

SPECIAL REPORT: Phono-Graphix and Synthetic Phonics

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Published by Read America

READ AMERICA
PO Box 1246
Mount Dora, Florida 32756

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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 0-9771330-5-2

Table of Contents

A NEW PARADIGM IN LITERACY INSTRUCTION	1
SYNTHETIC PHONICS IN THEORY	7
What the lobby organisations have to say	
SYNTHETIC PHONICS IN PRACTICE	17
The methods under the banner	
PHONO-GRAPHIX VS SYNTHETIC PHONICS	27
THE ROSE INTERIM REVIEW	47

A New Paradigm in Literacy Instruction

Phono-Graphix was the first reading method to describe the nature of the code and the skills needed to teach such a code. The approach described as, “**The Antithesis of Phonics**” by Daily Telegraph education editor John Clare (30 May, 1998) and “**Revolutionary**” by The Daily Mail education correspondent Diana Appleyard (28 September, 1998) is simple and pure relying heavily on logic and knowledge of how children learn.

Phono-Graphix teaches:

The Skills Needed to Read

segmenting

blending

phoneme manipulation

and the lessons for discovery of:

The Nature of the Code

letters are pictures of sounds

some sound-pictures can be represented with two or more letters

there is variation in the code, more than one way to show most sounds

there is overlap in the code, some sound pictures represent more than one sound

Also forwarded as fundamental to Phono-Graphix principles and practices is:

the understanding that children are motivated to learn through their own errors

a systematic scheme for correction of all errors made during lessons

lesson design that allows children to confirm information being told to them by the instructor

the inclusion of children’s literature throughout the instructional scheme

teacher flexibility within the framework of the scope and sequence of the programme

The method is widely recognised today as being the breakthrough approach to teaching segmenting, previously believed to be unteachable to young children (Bradley and Bryant, 1986), and being the first method to understand and lay out an instructional scheme for teaching the nature of the code to young children.

In 1998 Britain was ready for something new. Traditional Phonics instruction, sometimes in vogue but never the favourite of teachers, seemed stale in comparison. Real Books instruction was under serious scrutiny. Early numbers on onset and rime and word families were not promising. The timing was ripe for Phono-Graphix. Research on Phono-Graphix published in the *Orton Annals of Dyslexia* (McGuinness, C., et al, 1996) had recently rocked the literacy world. With standard score gains of 14 points in word reading and 19 points in word attack in just six to twelve hours of instruction, Phono-Graphix was now eight times faster than the next best literacy method available, Lindamood, and fourteen times faster than the tried and true old favourite Orton-Gillingham. In addition to the research to back it up, the developers of Phono-Graphix had in hand a parent how-to book, released in Britain by Penguin UK (1998) the year after the US FreePress edition was released. The method also came with the endorsement of Diane McGuinness, author of 'Why Children Can't Read', touting Phono-Graphix as "the most powerful reading method, the purest and most efficient way to teach a child to read." It was in this aura of excitement about the new Phono-Graphix method, that the developers of the scheme and authors of this article embarked upon our part in the metamorphosis of Britain's literacy instruction.

In an eighteen month period beginning in October 1998 we trained over six hundred teachers on seven week long certification courses and eleven one day internship courses around Britain. In all of this one trainee stood out above the others. It was in part because her accent was so odd. As an American newly living and working in England and married to an Englishman, I was actively building my knowledge base and my ear for accents in relation to regions of Britain. This one was different. Was she Irish?... or perhaps not British at all, but Dutch? No, she was actually an American who'd been living in Bradford-on-Avon for ten years. But her accent wasn't all that stood out about Susan Case. On the first morning of training during participant introductions, she stood and quite breathlessly vowed her allegiance to Phono-Graphix for life. "I so admire your innovation in having sorted this all out. I don't know what it is that allows people like you to see the forest for the trees, when teachers like myself miss it every day we go to school, for years and years, and years." Embarrassed I said a few words about owing it to extra time on my hands, etc., etc., passed it off to luck, and quickly changed topic with a question about the origin of her accent. But in truth, I was haunted by her words, and found myself wondering what mechanism allows one person to see, to use Susan's words, "the forest for the trees." It was around that time that I began reading and studying Thomas Kuhn's 'Structure of Scientific Revolutions', in which Kuhn perfectly described my discomfort when I first looked into the bowels of a sound-picture, when he wrote, "Rather than being an interpreter, the scientist who embraces a new paradigm is like the man wearing inverting lenses." I hadn't read 'Structure of a Scientific Revolution' yet when Susan posed her question, but with his wisdom as hindsight, I believe that what allows one to see the forest for the trees, is the willingness to keep the inverted lenses on rather than tossing them into the dark forest and running for one's life; because to be the parent of a new paradigm is rather like being the parent of a tornado. As Kuhn went on to say, "Literally as well as metaphorically, the man accustomed to inverting lenses has undergone a revolutionary transformation of vision." The inverted lenses that allowed me to see the sound-picture for the words, remained inverted just long enough to capture my interest. The rest was, as I'd said to Susan in May of 1999, a matter of having the time to do something with my new vision.



Susan Case pictured presenting the Phono-Graphix Word Building lesson to reception students in 1999.

What I'd seen, that dark night in the forest, was so pathetically obvious that I had to doubt its validity as anything more than pure truth. So letters are pictures of sounds. AHA! Well yes, but it's rather like realizing the earth is round. So what? No one has fallen off the bottom end, and indeed we don't even know what end that is. But in the first years of 1990, the truth was out, so to speak, and indeed many children had fallen off the bottom—some 35-40% in fact during the Whole Language era. But as history showed me Phonics wasn't much better! Between the years of 1960 and the late 1970s when Phonics was born again via 'Why Johnny Can't Read', the literacy rate in the US and Britain was only marginally better, with some 25-30% of students

failing to reach basic competency. So what was next for me was to explore how and why the obvious truth that letters are pictures of sounds had always been so absolutely, utterly, thoroughly and entirely missed. For this, I turned to psychology which reminded me that we humans sort and categorize information in order to make sense of it. Hence our now famous 'Discovery Reading and Mapping' lesson. Unfortunately humans also have a propensity to create bureaucracy around anything that is not easily categorized. This is no doubt how phonics rules came into being. But by now I was well used to those inverted lenses of principle 1, so I invoked principle 1.a. **APPLY BROADER INVERTED LENSES.**

<p>The Nature of the Code and the Child as a Learner of the Code</p> <p>Letters are pictures of sounds.</p> <p>Sound pictures can be one or more letters.</p> <p>There is variation in the code; most of the sounds can be shown with more than one picture.</p> <p>There is overlap in the code; some of the pictures are used for more than one sound?</p> <p>The Skills Needed to Use Such a Code</p> <p>Segmenting: Because to use a sound picture code one must be able to access independent sounds within words.</p> <p>Blending: Because to use a sound picture code children must be able to push sounds together into words.</p> <p>Phoneme Manipulation: Because to use a code that contains overlap children must be able to slide sounds in and out of words that contain overlap spellings such as the <ow> in 'brown'.</p> <p>The Nature of the Learner</p> <p>Children Learn Best In Context and Through Active Discovery</p> <p>Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget said... "The child only deeply understands that which he has created."</p> <p>Through directed discovery the Phono-Graphix lessons help the child to create a schema for the code that is based on its true nature and the way children learn.</p> <p>Copyright Read America, 1990</p>

When seen in its entirety you realize that the English written code is entirely straightforward and needs no rules, only a cursory understanding of the nature of the code, letters are pictures of sounds, a sound picture can be shown with one or more letters, there are many ways to show each sound, there is overlap in the code, Given that history and psychology has shown us that the children don't use rules anyway, this is a very good thing. Once I'd worked out the nature of the code and the nature of the learner vested with learning it, what remained for my discovery was the skills needed to learn such a code, and how a learner, such as the human child, might learn these. Here there was a lot of data for me to pile through. Blending, or 'synthesis' as it is called now, was obvious and written everywhere in the Phonics literature. From Noah Webster to Jean Chall it was all about blending, blending, blending. Blending was the old hat in the first years of 1990s. The new words on everyone's lips were 'auditory processing'. But no one had unlocked why it was important, and while on the topic of 'why', I also asked why blending was important. For these answers I applied pure logic. To read a code that is comprised of pictures of sounds one must be able to push the sounds into meaningful words. But why auditory processing? Back to the nature of the code, if sound pictures can represent more than one sound, like the ea in break as compared to the ea in bread or beach, in order to read a sound picture code that contains this sort of overlap one must be able to pull sounds in and out of words, trying the various possibilities until a meaningful word that makes sense in the context of the text is found. All this worked out, I began to wonder if children could pull the sounds in words apart in order to learn how to show sounds and to accurately spell words. This led me to Peter Bryant and Lynette Bradley's work, and to a brick wall that says 'young children cannot separate the sounds in words'—or at least they could not in any of the research to date, which lead me to invoke principle 1.a.again.**APPLY BROADER INVERTED LENSES.**

With the broader view of how children learn and understand questions asked of them, I discovered that the wrong question was being asked of young children, that indeed they can separate sounds in words if you give them spatial markers for doing so, a kind of map upon which to build the word. Again my application of logic was confirmed by psychology and the knowledge that children are pretty abysmal at temporal problem solving, but really pretty good at spatial problems. **—And so on, and so on, and so on.**

The National Literacy Strategy - A Brief History

Britain's answer to 30% of its nine-year-olds reading below competency came in the form of a mandate. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was put into practice in 1998. It was meant as the definitive word on how literacy should be taught in English schools. In its design, the engineers of the NLS reached out to proponents of literature based instruction, traditional phonics instruction, more contemporary phonics instruction like onset and rime and word families, and they reached out to the new paradigm on the block, Phono-Graphix. Between 1998 and 2000 the authors consulted with the head of the NLS, Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) chief inspector Jim Rose and head of Ofsted's primary section Keith Lloyd, and various officers of what is now known as the Department of Education and Skills (DfES). Consultation included Mr. Rose and Mr. Lloyd's visit to New Jersey schools to observe Phono-Graphix classroom instruction, six meetings in London, a dozen or so presentations of the principles and practices of Phono-Graphix to groups of Ofsted school inspectors around the country, and participation in the Conference on Phonics, March, 1999. During these consultations the authors forwarded the principles and practices of Phono-Graphix for inclusion in the National Literacy Strategy.

According to the engineers of the NLS the final document provided for a perfect blend of phonic and literature based instruction. From the perspective of the authors of this article the NLS contained enough of a description of the four concepts that comprise the nature of the code and the three skills needed to access such a code to allow a slow but steady revolution of thought. Also carefully written into the NLS was the teacher freedom needed to allow the spread of the principles and practices of Phono-Graphix. Indeed our principles and practices presentations to Ofsted inspectors in 1999 and 2000 and the observations of Ofsted inspectors in schools using Phono-Graphix resulted in these words appearing on Ofsted's website in 2001 "The innovative Phono-Graphix method demystifies phonics by throwing out the rules and re-emphasising the nature of the code-sound to symbol. Phono-Graphix emphasises the representation of the sound as the children actually hear it. The progress for language and literacy is outstanding." We were very happy with the progression of events. As we have long heard from teachers trying to wedge Phono-Graphix into a fixed system, a little Phono-Graphix is better than a lot of anything else.

Factions Form and New Banners Emerge

Unfortunately not all the consultants to the NLS shared the sentiment of the authors of this paper regarding the amount of their particular choice of instructional approach that made its way into the final draft of the NLS. The glow of camaraderie that had existed during the information gathering stage of the NLS had long faded. After its official roll-out and a year or two of observation and closer analysis, considerable criticism of the NLS began to surface from both sides. According to proponents of literature based instruction the NLS contained far too much of a phonic element. According to traditional phonics proponents it contained far too much literature based instruction, as well as the wrong kind of phonic instruction, such as onset and rime and word families. The inevitable factions formed, which quickly fattened to lobby proportions. Tom Burkard of the Promethean Trust and the collaborative efforts of Mona McNee's organisation, the Reading Reform Foundation represent the two lobby groups that have been most vocal in forwarding Phonics.

Very quickly after the roll out of the National Literacy Strategy came the first of what has come to be known as 'the Clackmannanshire papers'. The authors, Rhona Johnston and Joyce Watson, distinguished between some of the newer practices coming out of research such as that conducted by Bradley and Bryant and Usha Goswami, for instance, placing these under the heading of 'Analytic Phonics' and the practices of old fashioned phonics, bee says 'b', two vowels go walking, and sounding out.

With the release of 'Clack 1', comparing the effects of each in schools in Clackmannanshire, Scotland, the distinction between Analytic and Synthetic Phonics became the topic of discussion. In the year 2000 in

Britain, if you taught reading you were either Analytic Phonics or Synthetic Phonics. Phono-Graphix, you might say, got caught in the early crossfire. While the Analytic and Synthetic Phonics factions refined their arguments, distancing themselves from one another, at least in theory if not in actual classroom practice; Phono-Graphix just kept on with the momentum we'd gained in the previous two years. With brilliant data coming in from field studies being run around the country, and indeed the English speaking world, both the Analytic faction and the Synthetic faction had an eye to pull the fledgling paradigm under its banner. Within the two week period after the release of the first Clackmannanshire paper the authors of this article received phone calls or emails from every major paper in the country asking if we were Analytic or Synthetic Phonics. It was about this time that Trevor McDonald's News Night ran a segment on the spread of Phono-Graphix in Britain. That appearance went a long way to maintain the early momentum of Phono-Graphix, but still the pressure was on to commit one's soul and one's data to one side or the other.

According to the National Reading Panel, Synthetic Phonics teaches students explicitly to convert letters into sounds (phonemes) and then blend the sounds to form recognizable words. The panel goes on to say, "In the synthetic phonics approach, students are taught to link an individual letter or letter combination with its appropriate sound and then blend the sounds to form words."

Life Outside the Paradigm

The question of analysis or synthesis never seemed a serious one to these authors. No matter how deep we dug into the instructional practices of Synthetic Phonics, and no matter who we asked, we could not find anything about it that was new or different to the Phonics we had written about in our 1998 book 'Reading Reflex'; the same Phonics that was now being called 'Explicit Systematic Phonics' in America and Canada, the same Phonics that had left 20-30% of our children illiterate during two historical rises to instructional prominence. We always believed that the rigour of Phono-Graphix and its pure logic would distinguish it from Synthetic Phonics. Surely anyone with an eye toward truth would not consider a method that taught three skills and the entire nature of the code, an equal to a method which held as its central premise- blend, blend, blend. If we were guilty of anything it was of not digging in our heels deeper still, not taking seriously the heat building around the debate, and the determination Synthetic Phonics lobbies held to place Phono-Graphix and its data under their banner.

It was about this time that the authors began a three year process that was to result in the adoption into our family of two daughters from China. Lily joined our family in March of 2002 after a very stressful 15 month wait for her, in a period that saw new threats to international relations with the events of 9/11, US intelligence planes shot down on the South China coast and an international ban on travel to China with the SARS epidemic. After finally bringing Lily home we stopped long enough to host our Essential Education Conference in New Orleans, commence our member publications scheme resulting in a new product line, and launch our member eZine parenTeacher.net. Then in February of 2004 it was back to China for baby Rose. The authors confess that holding the Analytic and Synthetic demons at the gates was not the top priority on our minds at the time—though all the while we'd been clear in our communications with the lobby on both sides, that we did not consider Phono-Graphix to be Analytic or Synthetic, but rather a third paradigm entirely and the only one that addressed the four concepts that comprise the nature of the code, the skills needed to read and spell such a code, and did so in keeping with what we know about how children learn.



The Rose Interim Report

As 2005 came to a close, the Rose Interim Review was published. It lays out a brand of Synthetic Phonics quite different to what we have heard, seen, or read about to date from the two lobby groups forwarding it. It is important to the outcome that the distinction between Pre-Rose Review and Post-Rose Review Synthetic Phonics be drawn—important because this single document might be the greatest motion toward correcting phonic mislogic and misinformation ever to have been accomplished. Indeed where Clackmannanshire has been called ‘the Holy Grail of literacy instruction’, the Rose Review might well be the Rosetta Stone. Quite literally Rose has translated Synthetic Phonics through the lens of the Phono-Graphix paradigm by including the three skills needed to read and spell and the four concepts that comprise the nature of the code, and specifying that these be taught in a literature rich environment. This, despite the fact that until his review, Synthetic Phonics instruction did not include two of these skills (segmenting and phoneme manipulation), or two of the concepts that comprise the nature of the code (variation in the code and overlap in the code), and specifically excluded children’s literature. This distinction between what Synthetic Phonics was and what Synthetic Phonics is (according to Rose) is like night and day; and if taken to heart by Synthetic Phonics practitioners, authors of textbooks, teacher trainers, and the like, will result in the difference between the 14-20% failure we have received to date from Synthetic Phonics, and the 2-3% failure we’ve been promised.

Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this article is to:

- I. **Outline Synthetic Phonics theory and practice as established by the two lobby groups forwarding it prior to the Rose Interim Report. This section is presented in two parts:**
 - A. **Synthetic Phonics in Theory - What the Lobby Organisations Have to Say**
 1. **The Promethean Trust**
 2. **The Reading Reform Foundation.**
 - B. **Synthetic Phonics in Practice - What’s Happening in Classrooms**
 1. **A Review of Jolly Phonics - the exemplar Synthetic Phonics programme**
 2. **A Review of Sounds-Write - a Phono-Graphix copy cat gone Synthetic Phonics**
- II. **Outline Synthetic Phonics theory and practice as described in the text of the Rose Interim Report published on 1 December, 2005.**
- III. **Distinguish between these for historical record.**
- IV. **Clarify for historical record, that Phono-Graphix never fit into the Pre-Rose Report definition of Synthetic Phonics. Specifically we wish to avoid being discarded with Pre-Rose Synthetic Phonics, should its proponents fail to adapt the method to the definition provided for in the Rose Interim Report.**
- V. **Illuminate the path forward, with no confusion between Pre- and Post Rose Review Synthetic Phonics.**

Synthetic Phonics In Theory what the lobby organisations have to say

The Promethean Trust

In its position statement paper 'The End of Illiteracy - the holy grail of Clackmannanshire' presented to the Centre for Policy Studies and the Conference on Phonics in March 1999, the Promethean Trust describes Synthetic Phonics in these words:

all of the letter sounds are taught very rapidly
the emphasis is on blending sounds
can be taught in a few months

Given the recent rather heated debate in Britain over the importance of Synthetic Phonics, it's tempting to think there must be more to it than speed, letter sounds and blending, but the paper's author and the founder of the Promethean Trust, Tom Burkard confirms that indeed there is nothing more to it than that, on page 21 saying, "the central concept of synthetic phonics is that children should invariably sound out unknown words." Indeed if one took Burkard's Promethean Trust lead in 1999 one would assume that Synthetic Phonics is just a new name for the old and obvious practice of blending sounds together.

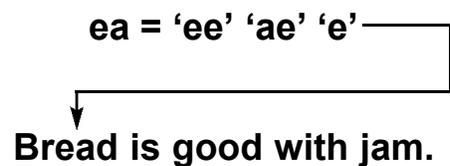
Regarding Skills and Information Requisite to Reading

"So why the stew?" our readers might ask. "Blending is good, yes?" Indeed it is, but a reading method it is not, and to suggest that the baby, the bath water, the soap and indeed the towel be allowed to slide down the drain with forty years of research is a bit of a big lump to swallow. This in combination with Burkard's courting of Phono-Graphix for a place under the Synthetic Phonics banner, earns the subject some space in this paper. Implying that Phono-Graphix is Synthetic Phonics is like saying that a rainbow is red. Yes, of course there is red in a rainbow, and blending in Phono-Graphix, but there is also the vast array of other colors in the spectrum. Phono-Graphix doesn't stop at one of the three skills needed to read, nor does it stop at the skills alone, but indeed goes on to describe why we need these skills via the four concepts of the nature of the code.

There was a large body of research available at the time Burkard's paper was released. The authors know that Burkard reached out to at least two researchers contributing to this. Between July 1998 and February 1999 Tom Burkard and the authors shared over fifty emails in which he was given explicit detail about the theories and procedures employed in Phono-Graphix ('Phono-Graphix- a new method for remediating reading problems', Orton Annals of Dyslexia, McGuinness, C., et al, 1996; 'Reading Reflex', McGuinness, C. and McGuinness, G., FreePress, 1998; Penguin 1999), In these emails we also firmly argued against Burkard's notion that Phono-Graphix fell under the banner of Synthetic Phonics. In addition to our concerns about the absence of phonological training in Synthetic Phonics, ie segmenting and phoneme manipulation; another consideration in these email communications and in reading his subsequent paper, is the lack of operationalisation of the term 'letter sounds'. What exactly does Synthetic Phonics mean by letter sounds?

Despite these concerns, and many hours and months spent in communications, Tom Burkard did in fact include the above referenced study and three other Phono-Graphix studies in his position paper on Synthetic Phonics. In fact, four Phono-Graphix studies, five Jolly Phonics studies, and two other studies employing less well known methods, were the only studies mentioned as representative of Synthetic Phonics in Burkard's paper. Might someone reading his paper and also familiar with Phono-Graphix, in the absence of anything but vague reference to blending and letter sounds, surmise that Synthetic Phonics includes instruction in the skills of segmenting and phoneme manipulation; and lessons in the four concepts comprising the nature of the code as described in the Phono-Graphix data?

Certainly not! Indeed if one read the full body of Burkard's paper with prior knowledge of Phono-Graphix one would be left bemused as to why Phono-Graphix studies were included in such a vague and methodless dissertation—methodless but for teaching letter sounds and blending. These authors went to great lengths to help Mr. Burkard understand why the skills of segmenting and phoneme manipulation were also important to reading and spelling. In order to learn a sound symbol code one must be able to access the segmented sound. In order to use a code that contains overlap one must be able to pull sounds in and out of words, trying them until meaning is accomplished.



Despite these efforts, on pages 29 and 30 of his paper Burkard goes to great lengths to explain to the reader why instruction in segmentation is, in his opinion, not needed: "The role of 'phonemic awareness' is frequently misunderstood," Burkard explains. He goes on to point to a 1991 Australian study ('Experimental Analysis of the Child's Discovery of the Alphabetic Principle', Byrne; in C. Perfetti and L. Rieben (eds) Learning to Read, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991, p. 83.), and claims Perfetti and Rieben forwarded the idea that, "phonemic awareness by itself is not enough to produce alphabetic insights. That, "knowledge of phoneme identity [letter sounds] is a firmer foundation for discovering the alphabetic principle than is segmentation ability." Has Burkard successfully convinced the reader to cast aside segmenting as a requisite skill to reading? Unfortunately his organisation has helped keep the wool over the eyes of the majority of English parents who feel that blending is the single key element to successful reading.

Even a casual read of the reference reveals that his words are a gross misrepresentation of what Perfetti and Rieben actually said vis-a-vis Byrne. In fact Perfetti and Rieben's reference (above) to Byrne's study contains no mention whatsoever of segmenting. Specifically what the authors say is, "Other laboratory studies with children have shown how difficult acquiring letter-sound correspondences can be in the absence of instruction. Byrne (1991) taught young children to read one-syllable words by pairing the words with their meanings; for example, fat was associated with a picture of a fat boy and bat was associated with a picture of a bat.

Then, with the pictures withdrawn, the children demonstrated that they could read the words alone. One might think that the children had inferred that the f made the sound /f/, because the f was the only letter that distinguished fat from bat and the phoneme /f/ was the only sound that distinguished the spoken word “fat” from “bat.” But instead, the children were unable to demonstrate that they had learned this association. When they were asked to judge whether the printed word fun said “fun” or “bun,” their responses were incorrect about as often as they were correct. Thus, in at least some conditions, children do not spontaneously infer letter-sound correspondences on the basis of being able to read whole words. This finding reinforces the importance of teaching children directly what they need to learn.” This misrepresentation of Perfetti and Rieben for the justification of teaching the sole skill of blending in the absence of segmenting is alarming. What Perfetti and Rieben actually say about segmenting appears further on in the paper in two passages:

1. “The phonological system is especially important for learning to read because, as we have observed, writing is a means representing speech. What are the child’s phonological abilities? An important part of the answer to this question is whereas the basics of speech perception are acquired rapidly, mental representations of abstract phonological structure undergo further refinement well into the period when children begin to be exposed to writing. Newborns can discriminate all the sounds (phonemes) that occur in spoken languages. Exposure to the sounds of one’s native language, however, appears to reduce this ability; by 12 months, infants readily discriminate only the sounds of their native language (Werker & Lalonde, 1988). Note, however, that completely reliable discrimination between words that differ by only a single speech segment do not develop until the beginning of age 5 (Gerken, 1994).”
2. “Treiman and Cassar’s findings reflect the difficulty of reliably segmenting syllables into phonemes and reinforce the conclusion that full awareness of phonemes is difficult to achieve prior to literacy. But the broader implication is that one underestimates the child’s potential grasp of the alphabetic principle—or at least the idea that speech sounds are associated with letters—if one considers only decoding. Spelling is the primary early indicator of this potential and can form the basis for later expression of the alphabetic principle in decoding.”

What Mr. Burkard suggests in his misrepresentation of Perfetti and Rieben, when he says, “...knowledge of phoneme identity is a firmer foundation for discovering the alphabetic principle than is segmentation ability,” takes the same logic of Analytic Phonics, ie, that you can teach blending with already blended phonemes as in onset and rime; and applies that logic to segmenting, ie you can teach segmenting in already segmented phonemes.

Regarding Children’s Literature

Burkard goes on to say, “The starting point of synthetic phonics is the fact that: the word recognition skills of the good reader are so rapid, automatic, and efficient that the skilled reader need not rely on contextual information. In fact, it is poor readers who guess from context – out of necessity because their decoding skills are so weak.” For this he references researcher Keith Stanovich (‘How Research might inform the Debate about Early Reading Acquisition’; Journal of Research in Reading 18:2, 1995). Burkard goes on to make this leap, “Since it is implausible that children can become good readers by encouraging them to use the skill of poor readers, synthetic phonics programmes begin by teaching children to recognise, articulate and blend the 42 to 44 basic sounds of English before they are introduced to books,” lending his tortured logic to the Synthetic Phonics’ practice of withholding books from young children until they can read, in the name of a researcher who neither said, nor implied any such thing.

Is this leap just sloppy logic, or is it an intentional attempt to mislead? One need look no further than Burkard’s own admission as to his devices in his words written about Keith Stanovich on the Reading Reform Foundation forum in December of 2005: “Although I agree that Stanovich, in common with most American

psychologists, is working under some pretty fundamental misapprehensions, we should never forget that he has been one of the most persuasive foes of Goodman, Smith, et al. I agree with Jenny [Chew]--he shouldn't be dismissed too lightly. I have cited him on a number of occasions."

And how long exactly does Burkard suggest we withhold books from children? He explains, "In the Clackmannanshire trials, pupils were first taught the sounds for the letters 's', 'a', 't', 'p', 'i', and 'n'. They were then taught to blend these sounds into words (eg 'pat', 'sit', 'nap', 'tin') within a matter of a week or two," and goes on to suggest that all the one letter to one sound code can be learned in nine weeks, and says, "... their introduction to literature is not long delayed." But Mr. Burkard does not go on to tell us what children's literature contains only phonemes spelt with single letters? In fact these children would presumably be given the so called 'decodable reader' after nine weeks, and real children's literature would be withheld until the end of the following year when the entire code had been taught and some degree of fluency established.

Just how seriously do Synthetic Phonics teachers take the doctrine that children should not be exposed to books until they can read? We have interviewed two teachers and a parent volunteer from three different education authorities who have told us that they were directed not to show the pages when reading stories to the class for fear the children might remember whole words of text. Indeed there is some evidence that this practice is tightening. The Sounds-Write method is an unauthorised copy of Phono-Graphix. Its training course and its teaching file read almost word for word like Phono-Graphix training and the Phono-Graphix Word Work manual. Despite the plagiarising of Phono-Graphix, there are distinct and glaring differences between the copy and the original. Phono-Graphix classroom practice puts children in real text from the start of instruction. Our Buddy Reading Lesson and particular error correction techniques employ real children's books in discovery of the code. In stark contrast Sounds-Write withholds not only books but indeed any written words, until children can read. David Philpot, one of the organisers of the plagiarising of Phono-Graphix into Sounds-Write, wrote these very alarming words on the Reading Reform Foundation website in December 2005: "Children with good visual memories can sight memorize very rapidly after only one or two presentations. It's the obvious default strategy for learning to read if you don't know the alphabet code or are being taught it badly. This is why things like text in the environment are so awful, ie putting labels on things such as a card with door written on it in large letters pinned to the nursery door."

Regarding Comprehension

On page 18 of his paper, Burkard says, "The key findings of the Clackmannanshire Study [the first paper] can be summarised as follows:

"Children who had been taught analytic phonics were reading one month behind their chronological age and spelling two to three months behind their chronological age. Children who had been taught synthetic phonics were reading seven months ahead of their chronological age and spelling seven months ahead of their chronological age"

In the fullness of time it turned out that these were not the "key findings" of what was to become a seven year longitudinal study (The Effects of Synthetic Phonics Teaching on Reading and Spelling Attainment- a seven year longitudinal study; Johnston and Watson, 2005). In the final paper the researchers report that by Primary 7 (eleven years of age) 14% of the students taught with Synthetic Phonics were two or more years behind in reading comprehension. *This* may well be the key finding of Clackmannanshire. Where a rigorous thinker would begin to reassess in the light of these findings—wondering if perhaps that key element of segmenting that is said to correlate so highly with comprehension BOTH read and heard, doesn't deserve at least a second look—Burkard has instead established a solid disbelief in the existence of comprehension as anything separate to reading itself, and has, through his continued lobby and in the light of the Clackmannanshire

results, brought this notion forward into the working model of Synthetic Phonics. The following were posted on the Reading Reform Foundation forum by Tom Burkard on 19 and 20 November, 2005.

"The concept of 'reading comprehension' is central to whole language mythology. If it is not possible to teach it as a decontextualised skill, then the whole house of cards falls to pieces...

Unfortunately, the notion that there is such a thing as reading comprehension has been so well engrained by a century's propaganda that it is difficult to fight it."

"As Kenneth Goodman once said, "We can define reading to be anything we choose". So I am all with Geraldine Rodgers in sticking with the definition that reading is decoding...

This is why I maintain that the concept of 'reading comprehension' is unhelpful and misleading...

In thinking of comprehension as a part of reading pedagogy, we are effectively ceding the argument to the whole language lobby. Decoding is what children should be taught in their first year of school. After that, you have another 11 years to teach them whatever you choose."

In his seminal work, 'Structure of Scientific Revolution' Thomas Kuhn addressed in detail the behaviour and thought processes of experts in a field in the light of important findings in their field, findings that are viewed by some as revolutionary in that they change the present course of thinking in the field. Kuhn's words are strikingly relevant to Burkard's maneuvering regarding comprehension. In chapter eight 'The Response to Crisis' Kuhn said that some experts in the field, "devise numerous articulations and ad hoc modifications of their theory in order to eliminate any apparent conflict," rather than rethinking their theories in the light of new findings. Burkard appears to have done just that when faced with the reality that at the end of seven years, 14% of the Clackmannanshire students were two or more years behind in comprehension, when on the Reading Reform Foundation forum Burkard recently wrote, "As I have said, I do not believe comprehension exists as a separate measure to reading itself."

The Reading Reform Foundation

In its May 2001 newsletter the Reading Reform Foundation made its debut to lobby status in the paper 'The Reading Reform Foundation is calling for'. The paper was brief, listing eight demands. These might have escaped the notice of the authors of this article if not for another article in which the author Geraldine Carter claimed there are four main synthetic phonics programmes:

- i. Accelerated Reading and Spelling with Synthetic Phonics researched and developed by Dr. Joyce E. Watson and Dr. Rhona S. Johnston, School of Psychology, University of St. Andrews.
- ii. Best Practice Phonics developed by Ruth Miskin, former headmistress of Kobi Nazrul School, Tower Hamlets.
- iii. Phono-Graphix developed in Florida [1990-1992] by Carmen and Geoffrey McGuinness, introduced to the UK in 1998.
- iv. Jolly Phonics developed by Sue Lloyd and Sara Wernham

Double Meaning in 'Old Habits Die Hard'

Given this renewed claim that Phono-Graphix fell under the Synthetic Phonics banner (now two years on from Tom Burkard's claim and our thorough explanation to the contrary in numerous emails and at the Conference on Phonics; the article titled 'Old Habits Die Hard' had an eerie secondary meaning at Phono-

Graphix headquarters. Why were the Synthetic Phonics lobbies so intent, once again, on claiming Phono-Graphix fit under their umbrella? In light of increased attention to Synthetic Phonics practice; its focus on blending to the exclusion of the other skills needed to read and spell, its instruction of only about 40% of the English sound symbol code, and the practice of withholding children's literature from pre-literate children, the authors of this article were alarmed at the appearance of Phono-Graphix on a Reading Reform Foundation list of Synthetic Phonics programmes. A request for more information on this and several articles appearing in that same newsletter was submitted to the Reading Reform Foundation in the Winter of 2002. To this day, nearly four years on, we have not received a response to these questions, now restated many times and in many venues. Instead of answers the Reading Reform foundation deletes every post we, or any of our members, make to its forum.

