

**HOW JOHNNY FINALLY LEARNED TO READ  
AND OTHER BLEND PHONICS STORIES**

By Donald L. Potter

[www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net)

[www.blendphonics.org](http://www.blendphonics.org)

# **HOW JOHNNY FINALLY LEARNED TO READ**

(A story using all 220 Dolch Sight Words)

by Johnny and Mr. Potter

February 10, 2013

*Once upon a time, there was a boy named Johnny. He did not live long ago in a land far away, instead he lived right here in America just last year. Johnny is ten years old and in the fourth grade. He is a very happy student, making very good grades; but his life at school hadn't always been so happy. Let's let Johnny tell you his story. I think you are going to like it. This is a true story. It really happened.*

Hi, boys and girls. My name is Johnny. I am probably a lot like you. I like to play games and have rides on my own new bike by myself or with my many friends on warm days outside, and sleep late in the morning. I like to eat hot pizza and drink a full glass of cold Root Beer. And I love going to school now. But I didn't always like school.

Before I met Mr. Potter, I couldn't read very well, and that made school an unhappy place for me. The teachers asked me to do my work, but I couldn't read well enough to do my schoolwork. The words seemed to jump around on the page and not keep together. I had trouble remembering the words from one day to the next. I couldn't even tell the letter *b* from the letter *d*. I will tell you that little story later.

Anyway, they made me repeat first grade because they said I wasn't reading well enough for second grade. I still couldn't read after two years in first-grade. Mr. Potter explained why I couldn't read. I will tell why later.

After third grade, my grandparents decided that "enough is enough," and they sent me to a tutoring center they had heard about on the TV.

The people at the Sylvan tutoring center told them it would cost \$8,000.00 to get me ready for fourth grade. I went to them for tutoring three days a week until we had finished the program and spent all eight thousand dollars. After all that tutoring, I still couldn't read very well. I did a lot of workbooks there.

My grandparents knew a Spanish and remedial reading teacher at the *Odessa Christian School* in Odessa, TX, where my cousin attended last year. Mr. Potter also tutors students with reading problems. You never met anybody like him! He has dedicated most of his life to helping children like me to learn to read. My grandma took me to Mr. Potter for testing to see if he could help me. As long as I live, I will never forget the walk down the hall to meet Mr. Potter. The door was open. Mr. Potter said, “Won’t you please come into my room.” He cordially invited me to pull out a chair and sit down.

Mr. Potter gave me two tests. I don’t know everything about them, but I will try to tell you what I learned about them.

The first test was the 1987 *Riverside Informal Reading Inventory*. On that test I just read lists of words until I missed five words. Then Mr. Potter backed down one grade level and asked me to read two pages from a story. He then asked me eight questions about the story. He told me I was reading on a first-grade level! I knew I had problems reading, but never thought I was reading down on a first-grade level. My goodness! I had repeated first-grade and just spent a lot of time at a very expensive tutoring center. When Mr. Potter showed my Grandma the scores, she said, “That’s exactly what we thought!” She was not happy about spending \$8,000.00 for tutoring that didn’t do me much good.

The other test Mr. Potter gave me was the *Miller Word Identification Assessment Level 1*. He gave me the *Level 1* because he said that the *Level 2* would be too hard for me.

I never took a test like that before. He asked me to read two lists of words, with fifty words in each list. The first list was quite easy, but the second list was really hard! It took me a long time to read the second list, and I saw that Mr. Potter kept underlining the words I missed and writing something over them.

After the test, I asked him why the last list was so hard. He replied that it was a bunch of simple phonics words that a kindergarten student should be able to read. I could read the harder words better than the easy words!

The first list of words is called the “Holistic List.” Those words are what Mr. Potter calls sight words. These are words that my first-grade teacher had me memorize from flashcards and a Word Wall.

My teacher sent the words home with me every day to practice reading to my family, who timed me to see how fast I could read. I was told not to sound out the words, but to memorize them by sight, which is why they are called sight words.

The second list in the test is called the “Phonetic List.” Mr. Potter says it is made up of simple three- and four-letter regular phonics words that should be easier to read than the sight words.

Mr. Potter explained to me that I had “artificially induced whole-word dyslexia.” He uses some pretty big words. All that means is that the sight-words that I had memorized caused my reading problem. I use my right brain to view words as picture-shapes with lots of context guessing, instead of using my left brain to look at all the letters the right way from left to right, without guessing. All the mistakes I made were look-alikes: *did* for *bib*, *lion* for *loin*, *meet* for *met*, *lunch* for *launch*, *frog* for *fog*, *squirrel* for *squeal*, etc.

He said that if I would have learned phonics-first, instead of sight-words taught in the Guided-Reading program published by Heinemann, I never would have had a reading problem.

Here is where my story gets good! Mr. Potter said he could help me. He told me that he was going to use his *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* to teach me to read without having to guessing. I would have to learn to look at every letter in every word and stop guessing. He does not allow guessing. Mr. Potter is very nice, but he can be very strict about things like that. My former teachers all told me to guess the words from context and pictures. Mr. Potter forbids those things. In fact, there were **NO PICTURES** at all in any of the stories he had me read. He said pictures were a distraction.

Mr. Potter first told me the sounds of all the consonants and the short *ă*, and then had me sound out a bunch of simple two- and three-letter words. Then I read a little story, answered four questions about the story, and spelled some words from the lesson. If I didn’t remember the answer to the question, he let me go back to find it. Pretty soon I started to grow in my ability to read. That’s exactly what we did every day until I finished the last lesson. Sometimes he would say, “Shall we draw a picture to go with the story?” I would pick out a word from the story to draw. I once drew a fly that ate a pie from a story that we were done reading.

Let me tell you about how Mr. Potter cured me of my *b-d* confusion. I always had problems telling *b* and *d* apart. As I was sounding-out the words with Mr. Potter one day, I came to a word with a *b* in it, but couldn’t figure out which it was. I asked Mr. Potter to tell me. He looked at me kind of strange like and said, “I don’t tell my students things like that.” I said, “What do you mean you can’t tell me? I can’t read the word till you do!” Then he looked straight at me and said, “I will cure you in five minutes, but you can never ask me that question again once I have cured you.” That just blew away my mind. All I could say was, “Yes, sir!”

