

S U M M A R I Z A T I O N
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AFTERNOON SESSION
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WATSON WASHBURN, PRESIDENT: - This Foundation was organized less than a year ago to cope with the terrible situation created by the look-say or configurationist system which was installed forty years ago in almost all our public and many of our private schools. This system, which has proved as ruinous in practice as it was unsound in theory, has deprived millions of children of the precious gift of reading, and condemned them to ignorance for life because you cannot learn anything until you learn to read. This frustrating system has survived bureaucratic inertia, arrogance or unwillingness to admit error despite the efforts of dedicated people (many of whom are here today) to restore reason to reading instruction.

Fortunately, the tide is turning at last. All of us in the Foundation have been heartened by the popular support which we have found throughout the whole country.



The tide had definitely turned in favor of phonics, but opposition is well entrenched. The sad fact that millions of children will again be subjected next month to the frustrations of look-say must redouble our determination to free them all as soon as possible.

The National Education Association, which claims a membership of over 800,000 teachers, is strongly opposed to alphabetical reading reform. I quote from one of its “popular” publications, *SAILING INTO READING* (pp. 9, 10):

“With this discovery, the alphabet method was doomed as decisively as the wooden clipper was doomed by steel-bottomed ships. Why teach the child an artificial method of looking at each letter when, in life’s reading, he recognizes one word from another by its total shape and unique characteristics, just as he distinguishes a sailboat from a submarine?”

“Second grade is the time when names of all the letters usually are learned. *** Alphabetical arrangement comes along in the latter part of the third grade or in the fourth grade ***,”

Dr. David H. Russell, one of the leaders of the self-styled “mixed” method, in the 1961 edition of *CHILDREN LEARN TO READ*, suggests that there are from seven to ten different techniques of word recognition which children must learn. Phonics is near the bottom of his list, which begins with the following examples, not meant to be humorous (pp. 204, 298):

“The general pattern of the word: for example, the word dog might look like : but this is a rough form of perception which may not apply to certain words: man and was look such alike in general shape. A good visual cue is provided when words have a special shape such as apple *** : special features of a word, such as the tail on the end of the word monkey; peculiarities in appearance of a word might be the double t in butter or the two wheels (c's) in bicycle; if the children know boat, they can make a good guess at goat; small words may be recognized in large words, but this method often doesn't work, because while there is a lion in dandelion and a wind in window, there is no hen in Stephen or but in butcher.”

Our main speaker, Mr. Mortimer Smith. Executive Director of the Council for Basic Education. Washington, D. C., and distinguished author of many books on American education will talk on THE PLACE OF READING IN BASIC EDUCATION. His speech is an adaptation of his article in CHALLENGE Magazine, October, 1961.

MR. MORTIMER SMITH: - I am very sorry, indeed, that Dr. Hansen can't be here this afternoon. I know that all of you would be very interested in and encouraged by his description of one of the outstanding programs in basic education in this country. Dr. Hansen is one Superintendent who is really making the effort on a large scale, not only to return to sense in reading methodology, but to return to a genuine academic program. He is accomplishing outstanding things in our capital city against enormous odds.¹

I am going to speak to you not about as precise a subject as reading instruction because I am not a reading expert by any means, but I shall try to talk to you a bit about the general place of reading in basic and liberal education.

Education once considered the dullest of subjects, fit only for discussion at conclaves of pedagogues, has in recent years become almost as popular a topic with the American public as sex or sports. Almost every large newspaper now has an education editor; mass magazines feature stories about education; admirals and generals and columnists pronounce on the subject; and ordinary laymen, intimidated by the weight of professional opinion, openly and brashly express their views on Johnny's ability, or inability, to read and write and spell.

There is reason to believe that there has been a vast decline in that literacy on which all sound and thorough education is based. I refer to literacy on two levels – knowledge of the letter, litera, and its extension in words and literature; and literacy in the sense of acquaintance with our common heritage of Western thought and culture.

In America, despite the staggering tonnage of printed matter with which we are annually presented, we suffer from a new kind of illiteracy compounded of inaccuracy, and indifference to nuance of meaning and emphasis, that cannot help but produce fuzzy and imprecise thought. The source of this illiteracy strangely enough, is the schools themselves whose teachers – of the newer generation, anyway — have been trained in methods not calculated to produce respect in their young charges for the subtlety and beauty and precision of language.

This undermining of the student begins in the earliest grades with that gigantic guessing game which goes by the name of reading instruction. Under this system, introduced in the 1920's and maintaining full sway since, the child begins to learn to read without benefit of phonetical training or knowledge of that infinitely convenient device, the alphabet, but is taught “word recognition” through elaborate memorization of “clues” such as shape, length, height of letters – e.g., by remembering “the two eyes peeking out” in **moon** and “the tail of the y” in **monkey**. Under this system, also, the child may see the word **snow** with accompanying pictures and guess that the word says **cold** -- and will be congratulated by his teacher for coming close enough for all practical purposes. Thus begins a habit for many of guessing or improvising or interpreting rather than learning what the writer actually said – a habit deadly to precision of thought. It is amazing that so many actually learn to read with such a cumbersome system. It is understandable that many do not: James Bryant Conant says he has been in schools where as many as 30 per cent of the pupils in the ninth grade are reading at the fifth or sixth-grade level. Other observers believe that Dr. Conant's estimate is low and that the situation is much worse than his figures suggest.