From 'A comparison of the pace of Synthetic Phonics teaching and the DfEE directives'

In the same Spring 2001 newsletter in the article titled 'A comparison of the pace of Synthetic Phonics teaching and the DfEE directives', Sue Lloyd (the developer of Jolly Phonics) claims, "Synthetic phonics provides the necessary skills that enable the majority to read and write above their chronological age. The 20% of children who have literacy problems still have a good foundation of the basics and just need more time and input." We asked then, and the question remains unanswered today, if someone affiliated with the Reading Reform Foundation would explain by what determination they have come to the conclusion that, "The 20% of children who have literacy problems still have a good foundation of the basics and just need more time and input." But this didn't pan out in the final paper of the Clackmannanshire study, published in February of 2005. By the end of primary 2 all the children had been exposed to Synthetic Phonics, including the original Analytic groups. On pages 41-44 of the study tables 8.1 -8.6 show the decline in scores across the board. The researchers define two years or more behind as a, "severe learning disorder," so we show here the percentage of students one year or more behind. As the reader reviews these keep in mind that that the researchers say on pages 37-40 that, **"No main effect of background was found,"** in regards to all three measures. Keep in mind too that the researchers report on page 13 that, "For June in Primary 6 and 7 the word reading section of the Wide Range Achievement (Wilkinson, 1993) test was used." So the numbers below for Primary 6 reflect scores on an America test normed on American children, known to score well below the UK; indeed the Primary 6 numbers on Word Reading would look much worse had a British test been used.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS ONE OR MORE YEARS BEHIND IN COMPREHENSION, WORD READING, SPELLING REPORTED BY YEAR

	Comprehension	Word Reading	Spelling
by June of Primary 2	5.%	2%	1%
by June of Primary 3	18.%	2%	4%
by June of Primary 4	15.%	6%	8%
by June of Primary 5	19.%	8%	12%
by June of Primary 6	29%	15%	15%

In the above referenced 'A comparison of the pace of Synthetic Phonics teaching and the DfEE directives', Sue Lloyd lists these activities for 4-5 year old children:

"Learn letter sounds"

The reader might ask, as these authors did, what research backs the need for teaching children the sounds of their native language, or is she referring only to foreign speakers?

"Know the blending technique: If the short vowel does not work try the long one."

The reader might ask, as we did, what are "long vowel" and "short vowel"?

"Learn to recognise alternative sounds ay, a-e, ea, igh, y, i-e, ow, o-e, ew, u-e, oy, ir, ur"

The reader might ask, as the authors of this article did, what is meant by "alternative sounds" in the context of this teaching guideline? Are the Reading Reform Foundation suggesting that these digraphs each have multiple sounds associated to them?

"Learn 20 more irregular words."

The reader might ask, as we did, for examples of "irregular words" and ask by what criteria they are irregular?

"Know the principles of 'soft c' and 'soft g'."

The readers might ask, as we did, for an explanation of "the principles of 'soft c' and 'soft g'".?

From the International Conference on Methods

In June of 2005 Reading Reform Foundation board member, Jenny Chew, presented a talk at the Phono-Graphix International Conference on Methods in London. We very much appreciate Jenny's availability to us. The talk served to confirm three things about Synthetic Phonics practice:

1. In Synthetic Phonics practice children's literature is withheld until such time as the individual child is reading with some degree of fluency.

Our specific concern about this is that presumably for most children fluency would not be established until well into Year 1 or possibly later.

2. In Synthetic Phonics practice children are never presented with blended words, the word is always built up from the letter to the sound.

Our specific concerns about this are:

A quite large percentage of 4-6 year old children do not understand the connection between *sound, sound, sound... meaning*. It is through the Phono-Graphix practice of 'directed reading', ie telling the child the word in advance of saying the discrete sound and blending them, that this population of children learn the connection, through experiencing the sounds as the prior known word unfolds.

If blended words are not presented, at no time does the child have an opportunity to practice the skill of segmenting requisite to good reading, spelling, and comprehension. We believe this accounts for the 14% of the population of the Clackmannanshire study whose comprehension was two or more years below age level by Primary 7 [eleven years]?

From the Education Forums

During the last week of November and first week of December 2005 the authors of this article posted over 120 contributions to the Times Education Supplement Staffroom forum in an attempt to elicit clarification of Synthetic Phonics practice from Debbie Hepplewhite of the Reading Reform Foundation who has been known to be active on that forum. Instead our questions were met with jeers and foul language from monikers common to the Reading Reform Foundation, and a staunch statement from Mrs. Hepplewhite refusing to engage in conversation with us. In the face of our steady professionalism we finally managed to inspire response from two Reading Reform Foundation board members, Geraldine Carter and Jenny Chew. The following represents the relevant information, vis-a-vis Synthetic Phonics practice, gathered from this internet discourse: Jenny Chew said in response to our questions regarding the Synthetic Phonics practice of withholding children's literature until children can read, "My understanding is that the early ability to identify printed words in a context-free way is a good predictor of later reading ability and that this ability continues to correlate well with reading skill even in older readers." Our specific concern about this is that word reading tests are not criterion referenced, in other words context free word reading should not be taught so that children can perform well on context free reading tests. In a second post regarding this Jenny said, "It would be a distortion of my meaning to say that 'context-free word reading should be taught so that children can perform well on context-free reading tests'. I certainly want them to perform well on context-free reading tests by the end of reception, but not for the reason you suggest – rather, it's because the early ability to read words out of context shows that children know how to apply the alphabetic code, and the evidence suggests that this is the best possible foundation for long-term reading (and spelling) success." Our specific concern about this is that science cannot possibly tell us that "the early ability to read words out of context shows that children know how to apply the alphabetic code". Science does not work that way. All we can know is that there is a correlation between the ability to read isolated words and other measures of reading success. Specifically these measures are segmenting, blending and phoneme manipulation. This is exactly why Phono-Graphix teaches segmenting and manipulation of sounds along side blending. Given the correlation, it would be reckless not to. And indeed it is precisely that recklessness that alarms us about Synthetic Phonics.

On 3 December, after release of the Rose Interim Report included segmenting and phoneme manipulation among those skills requisite to reading, Jenny replied to say, "But synthetic phonics teachers do teach segmenting for spelling and what you call manipulation of sounds which I call 'tweaking'."

It should be noted that this is the first time any representative of Synthetic Phonics has presented to us that segmenting or phoneme manipulation is taught in Synthetic Phonics practice. Our specific concerns about this are that what we've observed of tweaking does not teach segmenting or phoneme manipulation per the research definitions of these skills. In March 1999 at the Ofsted Conference on Phonics the authors observed Jenny's demonstration of 'tweaking' the misreading of 'said' as 'sade'. In her example the teacher would encourage the child to 'tweak' by asking, "Does that sound like a word you have heard before?" This does not, by any research definition with which we are familiar, in any way teach or even encourage segmenting or phoneme manipulation. In fact, in our opinion it encourages the aspiring reader to assume that written language is nonspecific at best and chaotic at worst.

It became clear to us in the days immediately following the release of the Rose Interim Report, that at least some proponents of Synthetic Phonics were prepared to scramble to throw together their explanation of how Synthetic Phonics has taught the skills of segmenting and phoneme manipulation all along. If 14% of Clackmannanshire's eleven year olds reading two or more years below grade level were not so tragic, the following forum discussion, led by Reading Reform Foundation board member Debbie Hepplewhite in the three day period immediately following release of the Rose Interim Report, would be funny. The following discussion as to whether or not Synthetic Phonics teaches segmenting, and how and why, is taken directly from a Reading Reform Foundation Forum topic thread titled 'Rose's Definition of Synthetic Phonics'.

Jim Rose's definition of synthetic phonics

"On page 28, Appendix 2, of his [Jim Rose] report, '...children are taught to take a single-syllable word such as cat apart into its three letters...'. This is a really classic example of the misunderstandings that occur all the time in writings about phonics, causing almost everyone to become very confused. Segmenting has absolutely nothing to do with letters!!! The spoken word 'cat' can be segmented into its component phonemes, 'c' 'a' and 't'. It's hard for me to envisage how anyone with a real understanding of phonics could have written that phrase." [abridged]

Dave Philpot

"I'm getting a bit lost off with this. Have I been getting it wrong all this time? In my understanding, with SP, when you are learning to read you don't start with a word at all, but with sounds (and their graphemes), which are blended together. So how can you 'take a word apart' when you can't yet read it?"

maizie

"I agree- I thought that was where the 'synthesising' came in."

Judy

"Are we confused about the stage of learning to read? I was thinking in terms of seeing the word 'cat', looking at each letter in turn, voicing it, then blending those phonemes to become /cat/. 'Word' being the term for the letter string you are trying to lift from the page."

Elsy

"The children ARE or CAN BE taught their letter shapes in isolation with the corresponding sounds and how these can be 'built up' to make a word. But when reading a whole word, the process is to sound out and blend the sounds from left to right - and I was describing how one could peel back to the level of saying that the printed word is segmented or taken apart before it is sounded out and blended, in the sense that the reader mentally looks to see if any of the letters are likely to be needed to be sounded out as digraphs or one-letter-one-sound. I DO think we can get hung up forever over this different start. This is just another way of introducing the 'correspondences' in the beginning stages but without an elaborate mnemonic system. The whole word itself IS the mnemonic in effect! Which method is the most effective in the early stages of beginning to read has not yet been properly compared between our well-known effective commercial programmes. The point is that the elements of these various programmes have so much in common (what they do and what they don't do) that surely we can place them under the umbrella of 'synthetic phonics'. [abridged]

Debbie Hepplewhite

"Sounds reasonable. How the hell did we get into this petty mess? You learn the sound of each letter, or combination of same with other(s), recognise these in a word and put 'em together (synthesise 'em) and see/hear what you get. What's all the fuss about?"..."And at least we're not all going to fall out over it."

bwking

"To be honest, I hope that we are leading the way, showing how we are trying to unpick what people write or say to make sure that we understand one another. The issue is, when do differences in the approaches matter and when do they not matter."

Debbie Hepplewhite

At the close of her afore referenced 2001 Spring article 'Old Habits Die Hard' Reading Reform Foundation board member Geraldine Carter said, "Instead of up to 30% of children experiencing reading difficulties at age 7-8, only around 2% - 5% of the most severely 'dyslexic' children would require specialist help after the introduction of synthetic phonics in nursery and reception classes." If this were true Debbie Hepplewhite's words (previous page), "The issue is, when do differences in the approaches matter and when do they not matter," might resonate. But in fact, 20% of the children were six or more months behind after having been taught with Synthetic Phonics in their first year at school in Clackmannanshire, and despite additional literacy support, 14% were two or more years behind by age eleven.

Synthetic Phonics in Practice the methods under the banner

A Review of Jolly Phonics - the exemplar

I was first made aware of Jolly Phonics in 1998 when John Clare, the education editor at London's Daily Telegraph, introduced me to Chris Jolly, the spokesperson for Jolly Phonics, after a talk I'd done at Westminster Hall. Over the following five years my husband Geoff and I would train over two thousand British teachers, and in total Read America would certify some three and a half thousand teachers in Britain. Many of these teachers asked us about Jolly Phonics, describing the lessons and materials to us. We thought we knew quite a lot about it, and we believed it was not in keeping with the nature of the code or the nature of the learner, young children age four to eight or nine. Then in 1999 we were surprised when Geoff's mother, Diane McGuinness (*Why Children Can't Read*), arrived for a weekend visit with a Jolly Phonics video she'd been sent by Chris Jolly. She said it was pretty good and we should watch it. She also had sample materials along. It was then that Geoff and I first evaluated the JP program. Other than Jim Rose (who was at that time the head of the Office of Standards in Education) and his assistant Keith Lloyd, during their visit to America to tour schools using Phono-Graphix, we didn't share our evaluation with anyone because it didn't seem an important thing to do. But recently the Clackmannanshire study, *The effects of synthetic phonics teaching on reading and spelling attainment*, has catapulted Jolly Phonics and its offshoot Fast Phonics First into the educational hall of fame, and because of the title has indelibly operationalized the term synthetic phonics with the practices of these two methods. I share here my assessment of Jolly Phonics / Fast Phonics First in the form of 'what JP/FPF says' on their websites and in their collective teacher instruction information, and our 'what's wrong with that?' response

JP/FPF says...

"The five basic skills for reading and writing are:

- Learning the letter sounds
- Learning letter formation
- Blending
- Identifying sounds in words
- Spelling the tricky words"

What's wrong with this?...

1. No one in the field of 'learning' believes that 'learning' is a skill. In learning theory and research, 'learning' is a process that requires particular skills and particular information. Believing that learning is a skill would allow the teacher or program developer (in this case JP/FPF) to presume the child lacked the (so called) 'skill' of being able to learn (in this case) "the letter sounds" or "letter formation". So they, and any teacher or parent who tries to use the program, are off in a wrong direction to start out. This is not a small thing, so called 'just semantics' rarely is a small thing because what you say is a revelation about what you know and believe, and is a mirror back to the child.

2. JP/FPF's misunderstanding of what a skill is leads them to the belief that teaching sounds is important. Indeed it's the first thing on their list. But it's wrong! The sounds of our native language are just that—native. A baby of one who cannot yet speak uses the sounds of his language in babble. He does not need to be "taught" these sounds. As Geoff and I pointed out in both 'Reading Reflex' and 'How to Increase Your Child's Verbal Intelligence' there is enough that must be taught to a child. Let us not take time in trying to teach things that are acquired naturally. Again, this may be 'just semantics' but it is also a mirror back to the child. If you tell Trevor, "We're going to work on your sounds now," by God, he'll believe it! And as a fully versed speaker of English, he'll think you daft, and step one in closing the blinds to learning is accomplished, the blinds are half shut as you open the book. As a teacher and clinician, I've seen it on thousands of faces, a dull resignation that, "No one knows what it is I need to know, so how in God's name will I ever come to know it?"

So problems 1 and 2 can be summed up to say, educational program developers should understand what learning is, how it works, what are its component parts; and understand what language is and the acquisition of it so that they don't waste time and lose confidence trying to teach students what they already know. You don't have to be Piaget or Chomsky to understand these things, you just have to have read them.

JP/FPF says...

"The letters b and d are introduced in different groups to avoid confusion."

What's wrong with this?...

This is so absurd as to warrant opening with some examples:

Teach pence and shillings (pennies and nickels) in two different lessons so as to avoid confusion.

Teach circles and squares in two different lessons so as to avoid confusion.

Teach the minute hand and the second hand in two different lessons so as to avoid confusion.

And so on. The very POINT is that they are alike. How pray tell, is a child of five to tease apart those similarities without seeing the two together? Here's an analogy of adult proportions. My boss has asked me to check his tally on a string of say nine numbers. I do and I come up with a different tally. Of course I need to check and see what's different. Do I do this by looking at one list at a time, or back and forth checking each number? Let's give the kids the 'b' and the 'd' together, in lots of words and get all those comparison and contrasts out of the way. Methodology like what JP/FPF suggest here is exactly why children make it into year two and three of school still mixing their 'b' and 'd'.

JP/FPF says...

"Teach letter sounds in groups in this order

1. s a t i p n

2. c k e h r m d

3. g o u l f b

4. ai j oa ie ee or
5. z w n ng v oo oo
6. y x ch sh h th th
7. qu ou oi ue er ar

What's wrong with this?...

The mislogic that we are actually teaching sounds in reading instruction, rather than how to show sounds, runs throughout Jolly Phonics. Here again we see it. JP/FPF teaches the SOUND 'ai', so why bother with ay, a, a-e, ey, eigh, ei and aigh?

Then JP/FPF goes on to say...

"Sounds that have more than one way of being written are initially taught in one form only."

What's wrong with this?...

Humans of the child and adult variety alike, are sorters and categorizers. We organize information (which is what the code is, not a skill at all) into meaningful and useful categories. In the case of a written language which is made up of many ways to show each sound, it makes perfect sense to organize from the sound (which after all is what is natural and already known) to all the ways to show the sound (which is invented), what we call in Phono-Graphix, the 'sound pictures'. So Phono-Graphix we teach children that there is more than one way to show sounds, then we expose them to the ways to show a sound through our Discovery Mapping & Sorting' lesson.

Still trying to make sense of the code, JP/FPF goes on to say...

"A sound that is represented by two letters, such as sh, is called a digraph. Children should sound out the digraph (sh), not the individual letters (s-h), so they can blend the digraph as one sound."

What's wrong with this?...

A single sound doesn't need to be blended. A 's' and a 'h' do not a 'sh' make! Again JP/FPF's logic is confused and leads to them trying to teach children something they don't need to do, and in fact will confuse them. If Mrs. Wright tells Trevor, "Look here, you don't need to say each 'letter sound' here. The 'letter sounds' are blended and you can just say 'sh'," poor old Trev thinks he must be the worst listener in the world, that all the other children who don't have to spend Tuesday and Thursday afternoon with Mrs. Wright can hear this so called blending of the 'letter sounds', but he cannot. He is Mr. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

JP/FPF says...

"The Jiglets help identify the sounds in words. Rhyming games, poems and the Jolly Jingles also help tune the ears to the sounds in words. Other games to play are: a) Add a Sound: what is it if I add a p to the beginning of ink. Answer: pink. Others are m-ice, b-us, etc."

What's wrong with this?...

