

August 7, 2008

Dear Mr. Potter,

Thank you so much for freely providing the educational materials on your web site that can be used to help parents and teachers to help their students and children to learn how to read fluently in a relatively quick period of time.

I am a semi-retired pediatrician. I have worked with children who have had reading and educational problems for about thirty years. In my opinion your web site over all has the best information I have found on how to help children learn how to read fluently, and you provide it for free. I wish I had this 25 years ago when I started doing a lot of school evaluations, then I would have referred many more parents and teachers to your web site.

I have a story I think you may want to share with other people.

I just talked with a mother about a week ago whose six year old son is being expected to read a book over the summer. But she told me that he does not like to read. I discovered from listening to her that the real problem is that he does not know how to read many of the words that are in that book. His teacher wants and expects him to read that book by applying phonics. I learned, as this mom talked with me, that her son's teacher has only taught him *part* of the phonetic code from the phonics reading program she is using. This mom also told me that her son's teacher has also taught him to read some words non-phonetically as sight words. He will not be taught the rest of the phonetic code for over one year. What this mom did not realize was that the *only* way her son could possibly read the words he cannot decode phonetically is either as sight words, or else he must guess at those words.

This boy has told his mom that he likes to read sight words because it's easy for him. He says he does not like to sound-out words, because it's hard for him. When I heard that statement I knew right away that the reason it was hard for him to sound-out a lot of words is because he had not been taught *HOW* to sound them out.

I then told this mom that the reason her son does not like to sound-out words is because he does not know how to do that. I told her that her son cannot sound-out a lot of words because he has not been taught *how* to sound them out. When I said that, it shocked his mother. I told her that what he is doing is memorizing more words as sight words so he can read more words in that book. She already knew that, but she did not understand why he was doing that. I then explained to her that it was because he only knew part of the alphabetic code. Her son does not yet know a lot of the sounds the letters stand for. She listened to me, but she did not really understand what I was telling her.

I then told this mom about your educational page, and I told her that it could really help her son. She was very interested in that idea, and she found it on-line while I was at work. She is highly motivated to help her son learn to read. She called me over to her computer, and I then showed her the link to Florence Akin's *Word Mastery* book on your Education Page, and the link to *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade* by Hazel Loring on your *Blend Phonics* page. She was thrilled with what I showed her.

After this mom down-loaded *Word Mastery*, I quickly went through some of the lessons in it until I got to the lesson on the final *e* on page 34 and 35. I learned from her that her son did not yet know that the final *e* marks the sound of the vowel letter as long. She told me that her husband was starting to teach their son the final *e* rule, because her husband remembered that was how he was taught in school. She told me that she did not remember that rule herself, but that she can read those words easily. I took that fact, and I used it as an example to show her that the *only* way her son could read words phonetically that have a final *e*, was if he had been taught how to do that. Then I reminded her that he was being asked and expected to read words with that spelling in his book, but that he did not know how to do that. Thus, the *only* way he could read those words was to read them as sight words or to guess at them based on the initial letter or on the context. Then the light went off in her mind.

Then this mom got it. She understood what I told her at first.

I then showed her Akin's instructions to teachers at the end of *Word Mastery*. She also found Hazel Loring's book on the *Blend Phonics Page* of your web site. I recommended that she use those two books at home to help her son to develop the phonetic reading habit. I told her that this would help her son to learn how to read phonetically in *much less time* than the way he is being taught at his school. I also told her that doing this would help him a lot at school, and that it would also prevent him from developing a very bad habit of reading words as whole words or as sight words. I explained to her that a sight word reading habit would make him a bad reader unable to sound-out new words. I told her that when a student develops that way of reading, it is called "whole-word dyslexia". Then she realized the great importance of what I was showing her. She now plans to use both of those books in her home to help her son learn how to read phonetically.

This mom is a registered nurse, and she also is a teacher of other nurses, and she is working on a master's degree in Nursing Education; but she did not know these things about reading instruction that she needed to know. She knew that phonics first is best, but she lacked the education to assess the quality of the actual phonics classroom instruction that her son was being given. She did not understand that sight word reading would harm her son. She did not know how to help her son. NOW she does.

This mom was very thankful that I shared these things with her. Perhaps you or some of the people you correspond with know some other parents or teachers or other people involved with education who would like to read this story.

We talk about giving children comprehensive and *explicit* teaching in phonics first. A lot of parents and teachers, as well as other people, have heard that statement and would agree with it.

We also need to talk *more* about giving both parents and teachers explicit teaching in how to teach phonics first. That is what Florence Akins *Word Mastery* book does, and that is what Hazel Loring's *Blend Phonics for First Grade* book does. Those two books have very explicit and very simple instructions for both parents and teachers in *how* to do reading instruction with phonics. Those two books also really supplement and enhance each other. They are together the two best books I know of that practically and simply teach parents and teachers *how* to teach children [and adults too, for that matter] the basic phonetics they need to know in order to learn *how* to read fluently.

I highly recommend those two books to other parents and other teachers to either use alone or to use as supplements to other reading programs both in the home and in the school classrooms. I am also very thankful that you provide these teaching tools that do that for free.

Please feel free to share this e-mail with others on your mailing list, or to post it on your web site.

Sincerely

Earl Eugene Roth, Jr., M.D. semi-retired

Phoenix, Arizona

Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

Odessa, TX - August 7, 2008

www.donpotter.net

I appreciate Mr. Roth sending me this unsolicited letter recommending Florence Akin's 1913 *Word Mastery* and Hazel Loring's 1980 *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*.

I am delighted to have an experienced pediatrician, who has years of experience helping children with learning problems, recommend these two books that I have chosen as the Flagships for my Education Page.

Both books are true to their titles:

Loring's *Blend Phonics* is **very easy** to understand and teach. No parent or teacher should have any problem teaching any child or adult of normal intelligence to read with this exceedingly simple method. Mrs. Loring felt that the secret of teaching children to read without inducing dyslexia was to make sure they received explicit **directional guidance**. Directional guidance is built into the *Blend Phonics* method. I have found it effective with both children and adults. I have created the following items to assist those teaching *Blend Phonics*: *The Blend Phonics Reader*, "Blend Phonics Progress Chart," and the "Blend Phonics Certificate of Successful Completion." They can all be download from my *Blend Phonics Page*. I, also, have a YouTube video clip that explains how I teach *Blend Phonics* in my classroom.

Florence Akin's *Word Mastery* is, also, **very easy** to understand and teach. It was used successfully to teach beginning and remedial reading **for decades** in classes throughout the United States. It begins by teaching the single consonants and short vowels using pictures to illustrate the sounds. After teaching the basic sounds and blending, it uses a phonogram approach for teaching the rest of English reading.

Another testimonial for *Word Mastery*:

I received a letter concerning *Word Mastery* from Marcia K. Henry (former President of the *Orton Dyslexia Society*) on February 2, 2007. She comments, "Re: Florence Akin's 1913 *Word Mastery*, I first started tutoring in Rochester, MN in 1959...almost 50 years ago! The director of the Reading Center was Paula Rome, whose uncle Paul Dozier was a neurologist with Dr. Samuel Orton. Paula gave me a copy of *Word Mastery* and said that was the only resource I would need to begin tutoring. I still have two extremely well-used copies!!"