

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Have You Ever Noticed?

- Four year olds love books and 4th graders hate to read?
- Our students score much lower on comprehension than reading?
- Half of our students may never read another book after graduation?
- A decade of No Child Left Behind and still millions are left behind.

Why is this Happening, and What Can We Do About It?

What makes kids lose their love of books and not understand what they're reading? What can we do so they will love reading and be really good at it?

What is the *Point to Reading*[™]?

The point to reading is to enjoy reading so you will want to do it and enjoy learning. Most books on reading are “educational”. *PTR*[™] is for people, not just educators. Instead of being like a textbook, *PTR* is written to be fun to read and easy to understand. We will discuss basic ideas you already know to be true. Then we'll look at them in a new way that will make sense to you. Some topics will surprise you because you might think they have nothing to do with reading.

So Much More than Just Reading

Most books on reading are about one thing: teaching a child to read. *PTR* is about everything else. What else could be needed for a child to learn?

Commitment	Fun	Relationship	Time
Coaching	Love	Discussion	Goals
Comprehension	Story	Courage	Legacy

These ideas for teaching children to read have been overlooked for the past sixty years. Today's children do learn to read, but at the sacrifice of the twelve principles listed above. *PTR* focuses on the **love** of **story**, building a **relationship** through the **time** we give our children, and having **fun** while we **discuss** the story with them. Combine the **goals** of loving to read with totally **understanding** the story and our children get more than just the ability to read.

Did you enjoy being read to as a child, but something turned you off to reading when you got older? Having asked thousands of people whether they like reading, I've found many think of reading like painful exercise or eating spinach. They

know it's good for them, but don't want to do it. There are a lot of people whose experience of school and reading was like mine. We never got very good at it, and just figured it was our fault.

*You know what? It wasn't our fault.
We were children doing the best we knew how.*

There are millions of children all over America who find school a painful and humiliating experience. I see it in the eyes of the adults I've talked to. And I see it in the news headlines that tell us things aren't getting better.

Maybe no one read to you when you were young, or you had a bad experience in school. You may be able to relate to the stories and explanations in this book, because most of us were taught pretty much the same way. My hope is that *Point to Reading* will encourage you to read a book with your child in a way that will make a huge difference in his or her life. And maybe your own life, too.

Why I Wrote This Book

The first instructions for *PTR* were only eight pages long. Over the years I shared it with hundreds of parents. I can show anyone how to do *PTR* in a few minutes, but it takes hours to explain why to do it this way. People have trouble believing it could be so easy—because it's not how we've done it for 60 years.

Why does it take hours to explain a very simple thing—how to read a story with a child? Because every one of us went to school where we learned to read the hard way—the way it's been done for sixty years. Instead of believing that reading should be fun and easy, we believe learning to read has to be painfully hard. For most of us learning to read means:

- Hours of boring readers and endless workbooks,
- Being forced to read out loud in class,
- Memorizing vocabulary lists and rules of grammar and syntax,
- And lots of tests.

You may be wondering, “*So what? Isn't that how everyone learns to read?*” Judging from the results of the past sixty years, how's that been working for us? While we may have taught kids how to read, we have also taught them how to *NOT LIKE READING*. Are we doing to our children what was done to us out of habit? What if we could do something different and get a better result?

We really ought to let go of the idea that our children need to go through the same painful experiences we did—those very things that made us dislike reading and school. Consider this. If our children had to learn how to talk the way we teach them to read, kids might never want to talk either. (By the way, how do babies learn to talk? By listening to and copying their parents. No workbooks.)

Along comes *Point to Reading* which says reading is fun and easy to learn. These new ways of learning the *PTR* way can be hard to understand at first.

- *How can a 1st grader learn to read with an 8th grade level book?*
- *Isn't sounding out big words necessary for learning to read?*
- *Isn't it the school's job to teach our children to read?*
- *If our trained teachers aren't successful, how could I possibly do this?*

But, is this Really New?

