

We spoke earlier today regarding my nephew. I was scanning quickly through the "Starting at Square One." In Chapter two (the R control rule - "Starry" and "carry" do not rhyme). It states to look at "carry" and that there is no single syllable base word in carry. Maybe in scanning I missed something, but the word "car" is in the word "carry" and rhymes with "star." How am I misunderstanding this?

As a general rule, words (no matter how many syllables) that can be reduced to one meaningful syllable follow what we call the rules of "Simple Phonics." For example, the word misunderstanding can be reduced to "stand." Words that cannot be reduced to one meaningful syllable follow what we call the rules of "FANCY Phonics." For example, the word crucial cannot be reduced to one meaningful syllable so the "sh" sound is not spelled sh but ci. The letters "car" happen to be in carry but it is not a meaningful syllable as fish is in fisherman, fishery, and fishing. The letters "not" and "ice" are in notice but notice doesn't rhyme with hot mice. Barry, Carry, Harry, Larry, and Marry do not reduce to one meaningful syllable. Starry reduces to star, tarry reduces to tar, etc. The "airy" sound is difficult because it can be spelled ery as in very, erry as in merry, ary as in Mary, arry as in marry, as well as airy as in hairy.

Also, I see that you offer free daily tutoring there. Boy, do I wish I lived there. Now that I know for sure that my nephew is dyslexic, I feel relieved and yet so overwhelmed. I have found in working with my nephew that daily repetition is the key for him, so it seems that I am on the right track and it is so nice to have that confirmed. I had planned to do reading/spelling and math over the summer. Sounds like I need to add in keyboarding/writing as well?

For faster results, yes.

I am so excited to be dealing with someone who has passion! Do you have these clinics in other areas of the U.S or just Clio, Michigan?

Sorry. I'm just one little old man.

We sure could use something like this here. Also, do you feel I should explain to Blaine that he has dyslexia?

It shouldn't hurt, especially if you point out to him that I am a dyslexic and I wrote *To Teach a Dyslexic*.

If you do think so, are there any books written on his level that would explain what dyslexia is and that it is okay and what we need to do to put him on the road to success?

Why bother with books. Show him my translations of the fancy definitions that are up on our website. Also tell him that dyslexics have three things in common that most "good readers" don't. One, they are logical. Two they believe what they're taught. Three they try to logically apply what they've been taught to believe about our language, and it just doesn't work. Good readers are not logical. They only half-heartedly believe and what they're taught. And they just ignore what they're taught when it doesn't work. Try sounding out left to right, letter by letter, the word *magician*. ma, mag, magi, magic, magici, magician!

One last question for the night--You know and I know that my nephew has dyslexia. Is there a formal test that would document his having dyslexia?

Don't bother. Testing costs money and doesn't get help. You already know what you need to know. He needs help and the schools don't know how to help him.

I do believe in making learning FUN! I appreciate your advice on where to start. By the way, last week, I did the first seven lesson plans of sequential spelling with my nephew and it worked. He loved not having to write the words in a pyramid or 10 times each. He can spell scatter now. At first, I thought, "Well yeah, he can figure out how to spell the word scatter, but will he know how to spell it tomorrow?" Not only did he know how to spell the next day, but I checked him today on the word and he still knows how to spell it! God bless you in your efforts!

I am a resource teacher in Fort Worth. Several of my students are dyslexic. This is only my 2nd year of teaching and I am desperately seeking ways to help these students. I am interested in whatever materials you have to offer and in offering a parent education class. I would be interested in obtaining more information from you.

You might be interested in reading my story of doing what you're thinking about doing. It's in my autobiography *To Teach a Dyslexic*. I do have free lesson plans for such a course for parents. Remembering that the first session will be the session in which parents will have the greatest amount of enthusiasm and the least amount of expertise, I recommend that they be shown how to use If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me To Do It. The first seven lessons are on our website. This way, when the parents come back for the second class they will have success stories to share! Occasionally, you will find a parent who couldn't follow directions, but at least you will be able to convince that parent of the necessity of giving the correct spelling of each word *immediately* after each word is given.

You might even want to spend a little time looking at Starting At Square One.

If you can talk your school into spending a little money, you ought to get them to purchase *The Teaching of Reading & Spelling: A Continuum from Kindergarten through College*. It is filled with practical things you can use in the classroom.

I am a Reading Specialist, who has just discovered your materials. In fact, we just submitted a purchase order for AVKO Spelling. I believe that your materials are just the tool to teach and reach several students. I do have a question. What is your take on Lindamood Bell, as a tool for severely dyslexic students?

If the "severely" dyslexic student is a small child, it seems to really work well. With children that have no speech and/or hearing problems, good listening comprehension, then I personally see no reason to spend so much intensive training into phoneme recognition, especially when I, myself, cannot pass most phoneme recognition tests that use nonsense words.

I have a particular case, which has me, and many others puzzled. We currently use LiPS, but the student's memory is non-existent.

Say what? I'm sorry if I offended you, but that was my gut reaction to a common pedagogical concept held by most university professors about memory being either short term or long term. Everybody has a highly sophisticated computer brain with many types of memories. Some last only hundredths of a second. Some last only seconds. It probably only took you two or three seconds to read to where you are in this paragraph. When you get to the end of this sentence close your eyes and repeat exactly word for word what I have written.

See what I mean. Your computer brain was processing and deleting as you were reading. What might be necessary is finding a way to trick that student's computer brain into more processing and a little less deleting. There are memories that last for minutes, others for hours, some for just a day or two (what did you have for dinner last Tuesday?), some for weeks, some for months, some for years, and some for life. Getting the brain to place specific stimuli (data) into the proper file and folder isn't all that easy using conventional instructional materials.

What would you recommend, from your materials?