This is the Jolly Phonics' methodology for teaching the fourth skill mentioned in the opening of this paper, 'Identifying sounds in words'. This is a perfect example of where not understanding what is a skill and what is not can lead to a poorly designed lesson. When reading that fourth 'skill' one might wonder, what does JP/FPF mean by 'identify'? But one might give them the benefit of the doubt and assume they mean 'segment sounds in words', ie: peel off one sound at a time in the sequence it occurs in the word. But apparently that is not what they meant. Apparently, and according to the Jiglets and their Jolly Jingles what JP/FPF

meant is be able to add a sound to the beginning of an existing word to make a new word. This methodology is known as ‘word families’ or ‘onset and rime’. The premise is that children can’t segment anything but the first sound in a word, as shown in numerous studies. But other methods like Lindamood and Phono-Graphix have devised lessons in which children can easily be taught to do just that. In the case of Lindamood the skill of segmenting is taught by helping the child to notice the subtle differences in oral motor formation as the sounds in words change. In the case of Phono-Graphix the skill of segmenting is taught by orienting the child’s attention to the spatial differences as he hears the word blended. Marks on a board or paper are used. The teacher says, “Tell me what you hear here (indicating the first mark) when I say ‘mop’,” as she runs her finger under the markers in time to the word she is saying. In this way the entire word is segmented, not just the first sound. Understanding how children learn can help program developers versed in this knowledge develop sensible programs. Just because seven researchers could not make children segment entire words doesn’t mean that children can’t do it. Phono-Graphix showed that the wrong question was being asked, and the wrong modality being oriented. Children are simply rotten at temporal problem solving, but brilliant at spatial problem solving—as demonstrated by the fact that not knowing what time it is does not stop them bouncing off walls and furniture with ease.

JP/FPF says...

“Some words in English have an irregular spelling and cannot be read by blending, such as said, was and one. These ‘tricky words’ cannot be read by blending.” Then go on to say that children should be taught to “Look, Cover, Write and Check,” such words.

What’s wrong with this?...

There is nothing ‘irregular’ about said and was. The ai in said is a way to represent the second sound in the word [s ai d], just as it is the third sound in [a g ai n], and the fifth sound in the word [c a p t ai n]. Mislogic about the nature of the code and the nature of the learner has led JP/FPF to use whole word or Look Say methodology to teach seemingly thousands of words, if they don’t believe simple words like ‘said’ and ‘was’ are irregular.

JP/FPF and rules...

Although there is no specific use of the so called ‘phonics rules’ in Jolly Phonics or Fast Phonics First,

JP/FPF says...

“In Jolly Phonics the 42 main sounds of English are taught, not just the alphabet. Each sound has an action which helps children remember the letter(s) that represent it. As a child progresses you can point to the letters and see how quickly they can do the action and say the sound. One letter sound can be taught each day. As a child becomes more confident, the actions are no longer necessary.”

Here are some examples JP/FPF gives:

- z Put arms out at sides and pretend to be a bee, saying zzzzzz
- oo oo Pretend to be holding the steering wheel of a van and say vvvvvv
- oo oo Move head back and forth as if it is the cuckoo in a cuckoo clock, say u, oo; u, oo (Little and long oo)
- y Pretend to be eating a yogurt and say y, y, y
- x Pretend to take an x-ray with an x-ray camera and say ks, ks, ks

What’s wrong with this?...

Humans are tool users. Show children how to use the code as tools for building up words and they learn it easily and quickly. Understanding the nature of the learner makes clear how to teach him. We don’t give a

ten month old a block with pegs in and a mallet and then make him learn a body shape to represent pounding. We simply pound ourselves, he giggles with delight and pounds in turn, and pounds again, and again, and again until we are very sorry we ever showed him how to do it. Incidentally, researchers have mimicked this with a group who gets demonstration and another group who gets no demonstration. It takes two minutes for babies to work out what to do with a mallet and block of pegs with demonstration and about twice the time (four minutes) if no one demonstrates.

JP/FPF says...

It is very important that a child holds their pencil in the correct way.

The pencil should be held in the 'tripod' grip between the thumb and first two fingers. If a child's hold starts incorrectly, it is very difficult to correct later on. A child needs to form each letter the correct way. Particular problems to look for are -

- the o (the pencil stroke must be anticlockwise, not clockwise)
- d (the pencil starts in the middle, not the top)
- there must be an initial downstroke on letters such as m and n

What's wrong with this?...

It's contrived and will make many children (and some teachers) 'graphic-retentive'. Let your children make marks on paper, chalk boards, marker boards, with markmakers from the time they can hold them. When you start to teach them to read and spell, stick to reading and spelling. I've written quite a long article on how to inspire legible handwriting titled, 'Get A Grip On Handwriting' (parenTeacher.net, vol 4, Spring 2000).

A Review of Sounds-Write Phono-Graphix copycats ala Synthetic Phonics



Sounds-Write is a copy of Phono-Graphix, from the name down to the use of the exact wording to describe the program on the company's website, matching (to the typo) the wording used to describe Phono-Graphix on <http://www.readamerica.net/page9alink.asp> since February of 1996 ⁽¹⁾. The owners of Sounds-Write are Phono-Graphix trained, two of them, Susan Case and John Walker, were long time Phono-Graphix trainers. Dave Philpot is the third owner, and is the author of the report we review here. He is a school psychologist working for Wigan Education Authority, where the data was collected. Between early 2000 and 2003 Wigan Education Authority trained 211 teachers in Phono-Graphix, and bought 175 Word Work Classroom Teaching Kits from Read America, the last order being placed on December 2002. It is relevant to this analysis that these were sold to Wigan at the cost of £50, representing a 30% reduction in price in order to help the education authority pay for Phono-Graphix research that was underway at ten Wigan schools under the oversight of Dave Philpot. Two weeks after Read America processed the last Word Work order from Wigan, we received notice from Susan Case that she and John Walker were terminating their trainer contracts with Read America, as they could, "no longer afford to do it." In October of 2003 we were contacted by a Wigan teacher, who prefers to remain unnamed and who I shall call Wigan source one for the purposes of this paper, reporting that, "The study is now about a new British version of Phono-Graphix."

These details are relevant in as much as it is not clear what is actually being measured in the Wigan Education Authority data. What effect might the prior Phono-Graphix training of 211 teachers have on the data? What effect might the existence of 175 Phono-Graphix Word Work Classroom Kits lying around in classrooms, sound picture charts on walls, open access to our member eZine, have on the so called Sounds-Write data? Is the Sounds-Write training at all different to the Phono-Graphix training previously offered by the same two trainings? According to the Wigan teacher mentioned above, “the course contains quite a strong Phonics bent”. Trainers pitch the program as Synthetic Phonics, claiming it is aligned with Jolly Phonics and Fast Phonics First, the two methods used in the Clackmannanshire Synthetic Phonics studies; ‘Accelerating Reading Attainment: The Effects of Synthetic Phonics’ and ‘The Effects of Synthetic Phonics Teaching on Reading and Spelling Attainment’ (Johnson, R. and Watson, J., 2000, 2005).

The purpose of this section is three part: 1) to demonstrate that Sounds-Write is Phono-Graphix to a Synthetic Phonics beat, 2) to analyze the Sounds-Write data reported on the Sounds-Write website in early November 2005, with an eye toward what happens when you do what is essentially Phono-Graphix from the theoretical perspective of the Phonics paradigm, and 3) tease apart the philosophical underpinnings of the Phono-Graphix and Synthetic Phonics paradigm.

It Must Be Synthetic, It Bends So Easily

It’s important to establish before commencing the data review that some time during late 2002 the Case, Walker, Philpot allegiance to the Phono-Graphix paradigm was replaced by an allegiance to the Synthetic Phonics paradigm. In its Volume No: 7, New Year, 2001 edition parenTeacher.net eZine reported John Walkers’ interview of Dave Philpot taken during a May training in Wigan. When asked to what he attributes the success of Phono-Graphix Philpot pointed to the differences between it and Phonics, “Phono-Graphix is the first reading method that has been put together in the light of modern knowledge of child development, learning theory and motivational theory. ...This has never happened before. The only two approaches to the tuition of reading are Whole Language and Phonics. Both of these were initially developed getting on for a hundred years ago at a time before there were any training colleges in education or anyone understood much about child development. And those two methods, despite their considerable failures, have gone on being used ever since without coming under really critical examination until quite recently.”

When asked what are the main differences between Phono-Graphix and Phonics Philpot said, “There are a number of specific differences. At all stages the Phono-Graphix program starts from whole words. ...Another essential difference is that Phono-Graphix teaches the skills of segmenting and phoneme manipulation. ...Not only is Phono-Graphix the only reading tuition method I know that teaches and practises the skill of phoneme manipulation, but it does so from the very beginning in order that pupils develop fluency in this skill before they actually need to use it in their reading.” In these statements Dave Philpot demonstrated a clear knowledge of and appreciation for the Phono-Graphix paradigm and earnestly distinguished that paradigm to that of Phonics. So why did he discontinue Phono-Graphix training in Wigan and commence training in Sounds-Write, its carbon copy?

According to Wigan source one the Wigan teacher mentioned, the Sounds-Write training is almost identical to the Phono-Graphix training, and in 2003 it wasn’t always clear what course was being offered. Many course participants were already trained in Phono-Graphix, or had inherited Phono-Graphix files from previously trained teachers. Some even arrived at training venues with Phono-Graphix manuals in hand. A photograph on the Sounds-Write website bears evidence to this.

But Wigan source one. tells us there was a new twist to the Sounds-Write training embedded in the trainers’ comments about how Sounds-Write is, “changing the face of Phonics in Britain.” Can one surmise that at some point the old Phono-Graphix team of Case, Walker, and Philpot decided that they were more wedded to renewing the battered Phonics paradigm than to forwarding the then new Phono-Graphix paradigm? With

hindsight, I am uncertain of our first read on Susan Case's words, "we can't afford to do it anymore". At the time I believed she was making reference to petitions from her and John Walker to raise training fees and reduce the already highly reduced Word Work Kit, for which we were charging nearly double in the US. Knowing now of her allegiance to Phonics, I wonder if she didn't mean that, "we can't afford to teach Phono-Graphix anymore," ... 'because to do so is harming the growing Synthetic Phonics movement in Britain'. The likelihood of this scenario is backed by the timeline. It was shortly after Susan's resignation on behalf of herself and John Walker, that we began to see several Phono-Graphix studies being added to the Synthetic Phonics data on Phonics lobby websites, and spectacular claims being made that Synthetic Phonics could be "the death of dyslexia"—spectacular in light of the fact that the best the Phonics paradigm had accomplished in any of its pendulum swings into prominence, has been about 70-75% literacy rates, falling far short of the benchmark set by Phono-Graphix. It was also about that time that education internet forums frequented by Case, Walker, and Philpot began displaying comments like this one were brought to our attention by two Wigan teachers, "It's not the program that's important it's the methodology. The program is only a vehicle. It is the Synthetic Phonics Methodology that works the magic. It really is a shame that Carmen McGuinness refuses to allow the description Synthetic Phonics be used to describe Phono-Graphix. If I had devised a reading program I would be doing all in my power to have it described as a Synthetic Phonics program." Within weeks this became something of a mantra in the official talking points of the Synthetic Phonics lobby. During those same weeks all mention of Phono-Graphix was removed from Phonics lobby websites. The data stayed, but the words Phono-Graphix were removed and in their place were put the words Synthetic Phonics.

Whether it was greed or mis-guided judgement, possibly as the result of pressure from the Phonics lobby, that led the Case, Walker, Philpot team to change the name on their business cards, get out the whiteout and crank up the copy machine, may never be known. What is known is that there was precious little time between Wigan's last Phono-Graphix training and the start of their data collection reported on their website, and reviewed here—not time enough that a soundly controlled study could occur, where teacher effect could be attributed to the method being studied, and the effect of the instructional materials could be assigned to the instructional materials being studied. As an educational psychologist, did Dave Philpot know the risk to his research? We don't know how well trained Mr. Philpot is in data collection, but we do know from another Wigan source who prefers to remain unnamed for now, and whom we shall refer to as Wigan source two that in the Autumn of 2003 David Philpot told teachers that they could use the Phono-Graphix worksheets, so long as they weren't sent home with the children.

Let's Look at the Data—Reception Year Data

At the opening of his report of the Wigan Sounds-Write data, Philpot says about reception students (children aged 4 and 5), "At this very early stage of literacy acquisition the results of standardised test scores in reading tend to be very confusing because they are constructed solely to measure whether or not pupils can visually recognise a word, not whether they can read it (decode it). For this reason we chose to ask teachers to test their pupils' spelling ability as a measure of their overall progress in literacy." The reader is asked at the onset of Philpot's report, to disregard the fact that the standard by which science measures evidence based literacy methods is real and nonsense word reading tests. Whether Mr. Philpot believes that is fair or not is a matter for discourse between he and the scientists who set the standard, not a matter of opinion. And why Mr. Philpot chose not to measure nonsense word reading is a matter of some debate and speculation. One source in Wigan says she believes that the reception year students were given a nonsense word reading test, and doesn't know why these numbers were not reported. In any case, we have no reading data from Wigan to compare to Phono-Graphix data collected from same aged children who received Phono-Graphix instruction. We share that data below, just the same.

In 1996 Dr. Sandra Scarr, a prominent developmental psychologist, organized a study to be conducted at seven Central Florida child care centers. Teachers were trained on a 15 hour Phono-Graphix course. None of the teachers in the study were university graduates. Two of them were university students. The children were

given Phono-Graphix instruction in reading groups of five to six children, for 15-20 minutes four days per week for eleven weeks. A research team from the University of South Florida, Diane McGuinness, and Read America, Carmen and Geoffrey McGuinness, post tested the students at the end of the eleven week experiment. The average age of the children was 4:9. It should be noted that this is not compulsory school age in the United States. These were daycare students and day care providers teaching them. The average reading age was 6:1. In another study conducted in Sunderland in the 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 school years, reception children receiving Phono-Graphix instruction in regular classroom lessons in three reception classes, were reading at 6:2 by May of their reception year.

It should be noted that although Philpot's Sounds-Write report doesn't show reading data on reception aged children, it does share spelling data. The problem is it is largely unusable due to the way in which it is reported. Out of 824 students, 128 did not reach baseline spelling. Instead of reporting them in the data, Philpot has simply removed them from the numbers and reports only on the 84% of the reception students who did reach baseline in spelling. About them he says, "At the end of their first year's tuition in reception with the Sounds~Write program, 84% of pupils (five out of every six) were spelling above chronological age by an average of almost 15 months." What about the other 16%? What was their spelling like? What was the average spelling for the entire sample?... not just the middle and right side of the bell curve. To give you an analogy of how misleading this reporting is, if the McGuinness, McGuinness, and McGuinness team had reported on only the top performing 84% of our sample in the KinderCare study organized by Sandra Scarr, our reading age would have been somewhere just over age 7 years! In explanation of the 128 students not reaching baseline Philpot says, "Children whose birthdays fall at the younger end of the age range are developmentally immature and may enter reception classes with equivalent mental ages as young as 2 years, 9 months."

Perhaps the clearest number coming out of the Wigan reception data is that only 1 in 6 students failed to reach baseline after Sounds-Write tuition during their reception year as compared to 25-30% in the national average. Clearly, Sounds-Write has taken a bite out of the numbers, cutting the need for additional literacy support in half compared to the national average, but they have fallen far short of one Phono-Graphix study conducted in Bristol schools and published in Support for Learning (17 (1), 34-38.; Dias, Katy & Juniper, Lynne, 2002), in which 0% of the children taught with Phono-Graphix in reception needed additional literacy support in year 1.

Comparison of Philpot's Sounds-Write study with these three Phono-Graphix studies begs the question, "Was something lost between Phono and Sounds, Graphix and Write?" other than the Greek words. It's difficult to know without reading scores for the reception children in the study. While Philpot blames the tender age of reception students, in an Autumn 2000 article in parenTeacher Magazine Susan Case specifically notes that despite their tender age her reception students excelled under Phono-Graphix tutelage. Specifically Susan said, "My own first-hand experience of teaching Phono-Graphix within the Literacy Hour began last year. I ran several projects in primary schools with various age groups. The latest involved teaching a reception class of children for 15 weeks. During this time I watched their reading skills grow steadily. At the end of the study post-tests revealed near perfect blending and segmenting skills, and code knowledge stretching into the advanced code. It must also be said for readers elsewhere: children in the UK start school young, many of these children had not yet reached their fifth birthday."

Year 1 Data on Remaining 37% of the Original Sample

Fortunately Philpot does report the Sounds-Write reading scores of the children in year 1. Unfortunately he doesn't explain what happened to 520 of the reception children now missing from the original sample of 824 students. Nor does he report the data for the lowest achieving 3% of the 304 students remaining in the study at the close of year 1. Again, an analogy would be that if the McGuinness, McGuinness, and McGuinness team took out the lowest achieving 3% of students in our 1996 Orton Annals of Dyslexia paper our gains would have averaged nearly three years! Without reading scores on those bottom 3% we have no way of

knowing what the average reading score actually was. Nor do we know what the reading score was for 520 students dropped from the study between reception and year 1. The reader is left to wonder (something that scientific inquiry is meant to alleviate) why a study starting with 822 students is paired down to 37% the next year. Are the remaining 308 the highest achieving within the reception data, were their teachers extra keen? Or, are the remaining students enrolled at the ten schools that originally were meant to host Phono-Graphix research? We simply don't know without the researcher having told us. What we do know is that 37% of the original sample scored an average of 11 months above baseline by the end of year 1.