I had repeated first grade and been to hundreds of hours of expensive tutoring with no one able to help me, and this guy is going to cure me in five minutes! He then asked me to look at my lips in a mirror and make the *b* sound, noting that my lips formed a **line**. He then had me make the *d* sound while looking in the mirror, and note that my lips made a kind of **circle**. Then he said, “There, I cured you in five minutes. Read the word, and remember never to ask me that question again.” I looked at the *b* that I hadn’t been able to identify and noted that it started with a **line** so it must make the *b* sound. Then I read the word. The next day, I was reading along with no problem, when it dawned on me that I really was cured. I looked at Mr. Potter and yelled out loud, “You cured me Mr. Potter! I really am cured! You did it in five minutes!” I have never had a problem with *b* and *d* since.

Mr. Potter also taught me how to hold my pencil correctly and to write in cursive. He told me that kids who write cursive have far less problems with reading and spelling. No one ever tried to teach me cursive before. Mr. Potter taught me the down-curve, over-curve, under-curve, and slant so my letters all look beautiful. I am proud of my cursive. If you want to learn the best cursive, you need to see Mr. Potter. He told us that everyone should buy a blue, brown, green, hot red, yellow, white, or black fountain pen. He showed me how to wash a nib (tip) with warm water to clean it. There’s nothing better than a fountain pen for making writing easy and enjoyable.

When we finished the *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*, Mr. Potter gave me the tests again to see if I had learned anything. I was really happy when he told me I had improved to “ready for fourth-grade.” That was an improvement of two grade levels just over the summer. He told me that I could now start reading books since I now read **accurately with my left-brain** instead of **inaccurately with my right-brain**. I love reading now!

Mr. Potter is a really nice man. He never got upset with me when I was having trouble reading. He always says everything positively. He can laugh a lot and is sometimes very funny. He will usually carry a small harmonica. He would play fun kids’ songs and ask us to sing along. He must have told me hundreds of times, “Remember Mr. Potter’s Secret of Reading: Look at all the letters the right way, and **no guessing**.” He cured me of the guessing habit that I had acquired at my other school where they taught sight-words. I wish that Mr. Potter could show teachers today how they can teach reading without any sight-words. He says, “Phonics-first is the way to go for all kids.”

School is really easy now that I have learned to read from the sounds of the letters, without having to guessing. My grandparents were so happy with my progress that they put me in the school where Mr. Potter teaches. Thank you, Mr. Potter!

When I finished writing this story, Mr. Potter told me that there were still some Dolch List Sight Words missing in my story. Here is a funny tale that uses the words that were missing: A little girl had a bad fall when she ran around the house seven times in a light rain and cut both hands. She had to call her mom because she hurt so bad! The only word that was still missing after writing that sentence was “its.” Now it’s there! I hope you enjoyed reading the true story of how I finally learned to read with Mr. Potter’s *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*.

Mr. Potter says that kids who learn to read with his *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* will be able to read all the Dolch List words without guessing because they were taught to read by looking at all the letters the right way, and no guessing.

Well, that’s my story of how I finally learned to read. If you have finished Mr. Potter’s *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*, I bet you have a good story to tell, too.

## Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

February 17, 2013

Odessa, TX

This little story was written to document this all-too-typical tutoring case. Every day I work with students just like Johnny. By the way, his real name was Sebastian.

Their teachers wonder why these students have so much trouble reading, little realizing that Johnny's problems were manufactured in their classrooms by the instructional materials and techniques the teachers unfortunately are required to use. It is paradoxical that the technique meant to improve reading creates serious reading problems that require special skills to remediate.

Every sight word taught is an insult to the human nervous system because it gives the child the impression that English is a hieroglyphic writing system instead of an alphabetic writing system. To teach words as pictures develops a reflex on the right side of the brain that severely interferes with learning to read properly from the sounds represented by the letters. The cognitive conflict from these two competing systems of reading causes immense stress and frustration, which leads to fixation of the undesirable guessing habit: confused visual patterning responses.

I have tutored several students whose parents and grandparents had spent thousands of dollars with professional tutoring. I used to be both amazed and puzzled at the rapid progress these long-term, struggling readers made when I **removed** them from their whole-word guessing environment, and **taught** them intensive phonics.

Eventually I came to understand that their problems were created in the classroom by the universal practice of teaching sight words and context guessing. Sight word readers are often called "predictable text" because the students are taught to guess the next word from the memorized context bed of sight words plus pictures and context.

For more information on the cause of artificially induced whole-word dyslexia and how to cure it with intensive phonics, visit my websites: [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net) and [www.blendphonics.org](http://www.blendphonics.org)

I am including the *Miller Word Identification Assessment Level 1* at the end of this document so parents can run off copies to use to test their children to see if they have artificially induced whole-word dyslexia.

Some may question whether such a condition as artificially induced whole-word dyslexia really exists since there is little about it in the literature on dyslexia. I questioned its existence myself; but after giving way over 500 assessments, I can see no other explanation for the patterns of errors the children make. It is also interesting that these children are often in dyslexia classes at their public schools, but overcome their problem with my intensive phonics instruction. In principle there is virtually no difference between my instruction and the Orton-Gillingham programs, except that I cover the skills much faster.

*The Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* that I used to cure Sebastian of his artificially induced whole-word dyslexia are now available in a convenient paperback edition from Amazon and Barnes and Nobles. Complete information on how to teach lessons and stories is included in the book. Nothing else is necessary. It is equally good for young beginning readers or older students in need of remediation. The link below will take you to the slides that I used with Johnny (Sebastian).

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6sb98nzskxlBiko/AAAvYSyOnEcGavu7oN509fkFa?dl=0>

Last edited on 3/06/2013, 4/13/2016, 5/27/2017. The Dolch form of the test was added on June 6, 2019.

Charles M. Richardson, B.S, M.S, P.E, September 25, 2003

## DIRECTIONS for the *MILLER WORD IDENTIFICATION ASSESSMENT I* (MWIA I)

### INTRODUCTION

The MWIA Level I is a quick way to see how a person analyzes words: By decoding (sounding-out), by sight memorization, or a mix of the two. The MWIA consists of a “Holistic” and a “Phonetic” list. You need a pen/pencil, stopwatch or equivalent, a clipboard or folder to hold your copy out of sight of the student, and a copy of the test for the student. (Use a separate copy to record each student’s responses.) If the student is apprehensive about being timed, tell him this is part of some research (which it is) and that we need to see if he reads one list slower or faster than the other. Explain that he should read aloud across each line (point), and stop at the end of the first list.

### TESTING

When you and your watch are ready, tell him to begin, and start your watch. Underline each word he mis-calls, but give no hint or signal; if he self-corrects, just circle the word. If possible, mark some indication of his error for later analysis. When he completes the Holistic list, stop your watch. Ask him to wait while you record the time, and reset your watch.

Repeat as above for the next list. Stop your watch; record the time.

