didn't even know it. At that time, even though I could read, I had no idea how to teach someone else to read.

Although I had been taught to read with phonics, I was not taught our English alphabetic system as a system. The result is that I failed in teaching my mother to read. Had I known then what I know now, it would have been as easy as pie. That is why when President Clinton decided that we could solve America's literacy problem by recruiting a million college students to tutor the children of America, I knew that his program was as phony as a three-dollar bill. If the so-called professional teachers couldn't do the job, what made him think that a million ignorant college students could do it?

The reason why *Alpha-Phonics* worked so well is that after analyzing our English alphabetic system, I was able to break it down into segments, beginning with the simplest elements and moving ahead to the more complex elements. Each of the 128 lessons taught one simple phonetic element, so that at the completion of the program the student would have learned not only our entire alphabetic system but also how to teach it to someone else. Also, I used no pictures. By eliminating pictures, I eliminated guessing. In other words, the student had to learn the entire phonetic system in order to become a fluent, accurate reader.

If you want to teach your child, or a dyslexic relative, or a dropout to read, you can get the latest edition of *Alpha-Phonics* at the Chalcedon Foundation. However, if you are having any problem getting the latest edition, contact me by e-mail at sblu123@verizon.net.



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