Faulty reading instruction is only the first step along the road to illiteracy. Quite likely as he grows older the student will be assured by his teacher (who will be backed by the opinion of professional bodies of teachers of English) that there is no one correct way in speaking and writing but that there are “levels of usage” appropriate to the occasion or suitable for speaker or writer – no “right” or “wrong” way, only an “appropriate” way. If he lives in Iowa his

teachers will follow a handbook for English issued by the Department of Public Instruction, which lists several examples of poor usage (such as: he must do like you say, who do you want? a great heap of books are on the table, etc., etc.) and then states: "Teaching corrections for these ... is a waste of time and a source of confusion to the students ...Only in formal literary writing and in formal speech are finer distinctions made". No stuffiness here – and no doubt the teachers do like the Department of Public Instruction says.

In view of this kind of early training it is small wonder that the average young American student often has a rough time in using his native tongue. In some American state universities almost 50 per cent of the entering freshmen fail the examination in basic English. Oliver La Farge, after teaching undergraduates in some of the western colleges, wrote a few years ago in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY, of the "contorted faces" of students as they put pen to paper, the reason for such pained expressions being clear when their exams were read: "They can't write ... They cannot spell, punctuation is quite beyond them, and the mere formation of a written word troubles them".

You must not think that illiteracy is a malady of the stupid only. It affects the able student as well, and the student at the graduate level as well as those at the college and high-school levels. Many of the deans of our law schools have complained in recent years about the lack of preparation of their students in ordinary English usage. Dean William C. Warren of the Columbia Law School says that "few of our entering students, however carefully selected, possess those skills (of writing and speaking grammatically and literately) to the extent needed for law study". Dean Jacques Barzun, also of Columbia, speaking of other highly selected graduates in his university, says that about one in ten "needs coaching in the elements of literacy - spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and diction. And these students cannot write because they cannot read". And to carry illiteracy to an even higher level, Professor William Parker Riley, long associated with the Modern Language Association, says this: "As one who edited a learned journal for nine years, let me assure you that any connection between illiteracy and a Ph.D. in English is largely coincidental."

Granted that there has been a breakdown in literacy, what can our educational system do now to prepare for the world of 1980? I would propose that we redirect our emphasis in educational reform and begin to take a sharp look at American elementary schools. While a hundred committees and commissions in recent years have been rearranging high school and college

curricula, our elementary schools have remained practically unchanged since 1925. The teachers in these schools have been exposed to training programs in the Deweyian-progressive theories, or distortions of those theories, which have almost completely dominated the thinking of those who staff our teacher-training institutions. These teachers have been taught, as a prominent professor of education has put it, that the chief goal of education is “the development of physical health mental and emotional stability, fine personality and effective citizenship”

While one may hope that these things will be the incidental outcomes of education, they do not constitute its chief goal: and as long as our elementary schools adhere to this catch-all theory of education our high schools and colleges will have to contend with the uneducated or half-educated student, with the student in whom the love of learning was starved before he got to the sixth grade. The first purpose of the lower school is to make the child literate to provide him with those symbols of word and number, and those sets of facts, that are the necessary preliminaries to more sophisticated learning at higher levels.

To put it another way, the chief task of the elementary school today (as it has always been) is to foster literacy on two levels: first, to teach the pupil how to read and to understand the structure of his language, and secondly, to acquaint him on a beginning level with his common heritage of Western civilization.

One should perhaps hesitate to speak on the first of these tasks except in the most tentative and apologetic manner; reading instruction has become a matter for “experts” and the outsider is not considered competent to understand the mystery. I am an admitted amateur here, but as one who has made the study of schools and education his chief concern for some years, I would have no hesitation in stating that we are producing a nation of poor readers, nor would I hesitate to make the logical inference that this condition has some relation to the so-called look-and-say, whole-word method of reading instruction which has for so long been the dominant one. I believe that the way out of this impasse is to return to systematic phonics instruction in the teaching of beginning reading. I so believe because I have seen it work in those schools which have had the courage to buck the current orthodoxy in reading instruction. An overhauling of methods of reading instruction, then, would be my first step in reforming the elementary program.

The sacred dogma of “readiness”, by which educators justify postponement of learning, is apt to involve a gross underestimating both of the eagerness and ability of the very young to learn. The psychologist O. K. Moore at Yale University has been proving in his experiments that average

children can easily learn to read and write at the age of two and three and four. Proper motivation and early systematic training, rather than postponement, can do much for the so-called average and below-average pupil.