On the PHONETIC LIST ONLY, re-visit 6 – 10 of the words he mis-called, point to each and say, “Spell this out loud while you’re looking at it, then say it again.” If he says it right, complete the underline into a full circle around the word. If he still says it wrong, bracket the word /thus/ to indicate that it was attempted but not successful. If he “blurts out” the correct word without spelling it, just circle the word. Enter the # of words spell-corrected and total # re-tried for the Phonetic list.

### SCORING

Convert the recorded times to speeds in WPM (words-per-minute) by the formula (3000 divided by seconds). Record WPM’s. The percent slow-down (SD) from the Holistic speed (HS) to the Phonetic speed (PS) is  $100(PS/HS)$  subtracted from 100:  $100 - 100(PS/HS) = \%SD$

% Phonic Efficiency is words corrected divided by words re-tried, expressed as a percent.

### INTERPRETATION

Severity of “Whole -Word-Dyslexia” (WWD) is proportional to %SD and the rise in errors on the Phonetic list. Up to 5% SD is mild, 10-20% is moderate, >20% is severe. Up to 3 Phonetic errors is mild, 4-8 is moderate, >10 is severe. Combinations are left to the judgment of the examiner. Examine the errors: if the substituted word is a “look-alike,” he’s using memory instead of decoding. If he switches a vowel it’s a phonetic error. If he mistakes look-alike consonants, e.g., “n” or “b” for an “h,” it could signal a visual difficulty. The above are not absolutes!

This test was first published on 9/27/03 on the [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net) website from a copy Mr. Richardson send Donald Potter. Rudolf Flesch’s 1955 phonics primer, *Why Johnny Can’t Read and what you can do about it*, is readily available in an inexpensive paperback and highly effective for helping students with WWD. Hazel Loring’s highly effective *Reading Made Easy for First Grade with Blend Phonics* is available for free on Donald L. Potter’s website: [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net) and [www.blendphonics.org](http://www.blendphonics.org). Mr. Richardson passed away in 2008 and his TLC organization was disbanded. There is also a MWIA II, which consists of two lists of words of 210 words each to use with older students. Writing the students response over the misread word will quickly reveal that the students are reading the words by shape. Articles by Samuel L. Blumenfeld, Miss Geraldine Rodgers, Raymond Laurita, Helen Lowe, Charles Walcutt, Dr. Patrick Groff and many other experts can be read for free on Mr. Potter’s website.

## DIRECTIONS

for the *MILLER WORD IDENTIFICATION ASSESSMENT (MWIA Level 1)*

Charles M. Richardson, B.S, M.S, P.E, September 25, 2003  
Revised Donald L Potter, June 10, 2016

## INTRODUCTION

The MWIA Level I is a quick way to see how a person analyzes words: By decoding (sounding-out), by sight memorization, or a mix of the two. The MWIA consists of a “Holistic” and a “Phonetic” list. You need a pen/pencil, stopwatch or equivalent, a clipboard or folder to hold your copy out of sight of the student, and a copy of the test for the student. (Use a separate copy to record each student’s responses.) If the student is apprehensive about being timed, tell him this is part of some research (which it is) and that we need to see if he reads one list slower or faster than the other. Explain that he should read aloud across each line (point), and stop at the end of the first list.

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The Miller Word-Identification Assessment I – Dolch I (MWIA)

SUMMARY SHEET

Donald L. Potter, February 11, 2016

Name \_\_\_\_\_ M ( )/F ( ) Age \_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_ Test Date \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_ City/State \_\_\_\_\_

Level I

Holistic WPM \_\_\_\_\_ Phonetic WPM \_\_\_\_\_ Difference \_\_\_\_\_

Difference \_\_\_\_\_ / Holistic WPM \_\_\_\_\_ x 100 = \_\_\_\_\_ % of Slow-down

Holistic Errors \_\_\_\_ Phonetic Errors \_\_\_\_ Difference \_\_\_\_

Ratio of Phonic Errors \_\_\_\_\_ / Holistic errors \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_

Phonetic Corrected \_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_ attempted = \_\_\_\_ % Phonic Efficiency

Tested by \_\_\_\_\_

Scored by \_\_\_\_\_

K – 1 School \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/District \_\_\_\_\_

Method/Program \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ M ( ) / F ( ) Age \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Test Date \_\_\_\_\_

Holistic Dolch I Time \_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_” = ( \_\_\_\_\_ Sec) \3000 = \_\_\_\_\_ WPM Errors \_\_\_\_\_

the to and a I you it in  
said for up look is go we little  
down can see not one my me big  
come blue red where jump away here help  
make yellow two play run find three funny  
he was that she on they but at  
with all

Phonetic – I Time \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_” = ( \_\_\_\_\_ Sec) \3000 = \_\_\_\_\_ WPM

Errors \_\_\_\_\_ Spell-Cor \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Phon Eff \_\_\_\_\_ % Slow-Down \_\_\_\_\_ %

bib nip map tag job met sip mix  
pad lock wig pass hot rack jet kid  
pack Tom luck neck pick cut deck kick  
duck fuzz mud hack sick men hunt rash  
pest land tank rush mash rest tent fond  
bulk dust desk wax ask gulps ponds hump  
lamp belt

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## **Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter**

March 21, 2012

Charles M. Richardson, B.S, M.S, P.E, sent me a copy of the *Miller Word Identification Assessment Level I* on September 25, 2003. The Copyright notice on that test was 1991. Mr. Edward Miller originally developed the test to demonstrate the presence of what he called “artificially induced whole-word dyslexia.” I published the MWIA I on November, 27, 2003 on my website, [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net). It is still available there – just as Mr. Richardson sent it to me.

On the original assessment, the Holistic Words were the 50 words in Dr. Seuss’s *Green Eggs and Ham*. Mr. Miller had discovered that Dr. Seuss wrote his books using a list of sight-words developed by Phyllis Cerf the wife of Bennett Cerf of Random House Publishing to help support children learning to read with the look-and-say readers, such as the famous *Dick and Jane Series*. William Spalding of Macmillan Publishing convinced the Bennett Cerf that kids could learn to read sight-word if they could be published in attractive books that would interest young people. Dr. Seuss had such a knack and wrote several such book, including, *The Cat in the Hat*, and *Green Eggs and Ham*. This effectively turned every child’s library into a look-and-say classroom before the children attended school. Mr. Miller surmised that memorizing sight-words as the parent read the stories to the children might cause them to identify words as wholes by means of word shape and context, just like dyslexic children read.

