

# Twenty Years After Rudolf Flesch

ARE THE NEW BASAL READING PROGRAMS DOING THE JOB?

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld, *Author*

*Delivered at the 14th Annual Reading Reform Foundation Conference, Arizona May 23, 1975*

THIS is the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Rudolf Flesch's famous book, *Why Johnny Can't Read*. It is probably the single most important book on American education published in the twentieth century, because it identified and exposed to public view the cause of the most serious educational problem this country has ever faced, to wit: the inability of our educational system to teach our children to read at the level required by the complexity of our civilization. Rudolf Flesch made America aware that there was indeed an identifiable cause to what was already, in 1955, a staggering reading problem: the cause was the wholesale adoption by virtually all of our schools of the look-say or sight vocabulary method of teaching children to read. What did look-say actually do that was so horrible and illogical? It converted our English writing system, which is alphabetic, into a hieroglyphic system, which it is not. And the tragic experience of the last forty years has taught us unequivocally that you cannot teach an alphabetic writing system hieroglyphically. To attempt to do so results in functional illiteracy, reading disability, dyslexia, strephosymbolia, or anything else you want to call it.

I don't have to tell you what kind of reception American educators gave Rudolf Flesch's book. *Time* magazine of January 9, 1956, summing up the events of 1955, put it very succinctly:

If 1955 was notable for anything as far as the U.S. public school is concerned, it may be that it will be remembered as the Year of Rudolf Flesch . . . American education closed ranks against Flesch, and when educators were not denouncing the "Devil in the Flesch," they were damning the "Flesch peddlers." Nevertheless, though Johnny was marred by flagrant exaggerations, it remained on the bestseller list for thirty-nine weeks, and thousands of parents — and teachers — found in Flesch the angrily dramatic spokesman they had been waiting for.

Contrary to what *Time* said, there were no flagrant exaggerations in Dr. Flesch's book. If anything, the book underestimated the long-range impact of look-say on our educational system, and it certainly overestimated the integrity and intelligence of our educators. In fact, as Dr. Flesch pointed out to me himself, he was naive in assuming that the educational establishment would respond favorably to his findings, that is, to the eleven or so test studies which proved phonics to be superior to look-say in beginning reading instruction. Today, Dr. Flesch takes a very dim view of the situation. He wrote me a year and a half ago: "I've by now arrived at the philosophical conclusion that the end of the American Empire is foreordained, and that Vietnam, Watergate, and our educational catastrophe are all part of the inevitable process of history." These are very pessimistic words. However, I don't believe that the process of our decline is inevitable, or foreordained. I believe that we still have the power to reverse the trend. I don't believe

that we have gone beyond the point of no return. Human beings have remarkable resilience and there are numerous modern examples illustrating this. Who would have thought in 1945 when Germany and Japan lay in ruins that twenty years later they would be among the most affluent industrial nations of the free world? So it is possible to recover from disaster if not avoid it.

What we must ask ourselves is what is it about the American educational system or establishment which has made reading reform — a return to the alphabet via intensive phonics — so difficult to bring about? Why is there such resistance to common sense among educators? In my speech last year, I stated that the greatest obstacle to literacy in America are the teachers of America because they don't know how to teach our children to read. And the single group of people most responsible for creating this situation are those who teach our teachers: the professors of education who live in an academic dream world all their own. The look-say method was dreamed up among them and handed down to the classroom teacher. Somewhere in the early part of the century a few professors of education decided that our alphabetic writing system could be better taught as a hieroglyphic writing system. There was no scientific evidence to support this idea, since at no time had the English writing system been taught as hieroglyphics except briefly in Boston from 1837 to 1844. That experiment was failure then, but that fact was unknown to our professors of education who were busy writing the new look-say textbooks.