In any case, it would seem that if we are to survive as a strong nation, we should begin now to shape new ideals for the education of 1980. If we are not to sink into a condition of intellectual mediocrity, and to have our place in the modern world usurped by more disciplined nations, we had better begin now to ring out the old and ring in the new in education.

MR. WASHBURN: - Thank you very much for that enlightening address. As Mr. Smith pointed out, the orthodox mishmash way of teaching reading depends greatly on guessing because nobody can recognize new words. With the alphabet, you do away with it; therefore, guessing has no part in alphabetical or phonetic instruction. We are now to have the privilege of listening to some of the leading authorities on what we think are the proper ways of teaching children to read, or I might well say the proper way, because all these methods differ only slightly. They are all based on the alphabet and phonetics.

QUESTION: - Granted that you can teach a child at two or three, it seems the important thing is: will he really read better than the child that starts at six?

MR. SMITH: - No, I am not necessarily advocating that we teach all of our children at the age of two or three. I am simply using it as an illustration to show that the reading readiness concept is somewhat outmoded. I think most children are ready to read by the time they get out of kindergarten, and many before that. We ought not to freeze this concept of reading readiness as we have done in the last twenty-five years; we ought to assume that most children enter school with absolute eagerness to learn how to read. I believe that some sort of phonetical training ought to be started for everyone in kindergarten and a thorough systematic phonics program taught in the first grade.

MR. WASHBURN: - Mr. James M. Hubball. Headmaster of Buckley School, in New York City, which has used phonics with outstanding success, will act as Moderator of our panel discussion.

MR. HUBBALL: - I shall call first on Miss Mae Carden, of the Glen Rock, New Jersey, for whom I have a high personal regard, and a deep sense of gratitude. We have used her phonetic system at Buckley for eighteen years.²

MISS CARDEN: - The Carden Method is not just a reading method; it is an integrated language program. A child is not reading if he lacks the capacity to open up words, to group words within the sentence, and to emphasize the key words. Nowadays, I find that people have great difficulty in finding the key word of a sentence. This inability prevents them from reading well.

The ability to read a sentence leads to the ability to read a paragraph and then an episode. If the reader does not realize when the episode ends and another episode begins, he is still not reading.

As soon as one technique is established for reading, I turn it around so that it becomes a tool for expressing a thought in written form. The child learns to write a sentence and then a paragraph. He learns how to set up compositions, book reviews, and biographies. By the time he reaches fifth grade, he has the tools by which he expresses his own ideas. He is equipped to go on and widen his knowledge of factual material. If he is encouraged to add a little appreciation of art and music and to establish a clear diction and accurate enunciation, he will possess the tools which enable him to read, write, and speak in a creditable manner.

MR. HUBBALL: - Next, Mrs. Mary T. Harrigan, Principal of Demonstration School, Miami, Florida.

MRS. HARRIGAN: - I call my system the 3-DIMENSION PHONIC METHOD of teaching reading and spelling. It is used in one place only, our school, a "demonstration school". My method was originated fifteen years ago, when my work was strictly with handicapped children. This is the best training for teaching reading.

The word vowel means voice or volume. Since a vowel has voice or volume, which a consonant does not, it should be made to look different. In this series of Phonic Workbooks, vowels are CUBED, or given a third dimension, to show that they have depth, or volume. This makes them look more important and helps them assume their rightful place as BOSSES of the reading process. Vowels must regulate the flow of words when we read just as the left hand of the accordion player regulates the volume of the accordion.

I believe we are entering a new era of reading proficiency. In Mathematics we learn first our long measure, then our square measure, and finally our cubic measurement. Just so in reading mastery we have learned our phonics, our word-outlines, and now we approach our third dimension technique: the feel, or mouth-shape for each letter, with stress on vowel-mastery.

Formerly vowels looked small and unimportant. For this reason, they were extremely difficult to master. 3-D teaching reverses this. Throughout the series the vowels are cubed and in color forcing themselves on the child's attention. He will unconsciously, and almost automatically stress them. The teaching of reading has at long last been simplified. These books should prove a revelation to teachers and parents and provide the solution to our present national reading dilemma. It is for this reason that they have been termed "Wonder Books".

Mine is a new technique. It is my contention that a non-reader is simply a person who has not grasped the vowel sounds. I believe we should read vowels rather than either "letters" or "words". This vowel-reading system has been tested and tried in my school at Miami, for over seven years where it has been found 100% successful. It has been so successful that children are now being flown to Miami from all over the country, as far away as Maine and California, for a few weeks of 3-D Phonics, which is usually enough to turn them into good readers, no matter what their previous experience.

It is not my purpose to take sides in the age-old controversy as to whether vowels should be first blended with the initial consonant, as:

$$(ca) + t = cat$$

or, first blended with the final consonant, as:

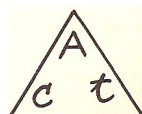
$$c + (at) = cat$$

or, again blended one letter at a time, giving each equal stress, as:

$$c + a + t = cat$$

This series is a completely new, refreshing approach to the problem, and ELIMINATES ANY SOUNDING-OUT PROCESS, thereby cutting teacher time in half. If the child is taught to subdue; whisper; or simply "think" the first consonant and to STRESS; S-T-R-E-T-C-H and HOLD the vowel to include and shape both consonants to form the word there need be no sounding out process. He simply says the word on the first try. If he does not, it is because the vowel needs more S-T-R-E-T-C-H-I-N-G.