The original MWIA Level 1 had 8 words that were not on the Dolch List. The MWIA-D I differs from the MWIA I in that I have replaced all the Dr. Seuss Words with the first 50 Words on the graded Dolch List: 40 words from the Pre-Primer List and 10 words from the Primer List. These are the first 50 sight words taught in the schools.

The Phonetic Words were taken from the first 14 Exercises in Rudolf Flesch’ 1955 *Why Johnny Can’t Read and What You Can Do About It*. They are simple word that children taught to read with Hazel Loring’s *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade* would never miss. The fact that students misread more Holistic Word than Phonetic Words and read the Holistic Words significantly slower than the Phonetic Words is irrefutable evidence that the students have been taught to “read” whole-word memorization of sight-words and have a confused visual response pattern as a result.

There is a Level 2 assessment for older students. I generally use the MWIA-D Level 1 with children below third grade.

Mr. Richardson passed away in 2008. He was a brilliant intellect, a true friend, and a great warrior for phonics-first instruction. He wrote me shortly before he passed away that he was passing the torch to me. Mr. Richardson was an engineer for Sperry during the Apollo moon program. He later called himself an “Educational Engineer.” I hope to honor his wishes by continuing his work.

Articles by Samuel L. Blumenfeld, Miss Geraldine Rodgers, Raymond Laurita, Helen Lowe, Charles Walcutt, Dr. Patrick Groff, and others are available on the Sight Word Information Page of the [www.blendphonics.org](http://www.blendphonics.org) website.

Permission is granted by Donald L. Potter to copy, print, and administer this test for any educational purpose. Mr. Potter revised the test on June 10, 2016

# THRILLING BLEND PHONICS SUCCESS STORIES

## FROM MR. POTTER'S FILES

### Twenty-One-Year-Old

The first story is one of the most touching. A 21-year old lady came to me to learn to read. I was shock when she could not even read on a kindergarten level. I assumed that she did not have a high school diploma. When I mentioned, the possibility of eventually getting her GED, she pulled out her small plastic high school diploma. I was shocked. I later asked her special education language arts teacher how she graduated. She said she was smart, but just unable to learn to read.

I asked her why she wanted to learn to read. She said she wanted to read to her boy, who was a toddler at that time. I figured that was a fine motive! The school librarian offered to come each evening for the tutoring. She was interested in learning to help a granddaughter learn to read. She kept good notes of the tutoring,

We jumped right into the *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories Slides*. I had not published the paperback book at that time. It is important to know that the slides came long before the book. I will save the story of how I published the books for later.

Her first efforts at decoding words were very labored. She literally said each sound individual and then blended them to make the word. The librarian wondered if the torturously slow decoding would ever speed up and become fluent, quite frankly, I wondered, too! I had taught lots of people to read, but none struggled as much as she did.

I simply trusted the method and continued to work with her one evening every week. She went on to learn to read. The slow, tedious, almost painful decoding eventually got faster and faster until she was reading normally.

The outcome of the story really touches my heart. She used her newfound reading skills to start reading daily to her little son. He went on to become an excellent reader. Between first and second grade, he won a backpack for reading a lot of books during the summer library reading program.

This story is undisputable evidence that not only can *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* teach a totally illiterate adult to read, but it can teach an adult who was failed by her school system. I believe every special education and dyslexia teacher, who has a seemingly incurable case of dyslexia, should give *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* a try. I think you will find it is the very solution you are looking for. Do not be deceived by the \$10.00 price for the book. It has outperformed systems costing hundreds more.

## How Mr. Potter Eventually Published

### *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*

#### In 6 x 9 Paperback

The year was 2014 -2016 school year. In spite of our private school's excellent phonics adoption, there were two boys in first grade that were failing reading. It looked like they were not going to pass to second grade. I decided I needed to do something to rescue them. That was just before the Christmas Break.

I decided to rescue them with *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*. I had originally created the full program with 62 lessons, 62 stories, 4 comprehension questions for each story, and a lists of spelling words for each story as Power Point Slides. I had taught the slides successfully, but knew that for best results I need them to reread the stories at home with their parents. Parental involvement is one of the secrets of my success

They boys were really excited when I gave them their *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* paperback, spiral notebook, and progress chart in a plastic ziplocked bag with their name on it as a present. We started working like crazy in my tutoring going through the slides. Each evening they would take their book home to read the stories to their parents. They were typical fun loving first graders full of energy and easily distracted; nevertheless, we continued to plow through the lessons and stories together. The parents did an excellent job of having them orally reread each lesson phonics word list, answer the comprehension questions and spell the 638 spelling words.

I am happy to report that by the last day of the school year they were both able to pass my first-grade *Riverside Informal Reading Inventory*. They also had no artificially induced whole-word dyslexia according to the *Miller Word Identification Assessment Level 1*. The classroom teacher was pleased that they were finally passing their A Beka reading tests.

Only Colby returned the next year. I was truly amazed when he scored Second Grade Independent Reading Level, a whole grade level improvement. I asked him if he had ready any books over the summer. He responded that he had read over 100! I figured that might be a youthful exaggeration and asked his mother how many he read. She laughed when I told her what he said, but responded, "Maybe not 100, but not far from it."

You may ask how he improved a grade level over the summer with no formal instruction. The secret is phonics-first. Once I taught him using systematic, sequential, step-by-step phonics with Direct Instruction, he was able to start reading on his own and building his vocabulary and background knowledge for continued grade level improvement.

This account of this boy's progress with *Blend Phonics* is a simple, straightforward honest account of what happened. It is an example of what could be happening if more teacher knew about the *Blend Phonics* method of teaching reading with intensive phonics and no guessing!

## How A First-Grader Learned to Read in One Month

with

### *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*

It was just one month before the school year was over when Katylin arrived at our school from another school district. Her grades indicated that she was doing quite well in reading at her former school, but the 1987 *Riverside Reading Inventory* told another story. I have used that inventory since 1990 with all my students and have found it to be very accurate. It tests grade level word identification, oral reading, silent reading, and comprehension. She was unable to pass even the lowest level of the test. The teacher felt that she would have to repeat first grade. We have an excellent phonics-based reading program, but it would be very difficult to go back with the child and take her through the whole program and all the many readers.

Her mother was heartbroken when she learned that her daughter was far behind grade level in reading and in serious jeopardy of being retained in first grade. I was honest with the mother. I explained that I had never taught a first grader to read in one month, but I was willing to try. I had her buy a copy of *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*, which she would need to do the homework I would be assigning every day. Since all my kindergarten and first grade tutoring students were doing find by that time of the year, I canceled my other students so I could focus my tutoring time with this one child. I knew it was a long shot. I had never heard of anyone teaching a child to read on grade level in a single month, especially after eight months of failure with another teachers.