Missing students aside, clearly the gains reported are good. But are they as good as Phono-Graphix or has something more than 520 students been lost between the Phono-Graphix and the Synthetic Phonics paradigms? Referring back to the 2001 parentTeacher interview when Dave Philpot stood clearly in a Phono-Graphix camp, his reports of Phono-Graphix data coming in around Wigan were much, much better than is reported on the Sounds-Write website. In Philpot's own words in that interview, "It is only quite recently [the interview was taken in May of 2000] that schools [in Wigan] started buying copies of the Phono-Graphix Word Work program designed to be used in classrooms rather than using Reading Reflex. Between February and June 1999 15 pupils, 5 each from the year groups Y2 (7 year-olds), Y4 (9 year-olds) and Y6 (11 year-olds), all of whose reading ages were over two years below their chronological ages, were put on a simplified Phono-Graphix program for four months of tuition, with 3 lessons per week lasting 45-60 minutes each resulted in the average reading age of these pupils increasing by 14 months; the lowest gain made being one of 12 months." These gains were an average of 5 months better than Sounds-Write. And that was just preliminary data. What about real studies?

The McGuinness, McGuinness, and McGuinness team, along with Phono-Graphix trainer Elaine Manion, conducted a study at Millhopper Montessori school in Gainesville. From September to May of 1997/98 Montessori primary students aged 5-8 received small group reading instruction. At the start of the study 25% of the students were reading below grade level on the Woodcock Word Identification sub-test, 41% were reading above grade level and 34% were reading at grade level. At post-test none of the students were reading below grade level with an average gain on the Woodcock Word Identification Test of one year, five months. The group was split into three cohorts for further analysis. The poor intake cohort gained one year, eight months. The average and good intake cohorts both gained one year, four months. The average pre-test score on the word attack sub-test of the Woodcock was first grade, seventh month. Post-test score on the word attack was seventh grade-second month, reflecting an average gain of over five years.

In 1999 a volunteer project was completed at Spring Lake Elementary School in Altamonte, Springs, Florida. Forty-three grade one through three students (age 6-8) were isolated as needing special help with reading. Sixty-four per cent were described as non-readers. All forty-three children received help once per week for forty-five minutes for eleven weeks-, totalling eight hours of instruction. Help was offered one-on-one by Costco employees who had received four hours of Phono-Graphix training and used materials from 'Reading Reflex' the parent book for teaching Phono-Graphix at home. The Qualitative Reading Inventory was administered pre and post. Average gains in eleven weeks were eleven months.

A 2003 study published in the Bristol Sen Publication targeted 13 chosen from year 2 based on the fact that their Reading Ages on the Carver Reading test at the end of year 1 were less than 7 years. This test was given at the end of the Summer Term and the intervention program started at the end of November. Before the program began all children were given the NFER Individual Reading Test. Amongst the group was one child who is on the Autistic spectrum and in receipt of a statement and three children whose attendance records are very poor. Three children who were already on a school action plan were included in the group. The group was set up initially for 3 x 20 minutes weekly to be given between 10:00 and 10:20am but as they were taken during assembly realistically most sessions lasted nearly 30 mins. The average Reading age increase in 12 weeks was 17 months. The increases, barring the autistic child ranged from 9 months to 48 months. The children were also pre and post tested for comprehension, with an average Comprehension increase over the 12 weeks was 13 months.

As to the other 520 students tested in YR, we may never know what the Sounds-Write Wigan data would look like had their gains been reported, but we do have one measure to go on, readiness for Key Stage Two testing. On this, Wigan scores below the national average as compared to nearby Lancashire county which has been resistant to the burgeoning Synthetic Phonics movement. Read America will be hosting a certification training and our first BLUEPRINT for Literacy Workshop in Lancashire in April, 2006.

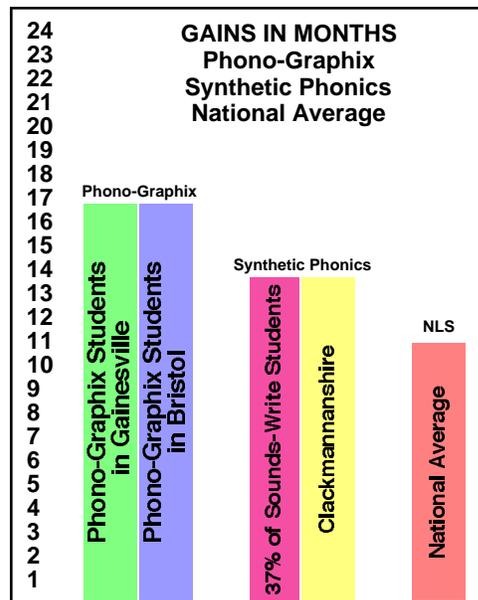
News about a 12 week intervention programme for 13 children who were taught in a single group using Phono-Graphix, By Suzanne Spencer

NFER Individual Reading Test

Taken from the Bristol Senco periodical.Reprinted with permission of the author.

Results November 2003					Results March 2004												
CA	Reading Result				Comprehension Result				CA	Reading Result				Comprehension Result			
	RS				RS					RS				RS			
7.2	11	4.8	5.5	6.2	5	4.10	6.3	7.7	7.6	19	5.8	6.5	7.2	7	5.10	7.3	8.7
6.9	5	<			0	<			7.1	15	5.2	5.11	6.8	2	<		
6.5	6	<			2	<			6.9	17	5.5	6.2	6.11	6	5.4	6.9	8.1
7.0	10	4.6	5.3	6.0	1	<			7.4	29	7.0	7.9	8.6	1	<		
6.11	6	<			2	<			7.3	29	7.0	7.9	8.6	3	3.10	5.2	6.7
6.3	3	<			3	3.10	5.2	6.7	6.7	33	7.6	8.3	9.0	6	5.4	6.9	8.1
6.5	8	4.3	5.0	5.9	4	4.4	5.9	7.1	6.9	18	5.7	6.4	7.1	5	4.10	6.3	7.7
6.8	13	4.11	5.8	6.5	5	4.10	6.3	7.7	7.0	29	7.0	7.9	8.6	9	6.4	7.9	9.1
6.4	9	4.5	5.2	5.11	2	<			6.8	15	5.2	5.11	6.8	4	4.4	5.9	7.1
7.1	12	4.9	5.6	6.4	6	5.4	6.9	8.1	7.4	27	6.8	7.6	8.3	7	5.10	7.3	8.7
7.1	9	4.5	5.2	5.11	3	3.10	5.2	6.7	7.5	19	5.8	6.5	7.2	5	4.10	6.3	7.7
6.11	2				0	<			7.2	7	<			3	3.10	5.2	6.7
7.0	6				5	4.10	6.3	7.7	7.3	12	4.9	5.6	6.4	6	5.4	6.9	8.1

If, as the Wigan source says, the Sounds-Write training is almost identical to Phono-Graphix—but for the interjection of the Synthetic Phonics perspective—can we assume that this perspective, this world view if you will, explains the difference in gain scores? Is there something unique about the Phono-Graphix world view that affords it phenomenal gains, even over those of an identical method? In his 1962 book, 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' Thomas Kuhn said, "It is, I think, particularly in periods of acknowledged crisis that scientists have turned to philosophical analysis as a device for unlocking the riddles of their field." Clearly the early 1990s, when Phono-Graphix was developed, was a period of acknowledged crisis in the field of education. From that crisis emerged the first literacy method to discuss and rely heavily upon the fields of epistemology, learning and motivation theory, and linguistics.



Phono-Graphix vs Synthetic Phonics

Fundamental Philosophical Differences



Can the difference in gains between Phono-Graphix and its carbon copy be attributed to fundamental differences in the educational philosophy of Phono-Graphix developers Carmen and Geoffrey McGuinness with those of Susan Case, John Walker, and Dave Philpot? Is there a critical kernel which makes all the difference, makes one a paradigm and the other a very good replica? Will those differences drive Phono-Graphix to become a dinosaur while Sounds-Write, newly aligned with Phonics is cast into the fossil that endures? Let us examine the philosophies underlying the Phono-Graphix and Synthetic Phonics paradigms.

Cult of the Learner vs Cult of the Curriculum

Phono-Graphix aspires to what we've termed 'Essential Education' (McGuinness, C., 1999). Essential Education is a reaction to these worrying times. It is the simple, but rigorous notion that when educating a child, consider only the essence of what you want to teach—the concepts, skills and information—and the essence (the nature) of the learner. Jean Piaget said the child only deeply understands that which he has created. George Kelly called him a 'constructivist'. Maria Montessori said the successful learner is an active agent in his own education. Specifically about literacy acquisition Carmen and Geoffrey McGuinness have said, "Understand the nature of the English written code, and the skills needed to use such a code. Teach these, and in the spirit of discovery guide the student as he builds up the code, making it essentially his own. Like a solid oak, concepts of the English code are the structure on which hangs the code itself, like so many leaves waiting to be picked. As teachers our job is to give children the skills to climb those concepts and discover the code."

So there!

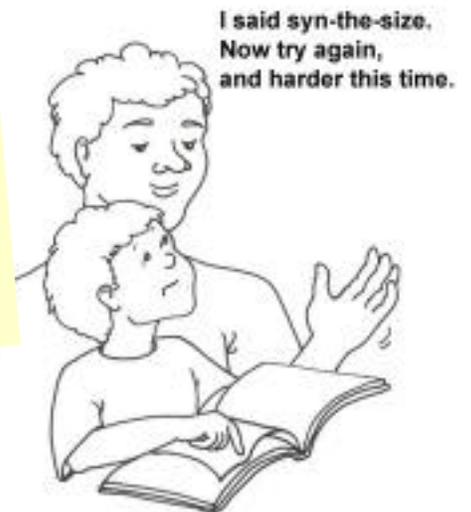


In comparison Synthetic Phonics offers a grocery list of credos and mottoes like; blend, blend blend, simple to difficult, no guessing, and no real books until you can read. It's not that Synthetic Phonics proponents are barking up the wrong tree. They don't even *have* a tree. Before it went 'synthetic', Phonics taught children the letter names, then the sounds the letters 'make', then taught them to blend these into words, using Phonics rules as needed. New, or Synthetic Phonics has heeded the warning we issued in our 1996 research (Orton Annals of Dyslexia, McGuinness, C., et al) and tossed out the phonics rules, and onset and rime. But it doesn't teach the

other skills needed to read and spell; segmenting and phoneme manipulation, nor does it give the child a structure of the written code: explaining a sound can be represented with two or more letters, that there is variation in the code, and overlap. Is this over focus on blending, or ‘synthesizing’, a symptom of something more worrying than missing methodology? Does it reveal a world view dictated by the adult perspective, with no insight into the learner’s experience? To the accomplished adult reader, “push the sounds together” is an obvious request. But to the child, who has not been taught to separate the constituent sounds in words, it is not so obvious. Instead of acknowledging a new path, a new paradigm, Synthetic Phonics proponents insist that the synthesis is the key. On the teacher and parent support forum rrf.org.uk, Debbie Hepplewhite, founder and board member of the Reading Reform Foundation, actually told one frustrated year 1 teacher faced with only a few students who could blend after two months of instruction, “Think deeply about it, and you’ll know what to do.” When a methods’ strong suit is a single skill real teachers with real questions get advice like “think deeply”—or worse still, no advice at all! The plea for help pictured below has been posted on the same forum for nearly a month as this article is being written, without a single reply. If the first verse of the Synthetic Phonics mantra is ‘blend, blend, blend’; it would seem the second verse is ‘blend by God’, and the third is, ‘swim, or go down with the *sh.....i...p*’.

Posted: Mon Oct 24, 2005 6:05 pm
 Post subject: help with blending

I feel that I am struggling to teach the children in my class to blend and am hoping for some advice. I have only 4 children out of a class of 22 who can blend and they are all girls. The children who can blend were able to blend very quickly but the others seem to be standing still. I started by playing oral games such as find the 'b' 'oo' 'k'. As soon as we had covered enough sounds to make words we used magnetic letters or cvc word cards to match to pictures. I have encouraged them to sound out words, repeating a couple of times which does help a little. Do you think I am expecting too much? I am sure we have made more progress than this in previous years.

The Teacher... A Necessary Evil vs Value Added

In Wigan the first goal of the Synthetic Phonics study was, “Teaching outcomes should be less influenced by individual teaching style.” This repressing of the teacher, as if she or he were a necessary evil, has been a growing trend throughout each phonics era. In fact in each era during which Phonics has been the predominant method, we’ve seen more and more attempts to control active teacher participation in the learning process. Perhaps this is a reaction to the fact that Whole Language was a teacher movement, or perhaps it is a genuine belief that teachers should be mere technicians of the curriculum. Regardless of motive, if the Synthetic Phonics faction is allowed to succeed, teachers will become little more than technicians repeating politically acceptable instructions like, “blend the sounds” and, “try again.”

Is the Synthetic Phonics world view correct? Should we put a lid on teaching style and just give the lesson? Or, is the Phono-Graphix world view correct, expecting teachers to be an active part of the lesson, the last defense between the error and failure. In the Phono-Graphix paradigm the teacher is a dynamic component in the lesson. Phono-Graphix puts teacher error correction at the forefront of group and full classroom instruction. The Phono-Graphix paradigm is banked largely upon the teacher’s ability to operate at the multiple levels of: the lesson itself, the child, his error, the error correction, and starting again from the top.

Phono-Graphix[®]

error corrections that **WORK!**

There are four basic error types

1. Phonological—errors in which the child omits, add or reverses a sound.
2. Phonic—errors made because the child did not know the phonetic code, or tried to use a letter name to read the word.
3. Global—errors based on a guess.
4. Visual—errors of visual memory or acuity (d/b m/w t/f).

General guidelines for correction of errors

Run your finger along the top of the word to indicate the sound pictures as you slowly say the word. This procedure allows the child to confirm for himself the sound he heard and the location at which he heard it.

Do not segment the words for the child, but say the word very slowly. Your finger should be just over each sound picture as you say that part of the word slowly, below it if you're working in a classroom at the board. This technique allows the reader to learn that what you see is what you hear.

Always refer to the sound, never to the letter name. Each lesson has examples of error correction strategies that are commonly needed with that particular lesson.

Correct one error at a time. Children will tune you out if you correct more than one error.

Go back and correct each error one at a time.

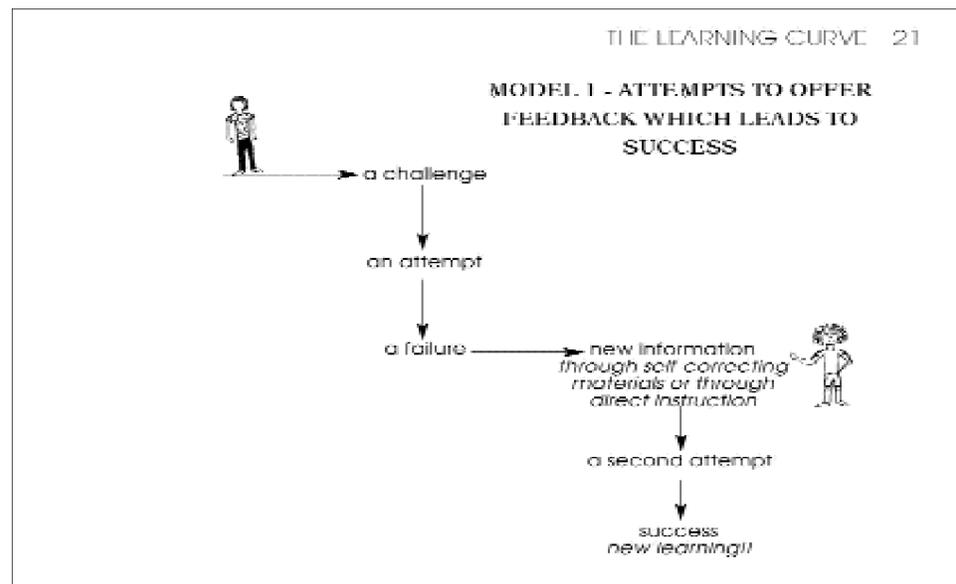
Start with phonological errors (errors where the child has left out, added or reversed a sound).

Then move to phonic errors (errors where a child has mis-read a sound picture).

Offer feedback about what the child has done, and then offer new information or skill guidance to help him correct.

Offer an error correction even if the child self corrects, just to sum up what happened.

This dynamic is pictured below from page 21 of our book 'How to Increase Your Child's Verbal Intelligence' (Yale University Print, 2001; Penguin, out of print). On page 22 is pictured what happens when there is no error correction and the child is allowed to fail.

