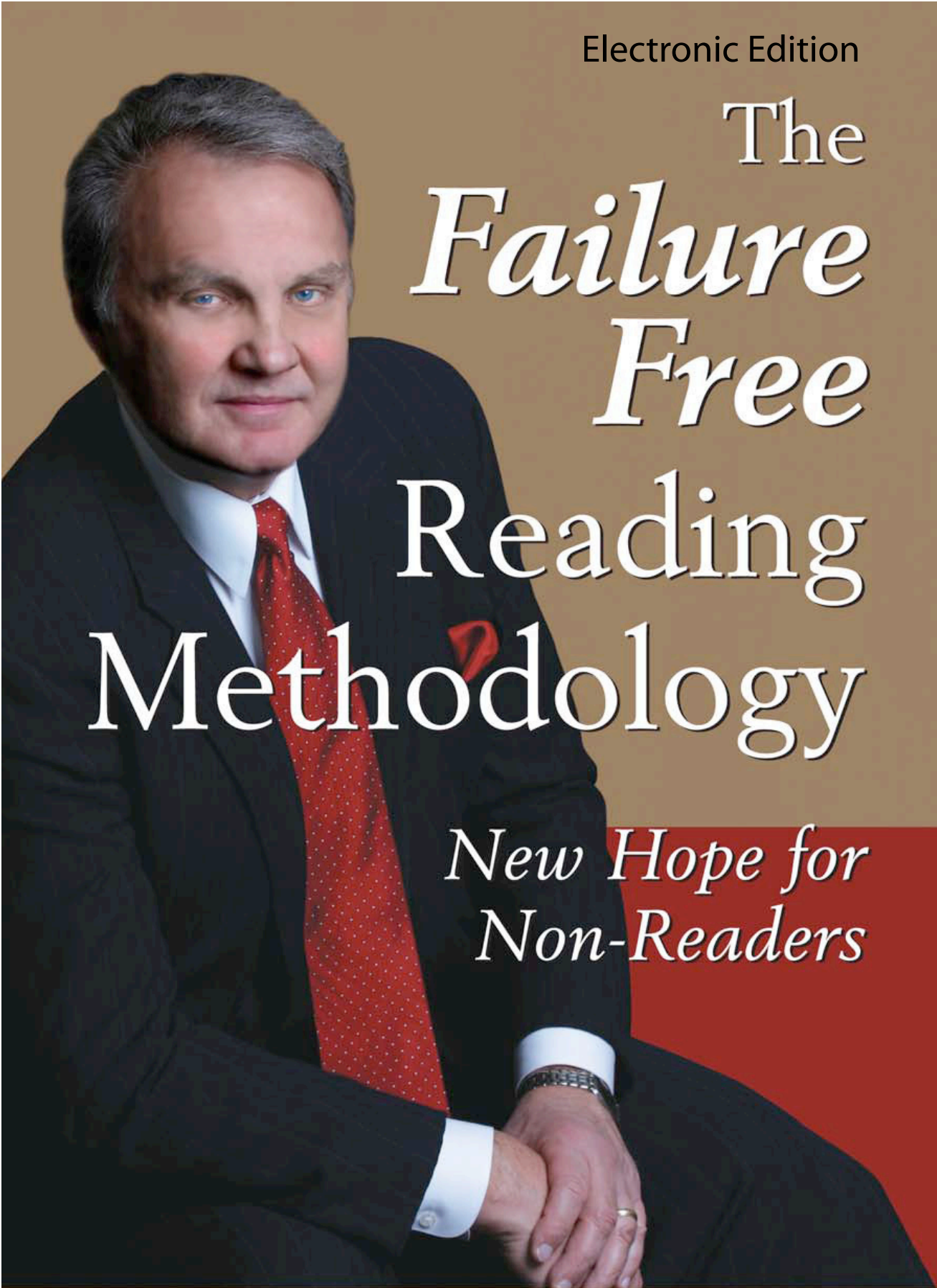


Electronic Edition

A portrait of Dr. Joseph Lockavitch, a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red tie with a small white pattern. He is sitting with his hands clasped in front of him. The background is a solid tan color.