Many classroom teachers rejected this idiotic look-say idea from the beginning. But that was thirty years ago. Today, most of our younger teachers have been thoroughly brainwashed by their professors of education to believe that our English writing system is indeed a hieroglyphic one. It is possible to convince many of them that it isn't, but not easy. For when you reach them, you must often break through a sometimes fanatic prejudice against intensive phonics instilled by their professors.

When most of us think of public education we think of the neighborhood school and some of the good teachers who taught us the basics. But that school building is simply the tip of the iceberg. Far more important is the hierarchal structure of public education which determines what is taught in those classrooms, and that hierarchal structure hidden from public view, is far more powerful and all pervasive than the visible teacher. To find out what it is thinking and doing you must read the educational journals, belong to educational organizations, attend educational conferences, and look over the textbooks the professors of education write.

Two weeks ago the International Reading Association — the citadel of look-say, better known as the IRA — held its twentieth annual convention in New York City. I was tempted to attend, but after looking over its 56-page program in the January issue of *The Reading Teacher*. I decided that I would be wasting my time. Here's a sample of some of the symposia offered to the conventioners:

Models and Techniques for the Construction and Implementation of a Behavioral Objectives Continuum.

Developing Assessment Instruments for Measuring Affective-Domain Objectives in Reading.

Practical Applications to the Cloze Procedure.

An Individualized Module for Training Teachers and Prospective Teachers to Administer a Reading-Placement Inventory.

Some Closure on Cloze; Beyond Placement to Teaching.

Saturation Tactics in Reading.

The Relationship Between Growth in Syntactic Complexity of Oral and Written Language and Reading Comprehension.

Hierarchical and Holistic Structure: Should Reading Be Taught As a Series of Subskills Or As a Holistic Process?

Instructional Practices that Contribute to Sight Vocabulary Deficiencies.

Format of Modules for Competency-Based University Programs.

Issues and Applications of Criterion-Referenced Reading Measures.

I could go on and on, but I'm sure you get the point. The professors of education have made the teaching of reading so incredibly complex that you begin to wonder if the intellectually confusing environment of the college of education itself produces its own form of insanity. All of these people live in a world of "research," "graduate studies," and doctoral dissertations made increasingly complex because of the need to justify the existence of a couple of thousand PhD's, exacting more and more money from the educational bureaucracy.

Of course Rudolf Flesch was attacked as simplistic when his book came out. And in fact it was simplistic by its very nature, because the alphabet is very simple when compared to hieroglyphics. In fact, the alphabet was invented to make reading and writing as simple as possible. The hieroglyphic system had become so cumbersome, complex, unwieldy, and difficult, that the alphabet had to be invented. But as simple as the alphabet is, it is based on a very profound discovery; that all of spoken language can be reduced to a relatively small number of irreducible voice sounds. That is the significant idea in back of the alphabet. That is the idea that gives the alphabet such incredible power. That is the idea that in the slow-moving ancient world made hieroglyphics obsolete overnight. And that is the idea completely unknown to most of America's top professors of education.

It is interesting to note that the International Reading Association was founded a year after Rudolf Flesch's book came out by those professors of education who had written all of those look-say textbooks. Its first president, in fact, was William Scott Gray, the chief author of Dick and Jane. The IRA told American teachers to keep on teaching reading as if *Why Johnny Can't Read* had never been written.

In 1955 when Johnny was published, there was only one phonics textbook on the market in all of America, the Hay-Wingo *Reading With Phonics* published by Lippincott. But it wasn't until 1963 — a full eight years later — that the publishing industry began to respond to the demand for a return to phonics. In that year Lippincott published the McCracken and Walcutt *Basic Reading* phonics program, Open Court published its phonics reading program, and the Economy Company came out with *Phonetic Keys to Reading*. But the big companies — Scott Foresman, Macmillan, Ginn, Harper & Row, Houghton Mifflin, etc. — continued to publish and sell their look-say reading programs, all of which were given the full support of the educational establishment through the IRA, its publications, teacher training programs, and conferences.

