

The Elephant is Still in the Room ...
Our Kids Still Are Not Learning to Read
by Carole Richards

For decades, the U.S. Government has reported that our students' test scores in reading haven't changed statistically. As measured with other countries, we spend \$530 billion dollars on education yearly; yet other developed countries spend far less and have better test results.

It is the elephant in the room. Our schools, teachers, administrators and many parents know the kids aren't reading as well as they should. Yet, reading is seldom discussed in elections, in the media or among friends. The kids can't read! So why is it ignored?

First, if you don't have a reading problem or a child with a reading problem, you don't realize how seriously poor reading skills effect a person's every waking moment. Adults with poor reading skills (they were previously our school children), can't read medicine bottles, can't write checks (you have to spell numbers and words on checks), can't read the internet; and getting and keeping a good job is very difficult.

Children with poor reading skills languish in classrooms. If they cannot efficiently read the words on the printed page they cannot remember what they are reading. All of their energy is used to read the words. If they can't spell the words they want to use, they can't communicate what you want to say. They choose easier words and write primitive sentences and paragraphs.

So our children with poor reading skills are pushed to do what they don't have the skills to do. They can't read a 6th grade text if they are reading on the third grade level. Yet they often are expected to do so. They can't write a paragraph let alone a required five-paragraph essay if they can't spell. This is important even before they can worry about grammar and punctuation. The Common Core demands the children on IEP's have goals reflective of the grade there are in regardless of their skill levels. Does this make sense?

Dr. Orton figured it out in the 1940's. That if you teach a person the sounds, syllables and patterns of words in an organized step-by-step method using all of the senses (touch muscle movement, eyes and ears), everyone can learn to read.

Yet many schools seldom teach multi-sensory systematic phonics throughout their school districts. There are pockets of teachers trained to teach this method but most teachers don't know how to teach it. In fact, many have never heard of the method.

Our colleges poorly prepare our teachers to teach any reading method. Having interviewed thousands of teachers in 30 years and asked them "how". They almost always answer, "I use a little of this and a little of that." They cannot define their method.

Until our schools, teachers, parents and politicians recognize that a primary cause of poor test scores, poor graduation rates, poor behavior and poor graduation rates won't improve dramatically until our children learn to read well.

This elephant remains in the room ... our children can't read well! If you want to join our cause to improve literacy, contact me to learn more.

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