Individualized Keyboarding with a peer tutor reading the words as the student types. Directions for this are in the manual that you should ask for if you decide to order. If the student does not know cursive then I would recommend that the student be taught cursive using Let's Write Right or if you're interested in being one of the first to ever use a system specifically designed to work with students like the one you have mentioned, get the lessons free off our website: Starting At Square One.

Would an fMRI be a good route to understanding and teaching this child?

Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging is, in my not so humble opinion, pseudoscientific voodoo. The problem is that you don't know exactly what it is that you are measuring. There is no way to really determine if there is an improvement that it is not the result of a placebo effect. On the other hand there is no doubt that there are changes that can be measured by fMRI if proper intervention has taken place. You might (by using the Freedom of Information Act) get some data from the NIH. I do know that Philip Bergman, a dyslexic who is part of a longitudinal study by NIH and who has had numerous fMRI's done, has learned to read and spell quite well. His greatest gains came when his father, Eldo Bergman, M.D., who directs the Texas Reading Institute, sent him to AVKO. You can read about him in my autobiography, To Teach a Dyslexic.

Your website has really hit home. I have a 9 year old that has been through the "professional" system of educating a child with "learning disabilities". From public to private to private special ed., he's been to it all! Now finally safe at home. His main issues are having trouble with left or right directions of numbers and letters. He gets distracted by being concerned about the directions of his numbers and letters so he is slower at coming up with the correct answers. This being in spelling or math.

Your child is merely having difficulty with the "logic" of both math and reading when it comes to directionality. We count from left to right 1 to 10 by ones, 10 to 100 by 10's, but when we put our numbers down we put the ones to the right (the pennies' column), the tens' next (the dimes column) and the 100's next (the dollars column). We add the pennies first, then the dimes, and then the dollars. It just takes practice and time to make it automatic.

He is slow at reading but does okay. He does not seem to be discouraged, however; I would like to do what is best for him.

I would suggest practicing speed reading with easy reading books. At least once a day but never more than twice, have him set the kitchen timer for ten minutes and read as fast as he can silently. He is to underline any words that are difficult for him. When the timer rings, he is to stop and then compute his words per minute rate. Have him make a chart. Have him keep pushing at least until he gets his speed up over 110 words per minute. 300 words per minute is an ideal target. Really good readers read over 1,000 WPM.

After looking at the web site, I had decided on getting not Sequential Spelling but the one that is similar and uses the words in a sentence. I also was looking at the Individualized Keyboarding. Is that a notebook of a C.D.? I would greatly appreciate your guidance on this before I order. Thank you for being open to homeschoolers!

If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me To Do It would have been my choice for him, so I just have to agree with you. Individualized Keyboarding is in book form. When you order, make sure you ask for the free manual that goes with it.

Mr. McCabe, I have a 7 yr old son who will be 8 in a couple of weeks. For some reason he doesn't seem to be able to learn to read, spell, and write. His handwriting is terrible and is an all out war to get him to try to write. The Dr. once said he is ADHD, but compared to some children that are, I'm not so sure. I have asked about dyslexia and was told that his tests didn't look like it, but at his age it's hard to tell what the underlying problem is. I have been to psychologist, etc., have asked about neurologist testing and was told that it wouldn't tell us anything. However, in the meanwhile he is slipping further behind. No he's behind in math as well, although not as bad as reading. He is in the 2nd grade at a public school and in special ed classes for reading and speech, but they don't seem to be making a lot of difference. I ask them if he was dyslexic, how to teach him, but they didn't seem to know. His teacher told me he is probably reading on a 1st grade 3rd month level and we're in the middle of the 2nd grade. So once again their only suggestion is to think about retaining him, which I disagree. I think this would make it worse for him. I checked on a learning center to get help which would be about a 75 mile drive one way for me to take him each time and the cost would be about \$700 for one month - 4 hrs. per week, 2 hrs on 2 different days. My husband is disabled and I'm the only one working, so I can't afford this. Can you share any advice or suggestions with me. It would greatly be appreciated more than words could tell you. Thank You.

First of all, even if the learning center were to be located next door to you and even if you were a millionaire, chances are that it would not work. From your description of your child, I am rather certain that your child needs at least 30 minutes of help every single day, Saturdays and Sundays included. Have you considered having your husband homeschool your child? You also might want to consider trying the freebie on our website, Starting at Square One and teach him reading and spelling AS you and/or your husband teach him to write the alphabet slowly and methodically.

If you would like to use the Let's Write Right series that has student pages and has already been written and is for sale, I wouldn't say NO.

You also might consider teaching him to use the keyboard using Individualized Keyboarding. He will also learn to read and spell AS he slowly and methodically learns the keyboard.

Hello, I was wondering if you could help me? My son has had problems in school ever since he started, he is 9 yrs old and in the 3rd grade (he had to repeat 1st grade). He has been tested by the school and they say he has a reading disability, I asked for him to be tested for dyslexia and they told me that the state of North Carolina does not recognize dyslexia (it doesn't exist) and that he would be helped for a reading disability. I haven't noticed much change in his reading and I believe that they have labeled him now and are letting him slide by with whatever he can do. I want more for my son than this and have decided to take matters in my own hands. I will order whatever it takes to help my son, if you could point me in the right direction(I don't know where to begin).

I would start with Sequential Spelling 1, a Student Response Book, and Word Families in Sentence Context.

So that you better understand why it is that school systems are failing the children who are dyslexic, I do suggest that you read my autobiography To Teach a Dyslexic. After that, you might consider ordering The Teaching of Reading and Spelling: A Continuum from Kindergarten through College. But please, don't order all of these at one time. It might be a bit overwhelming.

Any help would be appreciated on how many kids are sliding by because no one will help them? Thank you.

Too many, way too many. One last thing: Please do NOT waste your son's precious childhood play time by having him study whatever spelling words his teacher gives him to take home.