So for the first eight years after the Flesch book was published, virtually nothing was done by the educational establishment to change anything. In 1967 Dr. Jeanne Chall, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, after five years of research, published her

book, *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*, with irrefutable evidence that a “code emphasis” method, that is, the alphabet, used in beginning reading instruction produced better readers than methods, which began with a “meaning emphasis,” that is, look-say. Dr. Chall, however, qualified her findings. She wrote:

I cannot emphasize too strongly that the evidence does not endorse any one code-emphasis method over another...

Nor can I emphasize too strongly that I recommend a code emphasis only as a beginning reading method — a method to start the child on — and that I do not recommend ignoring reading-for-meaning practice.

So you can see that even though many of us assumed that Dr. Chall meant intensive phonics when she was talking about code-emphasis, look-say people equally assumed that she meant something much more watered down. By the way, when did the alphabet suddenly become a “code”? Why was learning the alphabet now described as “breaking the code”? What was behind this change in terminology? The use of the word “code” came from the linguists, notably from the linguist Leonard Bloomfield. Bloomfield had become interested in reading instruction and found that the methods used to teach children to read in America were in complete violation of the findings of linguistics, and he elaborated on this in a long essay in the April and May 1942 issues of the *Elementary English Review*. His views could be summed up as follows:

(1) The English writing system is an alphabetic one as opposed to the Chinese system which is ideographic. (2) The spoken language is composed of a limited number of identifiable, distinctive sounds, which he called phonemes, each of which is represented in the written language by a grapheme. In teaching a child to read, it was necessary to first teach him the phoneme-grapheme correspondences. Since there are approximately 46 phonemes in our language (some say only 44) and an alphabet of 26 letters to represent them, some graphemes are composed of one or more letters including letters which may be silent. (3) Because English spelling is so highly irregular, the phoneme-grapheme relationships should be taught by presenting the child with one-syllable words from regular spelling patterns first, and introducing the irregular spelling patterns after the regular ones have been mastered. The letter sounds should not be taught in isolation, because they are not used as such in ordinary speech. The sounds of the letters should be inferred by the learning of one-syllable words in regular, easily recognizable spelling patterns.

On this last and very important point, Dr. Chall wrote:

“Bloomfield was even more strongly opposed to sounding and blending than the authors of the conventional basal-reading programs. Like the proponents of the conventional wisdom, he insisted that words always be read as wholes. Unlike these proponents, however, he urged that the letters be mastered (identified by name) before word reading is started. When a new word is taught or when a child fails to recognize a word, Bloomfield said, he should spell it (say the letters), not sound it.”

So you can see that the intrusion of Bloomfield’s anti-phonics linguistic doctrine could open the door to unlimited mischief. You and I know that you cannot teach intensive phonics without teaching the child to isolate the letter sounds. Thus, when Dr. Chall used

the phrase “code emphasis,” she did not necessarily mean intensive phonics. And that is why the look-say establishment, although it was critical of Dr. Chall’s book, was nowhere as hostile toward her as they were toward Dr. Flesch. In fact, Dr. Chall was the featured speaker at this year’s IRA convention in New York.

Meanwhile, the publishers of the look-say basal-reading programs, in bringing out new basal programs, incorporated a great deal of linguistic thinking. So now we hear a lot about coding, decoding, and uncoding, graphemes and phonemes, etc. Since no one is quite sure what anyone means, you can get away with an awful lot of messy, half-baked pedagogy. Before I give you a few samples of such pedagogy in the current basal programs, let me say a word about the linguists. First, I don’t like the word code. Code denotes something secret and difficult to figure out. The dictionary defines code as: a set of signals representing letters or numerals, used in sending messages, as by telegraph, flags, etc., or a system of secret writing in which letters, figures, etc., are arbitrarily given certain meanings.