In an extremely difficult case, I have one more trick. I will draw the diagram shown below on the blackboard, making the vowel increasingly larger and redder, and the consonants increasingly smaller until he grasps the idea:



Do not give up and start grunting and groaning with the child or children. IT SIMPLY IS NOT NECESSARY! It will exhaust you and class! “Kuh - a - tuh” will never blend anyway.

RELAX: give him time to grasp the main idea. Tell him that the vowel is the worker, the blender, the pusher, the left hand of the accordion player. Say it anyway you like, but GET IT ACROSS. This is the key to success with the course. The rest will come easily and almost automatically. Your children cannot keep from reading once they learn their vowels. It is a wonderful feeling to feel like a teacher, and not a glorified baby-sitter. So, put a little effort here and it will pay rich dividends.

MR. HUBBALL: - Next is Mrs. Romalda Bishop Spaiding, of Honolulu, well-known expert in this field, and author of a widely-read textbook. She has given courses on her system to great numbers of reading teachers in recent years.

MRS. SPALDING: - Phonics is the proper way to teach reading. My method is the result of 30 years of experience. It is described in THE WRITING ROAD TO READING, the second edition of which has just been published by William Morrow. I call my method the unified phonics method, because it unites teaching of correct speech and good handwriting with accurate spelling and reading. Writing and the printed page are taught from the beginning as simply a visual way of saying sounds of words we use in speaking. We teach first writing of the forty-five sounds used commonly in spoken English. This requires seventy phonograms, printed on cards. Phonograms are dictated by the teacher and repeated aloud by the children just before they write them. For instance, this first one (the letter “a”) says ă, ā, ah. We find that those three sounds (of “a”) do very well to teach this letter in the first fifteen hundred words most used in English. The children repeat AH, AYE, AHHH and write the letter. They are taught how to sit, how to hold a pencil, how to hold the paper, how to form each of the letters. The children finish writing (spelling) third-grade words, in the first-grade. Spelling is the basic key to accurate and easy reading and writing of English, and yet it now ranks lower than any other elementary subject.

My method uses all the avenues to the mind, which promote word recognition. Children hear the teacher say the word correctly and hear themselves say the sound or syllables just before writing them. They use the muscles of the mouth to say it, and those of the hand to write it; they see what they have written, then read it aloud. Regardless of theories, the method works and remedial reading is no longer a problem.

Mr. Filbin, who is Principal of the public schools at Lincoln, Massachusetts, which use my method, tells me that they no longer have any child who needs remedial work unless either his IQ is truly low, or he is a newcomer. This method requires for writing and reading the thinking use of a child's knowledge of the phonograms. There is no guessing, no games or gadgets and no pictures to divert attention from the true process of reading. It is not narrow or limited. It makes the written language from the beginning both comprehensible and very interesting to every child as being simply the translation of the spoken sounds of his language to their written form. The median score in spelling of our first grades is third grade. By April, the children are reading library books. In second grade, I have heard discussions concerning authors and their books: which ones are good and which ones are best. Children who write thoughtfully from the start are soon able to appreciate good writing and enjoy good literature. They begin some grammar in first grade, diagramming in the second.

The teacher can teach the whole class. We do not need half a dozen methods of teaching reading "because different children need different methods". Each child must write constantly in spelling lessons, learning to think and produce. There is no copying. The reading period is spent on reading, and reading is not re-reading. We never teach new words before the reading lesson. We analyze our words as they come up if necessary. We also teach parents. One of the worst things progressive education did was to push the parents out of the classroom. There is nothing more thrilling than helping a child do what he is interested in doing, and needs to do, in order to get ahead in education. We should share what we know with parents so that they, too, can have the joy which comes from helping to give their children a real education.

QUESTION: - Is your system good for very low IQ's?

MRS. SPALDING: - Yes. I saw the record of a class of children with IQ's from 50 to 75, who had learned to read by this logical method. If persevered in, it cannot fail.

MR. WASHBURN: - Dr. Flesch feels strongly that while phonics is essential for all children, those with low IQ's and poor backgrounds need it most of all.

MRS. SPALDING: - That's true. And our difficulty with foreign language teaching probably arises from failure to teach our own phonetically.

Sister Claire, born in Boston, but now teaching in Hawaii, has had great success in teaching third-grade children who had learned English phonetically, to read and write French, using her own French phonics.

MR. HUBBALL: - Our next panelist is Mrs. Dorothy Taft Watson, of Oakland, California.

