

# If Your Johnny Can't Read Don't Teach Him Yourself, Warns Expert

By DON OBERDORFER  
*Special Staff Writer*  
 If Johnny can't read, don't teach him yourself! And don't hound him to do better in school!

That's the advice of a University of North Carolina education expert who just completed a researcher's work as a consultant to Charlotte city schools. He gives the advice in a study of reading.

Dr. Carl F. Brown never mentions the offending philosophy of freelance writer Rudolph Flech ( "Why Johnny Can't Read" ) by name.

But it's clear that Brown is aiming a hefty spear at Flech's revolt of the parent crusade to bring old methods back to the reading class.

Flech, whose book of protest exploded in The Observer and other papers last spring, caused

schools could just like they were a generation ago all of the problems would be solved.

"This obviously is not true. You should expect some improvements in reading methods from one generation to another. Remember the great strides which have been made in transportation, communication, medicine and the development of new fabrics since you were in the elementary school?"

"Would it not be very disappointing if the schools had not made any improvements during that time? But the schools have made improvements."

"Research and experimentation have shown us many new things about how children learn to read and many new ways of teaching children."

"Vast improvements have been made in books and other teaching aids. We are glad the schools are not using the methods of the horse and buggy days."

"If your child is still in the pre-school ages, can you help him to learn to read?"

Yes, Brown says, but be careful. You may hurt him if you don't watch out.

The UNC expert puts much emphasis on "reading readiness." Flech says, "When you get to the subject of 'reading readiness,' you approach the 'holy of holies.'"

Says Brown: "A child who is 'ready' to read is one who is prepared physically, mentally, socially and emotionally for the reading process."

"Many children who enter the first grade today are not yet ready to read. . . The better schools recognize that it is unprofitable, and actually harmful to the child, to teach him to read before he is ready for the experience."

What can the parent of a pre-school child do? Here are some suggestions from Brown:



TAKE AN INTEREST NO BABY TALK DON'T HOUND HIM

5. Don't put the child under pressure to do better by offers of rewards or threats of punishment, not in the way he reads. Perhaps emphasize the things he does well. Be generous in praise of his achievements.

6. When the child reads to you, take an interest in the story and mood.

7. See that the child is not rushed off to school in an unhappy mood.



DR. CARL BROWN

the hassle of the year in public schools with his assertions that new methods of teaching reading are blocking youngsters' reading development.

He recommended that parents teach their children "phonics"—the old, A-B-C method of reading—so Johnny won't grow up a dullard.

In a manuscript on "You, Your Child and Reading," Brown raises a warning finger.

"Unless you understand the methods being used by the teacher (in school) you should do nothing to help the child to read," Brown declares.

"The things you do may be in conflict with the method used in school. Your efforts may be actually harmful rather than helpful."

"If the school uses one method of teaching reading and you use another the child may be quite upset over the resulting confusion."

"He loves you and tries to do what you expect of him. He also feels that his teacher is his friend and he tries to do what she expects of him. A confusion of two methods of learning to read may prevent the child from reading."

Brown takes up the birch rod against those critical of current reading methods. Flech's sweeping indictment charged that teaching of reading in the U. S. was never a problem until education began getting away from the A-B-C's about 25 years ago.

The new methods emphasize recognizing the whole word rather than relying on spelling and pronouncing the individual letters and parts.

Brown defends the new methods. Says he:

"Some parents are irritated because they do not understand the new methods which schools use today. They yearn to return to the 'good old days' when the teachers really knew how to teach."

"Much has been written in recent months about how badly the school is doing its work. The implication is that if the

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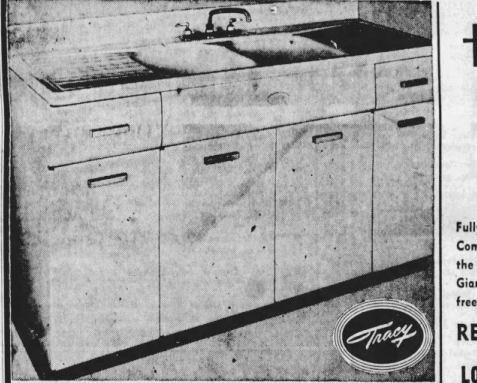
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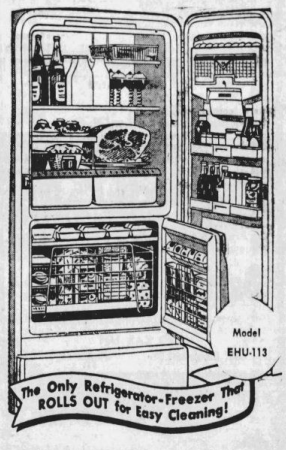
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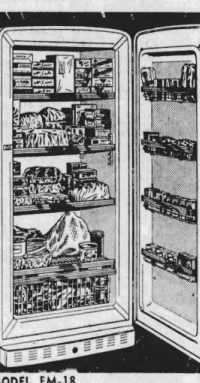


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