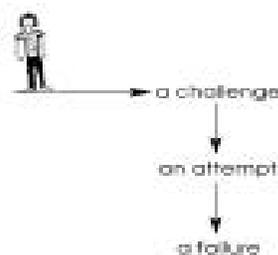


22 THE LEARNING CURVE

The teacher can be fooled into thinking learning is occurring in this model because there is no failure—when in fact without the chance of failure, there is no chance of learning.

In the following model the child is allowed to try and fail over and over again. This model is becoming more and more prevalent in our schools as the notion of learning disabilities takes over. This notion places the blame always on the child. *If Sally didn't learn, it's because Sally can't learn.* The instructional process and methodologies are never examined, never considered as the possible problem. In time, the child learns that failure is okay.

MODEL 3 - FAILURE IS EASY



In a 1968 study (deCharms & Carpenter) researchers found that low achieving students are likely to attempt things that are much too difficult for a good chance of success. These low achievers seem happy to fail repeatedly, placing value on the lofty attempt rather than eventual success. Seligman popularized the term *learned helplessness* to describe the effect of being faced over and over again with a challenge over which one has no control. As mentioned in chapter one, Weiner (1990) hypothesized that high achievers succeed where low achievers fail because high achievers use their failed attempts at moderately difficult tasks as a diagnostic tool for making subsequent attempts. This supports the efficacy of model number one where the reward is in the feedback gained from the error. Additionally it may explain some of the variance in verbal intelligence, and why some children are happy to fail again and again as in model number three, happy to settle for having tried a very difficult task.

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will suc-

We asked two questions on our polls page at readamerica.net in November 2005 in an attempt to gain public opinion on the role of the teacher in the learning process. Seventy-three teachers and parents from the US, Britain and Canada responded. Parents and teachers in our poll demonstrated overwhelming respect of the teacher's part in the learning experience.

POLL RESULTS

Full Sample n=73 United States n=32 Britain n=30 Canada=4 Australia=7 Educators n=48 Parents n=25

Which statement do you agree with MOST?		
Teaching outcomes should not be influenced by individual teaching style.	Full Sample	
	Lessons should not be influenced by teaching style	2.9%
	Teacher style is value added to the lesson	97.1%
A teacher's style is value added to the curriculum.	Educators	
	Lessons should not be influenced by teaching style	3.1%
	Teacher style is value added to the lesson	96.9%
	Parents	
	Lessons should not be influenced by teaching style	0%
	Teacher style is value added to the lesson	100.0%

If a teacher is trained to assess her students' errors and react to each differently s/he is less likely to become bored with teaching. Teachers who are trained to assess and error correct in this way are less likely to breed boredom in their students.	Full Sample	
	Agree	85.5%
	Disagree	14.5%
	Educators	
	Agree	85.9%
	Disagree	14.1%
	Parents	
	Agree	80.0%
	Disagree	20.0%
agree		
disagree		

Mandate vs Persuasive Demonstration

With the cult of the curriculum also comes the idea that persuasion of teachers is unnecessary. From its inception the Synthetic Phonics lobby has called for a mandate to teacher training institutions and schools. In this intellectually unhealthy atmosphere the teacher is disenfranchised from the process of observation and professional dialogue regarding best practice, and becomes little more than a vehicle for delivery of the mandated curriculum.

In comparison, in hundreds of schools and school systems in the US, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa teachers have observed and recognized the value of Phono-Graphix at work in classrooms where their colleagues have been free to implement it. In just nine years since the publication of the Orton study, this quiet flood has grown into a tidal wave of enthusiasm.

The Student... A Dynamic in the Process vs A Stagnant Recipient of the Curriculum

Partner to the notion that error corrections and the teachers who make them are important to the instructional dance, is the notion that children make different errors, and indeed are different. The fields of personality, motivation, developmental, and learning theory have long established classic research charting the range of individual difference among humans. Our November poll contained a question regarding this which revealed that 92% of educators in the US and Britain, and 80% of parents, believe that a child's personality and motivational differences are relevant variables to a good lesson.

A student's personality traits and motivational differences are relevant variables to a good lesson.	Full Sample	
	Agree	91.5%
	Disagree	8.5%
agree	Educators	
	Agree	92.4%
	Disagree	7.6%
disagree	Parents	
	Agree	80.0%
	Disagree	20.0%

Unfortunately the Phonics faction historically has not embraced the importance of individual differences in children. Contemporarily this history trend appears to be holding up. According to literacy specialist and Synthetic Phonic lobbyist Susan Godsland on her website dyslexics.org.uk, the fields of personality, motivation, developmental, and learning theory are only "vaguely scientific" and are based upon "somewhat dodgy experimental foundations". With curt dismissal Godsland places giants like Jung, Maslow, Erikson, Skinner, Piaget, Bandura, and Kelly in the same heap with astrology and three ring circuses.

This cavalier perspective stands in the light of the fact that Synthetic Phonics seems to leave behind that same 25% of children that its ancestor traditional Phonics left behind, according to Tom Burkard another Synthetic Phonics lobbyist. On its website Burkard's lobby, The Promethean Trust, says that, "About 25% of any class will need extra coaching in small groups, or even individually."

Yes, I know you're interested in astronomy, but your teacher says you must'n read about it until you can synthesize four syllable words.



dyslexics
.org.uk

Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences

Learning Styles: Would you use a horoscope to decide the best way to educate your child? 'Why are learning styles so popular, given that the concept is built on somewhat dodgy experimental foundations? ... The answer is simple. Learning styles appeal on the same basis as astrology: the comfort of putting things in categories, of giving oneself a label, of being told who one is. Combine this with the implication that there is something vaguely scientific about it and the fact that it is easy to understand, and you have an irresistible package'. (Parkinson. Guardian Education. 11 May 04)

The theory that we each have a unique and immutable "learning style" has been found to be empirically unfounded. Its popularity can be explained by the Forer effect (a.k.a. the Barnum effect after P. T. Barnum, who believed that a good circus had "a little something for everybody") and subjective validation. 'Psychologist B.R. Forer found that people tend to accept vague and general personality descriptions as uniquely applicable to themselves without realizing that the same description could be applied to just about anyone'. (SkepDic.com) Besides the Barnum effect there are other reasons why people believe in learning styles. When charismatic and influential people promote an idea, people tend to trust them. There is also a tendency to support things in which one has invested time and money.

Comparatively the Phono-Graphix perspective and lessons are built up the shoulders of giants like Jung, Maslow, Erikson, Skinner, Piaget, Bandura, and Kelly. On page 25 of 'How to Increase Your Child's Verbal Intelligence' we lay out the accepted model of natural incentives, emotion, motive, and behavior in the learning process.

THE LEARNING CURVE 25

natural incentive	contact
emotion	↓ pleasure
motive	↓ affiliation
behavior	↓ seek mother

A seven year old will be drawn to the science center in her classroom because her natural incentive to variety is stimulated while watching the ants in the ant farm burrow tunnels through the chunky wet sand.

natural incentive	variety
emotion	↓ interest
motive	↓ achievement
behavior	↓ seek new experiences

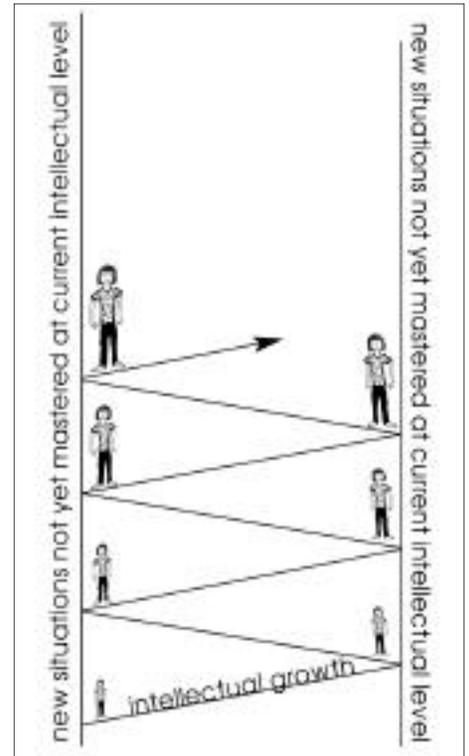
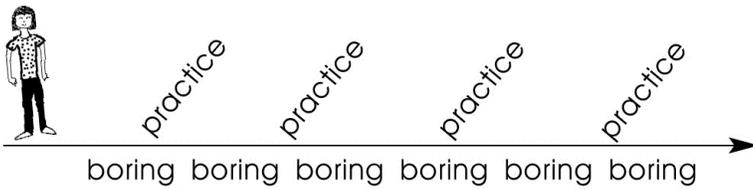
Based on this interplay between naturally occurring incentives, emotions and motivation, it would seem that if we want our children to be motivated—to achieve, to be affiliative with others, to have impact on the world around them—we should allow them lots of opportunities to experience naturally occurring incentives, help them to understand their emotions and to realize the relationship between the incentive and the emotion. Much of this occurs on the playing field so to speak. Johnny sees a large horse perform dressage and looks interested. "Oh Johnny, I see you're excited. It must be that the horse has caught your interest. Let's go have a closer look and talk to the man. Maybe we can learn what it's all about!" Sometimes emotions that appear to be negative play out to the learner's advantage. Here's a real-life clip from a conversation I overheard in a playground not too long ago. This teacher helped the child realize how he was feeling and why. And she showed him a way to successfully act on his feelings. Four year old Jason was working with five year old George to build a sand castle

Make It Simpler vs Make It Harder

Systematic Phonics teachers seems bent on controlling every word that falls before a child's eyes so that there is no chance the child will guess at the word. This also means there's little chance of failure. Phono-Graphix teachers knows better! According to motivation psychology it's errors that get the attention of the learner. Motivation psychologists call this an orienting response. Without error, there's no disequilibrium, no limit, no reason to take in new information, no reason to do what psychology calls 'orient'. Hence no motivation to learn. Motivation psychologists Miller and Dollard coined the term 'learning dilemma' to describe this phenomenon. They explained that old skills and information must be activated in order to solve problems. When a problem cannot be solved with existing skills and information, failure occurs resulting in anxiety. New skills and information are taken into the learner's repertoire in order to solve the problem and relieve the anxiety. The dilemma—learning follows failure. In Phono-Graphix this process is made easier for the student and teacher through lessons that externalize what the child doesn't know, and a system of error corrections such as that we shared in in the section, Teacher as a Necessary Evil of Value Added, which offers just the right amount of missing information to keep the child engaged in the problem solving process. In this way each new error is an opportunity to learn!

On the left below is a diagram taken from our book, 'How to Increase Your Child's Verbal Intelligence', which depicts what happens when the only thing put before the learner is practice. On the right is what happens when the material put before the child is just above her capability—taking into account the individual difference in her ability to manage novelty, her unique personality—as mentioned in the last section. Does the striking difference between these two diagrams explain the differences between Phono-Graphix and Synthetic Phonics data? It may well, according to one Wigan source, who said, "It made me cry to see children who so wanted to move on but were still made to practice 'c' 'a' 't' day after day for weeks."

MODEL 2 - NO LEARNING



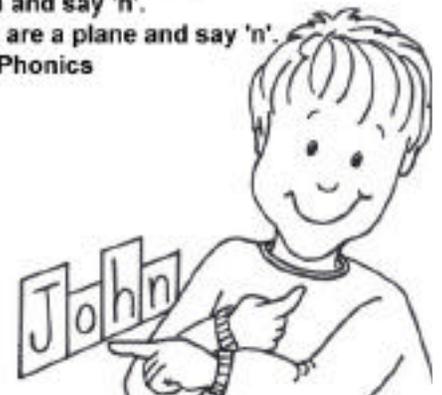
Once again we formulated a poll to confirm parent and teacher opinion on the matter of whether learning lessons should be below, at, or above the child's current ability. The results are pictured here.

Which statement do you agree with MOST?	Full Sample	
Lessons should be just below the child's ability.	Lessons should be just below the child's ability.	4.2%
	Lessons should be at the child's ability.	16.9%
	Lessons should be just above the child's ability.	78.9%
Lessons should be at the child's ability.	Educators	
	Lessons should be just below the child's ability.	4.5%
	Lessons should be at the child's ability.	15.2%
Lessons should be just above the child's ability.	Lessons should be just above the child's ability.	80.3%
	Parents	
	Lessons should be just below the child's ability.	0%
	Lessons should be at the child's ability.	40.0%
	Lessons should be just above the child's ability.	60.0%

Modeling is Good vs Modeling is Bad

This insistence in keeping reading matter simple so that students don't guess and can't fail exists beside the fact that there is no mechanism in Synthetic Phonics for making clear what it is the teacher means by, "synthesize" or "blend" or "push the sounds together to make a word." And there is very little instruction between the alphabet songs and the no guessing rule to encourage learning the code or how to use what you've learned to read. In comparison, the Phono-Graphix teacher is armed with many tools for doing this. The flyer below explains blending error corrections embedded in the classic Phono-Graphix lessons.

Pretend to wobble on a plate like jelly and say 'j'.
 Pretend to turn lights on and off and say 'o'.
 Hold your hand in front of your mouth,
 pant as if out of breath and say 'h'.
 Make a noise as if you are a plane and say 'n'.
 —from Jolly Phonics



When is a cat a potato?

four tips for dealing with bad blending

Sam is a five year old with a blending problem. The problem, Sam doesn't know that there's a relationship between the individual sounds he says, and the word he then forwards. It's just a party trick to Sam—sound... sound... sound... word. Sam could have been ten and been in the same shape, still harbouring the same misconception that saying sounds is some hoop that adults make you jump through before you can guess the word, or that you're supposed to *know* the word and then say the sounds and then say the word. In short, the sounds and the word are unrelated party tricks that adults require, much like washing hands and eating. What's to be done with Sam? Here's the ticket.

"Sam, this word is 'cat'. When you say the sounds, you'll hear the word happening. Let's give 'cat' a try." Listen as Sam says the sounds 'c' 'a' 't'. Then say, "cat", well done. It sounded like 'cat' to me." Move on to another word, telling Sam the word each time. By hearing the sounds while listening for a word you already know to listen for, the relationship is learned!

Glenda is a nine year old with a long time reading problem. She's essentially a non-reader, with a sight word vocabulary getting her to about six years, one month. After saying the sounds in words she tends to guess any word that ends with the same two last sounds. Often the last sound is repeated at the front of the word. So for instance, 'm' 'o' 'p' is 'pop', and 's' 'a' 'd' is 'dad'. What's to be done with Glenda? Try this.

"If that's 'pop', there would be a 'p' here (pointing to the 'm'), and there isn't. Say the sounds again please." This time after she says the first two sounds say, "So far you've got 'mo'" then point to the 'p'. After doing some like this, lay down a word and ask her what she's got so far after she says the first two sounds. Once she's blended the first two sounds point to the last sound picture. Without this intervention Glenda might have ended up an eighteen year old in the same shape.

Joe is a seven year old with a reading problem. He's much improved over earlier this year. He knows a lot of the code and says the sounds as he reads, but often he gets frustrated after he says the sounds and can't generate a word. Sometimes he reverts to guessing. His guesses are often words that contain a sound in the word he's reading. So 'cat', might be read as 'cab' or 'cap'. What's the problem? Joe is not very good at word retrieval. He gets an inkling of the word and then it's gone. He doesn't know that he needs to reach for words once he's heard all the sounds. Here's what to do with Joe.

Lay out three pictures from the Phono-Graphix kit or from a magazine. Choose pictures of similar words like 'fat', 'cap' and 'cat'. Write one of the words or choose a word card from the Phono-Graphix kit, for instance 'cap'. Before you lay down the word say, "This word is going to be one of these 'fat', 'cap', or 'cat'. Listen to the sounds as you say them and try to tell which word you hear." This will give Joe the experience of word finding within appropriate confines. *

Blending as a Function of Short Term Memory vs 'Chunking'

Unfortunately Phonics has long taken the view that the stringing together of sounds into a meaningful word occurs in the short term memory store (STM), also known as the 'articulatory loop'. In fact, this is highly unlikely. In the vast majority of words that are read the word itself is already known by the reader. It is part of his vocabulary. It is stored in long term memory (LTM). Given this it stands to reason that when the system is working efficiently and sounds enter the sensory store (SS) the word would be recognized from among the words in LTM. If recognition occurs and retrieval is made from LTM there is no need for sounds to be stored in STM. And further reason would lead to the likelihood that these sounds would only move to STM if the word was not instantly apparent to the reader meaning that the breakdown, or deficit actually occurred either in SS, or in retrieval from LTM not in STM at all. In fact STM would be the worst place from which to retrieve information in LTM. STM is meant for arbitrary strings of information that must be recalled short term, like phone numbers or a short grocery list. STM is not for reaching out to what is already known, like vocabulary. Information in STM can be moved to working memory (WM) and eventually to LTM. Learning the times table through rote memorization is an example of this. But while it is possible to learn 144 arithmetic facts like this, it would be highly inefficient to learn to read the 30,000+ words of a decent sized vocabulary through rote memorization of their constituent sounds... 'c' + 'a' + 't' = 'cat'. Yet the current theory among reading researchers that a deficit in the STM system leads to blending problems requires that one accepts that reading is the rote memorization of blended words that match sets of segmented sounds.