Now the alphabet is not a secret code that the child is supposed to figure out on his own from whole words. It is a set of well-known symbols with very specific well-known meanings, and it should be taught to the child as systematically, logically, and openly as possible. I disagree with the linguistic objection to voicing isolated sounds, because it infers that the child is not intelligent enough to learn the meanings of 26 letters. When you consider that a child of six comes to the First grade with a speaking vocabulary of at least several thousand words, all of which he has taught himself through trial and error, I cannot for the life of me understand why educators think he cannot learn the sound meanings of 26 alphabet letters. It is vitally important for the child to understand the concept of the alphabet — that speech sounds can be isolated and represented on the printed page by letters. What is so terribly difficult about this concept? Why not tell the child the alphabet letters stand for speech sounds and teach him what letters stand for what sounds?

The fact is that our educators, for some peculiar reason, underestimate the intelligence of the normal child, they underestimate his intellectual curiosity, they underestimate the seriousness with which he goes about learning to speak his own language, they underestimate how stimulating and enjoyable such intellectual work can be.

But you don’t underestimate a child when you teach him intensive phonics. You are telling him: “Look, I think you’re intelligent enough to learn this.” And the child appreciates your confidence.

As you’d expect, the basal-reading programs published after the Chall book incorporated a great deal of pseudo linguistic nonsense in their look-say methodology. Let me give you an example of some of this nonsense. In 1969 Ginn & Company came out with its new basal program, Reading 360. They went hog wild with their own version of linguistics. To start with they violated the first principle of the linguistic approach: not to use pictures. The Ginn beginning program is crammed full of big, powerful, distracting pictures, as are all the other basal programs. The cost of all this artwork must be staggering. As in all the look-say programs, the new Ginn program teaches the letters as phonetic clues. The vowels are not taught until level 3. To teach the vowel sounds, the authors contrived about as complicated a way of doing it as possible, using completely new terminology. In the Reading 360 program there is no longer any such thing as a short

or long vowel. There are now “glided” and “unglided” vowel sounds. The glided vowel sound is introduced on page 73 of the Teacher’s Edition (Level 3) in this way:

Repeat the word *kite*, emphasizing the medial vowel sound. Identify this sound as a glided vowel sound. Help the children understand that “glide” means to move smoothly from one place to another — the way a sailboat moves across the water, or the way a skater moves across the ice.

Demonstrate the meaning of a glided vowel sound by slowly pronouncing /ay/ to show that the sound slides from /a/, as in *father*, to /iy/, as in *me*. Tell the children that the English language has several glided vowel sounds, and /ay/, as in *kite*, is one of them.

Encourage the children to pronounce /ay/ several times, so they can hear the sound glide from /a/ to /iy/ and feel the jaw move as the sound is being pronounced. Reinforce awareness of this sound by asking the children to repeat the following: /ay/ *ride*, /ay/ *side*, /ay/ *white*, /ay/ *dime*.

Now what purpose is served by teaching a child that the long *i* sound is divided into two parts and that your jaw glides from one part to the next? None whatever, except perhaps to make him tongue-tied. The old look-say books gave him a reading disability. Now they want to add a speech impediment. In phonics, we teach a child to identify the long *e* sound because it is represented by a particular letter and by particular spelling patterns. There is no reason to care whether it glides or does somersaults. Incidentally, is long *e* a glided or unglided vowel? Eeeee. I wonder how they handle that one. In the Ginn 360 simple short vowels are taught as “unglided” vowels. The silent *e* is now called the “*e* marker,” and a syllabic unit is now called a “graphemic base.” The look-say people used to argue that phonics was too difficult to teach a six-year-old. So now they give him a course in college linguistics.

Another example of modern pedagogical madness is the Scott Foresman Reading Systems program, published in 1971 to replace Dick and Jane. If you think Dick and Jane was bad, wait till you see this mess. It is no doubt the most confusing, ill-conceived reading instruction program ever put together by a small army of PhDs.

