

Bio - Mission Statement

Intuitive Phonics
no clutter®

Why at age 85, did I feel a mission to help the non-gifted learn to read?

After my 40+ years in the field of education, having sat through 272+ semester hours of college level classes; also, having been a classroom teacher for 36 years and having observed in more than 1000 classroom settings from grades K through 12, in 13 states, Canada, Guam and Hawaii, both public and private, and having seen students in almost each classroom struggle to read and/or to learn, I could no longer sit in isolated retirement.

Recent research of *How the Brain Learns to Read*, has sparked this mission. The research outcomes are awesome. If only my Grade 1 teacher had known that many foreign reading researchers have confirmed a link between phonics and reading success.

Allow me to review my own struggle with reading. September, 1940, age 6: school day one is imprinted in my mind - I distinctly remember standing beside our country road, EAGERLY waiting for the school bus. (That feeling never returned at any level.) At school, a neighbor boy lay on the back table and cried - all day. Our teacher - ignored him. Day two: he was fine - fit into the class very well. Later, we became friends.

But, what about reading? We used the latest, scientifically based reading series. I still remember page one. There was a picture - don't remember what it was - but under the picture in big letters was the word, **look**.

To write the word, **look**, begin with a downward line - then two circles - then a downward line with two arms.

Interesting! I'm sure we all said the word, "**look**" together. Then came page two; it showed, **look, look** - we were moving along nicely. Next, I think it was: **See Jane**. Page four: **See Jane run**. Wow, four words in one day. At that pace we should be able to read the English language within our lifetime.

I remember nothing about letters or sounds - just words on a page under pictures. I have no idea what any of the pictures were. I focused on the words. Reading was not a new concept: my mother had read to me; the family read together. We also read the Bible; so, I knew that **words** have meaning - however, I do NOT remember being told by anyone that **letters** have sounds. (How could one boy be so dense?)

Grade 2, 3: I gave up on spelling: ten words per week, 32 weeks in our school year; that is 320 words per year. I can still remember comparing that rate with a dictionary's size: hopeless! I lost all interest in spelling. Then, probably during grade 4, my teacher paid a visit to our home. She was concerned about my reading and spelling skills. (I do not think I was stupid: scored at 10th grade level in Geography in 5th or 6th grade. Did fine in math; liked it.)

My mother continued to read to me and with me; she tried to help me with spelling. Mother (an RN) would ask questions, such as, "What sound do you hear?" I do not remember my verbal responses but I do remember my mental thoughts: "Mother, what has that to do with anything, I'm not deaf." (If only she would have said - "Letters have sounds." I would possibly have said, "Oh!!!")

To continue: in the middle of grade 6 my parents placed me in a parochial school. I distinctly remember day two or three - the teacher said. "Tomorrow we are going to look at the vowels." (probably for my benefit.) "The **vowels** are **a, e, i, o, u**." **Vowel**, was a new word and I wrote the **a, e, i, o, u**, down. At home that night, I remember writing the alphabet, underlining, **a, e, i, o, u**. Then I tried to find some sort of mathematical pattern or any pattern or any meaning. I could find NONE. The next day we did something with the vowels, but I do not remember linking each to a sound. (How dense could I have been?) Incidentally, in college I had a course in *Phonetics*. The teacher would dictate words, both in English and foreign languages; we were to write the word, using the *International Phonetic Alphabet*. I don't remember missing any *letter - sound* link!!! (Question: is "denseness" related to age?)

As I stated, I have observed (with purpose) in well over 1000 classroom settings. In each, there have been students who were not with the program: mental drop-outs! Many could NOT read. They had given up - feeling "stupid" and/or **out** of the "learning" culture.

So, since lack of reading skills is a major problem, what can I, as an ancient retiree, **do**? My research showed that there have been at least three scholars who have written and devised strategies to teach all children to read. They had neither platform nor audience. The "expert" voices were so loud and the publishers so dominate that none of their proposals were accepted. They had no internet - only an innovative book that few ever read.
(Who listens to a non-professional?)