She is another example of a student who not only learned to read on grade level in first grade in record time, but she improved a whole grade level over the summer with no formal instruction.

Her second-grade teacher mentioned to me that her reading achievement scores at the end of the year were at the top of the class.

Think about the savings for the parents. This girl would definitely have repeated first grade if I would not have been able to teach her to read on grade level in one month. If I would have failed, her parents would have had to pay for another year private schooling.

I had the privilege of teaching her the awesome A Beka *American History for Third Grade* textbook. Her reading ability in that serious history textbook were excellent. She read with great fluency (accuracy and speed).

The beauty of *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* is that the method is so simple that the parents have absolutely NO problem taking their child through the necessary homework lessons every evening. I have taught dozens of excellent phonics methods in my 30+ years of teaching, but none as simple nor as powerful as *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*.

## Two More Boys for the Just for Record

Two other boys at the Odessa Christian School came to us during the middle of the school year. Two different years.

The first one came the first year a new first grade teacher came to our school. The teacher was experienced teaching phonics, but not the A Beka reading program. It is an excellent reading program, but requires a full year of instruction to complete. There are 170 days of lesson plans. This boy in right after the middle of the year so he was already over 85 days behind. I had his mother purchase my *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* and put it in a protective plastic bag for him to take home every evening. There are 62 lessons and stories in *Blend Phonics*. I can generally cover a lesson in one or two days, especially once they get good at sounding out. I also taught him cursive, which is one of my specialties. He finished all 62 lessons and stories by the end of the year and was reading on grade level

The next boy came to me just two years ago. Again, he arrived at midterm. He was unable to pass my first grade 1987 *Riverside Informal Reading Inventory*. His mother purchased my book from Amazon so she could start right away on the homework follow-up. We worked like crazy everyday trying to catch up with the class. The work in *Blend Phonics* is highly concentrated. The entire focus is on decoding. There is no fluff to the program. He quickly overcame his whole word guessing habit and became an excellent reader. His parents moved at the end of the year. I recall that they bought me a beautiful plant in a vase that said, "Thanks for helping us grow

His sister was in third grade. She came to me to learn cursive. Since our school was an A Beka Book school, all the students are expected to do their work in cursive. I taught her and another girl cursive. The other girl was struggling with reading. I often use cursive to teach reading. I taught both girls cursive with another phonics program called *A Sound Track to Reading*. Since the first girl was a great reader, she ended up teaching the other girl to read, while I taught both cursive. May I say that Peer Tutoring is one of the most powerful and versatile tools at our disposal for helping struggling readers. I, also, found that the student being peer tutored often benefits as much as the student doing the tutored.

# Blend Phonics Timeline

Prepared by Mr. Potter on June 29, 2019

**1980** – Hazel Loring was asked by the *Reading Reform Foundation* to publish the phonics method she used for many years to teach reading to first grade. She refused to sell the book since she thought money was the real problem in education. She finally agreed to start a Hazel Logan Loring Foundation to make the book available. The money was given to print 5,000 copies to give to every first-grade teacher in Michigan. A glowing report indicating the success of the program was published in the *Detroit Free Press*. Thousands of copies were later distributed to teachers around the country.

Loring's original 1980 Blend *Phonics Pamphlet*. I have made it available here for historical reasons

[http://donpotter.net/pdf/blend\\_phonics\\_original.pdf](http://donpotter.net/pdf/blend_phonics_original.pdf)

Mr. Potter's Updated Version. This is the edition in my KDP Publishing paperback.

[http://donpotter.net/pdf/reading\\_made\\_easy\\_with\\_blen.pdf](http://donpotter.net/pdf/reading_made_easy_with_blen.pdf)

**1996** – Robert Sweet, President of the National Right to Read Foundation (NRRF), gave a report on the low state of teacher education mentioning Loring's *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*.

[http://donpotter.net/pdf/sweet\\_century.pdf](http://donpotter.net/pdf/sweet_century.pdf)

**1999** – Mr. Donald L. Potter read Sweet's report and ordered a copy of the Loring's Pamphlet through the Interlibrary Loan. About 2002, Mr. Charlie Richardson of Long Island sent Mr. Potter a copy along with his paper explaining the essence of good phonics instruction.

<http://donpotter.net/pdf/alphabet-code---loring.pdf>

**2003** – Mr. Potter started his [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net) website. He retyped Loring's *Blend Phonics* pamphlet and published it on his website, making it available to a wider public.

**2007** – Mr. Potter began tutoring one failing first-grade student from a local public school. There is an interesting story here, we will save for a later time. Following Loring's directions in her teacher's guide, the boy quickly became an excellent reader. He also purchased [www.blendphonics.org](http://www.blendphonics.org) and started promoting *Blend Phonics* on the Internet.

**2008** – Mr. Potter created an important YouTube videos demonstrating the basics of Loring's method of teaching reading with phonics and directional guidance. He also did important videos the Miller *Word Identification Assessment*, and Geraldine Rodgers' *The Hidden Story*.

[https://youtu.be/Gvbpm\\_XMXcA](https://youtu.be/Gvbpm_XMXcA)

**2010** – Elizabeth Brown send Mr. Potter the delightful little decodable stories to go with Mr. Potter's *Blend Phonics Reader*.

**2011** – Over Thanksgiving Holiday, Mr. Potter added 4 comprehension questions and spelling words to teach with each of Mrs. Brown’s decodable stories. Mr. Potter also added a unit for open syllables and another for the 37 Dolch List Service Words (sight-words) words not in Loring’s program. Three words with /zh/ were also added to make the program one of the most complete available. Mr. Potter also began writing *Beyond Blend Phonics: English Morphology Made Easy* as a follow up to *Blend Phonics*, introduced more advanced reading levels.

*Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* were originally written as Power Point slides. Mr. Potter later converted the slides to book format. The slides are currently available on the internet as a very useful free supplement to the book.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6sb98nzskxlbiko/AAAvYSyOnEcGavu7oN509fkFa>

**2015** – After four years of success teaching *Blend Phonics*, Mr. Potter published two paperback books with CreateSpace based on Loring’s Method. The first was *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade Plus Fluency Drills*. The other was *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* designed to be a decodable reader to go with the Blend Phonics Units.

**2016** – *Beyond Blend Phonics: English Morphology Made Easy* was published in paperback with CreateSpace (now KDP). Mr. Potter made improvements to the book as a fifth-grade student named Ally wrote all the words in a *Beyond Blend Phonics Journal*. She helped make a video, which is on YouTube.