Here’s their definition of reading: “The interaction between the reader and written language through which the reader tries to reconstruct the message from the writer. Learning to read involves the acquisition of the concepts, skills, and comprehension strategies needed to understand, use, enjoy, and evaluate the messages communicated in various kinds of written language.” That definition, of course, can apply to the reading of anything from Chinese ideographs to Egyptian hieroglyphics. It connotes breaking the code of some horribly complex system of symbols as impenetrable as the *Rosetta Stone*. The key concept in the Scott Foresman system is ‘comprehension strategies,’ which is really just a new way of saying “word attack.” Here’s how the Scott Foresman people describe their own system:

There are so many different cues to meaning. In Scott Foresman Reading Systems, teaching children to read is teaching them how to recognize these cues and use them as strategies. Pictures provide cues to meaning in books. At early levels pictures are used, often with the initial consonant, to provide the cue to a word . . . The context of what children

are reading can provide many hints that help with the unfamiliar. If the word *scolded* on the third line of the right-hand page gives children trouble, their teacher points out the information that the context gives them: "Lisa frowned at the grompet and said, 'Don't be silly!' What's another word for said that explains she sounded cross?" In providing further help for the word *scolded*, if needed, a teacher should help children eliminate guesses such as "angry talking," or "yelled" by reminding pupils of what they know about letter-sound relationships. Pupils have been working with consonants since Level 2, with vowels since Level 3. By Level 8, most children will be fairly proficient at using their knowledge of letter-sound relationship cues. . .

There you have it. By level 8 the children will be only fairly proficient in their knowledge of our alphabetic system, which is taught to them not as an alphabetic system, but as phonetic cues. Watson Washburn used to refer to look-say as the look-and-guess method. Is there a more accurate description of this Scott Foresman approach?

The other so-called eclectic basal reading programs are not much better than the Ginn and Scott Foresman. And that is why we still have a mammoth reading problem throughout our educational system. In this year of 1975, most American school children are still being subjected to classroom-induced reading disability and dyslexia which will handicap their intellectual growth for life. One could have made excuses for this situation in 1955, when no one knew the causes of the problem and there were virtually no phonics reading instruction materials available. But today the market offers the concerned parent as well as the school system any number of good phonics programs. And yet the resistance to intensive phonics, emanating mainly from the professors of education in the teachers' colleges, is what is making functional illiteracy inevitable for millions of youngsters. Educational malpractice is so widespread in our country; it makes its medical counterpart pale in comparison.

It's not difficult to see why Dr. Flesch is pessimistic twenty years after the publication of his book. Law schools complain about law students who can't write a brief. Medical schools complain about medical students who can't read their medical books. The SAT scores decline year after year, and the educators complain that there must be something wrong with the tests. In 1972 reading scores in New York City schools were the worst ever recorded! Only 32 percent of the pupils were reading at or above grade level. In 1973 the Board of Education in New York became jubilant because the score had risen to 33.8 percent, a less than 2 percent improvement over the previous year. And in 1974 New York was satisfied because the scores held steady at 33.8 percent. At the same time it was revealed that there had been widespread cheating on the tests, so we can be sure that the real scores are probably much lower than the recorded ones. Also, the tests were no doubt based on eclectic, sight-vocabulary reading standards, so you can imagine the extent of the reading disaster in the nation's largest school system. Is there any excuse for this disgraceful and tragic educational catastrophe which is destroying the literacy of a nation?

The major difference between now and twenty years ago is that today the parent can get help in teaching his child intensive phonics, whereas in 1955 or 1960 he would have been totally lost. Yet, twenty years ago there were still plenty of old-timers who could teach bootleg phonics. Today, not many parents even know that their children need help and we have thousands of young teachers who can barely read and write themselves. So in a sense our task is more difficult today because we are dealing with an educational system in a chronic state of disintegration and confusion, in the process of destroying every vestige of structure and tradition. And when some parents in some towns and cities try to get their schools back to teaching the basics, the progressive educators get together and start planning strategies to defeat them. Now that the classrooms have been opened up to sex education, behavior modification, sensitivity training, tranquilizing drugs, forced busing, team teaching, and every other possible kind of experimentation, the reading-methods controversy is brushed aside as irrelevant or old hat. Most teachers assume that the controversy between look-say and phonics was settled long ago, in favor of look-say, of course. If you bring it up, they give you that "Not again" look. So the battle is far from won. But it is being won because those of us who advocate intensive phonics are much better prepared and far more knowledgeable than we were ten years ago. It is being won because each year we win more valuable allies in the educational system. It is being won because people like Bettina Rubicam and Kathy Diehl and countless others have persevered through thick and thin to bring the message of phonics to whoever will listen.