The  
*Failure  
Free*  
Reading  
Methodology

*New Hope for  
Non-Readers*

*Dr. Joseph Lockavitch*

*\*Good for one electronic/printed copy. Do not distribute.*

Dr. Lockavitch has seen it all. Throughout his career he has given reading demonstrations in places that have ranged from the heart of the Mississippi Delta, inner city schools in Detroit and Chicago, maximum-security prisons in South Carolina, and after school programs in Los Angeles, California. He will only do a demonstration under one condition and make only one claim, "I'll only work with your worst students. If you don't see immediate improvement in their reading ability within 30 minutes, I'll walk out the door."

He hasn't walked out yet...

Now thanks to *The Failure Free Reading Methodology: New Hope for your Non-Readers*, you can find out why Dr. Lockavitch hasn't walked. Learn about the struggles these students are facing every day in the classroom and what can be done to help them see immediate results after years of facing nothing but failure.

Dr. Joseph F. Lockavitch, a former classroom teacher, school psychologist, university professor, special education director, and applied researcher, is the author and developer of: The Failure Free Reading Program, *Don't Close the Book on Your Not-Yet Readers*, Joseph's Readers Talking Software for Non-Readers, Verbal Master-An Accelerated Vocabulary Program, and The Test of Lateral Awareness and Directionality.

*continued on inside back flap...*

The  
*Failure*  
*Free*  
Reading  
Methodology

*New Hope for  
Non-Readers*

By  
*Dr. Joseph Lockavitch*

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# Forward

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Here are three indisputable reading facts. Nobody can deny them. These facts have stood the test of time.

1. Students are failing to read.
2. Students will continue to fail to read.
3. One of these students might be yours.

Reading failure in our schools and our society is a major issue. There are over 24 million functional illiterates in the United States. Every year, over 800,000 students drop out of school.

The prisons are at capacity—most with prisoners who cannot read above a third grade level. Businesses are investing billions of dollars in programs to upgrade the literacy skills of their own employees.

Fortunately, given all of this, there is one fact that is more important: reading failure can be treated and prevented.

One of the biggest problems facing parents and teachers today has been the need for a fast acting, easy to use literacy program for non-readers: students and adults who have an independent reading level between 0.0 and 3.0. This deep need is something of which I have first hand knowledge.

During the past 30 years, as a former classroom teacher, special education director, school psychologist, and university professor, I have been involved in the plight of the non-reader. My initial involvement began shortly after I had finished a training session with a group of teachers for learning disabled students. I had just finished a session summarizing the most commonly used remedial reading approaches. When I finished, the participants echoed a theme I had heard many times before, “We appreciate what you have told us and the approaches you mentioned look very good—especially for those students with mild to moderate reading needs,” they said, “but what about the kids who can’t read a lick?” one teacher asked, “What are we to do all day with these non-readers?”

## **A Nagging Question**

The question of what to do with non-readers was one that had also bothered me when I was a special education teacher. I noticed, first hand, a huge difference between the terms “struggling readers” and “non-readers.” While all of the remedial programs had value for “struggling readers” (students as many as four years behind), they simply did not work for a hard-core group of non-readers. I was still meeting students who continually defied conventional instruction. I tried everything I knew and yet, they were still failing miserably; I could not reach them. No matter how hard I tried (and boy, did I try) they still were no better off. And so, I asked myself, “What could be done? What could be done to impact on the lives of these students who are dying on the literacy vine?” Little did I know that I was about to embark on a thirty-year journey.

Thirty years of trying to find a solution to one ongoing problem. Thirty years of trying to rescue the lives of millions of students who are drowning in the classroom. Should I stop? No, I cannot stop when these students actually are growing in numbers. Even worse, the system is creating them every day thanks to the constant arguing, backbiting and a “one size fits all” mentality.