In stark contrast Phono-Graphix asserts that a blending deficit occurs when the reader moves segmented sounds from SS to STM where they are subject to recency effects and general temporal deterioration, and that the 'cure' lies in stopping the sounds from moving to STM—to teach the child to blend as he goes, or do what memory researchers call 'chunking'. To do so, it is imperative that we understand what might cause the child to move sounds to STM. There are several indications that we've observed in our research at the Read America Clinic and in our observation of children in classrooms.

POOR TECHNIQUE: With many children poor blending is largely a matter of technique. They say the sounds and then repeat them over and over again, until alas the STM trace fades (as it always will) and the sounds become mixed. Teachers should make sure that students understand that sound sound sound = word is not just a party trick that it involves listening for a word you already know. Give children stimulus pictures of two or three words and then ask them to read the sounds in a word and see if they can hear which of the pictures it is.

PERSONALITY: Some children are more reticent to err than others. The desire to be certain before attempting an answer may drive sounds into STM for repetition. Children like this should be encouraged to blend as they go and to guess even if they may be wrong.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES: Many children learn to move sounds to STM through poor instructional habits. In our observation of classrooms and reading clinics in the US, Canada and the UK we've seen many teachers sit and wait for the word, three, five, ten and twenty seconds after the child has said the sounds. It is simply too late! As we've said word recognition should be immediate. A child who is not reaching for meaning must be taught to do so before sounds move to STM.

INSTRUCTIONAL TRENDS: Another causal factor may be a trend toward over reliance on rote memorization. Many children we've observed seem to think that repetition of the sounds will eventually provide them with recall of the right answer. They seem not to understand that reading is not about recall, but about sounds sounding like a word that they already know. It is about recognition not remembering.

Rigidity vs Flexibility

For the Synthetic Phonics teacher sequence is the holy grail. You start at the beginning, the letter sounds—yes, those same sounds the child has been speaking since he was one or two. You teach him how to form the letters.

“The pencil should be held in the ‘tripod’ grip between the thumb and first two fingers.

If a child’s hold starts incorrectly, it is very difficult to correct later on. A child needs to form each letter the correct way. Particular problems to look for are -

- **the o (the pencil stroke must be anticlockwise•not clockwise d (the pencil starts in the middle, not the top)**
- **there must be an initial downstroke on letters such as m and n”**

Then (and not a moment sooner) you teach him which letters go with which sounds by having him wave his arms in certain ways so that he can remember the sounds, or is it the letters (this not clear in the manuals) when he is in the middle of reading a word. Examples of the arm gestures used in Jolly Phonics, the exemplar Synthetic Phonics program follow:

s Weave hand in an s shape, like a snake, and say ssssss

t Turn head from side to side as if watching tennis and say t, t, t

i Pretend to be a mouse, wriggling fingers at end of nose and squeak i, i, i

n Make a noise, as if you are a plane – hold arms out and say nnnnnn

e Pretend to tap an egg on the side of a pan and crack it into the pan, saying eh, eh, eh

h Hold hand in front of mouth panting as if out of breath and say h, h, h

r Pretend to be a puppy holding a piece of rag, shaking head from side to side, and say rrrrrr

d Beat hands up and down as if playing a drum and say d, d, d

l Pretend to lick a lollipop and say l l l l l

ai Cup hand over ear and say ai

j Pretend to wobble on a plate and say j, j, j

oa Bring hand over mouth as if something is wrong and say oh!

ie Stand to attention and salute, saying ie ie

ng Imagine you are a weightlifter, pretend to lift a heavy weight above head, saying ng

oo oo Move head back and forth as if it is the cuckoo in a cuckoo clock, saying u, oo; u, oo (Little and long oo)

y Pretend to be eating a yogurt and say y, y, y

ch Move arms at sides as if you are a train and say ch, ch, ch

th th Pretend to be naughty clowns and stick out tongue a little for the th, and further for the th sound (this and thumb)

ou Pretend your finger is a needle and prick thumb saying ou, ou, ou

ue Point to people around you and say you, you, you

er Roll hands over each other like a mixer and say ererer

ar Open mouth wide and say ah (British English) Flap hands as if a seal, and say ar, ar, ar (North American English)

You begin synthesizing simple words. When the child has trouble you use a piece of paper (from Promethean Trust) to cover the word so he can only see the next sound in the word. Veering from the prescribed sequence is considered unacceptable, and will get you a firm hand-slap from trainers, such as this reply from a Jolly Phonics trainer on the Jolly Phonic website. “Stick to the Jolly order of letter/s-sound introduction. The moment you start to tamper with the order, you preclude using the word boxes which are designed cumulatively. Teachers so often make unjustified decisions before they have really tried the program out properly.” This requisite adherence to the sequence is apparently born of a lack of trust in teachers’ ability to make decisions about sequence.

Only in the very recent months since carbon copy Phono-Graphix methods have sworn their allegiance to Synthetic Phonics, have we seen wording about segmenting words, or manipulating phonemes. We haven’t seen lessons to go with the words, mind you—just words. In the end, should these methods stop doing all of the above and actually begin doing a full fledged Phono-Graphix course of instruction, they would no longer be Synthetic Phonics, but Phono-Graphix and the only remaining debate would center on why they continue to claim they are Synthetic Phonics programs.

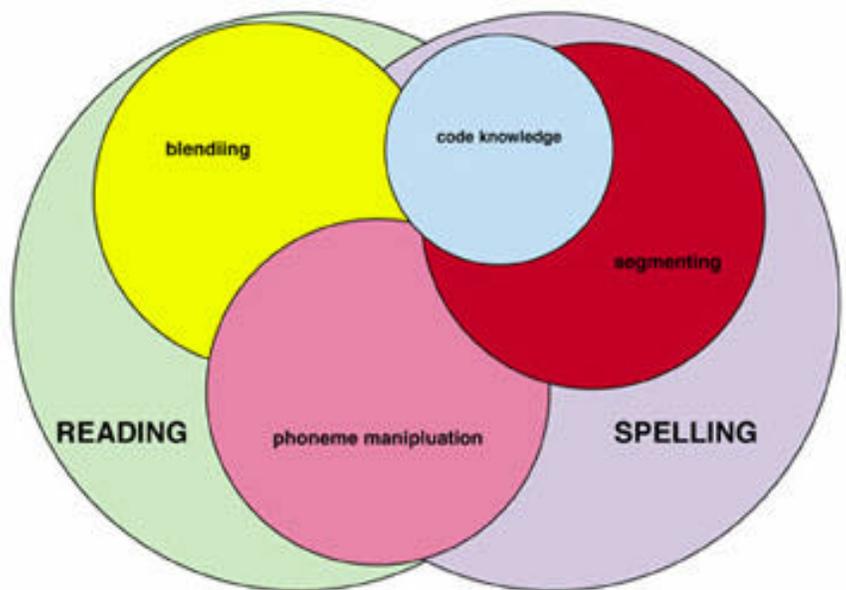
What about the Phono-Graphix carbon copies? Are they also doing this? Yes, according to our Wigan sources they are indeed. They are bound by the same ideals of sequence as Synthetic Phonics, and teach adherence to it as the secret to their success. At no time is the child allowed to go forward or in any other order to the prescription. The flexibility of Phono-Graphix is cast aside for a laundry list of lessons that must be scratched off in order. Contrarily Phono-Graphix teachers understand the adjacent graph, and put this knowledge to work for their students. The student’s success at reading and spelling can be partially explained by the three skills of segmenting, blending, and phoneme manipulation; and their knowledge of the code (McGuinness, C., Orton Annals of Dyslexia, 1996). There is a degree, or percentage, of overlap between the three skills, and code knowledge is impacted by the student’s success at each of these skills to a specific degree.

When processing the image, hold in mind that correlation is simply that—the co-relationship between variables. It does not indicate causality. So while we can say for instance:

Good segmenting scores and good spelling scores correlate.

One-hundred per cent of segmenting scores are relevant to spelling scores.

Most of spelling scores can be accounted for by segmenting scores.



We cannot say that good segmenting scores cause good spelling, or that good spelling scores cause good segmenting; only that they co-occur and that the degree to which one is good or bad at them is correlational.

One thing that is perfectly clear from this graphic is that spelling and reading are not perfectly reversible processes. If they were reversible, scores on reading tests would correlate one-hundred per cent to scores on spelling tests and the two circles would line up perfectly. In fact, much of spelling has nothing to do with reading, and vice versa. This tells us a lot about how to proceed instructionally vis-a-vis spelling and reading. For example, children who score well on a segmenting test also score well on spelling tests, so we should teach

children to segment. But that is not the only thing accounting for (filling the circle of) spelling. Scoring well on a blending test also helps fill the circle of accountability for good spelling scores, though to a much lesser extent; and the ability to pull sounds in and out of words (phoneme manipulation) also accounts for good spelling, and to a slightly higher ratio than blending. Also apparent is that knowledge of the code (as tested with our Phono-Graphix code knowledge test) is completely correlated to good spelling scores, but only about six-tenths by good reading scores; and that whilst good code knowledge is fully accounted for by spelling scores, some degree of good code knowledge is not accounted for by good reading scores.

Perhaps the most important thing we see from this graphic is that all three of the skills we teach, and knowledge of the code, fall inside the circles of what we are trying to teach. Also important is that most of the accountability for good reading and good spelling scores is covered by instruction in these three skills and code knowledge.

Despite the fact that on its website Britain's largest Synthetic Phonics lobby the Reading Reform Foundation, says that their first goal is the dissemination of information about evidence based practices, Synthetic Phonics at large seems completely unaware of the relationships between these four variables as they pertain to literacy acquisition.

No Reading Until You can Read vs Real Lessons With Real Children's Books Does a Reader Make

Perhaps the most disturbing trend to come out of the Synthetic Phonics ivory tower is the idea that teachers and parents shouldn't let children read until they can read. This is at least as ludicrous as the Whole Language idea that children learn to read by reading; and certainly in the same spirit of doctrine.

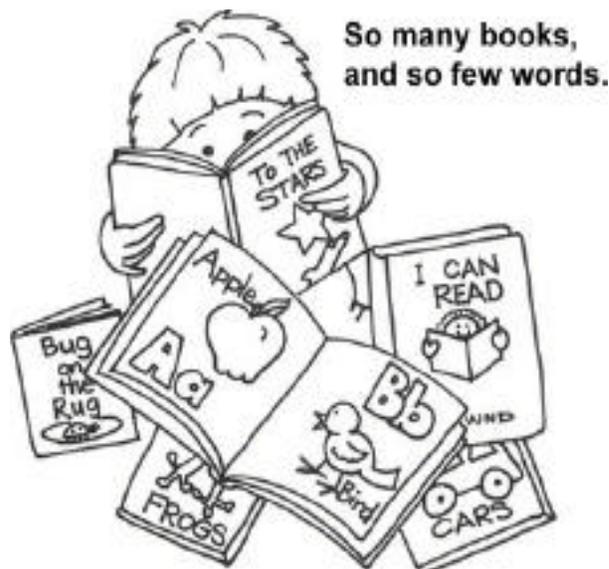
**Ro....berrrrt! You'd better
not be in the books again.
You know you can't read yet.**



In Summer of 2004, when I first became alarmed at the increase in prominence of the Synthetic Phonics movement, and the claiming of data from Phono-Graphix studies, I posted a poll on our website at readamerica.net. Three-hundred-sixteen parents and teachers took this poll and showed overwhelmingly that they believe children's literature should be an important part of literacy instruction.

Children's literature should be an important part of teaching children to read.	Full Sample	
	Yes	96.5%
	No	3.5%
yes	Educators	
no	Yes	97.1%
	No	2.9%
	Parents	
	Yes	95.4%
	No	4.6%

Partner to this idea is the notion that what books children are allowed to have access too should contain only so called 'decodable text'. There are two problems with this idea. The first is the obvious plea for the good literature, and is somewhat obvious, "What about all those wonderful stories and drawings?" The second is that with good lessons, all text is decodable. From the very first Phono-Graphix lesson on, we can use real children's literature as part of our literacy instruction, with lessons like our Phono-Graphix classic Buddy Reading shown on the next page.



Buddy Reading

Buddy Reading Word By Word

Buddy reading can be done one on one, in a small group, or as a whole class. The intention is to give the child practice reading the words he can in a real book, not just a reader. The teacher or other trained adult must be involved in buddy reading. Parent helpers can be trained to help with this.

1. Don't be afraid to ask a child to read a book that will be very hard for him. Tell him, "This is a difficult book. You'll need lots of help and I'll help you when you do." Choose a book that the child or children you're working with can read at least a fourth of the words without help.
2. With the child present look through the book or the first page or two if it's a long book, and make a list of the words the child can read. This will make the child feel as if there is much they can contribute to this story. If you're working with more than one child, have each child make a list of all the words. You can even do this with children at varying levels. Simply make multiple lists and say something like this, "Susie, these are the words you can read in the story, Rob these are your words, and everyone else, can read the words on this list here. Please copy down the words I've given you." When this step is done continue on.
3. Begin reading and choose various children to read words that each will be able to read with some ease. Every now and then it can be encouraged to choose a harder word for a child you think can manage it. Then this word can be added to his list. Words that are difficult to read through the adjacent consonant sounds might have a word card made for them. Children who receive advanced code lessons, more words

Buddy Reading—Taking Turns

1. When a child is able to do some connected reading, stop to give him a rest while you read for another child. When other children read.
2. Explain that the book is difficult but there is something you can do to help.
3. Have each child read an amount of text appropriate to his reading level. Do error corrections as needed. Keep track of words read.
4. Every now and again stop to recap what's been read. Let the slow reader have a turn, or if many errors are made, stop to reread.

Independent Reading With Monitoring

Once a child is ready to do some independent reading, you can monitor his progress. This can be done in the following ways:

Reading to a friend will encourage children to read. The reader should keep a written record of words read.

Reading into a tape recorder is fun for new readers. The reader should keep a written record of what they're doing. The reader should keep a written record of words read.

Reading to oneself. We suggest the reader keep a written record of any words he's not sure of for later review.

Words I Can Read From 'If You Give A Mouse A Cookie'

if	nap
ask	fix
glass	box
milk	in
him	fluff
on	get
trim	pen
up	stand
end	at
well	will

New Names - Old Games

In the early 1990s Phonics lobbyists accused Whole Language of failing 30-40% of school children, with Report Card on the Nation and States and dwindling SATs results in England as evidence. Together McGuinness, McGuinness, and McGuinness were a lone voice in two books, 'Why Children Can't Read' and 'Reading Reflex', expounding on the numerous problems with Phonics *as well* as Whole Language. But indeed the pendulum did swing, unhindered by the friction of reason and historic hindsight. Today, in the light of Phonics' return to prominence, the Phonics lobby is hard at work explaining why 20% of school children still fail to reach basic competency. The so called Synthetic Phonics faction says it's because the bulk of schools, with the endorsement of the National Literacy Strategy, are still doing all that silly stuff the McGuinnesses poked fun at, now known as the 'mixed bag'. The so called Analytic Phonics faction is mad because they went to all that trouble to add some phonic element to Whole Language, only to serve to enrage the Synthetic Phonics faction, and now they're stuck with a [analytic] 'Phonics' label! According to one literacy advisor in Devon, "I prefer the term 'mixed bag' to describe what I do, over the term 'Analytic Phonics'." Education secretary Ruth Kelly has *her* feelings hurt because scores are up and everyone is still fussing. Parents are furious because they are the ones who house, cloth, feed, and love those little faces at the wrong end of the bell curve. —And so on.

In the midst of all this regrouping, renaming, and name calling, a lot of people have had at least a small amount of wool pulled over their eyes. Is one of the McGuinnesses among them? According to Diane McGuinness, author of 'Why Children Can't Read', "Some Phonics is better than no phonics. I don't even know what they [Reading Reform Foundation] mean by Synthetic Phonics. I don't think they do either. They are only trying to describe what they already do and have done for years. They'd be better off using the term 'linguistic phonics', and I've tried to tell them so," (our back garden, June 19, 2005).