I appreciate your website and especially that you seem more concerned about people than money. In trying to get help for my daughter who is struggling (inexplicably) with reading, I have found that most everyone who wants to help also wants a lot of money for doing it. The problem I am having with my daughter is strange to me. All my other children, even those younger than her, read fine. She is a good speller in general and yet cannot read fluently. She often guesses at words. She seems not to simply recognize a word as most do.

Over the years, I have discovered that most "guessing" is the result of a the fantastic God-given computer doing what it is designed to do. I devoted one chapter in my book *The Teaching of Reading and Spelling: A Continuum from Kindergarten through College* to that subject. The chapter? "Statues and Sanctuaries or a Practical Use of Miscue Analysis: Building Egos/Self-Esteem." It tells of how a young man I was tutoring asked me the question, "How could I confuse the word statues with sanctuaries?" If you'll notice every letter in statues occurs in the word sanctuaries. They have the same beginning and ending letters. And most importantly they both have a religious subtext. Believe me, your daughter's "guesses" are not wild guesses. Her mind needs a little more "programming" to respond quickly and automatically to the patterns of English spelling.

She has some reversal problems in both reading and writing. She is also having problems in math. She does not intuit math concepts and is not fast.

My guess is that her lack of speed is tied to her fear of making mistakes.

She particularly struggles with word problems and math concepts in general. She doesn't fit my idea of a dyslexic altogether since she is a good speller and has beautiful handwriting. She also is a fairly good writer and can make good creative paragraphs. I have really been stumped as to why she has so much trouble with reading.

Fear of making mistakes rears its ugly head again.

Working with her in word families and phonics and with spelling workbooks has helped. I do see improvement, but reading speed is still a problem.

Here is a very simple solution. Have her create her own 10 minute Guinness Book of Personal Records for speed reading. Have her pick an easy reading book that doesn't have many pictures. Have her (math problem) calculate the average number of words per line and the average number of lines per page. Twice a day have her set the kitchen timer to 10 minutes and read as fast as she can. When the timer dings, she must stop. Now figure her words per minute and enter it on a chart or graph.

She does not like reading.

I'll bet she doesn't like to make mistakes either. So, get books for her that are FUN books, whether they are stupid riddle books or elephant joke books. Whatever turns her on. And also try to convince her to underline AS SHE IS READING any word she is not 100% sure of either its meaning or its pronunciation. Again, I have a chapter in my book about the importance of sending the correct message to the computer brain. Skipping words sends the message the word isn't all that important to learn. Important things we underline. Another method that sometimes works is having a "drama" class or "Babysitting 101" in which we practice different voices and expressions and sounds using simple children's books such as *Green Eggs and Ham*. Shel Silverstein's *Light in the Attic* or *Where the Sidewalk Ends* are great for this.

She is also not the most compliant learner, which makes things more difficult. I love my daughter and really want to find an answer. I can and will work with her daily. I intend to try sequential spelling, I am hoping that her strengths in spelling will help her in reading.

Sequential spelling should help build her self-confidence and help her computer respond automatically to patterns.

Dear Mr. McCabe, I have been looking at your website and I just don't know where to begin. My daughter has been tested and found to be severely dyslexic. She is almost 10 and can sound out small words. We homeschool our older children and want to continue to homeschool our youngest. There are no tutors in our area, that we have found to help us. Someone referred me to your website but I just don't know where to begin. Could you point me in the right direction? Thank you for any help.

1. If your child cannot print and write quickly and smoothly, I would recommend working with her handwriting, four fifteen- minute periods scattered throughout the day. I would recommend the Let's Write Right series including the Rimes and More Rhymes companion book. If you can't afford that, you might want to work with what is on the website and is free, Starting at Square One.

2. If your child has access to a computer, she should learn the proper keyboarding techniques. Her reading and spelling can improve with Individualized Keyboarding because it teaches spelling patterns AS she learns the keyboard. Make sure you order the freebie that goes along with it that gives explicit instructions on how to help a dyslexic.

3. If you can only afford one book, I would highly recommend If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me To Do It. The first seven lessons are on the website.

Dear Mr. McCabe, I'm very impressed with your program. After using numerous spelling curricula and approaches, as well as expensive tutoring, my 13 year old son still cannot spell his way out of a box! Your program appears to be very promising and may be the cure for his spelling ailments. This year, I'm hoping to teach two of my other children (ages 10 and 8) together with my 13 year old, covering the same material together. But, my 10 and 13 year olds do not have seven years to work through these levels one by one. Would the program be ineffective if I did 25 lessons from each level every year? For seven levels yearly, I plan to teach lessons 1-25 the first year, 26-50 the next, 51-76 the following, etc. I would still be doing 180 lessons per year. Is this feasible? Thanks.

As there are 365 days in a year, it is very easy to cover two levels in just one lesson per day. $180 \times 2 = 360$. That allows for Christmas, Easter, Hanukkah, and two birthdays :) !

You could do a lesson from Level 1 in the morning and a Lesson from Level 2 in the afternoon. Then six months later do lessons from Level 3 in the morning and lessons from Level 4 in the afternoon. Or you could just do one lesson from Level 1 in the morning and the next lesson in Level 1 in the afternoon and as long as you do the lessons every day, you will be able to complete at least four levels in one year! Of course, you can repeat lessons but you should do so only after at least two hours have gone by. You can remember anything if you forget it enough times!

Dear Mr. McCabe, I have a 14 yr. old son with Dyslexia. He has a terrible time with cursive writing. He always tells me that he CAN'T write! I was considering ordering your book, Let's Write Right...but I'm concerned about whether or not it is appropriate for a teenager. I have tried some books and CD Roms that haven't worked because they are geared more for younger children. Do you have a workbook that doesn't have the pictures and instructions geared toward little kids? Perhaps something written for adults?

This is what I have. No bunny rabbits or balloons. All the AVKO materials are designed for adults. We believe that you can treat children as adults, but don't ever treat adults like little kids. If you order, make sure that you order the teacher edition and not just the workbook.

