

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE PARENTS OF NORTH CAROLINA

From Samuel L. Blumenfeld

The North Carolina State Department of Education has mandated, through state law, a program for the first three grades of North Carolina's public schools calculated to turn your children into reading and learning failures.

The instruction methods being used in these grades to teach reading and "communication skills" are based on the theories of behavioral psychology and are known as psycholinguistics. The nation's leading proponent of psycholinguistics, Prof. Kenneth Goodman of Arizona State University, has called reading "a psycholinguistic guessing game." This instruction method, originally known as "look-say," "the sight method," or the "whole-word method," is known to cause severe reading and learning disability.

In 1929 Dr. Samuel T. Orton, in an article entitled "The 'Sight Reading' Method of Teaching Reading as a Source of Reading Disability," warned the educators of America that introducing this teaching method in the schools of America would "not only prevent the acquisition of academic education by children of average capacity but may also give rise to far reaching damage to their emotional life."

The educators disregarded Dr. Orton's warning and proceeded to introduce the "sight reading" method in our schools, with the result that our schools are now turning out millions of functionally illiterate and learning disabled young adults every year.

Not only is all of this costing the taxpayer billions of dollars in instructional and remedial costs, but it is causing untold emotional damage to millions of Americans whose ability to pursue careers requiring high or merely competent literacy has been severely limited.

I have read through the reading and communication skills program mandated by the state of North Carolina and can predict that at least one-third of the children now entering kindergarten and first grade in the state's public schools will be permanently damaged and handicapped by these methods.

I am urging the parents of North Carolina to demand the teaching of intensive phonics as the sole method of teaching reading in these early grades. That is the only way to prevent your children from becoming reading and learning disabled.

If the state will not respond to your demand, then I urge you to remove your children from the public schools and place them in private or church schools where intensive phonics is taught. If you cannot afford private education, but are at home, then I urge you to home-school your children, using readily available phonics materials for home tutoring. I also urge churches to create scholarship funds to help parents who cannot afford to send their children to a private school.

However, if you keep your children in the public school then I strongly advise you to keep records of your children's progress, accounts of your conversations with teachers and principals, and records of the materials being used in the classroom to teach your children.

If your children become reading and learning disabled you may want to sue the school system, the state department of education, and the legislators who voted for this program.

Heretofore, the only people who have sued public schools for educational malpractice have been high school graduates who have come out of twelve years of schooling functionally illiterate. None of these cases has been won by the plaintiffs because the courts have refused

to hold the schools responsible for their own malpractice.

However, by serving notice on your legislators, educators and state bureaucrats that you intend to hold them responsible for the results produced by the instruction methods they have voted for or have used in their classrooms, the courts will be unable to deny their accountability.

If you are a parent who has put a child in a public school kindergarten or first grade, we urge you to write to us and supply us with the following information: name, age, grade of your child; name of the school, teacher and principal; titles of the instructional materials used in the classroom.

In three years we shall know which children have been damaged by the school's teaching methods, and we shall institute a class-action malpractice suit against the North Carolina State Department of Education, the legislators who voted for the program, the teachers and principals who used these methods, and the publishers who produced them.

Only with your cooperation will we be able to stop the abuse of your children in the public schools of North Carolina by means of faulty instructional materials developed by behavioral psychologists.

Send the information requested to The Blumenfeld Education Letter, P.O. Box 39850, Phoenix, Arizona 85069.