Let me end my speech by telling you about one mother in the borough of Queens, New York, Mrs. Barbara Franz, a widow, who six months ago took her six-year-old son Johnny out of the First grade of the local public school because she became aware that they were not teaching him how to read but how to word guess. She decided to tutor him at home with the alphabet. Now what is interesting is that Mrs. Franz had never heard of phonics, or Dr. Flesch, or the Reading Reform Foundation. But she knew enough about the alphabet to know that Johnny wasn't being taught it.

The Board of Education decided to take Mrs. Franz to court as a negligent parent. Meanwhile, her sister had given her a copy of *Why Johnny Can't Read*, and suddenly she became aware of the whole phonics-look-say controversy that has been raging for the last twenty years. She got in touch with Dr. Flesch who decided to testify in her behalf as an expert. I became aware of the case in a conversation with Dr. Flesch, and I shall also be testifying in Mrs. Franz's behalf. On May 1, I went down to New York to appear at a hearing. The hearing was postponed, but during the visit I got to meet both Johnny and Dr. Flesch. For me, it was a tremendously moving moment.

The other day Mrs. Franz sent me a copy of a letter to her from Irving Anker, Chancellor of the New York City Board of Education) explaining their position on phonics. He wrote:

"The attached material from Nila Blanton Smith's standard text *Reading Instruction for Today's Children* deals with this controversy over methodology in the teaching of reading, and should be of interest to you. The enclosed New York State Position Paper on reading, based on sound research, sums up the position with which the city manuals concur. Phonics as a word attack skill is used in our schools in the teaching of reading, together with other essential skills."

So there you have the official position twenty years after Rudolf Flesch, the same position they had twenty years ago. Nila Banton Smith, of course, is the official historian



of the International Reading Association, and it's her book that Mr. Anker cites as authority.

And so the struggle goes on. But when I saw little Johnny's face light up because I had come to help him and his mother, I knew that this was the most worthwhile struggle in America today. Johnny exists. He is a real little boy facing an educational system determined to destroy his intellect. And we must be equally determined to see that this does not happen.

## Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

March 16, 2010

About a year ago, Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld sent me a couple boxes of books, magazines and files. This speech was one of the treasures. Although the speech was delivered on May 17, 1974, I feel that it is as relevant as the day it was first presented. In spite of the fact that there is a lot of rhetoric that would lead one to think that there is a major phonics movement afoot, the situation in the classroom hasn't changed as much as one would have hoped.