Dear Mr. McCabe, Thanks for developing your website. It has been a help to me. I am in the process of homeschooling my 6 year old. I have been working with the Dstar -100 easy lessons Reading program but have found this not to be very easy for my son. I have recently learned Dyslexia is both in my family and my husband's family. Because of this, I searched out an Orton-Gillingham 10 hour introduction class. I found it helpful but they now want me to take a 45hour \$800.00 class. I can do this but feel there must be something in print which will walk me through a systematic approach to teaching reading. I am searching for a reading program to use with dyslexic children which I can use with my son and in the future his younger siblings to teach strong reading and spelling skills. I am playing the odds that one of my children will be dyslexic. I assumed if I found a program developed for dyslexics which can make very strong readers and spellers out of them that it should work for all children regardless of a quicker ability to learn to read. I am currently following some advice from your site and am concentrating on Phonemic awareness skill development in my son.

Can you recommend material which takes me from ground zero (teach the sound to symbol) up through all spelling rules? I resent the way I learned reading in the mid 60s because I rely heavily on memorization with little knowledge of phonic skills. I am an avid reader and would like to keep my children from developing the same -very limited knowledge of spelling rules which I have.

You certainly are on the right track. Orton-Gillingham is excellent. I have received O-G training. It doesn't hurt for a tutor or a teacher to know "all" the rules. But I have found that it isn't necessary to TEACH all the rules. If you were planning on becoming a certified O-G tutor or tutor trainer and wanted to make a living doing so, then by all means spend the \$800.00. However, I think you can learn to be an even better homeschooling mom for a whole lot less. You can become a certified AVKO tutor for just the cost of the materials.

You would start with *To Teach a Dyslexic* to gradually learn how it was that a dyslexic learned to teach dyslexics and to develop materials for others to teach dyslexics. Then you take the full course in teaching reading that is in *The Teaching of Reading and Spelling: A Continuum from Kindergarten through College*. You would also need *The Patterns of English Spelling* and *Word Families in Sentence Context*. Your examinations would be up on the website and answered by E-mail.

If you want to start from ground zero with your son, I would strongly recommend that you simply start with *Let's Write Right*. You don't need the student's book. It's better if you just modeled the letters and let him trace over them. This way you can use all your O-G training to lock in the kinesthetic. And by the way, I hope that you will use either Italic or D'Nealian (Modified) manuscript.

Hi, I was just looking over your website and our son's second grade teacher has asked if the school could test him for scotopic sensitivity. Have you ever heard of this? If so, can you suggest a good place to find information about this? Your help is greatly appreciated!

Yes. This is a sensitivity to the "snow blinding" effect of white paper. I have this sensitivity myself. However, it does not interfere with my normal reading. In fact, it helps me increase my reading speed. I like to compare reading to riding a bicycle. The slower you ride the bicycle, the harder it is to maintain your balance. Increase your speed and you don't have to worry. In learning to read, students with scotopic sensitivity stay focused on single words a bit too long and then the words seem to jump around. They do that for me when I am tutoring and reading upside down. So, I use a tinted grayish purple plastic sheet that I lay over the print. You can pay all kinds of money for tinted lenses and for the evaluation. If the school will pay for it, why not? But don't expect that this will all of a sudden allow him to become a good reader. If it does, great. If it doesn't then he probably is a dyslexic and needs a different approach and not just tinted lenses or a tinted overlay. For more information go to <http://www.irlen.com>. From there you can find the nearest Irlen specialist.

Dear Mr. McCabe: I have recently started trying to teach a 12 year old boy to read. He seems like a very smart boy, but cannot read. In the 4 sessions I have had with him, he has not made much progress. He can sound out small words such as cat, dog. If I try anything harder, he gets very frustrated and confused. He even gets some letters of the alphabet confused. When asking him the sounds the letters make, he can do that now. But he can't seem to apply that knowledge when sounding out a word. He looks overwhelmed and won't try.

After reading the web page about dyslexia, I believe this a real possibility. Do you feel there is anyway that he could learn to read just by taking is slow with me. I am not a teacher or trained in reading disabilities. Will it be a waste of time if he doesn't get an "expert" to teach him. His two brothers seem to have difficulties reading also, and behavioral problems.

This child, however, wants to learn very badly but can't seem to get it even after several people have tried to train him. He comes from a broken family and is poor. They are not going to be able to send him to special schools and hire expensive teachers. His school district has done nothing to help him that I can see.

He is now in a "life skills" class where they do not teach academics, only how to do things like clean, or order meals, or tie shoes. He is capable to do anything like that. He is very smart in every other way. Should I try to help him on my own? Could he learn to read with just my help?

Yes, your young man can learn with just your help. In fact, he probably will learn faster with you as his mentor than he would with someone with all kinds of special training. Much of what is taught at the university level is "theory upon theory." And most of these theories just don't work.

If you can work with this young man fifteen minutes a day, six or seven days a week, you can really help him. I would suggest that before you start you read my autobiography, *To Teach a Dyslexic*, so that you will understand why my very simple, common sense, approach is not widely used. And more importantly, why it works! Then I would start with *If it is to be it is up to me to do it*. If you have any questions while you're using these materials, you can always e-mail me.

Hi Don, Our granddaughter is currently being tested for dyslexia, though preliminary test results from the psychologist is she is reading above the norm for her age group, which is 6 years old. She is left handed and I have noticed difficulty with writing numbers backwards and sometimes she writes her name Kaitlyn backwards. Is there any link that for young left handed children learning at a slower rate due to trying to function in a right handed world? When a right handed teacher shows how to write letters and sentences on the board, it's certainly harder for left handed children. Please let me know if you are aware of any sites available dealing with this subject. Thank You for your help, Robert

You're absolutely right. That's why I believe elementary teachers should not be allowed to teach handwriting until they can demonstrate that they can write with either hand and upside down as well. However, there haven't been studies concerning the effects of right-handed teachers teaching left-handed students--at least to my knowledge.