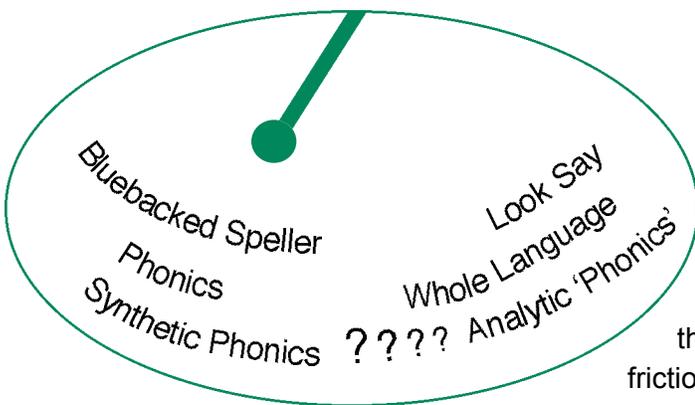
Is the eldest McGuinness right in taking the position that some Phonics is better than no Phonics? Can Phonics be reformed? Is reason the best policy? According the Phonics faction, Whole Language is irredeemable. Compromise is 'a mixed bag', and unacceptable. So why should Phonics be given another chance? Why let fly the pendulum upon which these thrice failed methods ride, cutting to shreds with each swing the lives of 20 to 40% of school children, if it can be stopped? Are the younger McGuinnesses being willful in their attempts to do so, as the Phonics lobby has accused, in particular in the light of Phonics' current upward mobility? As George Bernard Shaw said, "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man." Likewise Thomas Kuhn pointed out that only subtle reform occurs within a scientific paradigm; and that real change comes only with a revolution, with a new paradigm.

The Physics of Phonics

Whether history brings slow reform, or ends by embracing the Phono-Graphix paradigm, one thing is certain, the acceptance of a failure rate of any sort has to end. The goal of education is that all school children achieve at least basic competency. Whether this means the bell curve has to be moved to the right by 40% or 20% is irrelevant unless, and until, it actually happens. So sayeth the unreasonable man.

In our 1998 best seller 'Reading Reflex' we wrote about the perpetual swing between Phonics (of one form or another) and Whole Language (of one form or another). We poked fun at the many changes that Phonics and Whole Language have gone through over the decades, one being in vogue, then the other, each making changes from its theoretical predecessor as it swung back into vogue—ever swinging back and forth like H.G.Wells' perpetual motion machine, seemingly unstoppable, 25-40% left behind with each swing.

The perpetual motion which keeps the pendulum aswing is not a law of physics, but rather a violation of the laws of thermodynamics. We can learn much about the physics of the swinging reading paradigms by understanding the physics of perpetual motion. There are two tricks perpetual motion uses to beat the law of thermodynamics: 1) an energy source outside itself, and 2) very low friction. In 1998 we did not take lightly our analogy of a pendulum swinging. Our words were meant as a firm warning. But in the mid 1990's readers were out for answers, not warnings. Certainly the educational community of the English speaking world took seriously the Phono-Graphix method and our insight into the nature of the code and the nature of the learner. But most did not heed the warning words in the message. Instead they were so excited that Whole Language might be on the downswing and Phonics on the upswing that instead they tossed our arguments into the barrel of ammunition being blasted at any remaining Whole Language instructors hiding in the hills. Nearly ten years on Phono-Graphix still struggles for its rightful place as a third paradigm. And nearly ten years on, one can see the patterns about to repeat themselves—the patterns underlying the swing of the pendulum, the actions behind it's perpetual motion.



The Reading Pendulum

The perpetual motion of the reading pendulum operates on the same principles as a real pendulum: keep the energy up (by exciting the crowd) and keep the friction down (by honing the talking points as needed and changing just enough to appease any discord). Because it is lateral

by design, swinging only from side to side between the two systems on each end of its swing, it is a closed system, precluding any other paradigm which attempts to address the problem of illiteracy with ideas outside the existing systems. Instead of embracing the new paradigm, one or the other of the pendulum players pulls under its umbrella (sometimes kicking and screaming) what the new paradigm has to offer, bringing new energy to the system in order to keep the pendulum aloft at its particular end of the swing. We saw this phenomenon in the late 1980s when faced with mounting discord proponents of Whole Language began to claim Marie Clay's Reading Recovery (developed in the preceding Phonics era) fell under the Whole Language umbrella. What might have been a new paradigm (one-on-one instruction with specific error correction) instead became the crutch upon which Whole Language limped to its demise.

Another physical phenomenon is that a vacuum has a way of sucking in everything around it. And indeed a vacuum is created in the system when the pendulum players, in their earnest to keep the pendulum aloft, remove whatever elements of the paradigm were deemed unfavorable as the paradigm fell from its height during the last swing of the pendulum. In the case of Look Say, the whole word sight recognition drills and boxed words, to help children remember the shape of the word, were the first to go. Into the vacuum that was left Whole Language proponents sucked very descriptive pictures of reading material that was easily learned by rote such as, "Mary wore a red dress, red dress, red dress. Mary wore a red dress all day long."

Much of what I've written here is merely a matter of history. Of far greater importance is that with the mirror of history we begin to see patterns emerging, patterns that could have been predicted and preempted had the readers of 'Reading Reflex' heeded the warning. Is it too late? Are we bound by physics to see the pendulum swing back to Whole Language, in some form? And what twists and talking points will we see this time? Or are we now discovering that the energy to keep the pendulum aswing is so diminished that the pendulum is settling in the middle—at the point of the so called 'mixed bag'? Below is a graphic example of how Look Say morphed itself into Whole Language, and how Synthetic Phonics has been born out of Phonics. Whether one sees the obvious or not is rather like the old question of whether one can 'see the forest for the trees' or the new question whether one can 'see the sound pictures for the words'.

The Metamorphosis of Paradigms - As the Pendulum Swings		
How to energize while keeping the friction low	Look Say to Whole Language -remember when?	Phonics to Synthetic Phonics
Take out what has fallen out of favour	whole word sight recognition drills boxed words to help kids remember the shape of the word	letter names and phonics rules
and you're left with....	reading material that can be known by rote with lots and lots of pictures	blending
Add a twist or make up a pseudonym	whole language	synthesis
Hone your pitch and talking points, changing them entirely if needed.	"This is about linguistics and how children acquire language, whether spoken or written."	"This is about bringing the constituent parts of words together."
Add in some hysteria and reactive stupidity	NO primers-Children learn to read <u>by</u> reading	NO real books-Children mustn't read until they <u>can</u> read
When what you're doing is revealed as yet another failure claim that any peripheral paradigms (and their data) are under your umbrella, generating new energy to keep your paradigm on the up swing of the pendulum a wee bit longer. Inevitably physics will take over and you will drag down with you anything under your umbrella.	Reading Recovery Developed during the last phonics era (1972) by Marie Clay.	Phono-Graphix Developed during the last Whole Language era (1993) by Carmen and Geoffrey McGuinness

The most recent national assessments in Britain and the United States alike have seen only modest gains in literacy scores since the return to Phonics ten to twelve years ago. Instead of honor when faced with failure, we've seen Phonics proponents demonstrate exactly the same sorts of moves as Whole Language proponents demonstrated in the early 1990s: honing talking points, changing definitions, pulling in ideas (and data) from the peripheral paradigm (now Phono-Graphix), attempting to take it under the umbrella of Synthetic Phonics, and most alarmingly the hysteria and reactive stupidity of hiding the real books from children UNTIL(?) they can read.

Where will the squirming end? If history is truly a mirror, it will end with another swing of the pendulum... Or will it? On 1 December, 2005 something happened that may change forever the course of literacy history.

The Rose Interim Report

As we said in the opening pages of this article, we were pleased with the language of the National Curriculum (circa 1998), believing that through our careful consultation, and the attention paid to it by Jim Rose, Keith Lloyd, and John Stannard, it had led to a framework that included the three skills needed to read and spell - segmenting, blending, and phoneme manipulation, and the four concepts that comprise the nature of the code - letters are pictures of sounds, some sound-pictures can be represented with two or more letters, there is variation in the code (more than one way to show most sounds), there is overlap in the code (some sound pictures represent more than one sound); and that it made provision for these to be taught both in and out of children's literature.

It was with deep concern that a large part of this would be swept away in lieu of an over-focus on the single skill of blending and letter-sound correspondence alone rather than the full nature of the code, and in the absence of children's books that we awaited release of Jim Rose's Interim Report. It was with the greatest relief, and a tad bit of shame for having doubted him, that we read the report at our home/office in Orlando, Florida in the early hours of December 1st.

In the introductory section Rose discusses in overview the existing National Curriculum saying, in (14) "Primary schools are required to teach phonics, the content of which is prescribed as knowledge, skills and understanding in the statutory National Curriculum programmes of study for English, to pupils from the age of five. The programme of study for reading includes work on 'phonemic awareness and phonic knowledge'. During Key Stage 1 pupils should be taught to:

- identify, segment and blend phonemes in words**
- sound and name the letters of the alphabet**
- link sound and letter patterns, exploring rhyme, alliteration and other sound patterns**
- identify syllables in words**
- recognise that the same sounds may have different spellings and that the same spellings may relate to different sounds."**

Rose summarises in (15) to say, "In other words, the National Curriculum treats phonic work as essential subject content, not a method of teaching. How schools should teach that content is a matter of choice, which may, or may not, be guided by the non-statutory Framework for teaching and any other materials that the Primary

National Strategy publishes. Many schools also choose to use commercial programmes for phonic work. Some use them in place of the NLS materials; others, simply to complement the NLS, particularly in teaching letter-sound correspondences.”

That said, Rose quickly moves to the path ahead, a greater focus on phonic instruction, no more mixing of strategies. The books can stay but the onset and rime and the whole word instruction have to go. Blending is great, but you also have to teach segmenting and phoneme manipulation. Letter-sound correspondence is lovely, but you must also teach the rest of the ‘alphabetic principle’.

In (26) Rose quickly dispels any notion that phonic work in isolation to children’s books is acceptable when he says, “...the teaching of phonic work must teach beginner readers to process all the letters in words and ‘read words in and out of text’.” He expands Synthetic Phonics to include the ‘alphabetic principle’ not stopping at letter-sound correspondence alone. He reminds us that blending is not the only skill needed to read and spell when he says phonic work should:

teach grapheme/phoneme correspondences and the alphabetic principle in a clearly defined, incremental sequence

teach children to apply the highly important skill of blending (synthesising) phonemes in order, all through a word to read

teach children to apply the skill of segmenting words into their constituent phonemes to spell to understand that blending and segmenting are reversible processes

In (37) Rose says, “Ensuring that children master the alphabetic code is at the heart of phonic work.” Then goes on to remind us again that literature will not be kept from the hands of English school children when he says, “However, daily systematic phonics teaching does not mean that children are not exposed to the wealth of good literature and favourite books.” Rose shares that, “It is evident from visits to some schools that these two elements (i.e. systematic teaching of phonic work and the development of positive attitudes) of teaching reading are sometimes seen as incompatible,” and insists that, “This is absolutely not the case.”

In (38-40) Rose says that, “...listening and speaking are the roots of reading and writing.” And offers some specific direction saying, “Settings and schools should therefore give a high priority to the development of children’s speaking and listening skills, both because they are intrinsically valuable and because they provide the foundations for the systematic teaching and learning of phonics, and higher order reading and writing skills.”

The word ‘blend’ is used 16 times in the body of the Rose Interim Review. The word ‘segment’ is used 11 times. There are 7 references to ‘the alphabetic principle’, and ‘letter-sound correspondence’ is mentioned 7 times.

A Clear Voice Now

Its language is clear. If the language of the Rose Interim Report is taken seriously Pre-Rose Synthetic Phonics is dead and will be replaced with some rigour. Jim Rose’s Interim Review in effect says, YES to Synthetic Phonics and then proceeds to redefine it taking into account the forty years of research that the lobby groups seem to have forgotten, or intentionally misrepresented.

The central principles of Post-Rose Synthetic Phonics are:

That a high priority should be given to the development of children's speaking and listening skills as the roots of literacy development.

That children should be taught the alphabetic principle so that they can learn the entire sound-symbol code.

That children should be taught to segment, blend and manipulate phonemes.

That there should be an abundance of children's books available to children in schools.

That reading in text should proceed from simple to more difficult.

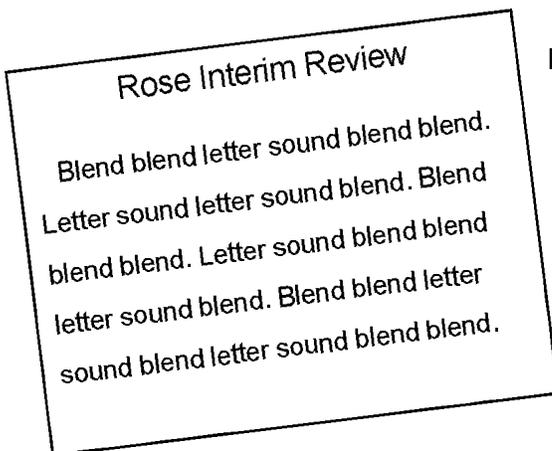
The working practices of Post-Rose Synthetic Phonics are:

Not yet established. As the Review says, (29) "Unfortunately, to determine in detail what constitutes best practice in synthetic phonics is by no means clear cut. Perhaps the most telling example of this is that, while its authors and advocates claim that the NLS Framework and related publications on phonics are emphatically 'synthetic', a considerable body of opinion, including the authors of several popular commercial 'synthetic' phonic programmes, just as emphatically deny this. Therefore, a prime irritant for practitioners and teachers is what they see as a wrangle in which advocates of phonic work are unable to agree definitions. Furthermore, these disputes often occur within their own camps."

Specific DON'Ts of Pre-Rose Synthetic Phonics are:

As of right now, the only DON'T the authors can find is DON'T forget to include children's literature in the plan.

And that is a very big relief indeed!



But will teachers, teacher trainers, textbook writers, and researchers appreciate this or will they see the Rose Interim Review as 11 entries on blending and 7 entries on letter sounds?... disregarding the rest of the skills and information needed in order to deliver to their students the sort of success to which they've been paying lip service for coming on ten years.

The Path Forward

The path forward is by no means apparent. The Rose Interim Report makes clear what Mr. Rose would like to see in literacy instruction, but we don't know what the process of achieving this might look like. That Phono-Graphix is the only literacy programme in Britain to meet the description of Synthetic Phonics per the language of the Rose Interim Report is staggeringly obvious. Based on this these authors have reached out to Jim Rose with an offer to provide a non-commercial government owned Department of Education and Skills based online teacher training course of the calibre of Phono-Graphix existing online course launched in 2003, and a materials kit for classroom application, both at no profit to the authors. Once prepared and available as a government owned programme, such an online training course and kit would serve to provide a blueprint for commercial programmes wishing to follow suit. Whether this offer will be taken up remains to be seen.

One thing is very clear at this point. The path forward looks nothing like the path forward in March of 1999 when factions were invited to sit down at conference tables in London (Conference on Phonics). Indeed this course would lead to ruin through debate over meaning and mitigation of the intention of the Rose Report. If commercial programmes wish to present their argument that they address the language spelt out in the Rose Report, fair enough. Let the evidence decide. But an embittered debate over what Rose really said and meant is irrelevant to the times, and would serve to cast us back seven years.

Obviously research and development may also be on the path forward. The Rose Interim Report lays out those skills and concepts to be taught, and specifies that they should be taught in a literature rich environment, but it doesn't say *how* they should be taught. Surely there are other ways to teach the skills and concepts and discovery of the code that have not been discovered by the developers of Phono-Graphix. Maybe something entirely new and different will arise out of Jim Rose's guidance. It is possible to be both right and open to others who are also right. Earlier this year these authors launched a scheme for blueprinting products and programmes based on our original ideas. The government might consider a similar plan, by endorsing or approving in some way those schemes that address what Rose has put forward.

Wherever the path forward takes us, these authors will continue to champion professional respect of teachers. We will continue to publish requests for clarification when the Reading Reform Foundation, or any other group, makes public statements such as in the spring 2001 newsletter of that organisation calling for, "...the dissemination of literacy teaching information by the DfEE and the LEAs regarding the results of reputable scientific assessment." We will continue to point out that science is a self regulating system, and that the 'reputability' of research is determined by peer review, not by Departments of the government, and certainly not by lobby organisations. We will continue to remind our readers that Whole Language, onset and rime, word families and the like, were all researched and to date the 'reputability' of the research remains unquestioned.

BLUEPRINT for Literacy



As to the path forward for Phono-Graphix? In addition to our offer to provide a non-commercial government owned Department of Education and Skills based online teacher training course, in June of 2005 we announced our BLUEPRINT for Literacy scheme by which we intend to free the use of our ideas, lessons, techniques, and terms to an open and free market in the interest of disseminating Phono-Graphix based practice at a level which we personally are unable to maintain. Through BLUEPRINT for Literacy teachers, private practitioners, school systems, and agencies can develop their own materials, teacher training programmes, and indeed entire literacy schemes based upon Phono-Graphix, and with proper credit given. The first BLUEPRINT for Literacy Workshop will be held in Lancashire in April of 2006, and will host three school systems, two private curriculum developers, and representatives from three countries. As an example of how the ideas and practices of Phono-Graphix can be used we have ourselves begun work on a new literacy scheme based upon our own original work, which will preview in February of this year. The path forward is indeed exciting, and is filled with riches for our children.

1. As this paper goes to publication, it has been brought to our attention that Sounds-Write's wording on their website has been changed, and no longer is an exact copy of the wording on <http://www.readamerica.net/page9alink.asp>.