MRS. WATSON: - My teaching started some forty years ago with very young groups in my private kindergarten. In three five-minute sessions a day, I gave them “the tools of reading”. There was only one test for reading readiness, and that was their wish to learn. Over eighty per cent of my five-year-old pupils and a few four-year-olds were reading independently at the end of the year. Some, on starting school, went directly into the second grade. Since they had a good, solid foundation, they progressed rapidly in school, showing sustained interest and enthusiasm. Consequently, principals of schools frequently recommended my kindergarten.

Given the right reading tools, a child will work indefinitely, hour after hour, with magazines, newspapers – anything with letters. Quite often, my pupils became excellent readers before their parents even realized that they were being taught. One such child was a five-year-old who went from kindergarten on a trip to Europe, and read all the way across the ocean ... to the parents’ amazement. Most children are at the peak of their enthusiasm, at five, and, if given the proper tools, can’t be kept from reading. But, unfortunately, our children today don’t have these tools. Many of them have passed that peak of enthusiasm by the time they even get into the first grade. I agree that one of the worst mistakes has been to rob parents of the privilege of helping their children. Education suffers from frightened defeatism. Parents are afraid to teach their children. Teachers are afraid to use their own ideas: they are afraid to use their common sense. They are looking for stumbling blocks, for complicated problems. They search for reasons why a child can’t read, and decide he “isn’t ready”. Once I attended a meeting of some 35 teachers and principals, and heard them discussing a little girl who had failed in every “readiness” test. They didn’t know what to do with her – because in spite of “not being ready”, she was already reading beautifully! Another child of five who had I earned to read and write in French was also declared: “unready” to read English because he had failed their readiness tests.

My many years with kindergarten children have proved that I could apply the same phonic method with all ages and levels of IQ. In fact, brighter children are more apt to stumble over the “sight” method than the slow child, because they want to know reasons for things, and dislike

meaningless memorization. These bright children are also very sensitive and critical, and often are quick to experience a sense of defeat if they do not learn to read. I tell parents of non-reading children that the apparent failure and discouragement often indicate that he is above average, not below. Retarded children frequently have excellent memories. They retain first impressions; and, of course, if these are wrong, it is hard to erase them.

A bright child has a more flexible and a more logical mind and he often learns quickly at a very young age. I've had children as young as two learn to read by playing with my materials and by asking questions. I would never try to force reading on two-to-five-year-olds, but merely give them the tools and the opportunity.

Because I had so many demands for tutoring, I eventually built my methods into the audio-visual self-instruction course which I call LISTEN AND LEARN WITH PHONICS, originally intended for home use. With these books, cartoons, and phonograph records, any fairly intelligent parents can with very little effort give their children a good start. They can often turn their child loose with the material and let him teach himself.

Teachers can do the same thing, even if they had no previous training or experience with phonics. Today, my materials are used mainly in schools and kindergartens, and are recommended by a considerable number of college educational departments. Altogether, about 4,500 sets have been sold, and this distribution job is so exacting that I find it more than I can handle, and am looking for a publisher to take it over. I know for a certainty that most four or five-year-old children can learn to read easily and with pleasure when given the right tools, and that "emotional disturbances" are more often than not the result, rather than the cause, of non-reading. Learning to read can often mitigate such disturbances in cases where they actually are caused by "problems in the home", etc. One 6-year-old girl, as disturbed as any I ever saw by the breaking up of her parents' marriage, took a set of my materials for the summer, and by September, was able to read almost anything. Before Christmas, she had devoured PETER PAN, THE SECRET GARDEN, ALICE IN WONDERLAND, and any number of others; moreover, this seemed to be very helpful therapy for her emotional problems as she was able to lose herself for long periods in other interests and adventures.

MR. HUBBALL: - Mrs. Edna B. Smith of the Primary Day School, Bethesda, Maryland, will describe the Phonovisual Method installed last fall in the District of Columbia schools.³

MRS. SMITH: - In the late 1930's. Miss Lucille Schoolfield, a speech correction teacher in Washington, D. C. Public Schools, discovered that by the time she had corrected the child's speech, the child, who in most cases was a non-reader, was reading. She backtracked to see how this had come about. After collaboration with Miss Josephine Timberlake, who was teaching the deaf to speak, they developed the Phonovisual Method in the early 1940's. The Primary Day School in Bethesda, Maryland, was established in 1944 as a demonstration school for this Method.

The Phonovisual Method is organized phonics. The Method Book: and a set of illustrated wall charts – one for consonants and one for vowels – are the basic materials needed for teaching the Method. Supplementary materials are available. This material is scientifically organized. The consonant chart lists, in the first column, all breath consonant sounds; in the second column, all voiced consonant sounds. Next column has the nasal sounds, and the last column has the other sounds needed for elementary reading. Kinesthetic organization of the charts is perhaps the most important feature. Here Miss Timberlake's experience with teaching the deaf to speak was invaluable.

If the child comes to school talking, he must be hearing sounds; he may not hear all of them correctly. The Phonovisual Method teaches the child to listen critically. It is for this reason that we advocate use of Phonovisual materials at the very beginning, in kindergarten. We begin with daily drill, starting with three sounds or five sounds and proceeding until the consonant chart has been learned. We teach consonants first because most words in existing basic readers begin with consonants. We teach short vowels first because most of the vowels in the pre-primers are short vowels.