Don, My son is 7 and is in Kindergarten for the 2nd time. He is adopted. He was a drug and alcohol baby and has been on many medications including seizure meds. He is a normal functioning child at this point but has been diagnoses ADHD. He is currently taking Adderall. The problem with Isaac is...he can work on a letter at school all week and by the weekend...he's forgotten it. My husband and I have been working with him at home too but he doesn't even remember what we work on. We have been coordinating with the teacher to reemphasize what she has been teaching. We are having a conference with her next week and don't know what to do. We DO NOT want him held back again but we feel like that's going to be a problem. I have homeschool experience with my other 2 children but with Isaac's background and special help at school, we felt it was best that he went to "school." My oldest daughter, now 16, went through a Slingerland summer school program to help her with her dyslexia problem. And it did...we have tried the hand in the air approach with Isaac too but he just doesn't retain anything that has to do with letters or numbers. He has a hard time remembering money too. He calls a nickel a

penny and so on. Even after going over and over it. Do you have any suggestions? If so...I'm all ears...Sincerely, Lisa P.

I agree that Isaac should not repeat kindergarten one more time. If the techniques and materials didn't work the first time or the second time, why on earth would anyone think that they might work the third time through? Something different must be tried. By what you have said about Isaac's "inability" to remember, I wouldn't be surprised if Isaac would be a candidate for some form of "brain retraining." Dr. Lyelle Palmer of Winona State University in Minnesota immediately comes to mind. So does Benton Kurtz of the Kurtz Center in Winter Park, Florida. If you live close enough to travel to Clio, Michigan, I would be willing to see what I could do. If your school system cannot or will not help your son, homeschooling seems to be about the only answer. If you do elect to go this route, I might be of some help to you. I would suggest a very careful modification of the presentation of letters (and words) in *Let's Write Right*. I would start with the letters A and a. The names are "Big A" and "little a" and the letters make the word "uh" as in "a car," "a house," "a dog," "a cat." You might start teaching a form of rebus reading. Use the letter "a" and a picture of a car, house, dog, or cat. You point to the letter and say "uh" and point to the picture and name it. Do this for five minutes and take a break. Let's say, counting pennies or fingers. Five fingers, five pennies make one fist or one nickel. One hand plus two fingers equal 7 fingers. One nickel plus two pennies equal seven pennies. Play, play, play for five or ten minutes. Then back to the letter "AY" and how to read it whether Big A or little a.

Praise, praise, praise and not one bit of discouragement for not remembering. Keep telling him he WILL remember. You can remember anything IF you forget it enough times. You don't go to the letter whose name is Big B and little b until Big A and little a are mastered.

Now you can have the words baa, BAA, and Baa. After the B's are mastered, then we go to the C's. And we now have "A CAB, a cab, A Cab, and A cab" and we can play with alphabetical order. What comes first? A. What comes after A? B. What comes before C?

B. Play, play, play. Small periods of time with increasing lengths between the teaching. If Isaac can remember after a ten minute break. Great! Continue extending the break times by intervals of one minute. If Isaac fails (NOT CAN'T!) to remember after a ten minute break, reduce the break intervals by one minute each time until he can. And then reverse and increase the break intervals. After C you help him master D and d. You now have added words of BAD, bad, DAD, dad, and the "nonsense" words of CAD and cad. Then you go to the letters R and r. After R and r go to S and s. After S and s go to T and t. Then return to teaching the letters of the alphabet and the words that they make in alphabetical order. You also might want to read my life story. I am a dyslexic. I am ADHD and even at 69 can't sit still. I should never have been able to learn to read, but I was "homeschooled" by my sister before I went to school. It was that and an awful lot of unique experiences that enabled me to learn to read and learn to teach other dyslexics how to read. Sorry about my plug for *To Teach a Dyslexic* but I really do think it might help you understand why schools fail to help children like your Isaac and why my methods have yet to become widespread.

Thank you for the advice for our six and a half year old daughter. I ordered a number of books from AVKO and started the program last Monday. Mikhaila spelled "scatters" correctly on Thursday and was SO THRILLED!!! Everything in the book makes a lot of sense. As a former English teacher it is interesting and frustrating to read about your experiences and learn why the schools aren't doing more to help these kids. Our children (ages 8 and 6) have never been in the public schools. Our experience in getting the schools to help our daughter has not been a positive one to say the least. Last summer the director of a school for children with learning disabilities told me they could not help Mikhaila with her reading due to the problems I described. What kinds of reading problems do they help children with, I should ask! The director then told me that the public schools wouldn't know what to do with her either. Real positive meeting! I'm so glad there are people out there like yourself who don't give up. We certainly haven't! We have decided to start this approach with our son as well. I also shared the information with a home school friend of mine yesterday and expect she will be starting it with her two daughters soon. Dear Sir,

Where do I begin? I have just pulled my 3 youngest children from public school. 2 of these children have dysgraphia and dyslexia. I am told there are so many types of dyslexia they will never really know what kinds my children have. At one time, I was shown sample pages of what a child might see when dyslexic. I would like to know where can I get some pages of dyslexic samples. My other question is this- I would like to order the resource handout that contains the sight words! I believe they are called Dolch! I want to help my kids as much as possible. Out of seven children-(4 left at home), 6 children have varying degrees of Many many learning disorders and / or .neurological or psychiatric disorders. Anything from depression and anxiety to dyslexia, obsessive compulsive disorder, Tourettes syndrome and the list goes on! I guess today is a blue day for me. Although I know this is not my fault, I keep asking myself WHY and what did I do wrong to have so many children with so many special needs. I know that many of the disorders are genetic, inherited and what not! I myself am riddled with many special needs as I like to call them. I must find ways on one income, with my special needs to be able to teach my children at home because they dont get what they need in school. Any help will be appreciated, I especially want the sight words and the samples of what a dyslexic might see! Thank You so much, Tracee'

In order to send you anything, I must have your snail mail address. Your name would be handy also. There's something about e-mail that just doesn't like books and pamphlets.