**2017** – Mr. Potter wrote *Blend Phonics Timed Fluency Drills*. This paperback book follows the revised *Blend Phonics* Units, but is formatted to make it easy to do timed drills. It is based on Precision Teaching. The specific timings were based on the original *Victory Drill Book* by Mr. Gus Enderlin. The format is similar both Rudolf Flesch’s 72 Exercises in *Why Johnny Can’t read* and the *Victory Drill Book*, but following Loring’s phonics sequence.

<https://youtu.be/AaVfDf5HNoc>

**2018** – Mr. Potter made Power Point Videos for all the *Beyond Blend Phonics* chapters. This is a very helpful supplement.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/49adpibqdrisf67/AACdOAE3S09JjEiu90EUrAWVa?dl=0>

**2019** – During summer vacation, Mr. Potter did a careful investigation of any sight words appearing in any of the stories before they were taught in the lessons. A mere 12 such words were discovered. These words are now presented in brackets at the end of the word lists for the story where it first appears. [a, the, to, who, of, give, are, they, do, your, have]. Every effort has been made in eliminating all guessing from the reading process.

On May 31, 2019, Mr. Potter resigned from teaching at the Odessa Christian School, after 13 years in the classroom. He is thankful for the wonderful opportunities to further develop his knowledge and skills for teaching reading and handwriting. Mr. Potter currently tutors students of all ages with reading and handwriting problems. He also specializes in tutoring prekindergarten and kindergarten students of all abilities to assure that they learn to read at their highest potential.

On March 27, 2022, I published my *Natural Phonics Primer: The Universal Safety Net for Reading*. This book has a different order from *Blend Phonics* but uses the same approach to sounding out.

## Stories Concerning the Intermediate Step

### Introduction:

The full story of the current line of *Blend Phonics* materials is a bit complicated. For those who might be interested, there was an **intermediate step** between the original 25-page *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade* pamphlet Mrs. Loring published in 1980 and the *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*. I wanted a list of the same words Mrs. Loring was teaching to send home with the kid to read with their parents. I also realized the need for practice learning to discriminate between sounds, especially vowels. I created a *Blend Phonics Reader* for that purpose. It proved very helpful. There were actually two forms of the Reader. I called them *Blend Phonics Reader: Standard Edition* and *Blend Phonics: Lite*.

Mrs. Elizabeth Brown used the *Lite* version to as the basis for making her *Blend Phonics Stories*. She created them to use with her *Blend Phonics* stories to add some fun to learning to read. I have used both versions of the *Reader*. I called it a *Reader*, although it consists of word lists only and no stories. The *Standard Edition* is part of the current paperback, *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade*.

### The Story:

The student was a sixth grader named Dillon DeArmond. He came to the Christian School from a public school where I taught for five years so I was well known there. Anyway, he came to our school a struggling reader. He scored place-in third grade on my 1987 *Riverside Informal Reading Inventor*. His problem was obviously very severe. I learned from his former school that he was unable to pass the State of Texas reading achievement test. I was told that he had been in after-school tutoring for three years. His teacher at my school would only let him come to tutoring for 15 minutes per day. That may not seem like much, but **the results show the value of brief, daily, focused, intensive phonics instruction**. We jumped straight into the Reader, going as far each day as he could decode. In less than 5 hours he finished all the Units. His grade level improvement was simply staggering considering his previous years of failure and the brief amount of time he spent with me.

### The Rest of the Story:

Soon after Dillon finished *Blend Phonics*, I started retyping Noah Webster's 1908 *Elementary Spelling Book*. I had previously typed his 1824 American Spelling Book, and had some experience teaching it. Since Dillon has moved up from third to sixth grade in his reading in just five short hours, I decided to let him work through Webster's 1908 *Elementary Spelling Book* as I finished typing it. It is important to know that reading was taught with Spelling Books in Webster's day. According to research by Geraldine Rodgers, it was a highly effective way to teach reading and produced very high levels of reading achievement. As I type the pages each day, Dillon would read the typed page as I followed along in the original book looking for any typos – and there were quite a few. It was a difficult book to type since the word are divided into syllables, making it impossible to use a spell checker. Dillon read every word and sentence in my edition of the 1908 spelling book. His reading level jumped to high school level. Dillon read so well that he was placed in Advanced Academic Placement classes in junior high. I later published the book as a paperback.

## **The Case of the Retired Special Education Teacher.**

For me, this is the most encouraging story of all. I was tutoring a nephew of Mrs. Cook, a retired special education teacher for my school district. She was hired to teach the fifth and sixth graders at a school who had all failed to pass the state reading assessment. Her nephew's mother suggested that Mrs. Cook might visit my tutoring room at the Odessa Christian School to see how I tutored. I taught her nephew to read with Samuel Blumenfeld's *Alpha-Phonics*, one of the first programs I taught. For those who are interested, I have a webpage dedicated to that excellent phonics method: Samuel L. Blumenfeld Reading Clinic.

Mrs. Cook came over later to watch me give my reading assessments to determine exactly what remediation would be the best for each student. I took some kids out of our classrooms and tested them so she could see how to give the assessments and evaluate the students' needs. After testing her student, she brought me to scores so I could help her organize her students into groups with similar needs.

I got several emails from her concerning her success teaching *Blend Phonics*. She said the kids loved the lessons. Every student passed the Texas state reading test at the end of the year. She was able to teach a similar group the next year at the same school.

She told me she was trained in two popular dyslexia methods for public schools. After a career in special education, I believe she was in a unique position to compare programs. She told me she had far more success with *Blend Phonics* than any other program. At that time, she only had the original *Blend Phonics* and my *Blend Phonics Reader: Special Edition*.

The third year was disappointing. After two years of complete success, her principal refused to let her use the program since he said it was not approved by the state. She was deeply disappointed.

Later she worked at another school. I had just finished my *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*. She was excited to be able to use the new material. She was tutoring at another school at that time. She surprised me by revealing that other special education teachers were using *Blend Phonics* in their classrooms. I will not mention the school here, but it is extremely satisfying to know that other teachers were benefitting from our powerful *Blend Phonics* method.

By the way, the first time I met Mrs. Cook, she stayed in my classroom a bit late talking to me. An 18-year-old tutoring student of mine walked in for his tutoring session as she was getting ready to leave. She was as surprised to see him as he was to see her. She was his elementary special education teacher! He went on to become a fine reader with a DVD reading program for teens and adults called *The Phonics Lessons* by Elizabeth Brown, the lady who wrote my *Blend Phonics Stories*! Mrs. Cook told me she had been trained in two Orton-Gillingham Dyslexia programs when she worked for the public schools. She felt that *Blend Phonics* was more even more effective than those highly regarded programs.