Have we somehow forgotten how children learned to read two hundred years ago? Did you know that it was common for children who could read to be able to read the King James Bible (*and understand it*) by the age of eight? They were expected to become proficient at reading very quickly. People entered university by the age of thirteen to fifteen and had degrees before they turned twenty.

Just one hundred years ago, our public school students may have been far advanced over today's students. An internet search for "eighth grade exams" will find a number of examples. [The Eighth Grade Examination for Bullitt County \(KY\) Schools, November 1912ⁱ](#) may shock you. The test covers topics from reading, grammar, math, geography, physiology, civics and history. Many college grads today would struggle to pass this test, besides our eighth graders.

There may be good excuses for why this has happened. Back then, maybe only the best students stayed in school; plus, they didn't have the distractions of modern life: TV, internet, popular music and sports. Regardless of the reasons, we still have the reality that some children did learn to read *extremely well* when they were very young, and eighth graders in 1912 faced higher standards.

Which Goals and Standards Do You Want for Your Children?

Do you want the goal of your child being an excellent reader by age eight, or the situation we have today with two out of three fourth graders who can't read proficiently? How about an education which prepares him for success in life?

Much of what you will read about in this book is what parents did with their children two hundred years ago.

This is not about “going back to the good old days”.

Point to Reading is about discovering how children learn to read better and faster, and what good practices can we use today to get the best results.

The Difference You Can Make I encourage you to check out this study published in 2012 by The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) titled *Let’s Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education*ⁱⁱ. Not only does the research show how parents can be a valuable part of a child’s education, it clearly states:

You, the parent, may be the most important key to your child’s success in reading and learning.

Why Can’t This Be Easy? The answer is as simple as reading a story with your child. That’s it. We’ll discuss what hasn’t worked and why. Part of the answer is understanding the difference between reading to your child and reading with. Reading to is what we do with little kids. After your child becomes a successful reader, then he will read by himself. *PTR* is the missing step in between, when you will read with your child. Unknowingly, we’ve been making the mistake of assuming children should somehow jump from being read to, to being able to read all by themselves. Reading with your child is what will help him or her become a fantastic reader, and not get lost along the way.

Using the Power of Habit Think of all the times you have tried to break a bad habit. Maybe your son won’t put his clothes in the laundry, or your daughter leaves toys around the house and won’t put them away. Habits can be difficult to change, *especially when the person sees nothing wrong with what they’re doing*.

America has some habits with reading which cause problems. We’ve had these reading habits so long that we think they’re the right thing to do. As simple as *Point to Reading* is, it can be difficult changing old habits. Most people (parents and teachers alike) think a 1st grader should learn on a 1st grade level book, and that making kids sound out words is good for them. As you read the chapters

explaining *Point to Reading*, you may find yourself saying, “*That makes total sense.*” Getting the answers to all your questions will give you the confidence to do this (and have fun doing it).

PTR is about helping your kids build good habits which make them winners all the way through school and the rest of their lives. Building good habits is just as easy as building bad ones, and a lot more useful. It also makes life easier not having to change the bad ones later.

Someday soon, it will be commonplace for second graders to be able to read anything. People will look back and wonder what took us so long to figure this out.

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition. Many ideas will be repeated as they get explained in different ways throughout the book. Repetition builds good habits. But, old habits die hard. Better to repeat an important point than allow it to continue causing damage to your child’s education.

Follow the Recipe. The simple instructions for *PTR* are like a recipe. Follow the recipe so your child gets all the benefits. Every instruction is connected to a benefit. For example, discussing what the story means builds communication and comprehension skills. Understanding the story is necessary for learning to be fun.

Once you get started reading a great story with your child, you’ll be surprised how really easy it to do. And anybody can do it. In no time you’ll be having fun reading with your child the *Point to Reading* way.

*Making your child wait until entering school
to become good at reading,
is like making him wait until he joins the baseball team
to learn how to throw and catch a ball.*

“Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”

Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922), scientist and inventor

ⁱ <http://www.bullittcountyhistory.com/bchistory/schooexam1912.html>

ⁱⁱ OECD (2012), *Let’s Read Them a Story! The Parent Factor in Education*, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264176232-en>