And yes, you're right. Your children's problems are not your fault. Inherited maybe, but then again, you never picked your parents either. I happen to be a dyslexic, a very lucky one that was able to learn to read. I also passed my "dyslexia" gene onto my son, but I was able to teach him. He gave it to one of his sons, but again, I helped my grandson learn to read. He will be graduating from high school with honors. I would suggest that you start by reading my book, *To Teach a Dyslexic* and then begin using *Sequential Spelling* with your kids. As you can tell, there are a number of things on our website that you could use. But I wouldn't advise trying to get them all at one time.

Dear Mr. McCabe, I am writing an article about the steps a parent can take once it discovered that their child is dyslexic. I will also be comparing schools for the dyslexic to public school learning disability programs. I was hoping you could answer a few questions for me? I would like to know in your opinion what you think the biggest misconception about dyslexia is.

The biggest misconception is that dyslexics see differently. This misconception comes from not understanding why b's, d's, g's, p's and q's are so frequently confused in reading and writing by dyslexics. The dyslexic mind tends to be more rigidly logical than the "normal" mind. Position in real life means very little. Picture a dog in your mind. Is the dog facing you? Is the head pointed to the left and the tail to the right? Is the head pointed to the right and the tail to the left. Is the dog standing on it's hind legs? Is the dog lying down? Does it make any difference? Of course not! To illustrate this point, when I am lecturing, I pick up a chair and twist it all around in different directions to that the audience can see how the position of a chair can relate to the position of the ball (o) and the stick (l) when it comes to the letters b, d, p, q, g. It is merely the processing of what is seen that is different in the dyslexic mind, not WHAT is seen.

Also, What changes do think need to take place within the public schools learning disability programs to ensure that dyslexic children receive an enriching and successful education.

Read my analysis of the teaching of the alphabet in http://www.avko.org/write_right.htm and in http://www.avko.org/spell_key.htm. Also, in both public schools, and the private expensive schools for dyslexics in which tuition can be \$45,000.00 a year or more, the methods of teaching do not reflect the knowledge that there are five different types of words in the English language and all five cannot and should not be taught in the same way. These five types are the simple, the fancy, the tricky, the insane, and the scrunched up. The phonics that allow a person to decode cat and city and fish are insufficient to allow a person to logically pronounce insufficient. Although you have no problem with that word, you probably are not conscious of the fact that the letters fici in sufficient are pronounced

A Resource Provided by The AVKO Dyslexia & Spelling Research Foundation
<http://www.avko.org/>

"fish!" We do not teach the ci digraph that is pronounced /sh/ in words like precious, efficient, and crucial. Although we teach insane words like was (wuzz) and does (duzz) we do not teach lough and quay and victuals and about fifty more words commonly mispronounced by college "educated" people.

Dear Mr. McCabe, I am starting home schooling for my eight year old son. I was wondering what parts of this program you would recommend for him. He was in the second grade public school. He seems in what they call grade level for reading and spelling but he cannot transfer the spelling to writing and may have some organization of stories troubles. I need to assess his abilities but am anxious to get started. I think he would do well with this type of sequential work. I would like to use the same program for spelling, writing, and reading so it is consistent. Any advice would be appreciated. Thanks, Andrea

Starting with Sequential Spelling 1 would be what I would recommend. If you plan on teaching your child cursive or just to practice manuscript, I would also recommend using the Let's Write Right. However, whatever style of continuous stroke handwriting (or combination thereof) that your child prefers is perfectly okay so long as it is legible. The Getty-Dubay Italic is a great system, as well as Don Thurber's D'Nealian. If and when you plan on having your child use the computer keyboard, I would strongly recommend using Individualized Keyboarding. You might want to later on combine these with a lot of just plain fun reading. All of the Dr. Seuss books should be read. They have such great morals. The same as all the books by Theo. LeSieg (Note: LeSieg is Geisel spelled backwards and Dr. Seuss's real name is Theodore Geisel). The Berenstain Bear books are also great for kids that age. For composition, I would suggest that you first start with the easiest type of practice which is what the "experts" call Language Experience. After completing a Sequential Spelling Lesson, have your child make up a few sentences using some of the words in Sequential Spelling. You might want to start with just one or two sentences. Make sure YOUR CHILD doesn't worry about "correct" spelling. You can provide the correct spellings without any criticism for not knowing. His spelling will automatically improve provided no undue pressure is put to bear. As sentence composition improves (You can always help him make his sentences funnier or more sophisticated), then add the number you do in any one assignment. After sentences become easy, then you might try simple paragraphs. So you can see my sequencing is from letters to words to sentences to paragraphs and then to stories or essays. You can always find other ideas in my book on *The Teaching of Reading and Spelling: a Continuum from Kindergarten through College*.

Dear Dr. McCabe, I have just found out that my 15 year-old son has dyslexia. He is a tenth grader and is reading between the 5th and 6th grade level. I have been reading your book "To Teach a Dyslexic" and would like to order some of the AVKO products to help him improve. I will be trying to tutor him myself. I was going to order "If it is to be it is up to me to do it". I would like to know what sequential spelling lessons are for 5th grade and up? I will order these plus the response book after I hear from you. What other materials would I need for home tutoring? Thank you for your time.

Your selection of "If it is to be.." is a good place to start. In regards to Sequential Spelling, the volumes are not arranged by grade level. The reason: words like *ice* are 4th grade words and *nice* is 1st. I believe in teaching words of the same patterns at the same time. So, the easiest patterns to learn are in the early volumes and the more difficult patterns in the later volumes. If your son hasn't already learned touch typing so he can use a computer keyboard without looking at the keys, I would strongly recommend that you use my *Individualized Keyboarding* to teach him. If you plan to homeschool him, I would also recommend that you use as your own text for learning how to teach reading: *The Teaching of Reading: a Continuum from Kindergarten through College*. If your son is reading at the 5th or 6th grade level and he's in the 10th, the reason is probably because he doesn't know the "FANCY" patterns such as the "cial" being the way we spell the sound "shul" as in special, crucial, racial, and commercial. In both "The Teaching of Reading..." and "If it is to

be..." I have lists of these patterns and the pages in "*The Patterns of English Spelling*" that the words containing these patterns can be found.