## **Stop the Either/Or Approach**

I began to look at the two basic approaches to the teaching of reading. These two approaches are still dominant today. The more I studied the position taken by the proponents of each philosophy, the more I was reminded of an old TV commercial. The commercial centered on defining the product—what the product really was. Was it a breath mint or a candy mint? The commercial involved two people defending the opposite point of view. One person would scream “It’s a breath mint!” while the other person would scream back “No, you’re wrong, it’s a candy mint!” Both people were absolutely sure they were right and that the other person was wrong. They were at what appeared to be an unsolvable impasse. Finally, at the end of



the commercial, an unseen announcer would state: “Stop, you’re both right! They’re two, two mints in one!” It seems the same holds true today in the teaching of reading, both philosophies are right! Unfortunately, when it comes to the plight of the non-reader, both philosophies are wrong—dead wrong!

Reading is not an either/or approach for our non-readers. Reading is not either phonics or whole language. Reading is much more complicated than that. Reading is an interactive process that involves giving non-readers (regardless of age) simultaneous access to the three instructional elements crucial to reading success. In other words, non-readers, regardless of age, must be in highly repetitious materials, written in a basic sentence structure and containing content that is easy to relate to. Sadly, none of the existing reading approaches utilize materials that control for simultaneous access to these critical elements. So, armed with this knowledge I set out to create a reading methodology that did.

ing. (Remember what you did in our “right to left” reading example.)

For example, students who responded, “The kids were outside playing,” would not be rewarded. Most would be told they were incorrect and to go back and first look at the letters. What are the sounds that go with the letters? Look at the beginning sounds. Look at the vowels. What sounds do they make? What are our rules about these letters and the sounds? Soon, the students only make phonetically correct errors such as, “The bays and grils were outslide paying in the year.” While we can figure out how they were able to come up with what they did (concentrating too much on the letters and sounds) their response makes absolutely no sense.

## **PD Students**

While the danger of Acquired Hyperlexia is real and is a much overlooked, there is an even greater danger associated with teaching phonics to many non-readers. It has to do with the first characteristic associated with non-readers—PD students.

PD stands for the phrase “phonetically deaf.” What do you mean??? Are you telling me that phonics is bad?? I thought phonics was the answer to all of our reading woes. Isn’t that what their research says? Isn’t the lack of phonics a primary factor in the current mess we are in? Well, before I answer that, let me remind you about what I first said about the three key reading research facts. Remember those facts? All reading programs work; so no, I’m not saying phonics is bad. But, it’s not for all students (and yes, I am saying phonics is not appropriate for many). I am not here to attack phonics. Instead, I am going to put it in its proper perspective.

Here is the plain truth. There are some students (adults as well) who will never learn to read by using phonics. They were born with a “tin ear” for sounds. Like it or not, you could dedicate the next 120 years of your professional life trying to teach letter sounds and at the end of this time, they still wouldn’t get it. I know this first hand, because I am “phonetically deaf.”

### *The Plight of the Phonetically Deaf*

Let me make one key point here. I am not deaf. I hear great. I don’t have a sensory impairment. I do not suffer from any hearing loss. I can pass any hearing acuity test. I just don’t make sense out of many letter sounds. I have a perceptual impairment. I don’t know why. Frankly, I don’t care. It’s not a

big deal. I'm a very poor speller. That's why I have spell checker. I can recognize a misspelled word by appearance and I can use a dictionary better than most. Let me elaborate.

I barely manage to get by in the world of letter sounds and there are times when this condition really rears its ugly head. Let me give you an example of how my inability to discriminate certain letter blends disrupts my life.

I have two good friends. One is named Craig and the other Greg. I have known them for decades and yet, I am constantly calling Craig, Greg and Greg, Craig. It drives my wife crazy.

"Why do you do this?" my wife asks.

"I just can't make the distinction," I reply. And I can't. In fact, I have to mentally visualize their names and associate them with key words to make the oral distinction. I simply don't hear the distinction. Believe me; I've tried to hear the distinction over the past two decades!

In other words, I have to see in my mind the "Cr" in Craig and associate it with the "Cr" I see in the word creek. Then I have to say both words aloud in order to distinguish between Craig and Greg. Craig is the word I see that starts with the "cr" in creek. This is a lot of work. It's not easy.