## My First Blend Phonics Student

The year was 2007. A first-grade teacher had heard that I was retired. She asked me if I could “roll up my sleeve and come over and help her teach reading to a first-grade class. This during a time when *Guided Reading* (an offshoot of Whole Language) and *Reading Recovery* (the remedial arm of Guided Reading and Whole Language) were in vogue. The teacher had been a successful fifth grade teacher, but moved down to first grade. There is an enormous difference between a first grade and fifth grade class. For one thing, a first-grade class deals mostly with the fundamentals such as beginning handwriting, basic phonics, and sounding out skills. In spite of following the *Guided Reading* plans as closely as she could, her kids were not learning to read. She was under heavy criticism from her principal and the Reading Recovery teachers. I would have been happy to accept her request to help, but I was in my second year teaching at a private Christian School. I had a very heavy schedule and no time off to help another teacher in another school.

I sent her a link to my 2003 Internet publication of Hazel Loring’s 1980 *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics*. She responded, “Is that all there is to it.” She had just spent \$500.00 of her own money on materials for teaching reading. I assured her that in those brief 25 pages was EVERYTHING she needed to teach all her student to read before the end of the year. She started teaching *Blend Phonics* and send me reports of her initial success. She said the kids were so excited to learning to read that they didn’t want to leave for lunch.

The story takes a sad turn her. She was fired from her teaching position. She tried to defend herself before the School Board. She even mentioned my name and showed them a copy of *Blend Phonics* at her hearing. I doubt if anyone remembers, but that was probably the first time anybody in the district heard about *Blend Phonics*. She was relieved of her job shortly thereafter.

Now things get interesting. He loved her student, but was forbidden to talk to them or their parents. She asked me if I would be willing to tutor her student if she were to pay me. I said I would be very glad to help them. She gave me the phone numbers of three student for me to contact. I phoned the parents and told them a donner, who wanted to remain anonymous, wanted to pay for a scholarship for her son to come to me for tutoring.

I thought to myself, this is a good opportunity to put Hazel Loring’s *Reading Made Easy with Blend Phonics for First Grade* to the test. I began tutoring the student, whose picture by the way, is on my Facebook page. I taught straight from my unaltered copy of Loring’s *Blend Phonics*. I set the student at a desk facing my chalkboard and started teaching him EXACTLY as Loring explained in her 25-page pamphlet. After a few months, his parents took over paying for his tutoring. When he finished *Blend Phonics*, he was reading on a solid first grade level ready for second. He went on to become an excellent student.

I had been slow to switch to *Blend Phonics* because I had many other phonics programs that were highly effective and enabled me to be a very successful reading tutor. What this experience proved to me was that Hazel Loring’s simple method was just as good as the most expensive. It was then that I started my [www.blendphonics.org](http://www.blendphonics.org) website to promote *Blend Phonics* as the cheapest and best solution to America’s reading programs.

## My Oldest Blend Phonics Student So Far

This is another great success story for *Blend Phonics* with the most unlikely student. This student was 41 years old. He was recommended to me by a local counseling center. Actually, when I retired from the public schools, I had no thought of teaching at a private school. I had developed a wonderful relationship with a junior high school counselor. He worked for the schools and had a private counseling business of his own. I was able to secure a room to use for tutoring at the counseling center. I became good friends with all the counselors. Given that many people in counseling have poor reading skills, it made good sense to have a reading specialist working at the Center.

The secretaries helped me schedule students, etc. Everyone working there showed great interest in my tutoring work at the Center. They noticed that some of my younger tutoring students showed significant progress in their counseling as they improved their reading with me.

It was at this time that the Odessa Christian School was looking for a fourth-grade teacher. My children all attended the school and my middle daughter even taught there. I decided to go ahead and teach at the school, but keep up my tutoring going on the side. I immediately began to tutor students on the campus that needed help with reading before school, after school, during lunch, and even during my conference period. The next year I left fourth grade and began teaching Spanish and remedial reading and cursive handwriting.

The Counseling Center continued to refer students to me for help with reading. In this case, there was a 41 years old gentleman who was in counselling. His counselor asked me if I thought I could teach an adult to read. I said I would be glad to try. I was amazed when the gentleman could not read my kindergarten level word list. He told me he had been in special education classes all his school career, and decided to quit school as soon as he could legally drop out. Like the 21-year-old lady above, I wondered if a person could learn to read at 41, given that he had attended public schools for many years and had special help. I figured he must be smart because he had worked his way up in a shop to the position of Shop Foreman. He managed his job by having his wife write his reports, and he communicated with his superiors by phone only.

I had him set at a student desk facing a chalkboard. I taught through Loring's *Blend Phonics Unit by Unit* exactly as she suggested. I did not have my *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories, Reader, or Timed Fluency Drills*. I just wrote the words one at a time and proceeded through the program as fast as possible. We met for one hour every week over the summer.

I was absolutely amazed at how fast he learned to sound-out the words. It was as if he were being taught with phonics for the very first time. He remembered everything I taught him from session to session. His counselor noticed the difference. Near the end of our work together, I asked him how learning to read had changed his life. He said it changed everything. He was writing his reports himself and enjoying the ability to read for himself.

This story is absolutely true. It makes one wonder how they were trying to teach him to read in his public-school grade classroom and special education room. I figure he would have learned to read at 12 instead of 41, if he had been taught the **fundamentals** – that is the **Secret**, and *Blend Phonics* delivers every time.

## My Experience with Kindergarten

When I first heard about artificially induced whole-word dyslexia from Charlie Richardson and later Samuel Blumenfeld and Edward Miller, I thought they must be mistaken. I started giving Edward Miller's *Miller Word Identification Assessment* in 2003. I quickly discovered that ALL my tutoring students, according to this unique assessment, had artificially induced whole-word dyslexia (WWD) caused by the sight word drills that were a part of every kindergarten through second grade classroom.

I decided I wanted to figure out where the "point of origin" for this unrecognized form of dyslexia might be. I asked Cindy Haynes, a kindergarten teacher, at the Murry Fly Elementary school, where I was an Instructional Resource Teacher (basically a remedial reading teacher) if I could watch her reading lessons for a couple weeks. After two weeks, I had a conference with her to explain that she was doing a lot wrong in teach reading to her kindergarten kids. I loaned her essays published by Raymond Laurita, Samuel Blumenfeld, and others on how reading should be taught and the dangers of teaching sight words with look-and-say techniques. [Basically, our writing system is a sound-association system based on the alphabet, not a sight-association system based on the shape of words and context. To teach a sound-association system with sight-association techniques will naturally create **associational confusion** – reading problems.] She agreed to let me teach basic phonics lessons to the class 15 minutes per day for the rest of the year, we started in Feb. By the end of the year, most of the kids were reading far above grade level. Their first-grade teacher later told me they were the strongest readers the school ever had.