Dear Mr. McCabe, My son will be turning 7 years old in just a couple of days. When he was 4 he was diagnosed as ADHD. It was recommended that he be medicated but my husband and I chose to try other things that seemed to work. Last year he completed Grade K with great success; however now that he is in first grade and the load is much heavier he is having a lot of trouble! Yesterday I received a note from his teacher saying that he can not continue this for the rest of the year. After staying up all night last night researching the net, I'm almost convinced that he is dyslexic instead. Your site was one of the best that I ran across however it seemed a little advanced for a child just entering 1st grade. Do you have anything that is directed towards this age group. It'll have to be something over the net that is free because I don't have the money to order some of the things I found last night on some of the other sites. Even if you do not, I still want to express my approval of your site, it is the best I've found so far. It seems more people should be more concerned about our children vs. making so much money on other peoples misfortunes. Again thank you so much.

I am glad that you avoided the drugs for your son. As far as helping your son, you might want to help him in making his handwriting (probably printing) automatic (fast but legible). You might want to visit our web page http://www.avko.org/write_right.htm and check out the concept of teaching reading and spelling as we teach the printing of the alphabet using D'Nealian, Getty-Dubay Italic, AVKO, or any "continuous" stroke manuscript printing that makes the transition to cursive handwriting a lot easier when it's taught in the third grade (probably). I would start with the letter a, letting him know that it is the word "uh" as in "a book, a man, a dog, a glass," etc. When he can write "uh" and spell it "AY" automatically, then go to the letter B. Now, you can have him write "baa, baa, baa" as in "Baa, baa, Black Sheep." and then the name Bab. When the writing of the letters b and a are automatic as well as the reading and spelling of these simple words, work with the letter C. Now we have "a cab." When the writing of c and the spellings of the words available are automatic. Add the letter D. Now we have dad, bad, cad, dab, cab, and baa. When this is automatic, add the letter R. This gives us car and bar and card and bard. When this is automatic add the letter S. Wow does this begin to open up possibilities. We have "ass (the donkey, of course), bass, dads, cabs, dabs, cars, cards. With T comes a tremendous explosion of words. We have the at family: at, bat, cat, rat, tat bats, cats, tats as well art, cart, carts, tart, tarts, start, starts, Bart and tab, stab, tabs, stabs, etc. Then continue on slowly working through the alphabet with e,f,g,h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q & u together, v, w, x, y, and z.

Hi, my name is Kim and I have a 14 year old son by the name of Jimmy. I believe he is dyslexic and would like to see if there would happen to be any tutors in my area that could help me. I am home schooling Jimmy and have been for two years, we have made some progress but very little. When I started homeschooling Jimmy he was on first grade reading level going into the 7th grade. now he is about on 3rd grade level at his best. I took Jimmy out of school because he had been in SLD classes for "learning disabilities" they said he was ADD and put him on several meds but they altered his mood and personality so I took him off the meds. Anyway, the public school system does not have SLD classes when you get into middle school here so they put him in a class with 50 kids and an extra teacher for kids who needed help. This made my son so upset that he was physically ill. What kid is going to put his hand up and ask for help in front of 50 kids? Plus Jimmy couldn't even read his schedule or what was on the board. After several meetings and one which included school board members, they told me to quit babying him and that's why they had two teachers in there to help the kids who needed it and "anyways" they said "we don't teach 7th graders how to read, he'll just have to catch on". I figured they had him for 7 years and couldn't teach him to read, I could do better but now I'm not so sure. A little personal info. on Jimmy; he is 14 yrs. old as I said, over 6 foot tall, 225 pounds, he thinks he is stupid, fat and told me he thinks he will never learn to read. Jimmy is very smart, a lot more common sense than his sister who made a 4.0 in school. No one knows of his learning disability unless I would tell them.

I could really use some help, I'm not sure where to go from here. Time is slipping away, Jimmy will be 15 in Jan. and things don't seem to be getting much better. In the mean time I stopped working to try to help Jimmy and we are struggling financially. Any help you can give us will be greatly appreciated. Thank you, Kim J

Good tutors don't come cheap. They often charge anywhere from \$20.00 an hour to \$80.00 an hour. And that is a real problem for those on limited incomes. That's why at AVKO we use trained volunteers to tutor on a daily basis. If there is any chance that you live within driving distance, I would suggest that you make an appointment and bring Jimmy with you to the foundation. Here we will train you in some very simple (but effective) techniques and how to use those AVKO materials which are most appropriate for him. If coming here to AVKO is out of the question, then I would suggest that you first purchase my autobiography, *To Teach a Dyslexic*. That will help you understand why Jimmy's school has been unable to help him learn to read and also understand that it's never too late to learn to read. If you would like to have a course in the teaching of reading, you might want to purchase *The Teaching of Reading: a Continuum from Kindergarten through College*. However, you probably can begin to get good results by starting first with *If It Is To Be, It Is Up To Me To Do It*, which only costs 22.95 plus shipping. If I can be of further help, feel free to either e-mail me or to call me on the phone.

Mr. McCabe- Please share your opinion regarding the teaching of reading to high school students and adults who have learning disabilities and/or mild intellectual disabilities. Does research support the practice? Thank you.