My reading comprehension scores are high. I have a Doctorate in Education, written close to a dozen published journal articles, developed a complete reading intervention series, and authored dozens of student booklets and this book as well.

## *The Generational Lottery*

I didn't need phonics to learn to read. So, don't cry for me. I was lucky. I was a winner in Reading's Generational Lottery. I was born when "sight," visual or in more common terms—"Dick and Jane" was in and phonics was out. Quite frankly, this saved my life. But you sure can cry for the millions of school age PD students who are being brutalized daily by this generation's dogmatic "phonics only" approach. These Phonetically Deaf students are failing miserably. These PD students are beating themselves up internally. They think they're at fault. They need help now.

"How can you say this?" you might ask me. Who gives me the right to attack phonics like that? How can I stand there and defy the abundant amount of research supporting phonemic awareness, phonics and phonics based remedial intervention? Didn't I read the National Reading Panel Report? Haven't I read the literature written by the experts?

Yes, I did read the report and the articles. In fact, this is one of the main reasons why I feel fully confident in taking my stance. Frankly, I only wish key decision makers had read the research as well. If they did, they might be amazed at the number of times terms such as “treatment resisters” and “non-responders” are included in almost every review of the literature.

Researchers over the past two decades have recognized students with a core deficit in phonological processes and it is no small number. Researchers, Stephanie Al Otaiba of Florida State University and Douglas Fuchs of Vanderbilt University wrote in their article, *Characteristics of Children Who Are Unresponsive to Early Literacy Intervention: A Review of the Literature* (2002), that up to 30% of regular education and 50% of special education students fail when phonics are used! These students have difficulty processing letter sounds. This group currently makes up the largest number of at-risk and severely reading disabled students. While there is no controversy that PD students exist, there is considerable disagreement over how to treat them.

## *Two Schools of Thought*

Basically, there are two schools of thought: remedial or compensatory.

Remedial proponents attempt to eliminate phonological deficits by intensive intervention. Remedial proponents believe that students must identify and apply the relationship between sounds and letters if they are ever going to learn to read. Remedial proponents cannot fathom a world in which students can learn to read without first learning sounds. Their primary goal is to remediate this deficit. Their primary argument for teaching sounds is that there are only 44 English sounds represented by 26 letters.

Remedial proponents believe that it is impossible to memorize the millions of words contained in the English language. To them, phonic rules provide a systematic method to decode practically every word they will contact. To these proponents, learning the phonic rules provides the most logical approach to attack unknown words.

Remediation is currently the prevalent educational approach used in our schools today. Billions of dollars are being spent on remedial methods and materials designed to correct phonological deficits. Remedial proponents cite as evidence the most recent research published by the National Reading Panel and the National Research Council.

Now hold on just a minute! Didn't you just cite the very same research as the basis for your argument against remediation? Are you losing your mind? What gives?

Well, yes. You are correct. Let me explain. The systematic teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness (a fancy name for the 44 different sounds) is the heart and soul of 40% of the current federal mandate of scientifically validated reading research programs. Schools are being mandated to include training in phonemic awareness and systematic phonics in addition to vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. However, there is a problem with the remedial model; it just doesn't work for everyone!

### *Students Who Defy Intensive Phonic Remediation*

As I mentioned, there is a significant number of students who defy intensive phonological and phonetic remediation. Like me, they have a dysfunctional "letter to sound" route. The most recent research by the National Reading Panel confirms this. The effects of phonics and phonological awareness (PA) training appears to have little impact past K—1st grade! 67% of the PA and Phonics effectiveness studies showed no meaningful improvement in Oral Reading (effect size < .3). Even worse, phonics instruction had no impact on the reading performance of low-achieving readers in grades 2-6 (effect size = .15). Systematic phonics did not improve spelling in grades 2-6 (effect size = .009) and had no impact on passage comprehension in grades 2-6 (effect size = .12).

In addition, the National Reading Panel found that one out of every six studies measuring the efficacy of systematic phonics instruction (how good it works) actually produced negative results in reading comprehension. Finally, it appears that there is a 20-hour incubation period for phonic effectiveness. More instructional time does not improve the phonemic awareness of "phonetically deaf" students. They simply do not improve much, even if they receive hundreds and hundreds of hours of more phonics.