Okay, that has nothing to do with *Blend Phonics*, which I had not taught at the time. Nevertheless, the experience led me to conclude that WWD (reading problem) were beginning in kindergarten due to teaching sight words and too little phonics.

After moving to the Odessa Christian School, I had the opportunity to tutor numerous kindergarten kids. I used the opportunity to teach them the alphabet letters with my ABC Tapping Exercise and flashcards coupled with phonemic awareness and phonics using the Phonovisual Charts.

Once they knew the letter names and sounds pretty well, I started them on *Blend Phonics*. One year a little kindergarten girl we will call TR came to me for tutoring because of difficulties in her classroom. Later, she was showing great promise in tutoring so I started her on my *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories*. She finished the program and ended up reading on an independent first grade level by the end of the year. She did superb work in our A Beka first grade class and the next year in our second-grade class. She transferred to another school at midterm. I tested her before she left on an independent fourth grade level on my IRI. She had absolutely no WWD (artificially induced whole word dyslexia). I was told later that her new school actually considered moving her to third grade since she was so far ahead of the other students. She also was teaching the kids at her new school cursive since they hadn't learned cursive, yet. Her cursive was magnificent. I taught her cursive in kindergarten.

**As an aside**, two of the best readers in first grade last year had come to me for reading tutoring between prekindergarten and kindergarten. I have prekindergarten kids coming to me for tutoring this summer. An early start on the foundation skills makes a big difference.

## Some of My Current Blend Phonics Students

This is the summer of 2019. I currently have 26 tutoring students of various ages. One fourth grader came to me unable to sound-out the simplest words. His grandmother is bringing him to tutoring. I started him on *Blend Phonics*, not sure what to expect. It is unusual to get someone in fourth grade that can't even read simple words like *big* or *bat*! I started him by writing the words on the board following Loring's instructions in directional guidance, teaching **ba-t** instead of **b-at**. He really struggled with the first few words, but by the end of the first tutoring session had learned to sound out about 15 to 20 words. The next session he did much better so we were able to start on the *Blend Phonics Lessons and Stories* Power Point slides to accelerate his progress. I want to have him ready for fourth grade by the end of the summer. We are meeting two days a week for one hour each day. Our least session he actually completed four stories in a single session. His progress is phenomenal.

His grandmother is working with him between tutoring sessions to deepen the learning and hasten his advancement in reading. I hate to say anything negative about schools, I really do! But I cannot understand for the life of me why he learned more about reading with me in his first session than it appears that he learned in his classroom from kindergarten to third grade. I do know that his school district at that time emphasizes *Guided Reading*. His grandmother said he has been required to memorize sight words since kindergarten. I would like to suggest that his rapid progress with me teaching him *Blend Phonics* is positive proof of the superiority of *Blend Phonics* over the reading methods used at his school. It also points up the need quit the fruitless practice of teaching sight words instead of strong phonics first. I truly believe that if every first-grade teacher at his public school were to have taught *Blend Phonics*, every student would be reading on grade level by the end of the year. I also believe that the incidence of dyslexia would be considerably reduced. Revising this document on April 1, 2022, the boy jumped up to grade level and has done excellent work in middle school.

The beauty of *Blend Phonics* is that it can be taught in 15 to 30 minutes per day to whole classes without making any other changes in the curriculum. If a district requires a particular reading program, the teacher can go ahead and teach the mandated program, but **supplement** with a few minutes *Blend Phonics* everyday to assure that **all** the student learn to read. It can be started at any grade level, even prekindergarten and kindergarten. Loring and I have both taught it in four months at the beginning of first grade.

### July 2020 Award from Texas Governor, Gregg Abbott

I was thrilled earlier this month when I received an Award from Texas Governor, Gregg Abbott, for my work continuing to tutoring during the Covid-19 Pandemic. I tutor between 35 to 40 students each week in my new office at 2020 E. 8<sup>th</sup> St., Odessa, TX. When Governor Abbot issued the stay home order, I sent all my tutoring students my Skype Name and suggested we switch immediately to Skype tutoring. Almost all my students were able to make the fast switch to Online tutoring. Fortunately, I have a very good Aver Document Camera and all my tutoring materials on my computer hard drive. I keep careful document of my student's progress through my programs so I was able to make the full transition with no problem at all. Quite frankly, it has been fun to tutor my students in their home environment. I now know all their beautiful dogs, cuddly cats, and even the younger students' dolls! I was thrilled to have many of my former students comment on the newspaper Facebook page.

I appreciate Mrs. Twyla Greenfield, who I consider the best principal I ever had, for recommending me for the Governor's Award. Mrs. Greenfield was a highly successful Herman Dyslexia Teacher for the Ector County Independent School District in Odessa, Texas. A couple years after her retirement, Mrs. Greenfield became the Principal at the Odessa Christian School. I taught fourth grade one year for her, and then, at her suggestion, changed to teaching Spanish and remedial reading for the school. She was responsible for the school switching to the excellent A Beka Book Christian School Curriculum, which led the school to a decade of unprecedented success.

How Time Flies! I celebrated my 75-birthday on March 20, 2022.

I currently tutor 41 hours per week. Sadly, all my students are still required to memorize lists of sight words in both public and private schools - so it looks like I will never run out of students to tutor. It is the height of irony that the schools tell the parents that memorizing sight words without reference to the letters and the sounds they represent will help children learn to read better, when exactly the opposite is true.

### **Something Important to Know**

It is important to know, on one hand, that the psychologists involved in reading research seem to have ignored the fact that for most administrators, teachers, and parents the term "sight word" is a word that is memorized by mere look-say without reference to the sound values represented by the letters (spellings).

To the psychologists, on the other hand, a sight word is any word that students have sounded out so many times that the sounds, spellings, and meanings have become intertwined (amalgamated) for instant (obligatory) recognition. Psychologists call this orthographic mapping, which simply means that the sounds, spellings and meanings of the words are so fully interconnected that the words are instantly recognized by sight, thus: sight words.

The teachers and psychologists are **talking past each other** and drawing contrary conclusions respecting instructional practices.

### **Don Potter's Philosophy of Education**

To teach the heart  
Where lies the gold  
My goal shall always be  
With warm love and true kindness  
For all the world to see.