The Phonovisual Method has universal application. It was originally started for remedial and first-grade students. Now it is being used in kindergarten and through all elementary grades, junior and senior high school, college reading laboratories, and in adult education. Because of the simplicity of the Method and the logical teaching techniques, it has been proved especially valuable in teaching the mentally retarded and brain-damaged child. It is used in about twenty-two foreign countries for teaching English, and is being used experimentally with juvenile delinquents, since it is acknowledged that there is a relationship between delinquency and non-reading.

In June, an experiment was started in a New York prison, using the Phonovisual Method to teach the prisoners to read. The warden had organized a fine vocational school for the prisoners so that when they left the prison, they could get jobs. The warden discovered that they could not read well enough to fill out the application forms. In the same way, when Johnny has reading troubles, he becomes frustrated, and is often labeled backward without determining the basic reason for his troubles. Teacher-training courses are given at the Primary Day School every summer. Through our Extension Service, training courses are given in schools around the country, as requested.

Phonovisual is workable across the intelligence scale; it works as well for the average and below-average child as it does with the bright child. We have never had a non-reader at the Primary Day School, although the IQ range of pupils is comparable to that of students in an average public school. There is no need for grouping when teaching the charts. At the end of two years of training in the Phonovisual Method, the child has every tool he needs for successful elementary school reading, spelling and speech.

MR. HUBBALL: - Mrs. Raymond Rubicam, our Arizona State Chairman, is the next speaker. She has been active in the cause of reading reform, both there and elsewhere, for many years.

MRS. RUBICAM: - In Southern Arizona, we have a school expansion of about 33% per year. This means a tremendous number of new young teachers each season. Since they have had no training in a strong phonetic approach, we needed a system with a manual so excellent that you could hand it to a teacher and say, "Go ahead and teach it". The Economy Company's PHONETIC KEYS TO READING was selected, and our first experiments started with no special teaching-training.

The results quickly achieved were so remarkable, as shown by the test charts I have here, that this program is now established in two-thirds of all Arizona's elementary schools covering about 50,000 primary grade children.⁴ Workshops for teachers are prevalent. We have also had two University extension courses, and two of three State-supported Teachers' Colleges have had summer workshops for credit.

PHONETIC KEYS TO READING is a complete reading program which starts with eight weeks of auditory training and phonetics principles, not in isolation, but applied immediately to

words. The vowels are taught first, since they control pronunciation of the word, then consonants. After these eight weeks, children have no trouble moving fast through pre-primers and primers of any basic series. They have learned to think and analyze, not memorize. This graph shows what happened in our large Washington District, Phoenix, this year with 1,360 first-grade pupils. The Arizona Citizens for Strengthening Public School Education, of which I am Chairman, made the graph from Superintendent Miller's excellent report. Thirty-nine per cent of the pupils attained the ninth stanine, (top reading group) as against the "norm" of 4%. This result was corroborated in other districts where ten times the norm was also obtained. Medians jumped from fifth to eighth stanine.

It was PHONETIC KEYS TO READING that Mrs. Margaret Henderson Greenman used in her notable six-year series of comparative tests at Champaign, Illinois, beginning in 1952. The tests uniformly and decisively favored the phonetic system, as do all our Arizona statistics.⁵

MR. HUBBALL: - Dr. William Lawlor of Glendale, Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Commission on Education to the California Legislature, President of the California Educational Research Foundation, and our Southern California Chairman, is our next panelist.

DR. LAWLOR: - California has the largest Junior College system in the world; in fact, our Junior College system handles more pupils than all Junior College systems of the rest of the United States put together. We have a larger State College system than any other State. We pour tremendous numbers of students into higher education. There are no entrance requirements in California for Junior College if you are over 18; if you are under 18, you must have a high school diploma.

You people who are interested in reading are basically talking about presenting our youngsters who are going to be our students in elementary and secondary schools and colleges, with the tools for communications. You know, it's a strange thing, for which I've never found the complete answer myself, that all pre-school age French kids learn French; all pre-school age German kids learn German; all pre-school age Italian kids learn Italian; and all pre-school age American kids learn English, – in fact, they don't have any trouble with it till they get to school.

Our State Department of Education boasts of having the most complete modern educational and recreational facilities for education that could be imagined. In order to make sure that these marvelous facilities are put to full use the Department feels that both teachers and pupils must be spared the responsibilities of meeting standards of achievement; each student will progress continuously at his own rate, and promotion problems will disappear. This attitude prevails in many other States.

It sometimes seems that some of our educational leaders have never met a child. A six-year old child has been better educated before he enters school than he can hope to be in most of our schools for the next six years. He is not stupid. Though he may not be able to read and write, he has a tremendous command of the English language, – more so than ever before. He must not be treated as an animal fit only for training.