The notion of students who can't hear sounds and subsequently cannot learn to read using phonics is not new. Special educators have been familiar with this idea for decades as demonstrated in the work of Helmer K. Myklebust in the sixties. Mykelbust, noted researcher, author, and head of the Institute for Language Disorders at Northwestern University, listed in his research classic, *Learning Disabilities Educational Principles and Practices* (1967), the following characteristics of students with what he called auditory dyslexia:

Inability to relate letters to sounds

Can't "hear" similarities in initial and final sounds ~ in words

Short vowels one of their greatest difficulties  
Can recognize “pin” “pen” in context but not in ~ isolation  
Can’t recognize a rhyme or think of words that ~ rhyme  
Can’t break words into individual syllables or sounds  
Can’t combine the sounds to form a whole word  
Can’t learn to read by a phonic or elemental approach

Why can’t they learn to read using a phonetic approach? Because they are, what I have already called, “phonetically deaf.” “Phonetically deaf” students don’t hear the sounds or can’t comprehend the relationship to sounds and letters regardless of age or length of treatment. In other words, phonics “ain’t ever gonna be their thing.”

Therefore, the bad news is that there are large numbers of students who will not learn to read using phonics. Dr. Joe Torgeson of Florida State University, cited in, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, calls this group “treatment resisters.” “Up to 25% of at-risk children who receive training in phonological awareness, ‘gain little insight in the structure of spoken words, much less into reading by the end of training’ (Torgesen et al., 1997).” Dr. Torgeson concluded by stating that another reading alternative is needed.

As I previously mentioned, Otaiba and Fuchs (2004), fully agree with Torgeson when they state, “...few researchers have suggested that either phonological awareness training or beginning decoding instruction is a silver-bullet solution that prevents reading difficulties in all children. Indeed, investigators have reported that as many as 30% of children who are at-risk for reading difficulties and as many as 50% of children who have special needs may not benefit from generally effective phonological and decoding instruction.” (Page 1). They cite twenty-three different phonological and decoding intervention studies that document the existence of significant numbers of “treatment resisters” in each study.

## *The Good News*

However, there is good news. Whether they are called “Treatment Resisters” or “Phonetically Deaf,” these students can learn to read utilizing compensatory methods such as Failure Free Reading. In most cases, they can have an immediate and successful reading experience.

Compensatory proponents believe in teaching to the students’ strengths. For example, the obvious alternative to help a student with poor phonics would be a “sight based” reading approach. While researchers like

**8 Million** students in grades 4-12 cannot comprehend grade level reading material.

**440 Thousand** students sitting in American classrooms K-12 have a total reading vocabulary of less than fifty words.

**3 Thousand** students drop out of school each day.

**40 Percent** of African-American and Latino students will not graduate on time or with a regular high school diploma.

**25 Times** the likelihood that non-readers and high school students testing below the twentieth percentile will drop out of school.

Every day students across the country are being labeled and put into “special” programs. The gap between those students and their peers reading at grade level simply continues to grow until the gap seems too large to overcome. Often these students begin acting out in class because they have learned that it is better to go one on one with the principal versus being embarrassed and frustrated in front of their peers.

It is not the fault of the student, teacher, or parent. We must stop looking for the reason to justify the failure and find a way to overcome it. Simply labeling students Dyslexic, Learning Disabled, and Autistic will not offer them a reading solution. These students do not need remediation; they need an accelerated compensatory approach to mastering language and reading skills.

Dr. Joe Lockavitch has been in the trenches with non-readers, their families, and their teachers for over thirty years. Students in the bottom reading percentiles (0-15<sup>th</sup> %) are slipping through the cracks right before our eyes.

Based on his experiences in the classroom with non-readers, Dr. Lockavitch (former college professor, school psychologist, special education director) researched and developed a new reading methodology targeting non-readers of all ages. Highly structured, repetitious, and non-phonetic, The Failure Free Reading Methodology is an accelerated language program designed to give students, parents, and teachers the hope and the results they deserve.

\$27.95 U.S.

