

# The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce these risks.

"Without vision, the people perish."

## What's Wrong With Whole Language?

The fundamental flaw in whole language instruction philosophy is that it teaches children to read English as if it were an ideographic writing system like Chinese instead of an alphabetic sound-symbol system. We know now from years of experience and observation that imposing an ideographic teaching technique on an alphabetic writing system can cause reading disability through symbolic confusion. In fact, it can cause the symptoms of dyslexia.

It is for this reason that the debate over the implementation of the whole-language philosophy in reading instruction is so very important. The future intellectual development and emotional health of millions of children are at stake. If, as we believe, that a child's normal language development can be seriously harmed and retarded by whole-language teaching techniques, it is imperative that parents and teachers become aware of this.

It should be the aim of every school, of every educator, to make sure that what is done in the classroom does not inadvertently harm the child. There is such a thing as "educational malpractice." And because

reading is taught to children at such an early, impressionable age, the permanent harmful effects of a teaching method should be thoroughly considered and explored. Our responsibility to the children dictates that we use proven methods of instruction, tested over the centuries, judged and verified by their results.

Although its practitioners insist that whole language is a philosophy and not a specific instructional technique, there is no doubt that the philosophy implies a methodology. In fact, at closer inspection we discover that whole-language methodology is not so very different from the look-say, whole-word teaching methods that have been in use since the early 1930s when look-say was first introduced in the schools.

## No More Dick and Jane

The major difference between the old look-say and the new look-say is that the basal reading programs with their insipid and inane little stories about Dick and Jane, Tom and Betty, and Janet and Mark have been replaced with what the educators call

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