We have for years taken the finest brains in the nation, poured them into our graduate and post-graduate schools, highly specialized their skills and training and actually prevented them from ever being really educated. We have a job to do – to correct this condition as quickly as possible. We have no more time for experiment. Every time I hear somebody say that he is going to “experiment” with phonics, I just wince. My impression is that experimentation as to the validity of phonics as a method of teaching was over at least forty years ago!

A former school teacher, who came before our Commission, had been a principal of an elementary school district for thirteen years and worked on through the whole thing. She had started out at a time when phonics was in vogue, then had tried out all the substitute systems, and finally went back to phonics. She had an eighth-grade class of students of whom half had been taught phonics. In September, she gave them a sixth-grade spelling test, and gave it to them over and over and over until in December, they all got a hundred percent. In March or April, she gave the identical test to the same group of children. In the group that had not had phonics, the highest grade was sixty. In the phonics group, the lowest grade was ninety.

Now, it's time we went out into the open on this thing. We must send more and more children to college, but we must send them prepared to accomplish something. We must tell the people of this nation that they are being short changed. Public schools are governmental agencies. They can pay dividends beyond the abilities of any other agency anywhere in the political structure of our nation. The necessity for action is obvious. The opportunity is there. There's nothing the matter with our students. There is nothing the matter with our teachers. There isn't a single one

of these problems that cannot be solved by sound administration. And we have a right to demand it.

MR. HUBBALL: - We shall now hear from Mr. William Bacci. Assistant Superintendent for Research and Curriculum Development, Carle Place Public Schools, Carle Place, New York.

MR. BACCI :- Our program at Carle Place began only three years ago. At that time, we took a good, hard look at our reading program, and decided to get more phonics into it. One of our first-rate teachers volunteered to be the guinea pig. We took material from any phonics books we could find and in eight weeks put together a course of study which covered in one year the phonics material which was spread over three years in the basic reading system we formerly used.

We also interested our kindergarten teachers in phonics. One teacher began teaching the youngsters the sounds that the letters make, and how to write these sounds. Other teachers saw it working and started doing it. Then we instituted some large group instruction. We chose at random about a hundred kindergarten youngsters. Teachers monitored them while I taught phonics sounds. We started with A, B, C. by showing pictures and other sources of sounds in question. The youngsters then would write the letter as they said it. After they learned the sound of A and the sound of B. we combined the B and A into BA. We then took D and got the word BAD.

Finally, the other teachers introduced the method in their own classrooms and a first-rate program got organized, to the point where we figured we needed more than just these sounds so we used materials we had projected onto the screen, which we had begun on our own. Scores at the end of the year were gratifying. The total class scored a good eight to ten months better than other classes did. At the end of the second grade the same pilot class scored almost two to three years better than the other group. We had one particular pilot class that had a median score of 5.6 at the end of the second grade.

This, of course, convinced all the teachers that this was the program to follow. We call it PHONETIC APPROACH TO LANGUAGE ARTS. We teach diagramming at second-grade level. The over-all program right now is third grade. On a New York State Survey test, this group scored 85% whereas the rest of the groups scored in the 65% bracket. We are convinced that phonics is important; and that phonetic spelling is important. We teach spelling at first-grade level, according to the Webster program.

We found that most youngsters who come in from another school district do not have much phonic background. To combat this, we have organized programmed texts so that these children can work at their own pace. We have also written a programmed text on phonics for teachers and parents.⁶

MR. HUBBALL: - I now introduce Mr. Fred B. Parker.

MR. PARKER: - I am principal of Nathaniel Rochester School. Number Three, Rochester, New York, in a low socio-economic area. Usually we have 180 children in first grade from kindergarten -- six classes. About sixty pupils had to repeat the first grade over every year because they did not know how to read. Other children who were passed into second grade were only half-way through "Dick and Jane". I objected, and finally persuaded the superintendent in charge of instruction to allow me to try two classes with phonics. Two teachers, one a two-year Normal teacher, and the other who had not taught in twenty years, agreed to instruct these classes. We eliminated the reading readiness test and grouping. We taught these children reading for sometimes an hour without loss of interest. They enjoyed it, and loved the filmstrips. At the end of the first year, not a single child failed to pass; some could read at third-grade level. The supervisor could hardly believe it. I'm sold on this idea, and gradually we are getting together people also in Rochester interested in it.⁷

MR. HUBBALL: - "My old friend. Lyttleton B. P. Gould. Jr., Headmaster. Far Hills Country-Day School, an independent elementary school, and our New Jersey Chairman, is our last panelist.

MR. GOULD: - I believe that our primary job is to teach a sound education in the three arts, of which the most important is reading. We use the Carden method, which not only teaches the ability to read but also the ability to think, and to learn something of the culture and the heritage of this country. It is the principal's job to know what is going on, particularly in reading instruction. Any good phonics method will do, preferably begun in kindergarten. The principal must also build up enthusiasm and teamwork of teachers, parents and pupils. Performance is necessary. Tests are necessary. And the children should have access to plenty of books – in the school library, if possible.