It is my opinion that nearly all high school students and adults with or without learning disabilities or intellectual disabilities can benefit by systematic instruction in reading. My personal research does support this practice. When I first started out in the reading field as a high school teacher at Flint Northwestern High School in Flint, Michigan, I secured permission from the school to pre and posttest the entire student body of over 2,000 students in both reading and spelling and compare them with my five classes. You can find the results of this study in my book, *To Teach a Dyslexic*. Mind you, I used a "canned" direct instruction method developed by SRA years ago using Power Builders, Rate Builders, Reading for Understanding, and Spelling. If I were in the same position today, I would be incorporating much more systematic and sequential instruction and achieving far greater results. But is there a decent body of research in this area? No. It's much easier for reading researchers to work with children and work exclusively in the early years where vocabulary is limited to a few thousand words most of which follow simple phonic principles. If you would like to find out more about my opinions regarding the teaching of reading to high school students and adults, you might want to either read my book *The Teaching of Reading: a Continuum from Kindergarten through College* or at least read its table of contents and a few selected chapters on our website.

Hello Mr. McCabe, I really enjoyed reading sections of your book in the Internet. I will definitely buy it soon. My son is fifteen and he has dyslexia, I have known about it since he was six years old. I, at the time, did not have any idea what that was. I since bought many books and read many articles about the condition. I am still, a lot confused, about what I had learned. I am from the Island of Haiti, and in my homeland, kids were either smart, average or slow. When I heard, that the school system here recognized that learning disabilities were to be taken seriously and a lot of work were devoted to help the kids in that situation, I was very happy. But I am very disappointed, all those years, I had to fight for Ari to receive the extra help that was due. You see Mr. McCabe, Ari is also gifted with an IQ of 130. I have been trying to tell those teachers that he needed extra help but for some reason they keep saying "this boy is too smart for his age and he just don't want to work " Ari really would like to go to college, but we worry that his grades might keep him from that goal. Ari, wants to be a psychiatrist and work with children. I will

keep on looking for a way to help him succeed and reach his goals. Keep up the good work, and God Bless!

Does AVKO have a position on the teaching of handwriting skills for elementary students - manuscript vs. cursive, D'Nealian, italics, etc?

Yes, AVKO does have several different positions regarding the teaching of handwriting skills to elementary students.

Also, what is the best age to teach manuscript, cursive, etc?

Ah, the ubiquitous "it all depends..."

Do you know of up-to-date research on these topics?

There is almost as much valid research on handwriting as there is on spelling. Would you believe that the last time a study was done on the 5,507 basic spelling words in English was done in November, 1953? You might want to contact Kate Gladstone about whatever research is out there, or Getty and Dubay, both of whom you probably are well aware of.

I am doing research for the curriculum office of the Medford, Oregon, Public Schools. I came across your website in doing web searches on the topic of handwriting research.

My personal preference is to expose all children to all the major styles of handwriting and allow them to use that style that fits their ability to make their words legible. I also strongly believe that handwriting practice can be used to teach "phonics" and spelling and decoding. With such emphasis on legibility to make it clear that dear and clear, dean and clean, and cling and ding, should not be confused because the c and l must not touch to make the letter d, phonics and spelling can be taught especially with student self-correction. For a handwriting "mini" curriculum I would strongly advise using the order of presentation in *Let's Write Right* for the first year of any handwriting program. Handwriting books for the children are really unnecessary expenditures. Handwriting charts and exercises that emphasize legibility and speed (automaticity) really are all that is needed.

Can you tell me if I can just purchase a word list from you to go over with my son who is dyslexic?

We have all kinds of different word lists. Each is designed for a specific purpose. If you can tell me what it is that you wish to accomplish, I would be in a better position to recommend a specific word list. Actually, I think you might want to visit our web site and to download. This allows you to try before you buy.

From a homeschooling mom: I am thinking of ordering some material, and have a few questions first. I have an 11 year old who has very poor spelling, poor handwriting, and poor word-attack skills, though he can read in context fairly well. I am thinking of getting the first few levels of sequential spelling to see if that will help him.

I am curious about *Let's Write Right*. How does it correlate with the spelling?

This book teaches both reading and spelling AS it teaches the alphabet both in manuscript and cursive. I would strongly recommend that you use it with him. If he writes stick/ball instead of D'Nealian, I would even more strongly recommend that you teach both the manuscript (printing) and the cursive at the same time.

My son can write, though not cursive yet, and I am more hoping for sentence copying type of practice with the cursive.

There will be plenty of sentences for "copying" but remember unless your son knows and reads what he is copying, the "copying" will not help either his reading or his spelling. The dictation of sentences with immediate student self-correction is what will help him the most.

Would your sequential spelling be a complete spelling program? I cannot afford your Patterns of English Spelling as well.

For the most part it is. Every consistent pattern in English spelling is covered somewhere within the seven volumes.

Would The Tricky Words be good to get at the beginning?

That set does have a lot of "fun sentences" and plenty of preview and review. I'm using it now with a 61 year old dyslexic lady from Germany who came to the AVKO Dyslexia Research Foundation to learn English. She is enjoying it.

Mr. McCabe, I was thrilled to find your website today. I worked as an assistant Reading Teacher in Virginia's public school system for 4 years, but still don't feel like I KNOW how to teach phonics!! Of course, it was taboo to use boring old phonics techniques with students. Must use the new Whole Language methods recently discovered. It was very frustrating as a teacher not to be able to use phonics with my students. I am now a homeschooling Mom with 4 kids and am trying to teach my 4.5 year old son how to read. I've noticed that he does have dyslexic tendencies, and often forgets his alphabet letters. What am I doing wrong?

You may be doing nothing wrong at all. It may be that he isn't quite ready. It may be that you might be trying to teach too much too fast.

Is it too early yet to peg him as a dyslexic?

It probably is too early. If I were in your shoes, I might want to begin all over again with Let's Write Right and slowly and methodically teach reading and spelling and handwriting AS you teach the letters of the alphabet and not burden your son with learning 52 different printed symbols (Upper and Lower Case letters) before you begin the reading and writing process.