However, I do remember in the Fall of 1967, I began teaching in a new private school. I was placed in charge of the "end of year" achievement testing. Grade 1: each student tested at the 99th percentile in reading. We decided to retest the class, using Grade 2 tests. At least we did get a spread of scores with the bottom being at percentile 92.

Note: the previous summer I had completed an educational psychology course taught by a "Reading Specialist" who loved to inject tid-bits about the latest updates for Reading Education. He stated that typical Grade 1 students could read about 200 words and some might get up to about 400 words.

My curiosity about our Grade 1 scores made me ask the teacher, "About how many words can your kids read?" Her response was a shock. She said, "Oh, maybe about 4000." To an educator, those two numbers (400 or 4000) were notable. I knew she used a phonics approach for teaching reading.

Let me tell you about that reading program. It was phonics based, with the idea that letters are symbols for sounds in the English language (unique for that day's 1930s approach to reading).

Not the end of the story. That publisher was NOT a main-line publisher of reading books and evidently did not promote the program. Also, since its methodology was not "main stream" and its phonics approach was not widely accepted, its approach soon disappeared from the educational scene. That seems to be true for most programs that are not "main stream" (even though they may have been very successful).

Thus, about 3 years ago, as an aged educator, who often functioned "outside" the educational box, I decided to do some research and found that most "outside the box" reading instruction has been focused on "**How does the Brain Learn**" and has been done "outside" of the United States.

So, how does the brain learn? There are scores of studies showing that *learning to read*, actually helps the brain develop new neural pathways. These new pathways are valuable for all learning and for life. Also, brain research has found that *learning to read*, requires previous brain development by hearing and speaking words and sequences of words (sentences). This means that **readiness** for reading requires that children **hear** and **speak** their language.

Learning to read requires foundational **brain development**.

How do children develop these initial neural brain pathways. Research has shown that some children have heard millions of spoken words before entering school. Others have heard only thousands. (TV speech doesn't help.)

Question: Which student will be expected to *learn to read* more quickly?

Please listen to the first **10** minutes of this video.

[Words Matter](#)
(22 total minutes)

[Words Matter](#)
(3 minutes)

Please listen to the first **7** minutes of this video.

[Talking Matters](#)
(19 total minutes)

Also, I had observed that neither athletic coaches nor music teachers put a beginner "in the game" until some BASICS have been mastered and practiced (that is, until the brain has begun its training to develop intuitive skills).

My question: If athletes and musicians must practice the BASICS before a game or concert, why do we expect success from children who are **not ready** to read and are tossed into the learning game **with** students who **are ready**?

My KEY search: I have found no reading program that targets struggling readers, using a **Brain Training** process to develop an intuitive sense of the foundational letter-sound patterns of the English language.

My mission: devise an "on line" program that will begin to build an intuitive foundation of the letter-sound patterns of the English language. Also, the program will help develop a positive **Attitude** toward reading **Success**. (**A&S**)

Let's develop a **new, unique** foundational strategy that will focus on **Learning The Way the Brain Learns**.

Let's design *Brain Training*

The program will be designed for a **coach**.

- a parent - student, or
- a tutor - student, or
- a teacher – student.

Let's focus on the phonetic, **letter-sound** patterns, not phonics rules.

- ▶ **Let's design** it to be titled, ***Intuitive Phonics no clutter***®.
- ▶ **Let's design** it to be an incentive for struggling readers.
- ▶ **Let's design** it with incentives for developing reading **Success**.
- ▶ **Let's design** it to build a sense of phonetic, letter - sound **patterns**.
- ▶ **Let's design** it to be for the student who says, "***I hate reading***."
- ▶ Let's teach ***the way the brain learns***.
- ▶ Let's use phonetic, letter-sound **patterns**.
- ▶ **Let's do *Brain Training***.

▲ Three qualities are needed for both coach and student:

- ▶ **persistence**,
- ▶ **patience**,
- ▶ **practice**.

▲ Three qualities can result from diligence:

- ▶ **confidence**,
- ▶ **competence**,
- ▶ **comprehension**.

John-Mark Holland

[\(Tell me More\)](#)

[\(Not Interested\)](#)