Sam suggests that Hay-Wingo was the only phonics program commercially available when Flesch wrote *Why Johnny Can't Read and what you can do about it back in 1955*. I suppose if you are talking about basal programs, he was certainly correct. I believe the excellent Beacon Reader (1912, 1921) phonics series by Faucett was out-of-print by then, although still used by some teachers well into the Dick and Jane era. *The Beacon System* formed the basis for Hazel Loring's 1980 *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*, which is available for free on my website. On the other hand, the *Phonovisual Phonics System* has been in print since 1942. It is still a superb, universal system for teaching what Sam calls the irreducible speech sounds. It was designed to supplement the Dick-and-Jane/Alice-and-Gerry sight-vocabulary basals – and rescued untold thousands of otherwise sight-word victims from the fate of functional illiteracy. It was not a basal program as such – just an excellent phonics supplement. Another program that was still in print at that time was Florence Akin's 1913 *Words Mastery*. It is still a superb supplemental program for beginning or remedial reading. Charles C. Walcutt highly recommends it in his 1958 *Reading: Chaos or Cure*, and his 1961 book of essays, *Tomorrow's Illiterates*. Miss Geraldine Rodgers rates *Word Mastery* as a solid Code 10 in her system of rating phonics programs according to the number of sight-words taught, that is a perfect phonics score. I republished *Word Mastery* back in 2003 as a free e-book. It got over 274,000 hits last year! It is available on the Education Page of my website, [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net). Mr. Bloomfield also did not mention the 1936 Hegge-Kirk-Kirk *Remedial Reading Drills*, which are the very phonics exercises that Flesch used to cure his Johnny of the guessing habit he had acquired in his look-and-say reading classes. Again, these drills are designed for students who had failed with the look-and-say method, but could very easily have been used in a first-grade class to prevent the very problems it was designed to cure. The original drills are available for free download on my website. There is also a newer edition available from Academic Therapy, which is worthy of recommendation.

Someday I would like to publish an update version of Sam's essay in the light of current basals. At the present time, I find myself in the very unfortunate situation of having no phonics-first basals available that I can whole-heartedly recommend. We do have some good supplemental programs, but not basals that meet general state standards. I find that Zig Englemann's *Reading Mastery* is on many acceptance lists for Tier 3 (Group Interventions) and Tier 2 (Intensive Interventions), but sadly it is not on any of the Tier 3 lists (Core Instruction) that I have seen. I assume that it does not meet the "state standards," which tells us more about the defects of the "standards" than any

problems with *Reading Mastery*. Here is a list of some more essays by Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld that you can read on my website:

1. "Can Dyslexia Be Artificially Induced in Schools? Yes, Says Researcher Edward Miller" (1992)
2. "Miscue Analysis: Training Normal Children to Read Like Defective Children" (1992)
3. "How to Cure Dyslexia." (1990)
4. "Dyslexia: The Disease You Get in School." (1988)
5. "Why America Still Has a Reading Problem." (1974)
6. "Letter Precision" (1975)
7. "Why Pictures in Reading Instruction Are Harmful." (Sam sent to me on February 4, 2008. I have added information from Dr. Robert Calfee and Rudolf Flesch)
8. "The New Illiterates – Quotes." This paper is composed of quotes I took from Sam's 1973 book *The New Illiterates*." Sam's insights here are of fundamental importance.
9. "Cursive First, Print Later!" (1994). Sam and I part company with some of our phonics friends when we advocate cursive first. At least we practice what we preach and can show good results for keeping-the-faith. We have many of the Orton-Gillingham dyslexia people with us here.
10. "Who Killed Excellence" (1985)
11. Create Dyslexia: As Easy As Pie.
12. Pavlov's Dogs and American Education (2008) I have added some information on Pavlov and his theory.
13. School Induced Dyslexia and How it Deforms a Child's Brain (2011)

You may obtain copies of Dr. Blumenfeld's highly effective, intensive phonics program at:

Here is a link to a beautiful pdf of Alpha-Phonics:

[http://donpotter.net/pdf/alpha\\_phonics.pdf](http://donpotter.net/pdf/alpha_phonics.pdf)

Here is the Instruction Manual.

[http://donpotter.net/pdf/alpha\\_phonics\\_im.pdf](http://donpotter.net/pdf/alpha_phonics_im.pdf)

Here is the same program reformatted for students seeking to teach themselves.

[http://donpotter.net/pdf/af\\_self\\_tutor.pdf](http://donpotter.net/pdf/af_self_tutor.pdf)

Here is the free audio instruction that teaches each lesson for students working on their own.

<https://onedrive.live.com/?authkey=%21AAv0BPtP6PqozPI&id=A35A41AAE971F85D%21182&cid=A35A41AAE971F85D>

This document was published on the [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net) website on March 19, 2010. Updated on March 13, 2022.