MR. HUBBALL: - All afternoon I have kept recalling a freshman composition I had the pleasure of reading some years ago, "Who Am I and Where Am I going To?" The READING REFORM FOUNDATION has answered those questions for us today on this splendid occasion. I know

you would not want to end it without thanking Mr. Washburn and the Foundation for giving us this great opportunity.

MR. WASHBURN: - Thank you, Mr. Hubball – and all. The First Annual Conference of the READING REFORM FOUNDATION is now adjourned.

HANDWRITTEN ENDNOTES

Annotations from the Tables of Contents page: The noteworthy thing about the phonics systems described here (nearly all that were available in 1962 – There are many more now.) is that they all were developed and proven successful by teachers and administrators in the classroom. In contrast, the look-say theory and programs came in – completely unproved – from the “top,” from college professors with a theory and usually no elementary teaching experience. They became aligned with publishers – collected royalties – had a total monopoly for 30 years...and still have a majority control today (or their successors do – most of the originators now dead.).

¹But it collapsed under opposition within a few years – Hansen was fired – Washington again a major disaster area.

²The following phonics systems were used in 1962, only in the best private schools – and possibly 2 or 3% of U. S. public schools. According to Dr. Chall, 81% of the public schools in early 1960s were using Ginn or Scott Foreman pre-primers – the rest using other look-say programs.

³Didn’t last – except for highly successful pilot Amidon School, it wasn’t followed through – teachers weren’t trained to use it nor properly supervised to make sure they used it all (Big disadvantage of phonics “supplements”).

⁴Only as “supplement” – state textbook commission choose only look-say basal adoptions.

⁵In 1971, the Arizona state appointed *Right to Read Commission* loaded with phonics advocates, including Mrs. Rubicam. The big fight now is to reform teacher training to phonics in their colleges.

⁶Still using phonics program.

⁷Was quickly “killed” by imported leaders of the look-say Establishment the minute Mr. Parker retired. Caused a tremendous temporary uproar in news media – but Rochester still solidly “look-say” (Ginn) ten years later – spending staggering sums on “remedial reading. [Note: Ten years later would be about 1972 for this note. D. P., 5/30/2006]

Note by Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

Odessa, Texas – May 30, 2006

This invaluable historical document was sent to me by Mrs. Kathryn Diehl of Lima, Ohio, former Research Director of the *Reading Reform Foundation* on 12/12/06. Included in the package were several editions of *The Reading Informer* along with her book, *Johnny Still Can't Read but You Can Teach Him at Home*, 1986, AP.

The “Endnotes” were annotations written in by a previous owner of the document. They were so insightful that I decided to include them in this edition. They were not part of the original document. Internal evidence leads me to conclude that they were added around 1972.

My oldest daughter learned to read very well in kindergarten and first-grade with Economy’s *Phonetic Keys to Reading*. A teacher who taught over 30 years told me that Economy the best reading program she ever taught. One third-grade teacher showed me her carefully guarded Economy materials, saying that every year she taught students who had failed to learn to read. Another teacher gave me a whole classroom set of Economy materials because she wanted someone to have it that would appreciate the value of the materials. I was honored. She said that it was the best reading method she ever taught, except for the old *Open Court*. (I have to say “old” because the new *Open Court* is a TOTALLY different program. Economy focused on teaching all the vowel sounds from the beginning.

I taught Spalding’s *Writing Road to Reading* to one first-grade class. Later I used the phonograms with several classes. See my *Alpha-Phonics Phonograms* on my website, www.donpotter.net, for my sequence and method for teaching the phonograms with Samuel L. Blumenfeld’s *Alpha-Phonics*. It is very important to continue WRTR beyond the first-grade so the students can have time to fully master the spelling rules and decoding processes.

I have done a lot highly successful remedial work with Rudolf Flesch’s 72 Exercises in his 1955 book, *Why Johnny Can't Read and what you can do about it*. My procedure is to use the Phonovisual Charts mentioned in the above “Summarization” to teach the English speech sounds (phonemes) and sound-to-symbol correspondences. Then I teach the students to use the phonics learned from the charts to sound out the words in Flesch’s Exercises. The charts are available from www.phonovisual.com. The Phonovisual Charts are based on the *Northampton Charts*. See The Association Method for more insights.

The Carden Method is still available and used in many parochial schools. There is a homeschool edition available. Since Mae Carden would not let any teachers use her method unless she trained the teachers herself, the method was severely restricted in its use for a long time. Their web site is: www.cardenschools.org.

Be sure and visit the Education Page of my web site, www.donpotter.net for lots of information on phonics-first. Visit www.blendphonics.org for my Nationwide Blend Phonics Education Campaign.

I have published three very valuable phonics books from Amazon or Barnes & Nobles

1. *Word Mastery: Phonics or the First Three-Grades*. A 1913 masterpiece by Florence Akins.
2. *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*. Hazel Loring’s premier phonics program.
3. *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*. 62 Lessons and Stories for teaching fluent reading with phonics.

Donald L. Potter, Odessa, TX

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