

# LETTERS

## "Let's Teach The Kids to Read!"

To the Editor:

I read with special interest your article in ARRI 6/3, since our son Philip is the "Jimmy" of the *Reading Teacher* 1965 article.

We have been skeptical about F/C because we have not seen nor heard of any adequate scientific explanation. Nonetheless, we have tried it. Philip will facilitate with almost anyone, including me . . . I can vouch for the fact that he forcefully pulls me to the letters he wishes, and he gives correct answers when I don't know the answers and can check it later.

I am sure this [success with F/C] would not have been possible without his having been taught to read by Frank Hewitt.

Helen Arens  
Los Angeles, CA

To the Editor:

The ability to read may still be present without the ability to bring it to the attention of others. In turn the ability to read depends on exposure to reading materials whether that is intended or not. In my case the fact that I absorbed shape totally on a glance meant that I could read without that being apparent. I was in word recognition and simple reading programs for ten years before I was thought to have more than word recognition.

The facilitation is only possible in typing with some literacy, but the same touch is effective in releasing seen language symbols like pictures and overcoming compulsive attraction at a certain image.

Language has to come before either form of visual language and that is the crux of the problem.

If we have language at variance with our actions we also to some extent understand our predicament and in the long run the actual importance of what we are doing through DEAL just has to make a new view of people like me.

This has made a big difference to my life.

Lucy Blackman  
Australia

**Editor's Note: Lucy Blackman is a non-speaking Australian autistic college student who now types independently.**

To the Editor:

In your recent editorial you expressed disbelief that young children who had never been taught to read were literate. (*Not true!*—Ed.) I too found it incomprehensible. Shortly before my son's fourth birthday, we decided to experiment with F/C. My son is non-verbal and "low functioning."

We first decided to see if he could recognize simple words. We laid out several flash cards and asked him to touch the one that said "cat." We were shocked and elated when he correctly identified about ten cards in a row. This was done with no physical contact whatsoever. We then progressed to asking cognitive questions, i.e., which one is

a color, and giving him three words on flashcards to choose from. Again he was able to get over 90% accuracy . . .

For this reason, please do not discourage parents of children who have never been taught to read from trying F/C. I was certain my son did not understand a word I said, much less that he was able to read. My son has proven that he does understand, even though his functioning level is quite low.

Finally, let me say that my experience with F/C has been mixed. With one facilitator, my son is consistently able to convey information that only he and I know. With another, I feel that the thoughts are not my son's. I have been shown enough "proof" that I am sure my son is communicating through F/C. As with any medium, however, there is occasion for abuse.

Sandra Bosso Pardo  
Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

**Editor's Note: My intent was not to discourage parents of children who have never been taught to read from trying F/C, but rather to encourage them to make sure their children could read before trying F/C, lest they wrongly conclude that the child cannot communicate when his real problem is that he cannot read. My other intent was to prevent parents from being persecuted for unwarranted allegations of abuse, made through F/C (see following letter). In all of the court cases heard thus far, it was concluded that the child's ability to communicate had been grossly overestimated.**

### Angry at F/C

To the Editor:

Re your article, "F/C: courts say no," I gleefully read that some of the parents who were wrongfully accused of abuse will take legal action against "...those who have so cavalierly forced an invalid and untested treatment upon a community of individuals so vulnerable to manipulation." I hope they haul [Douglas Biklen] and his brainwashed, brainwashing followers into court....

The families of autistic children have complicated and difficult lives. These children publicly humiliate their parents by engaging in bizarre behaviors...yet, most parents do their best to cope. They do not punish, nor do they abuse. The parents are the ones who receive abuse—from school systems, from the day to day exhausting routine of caring for an unresponsive, often uncontrollable child, and from Biklen.

My husband and I had a truly horrible experience as a result of the use of facilitated communication. Our daughter had been using it in school for several months. The facilitator determined that she had been abused by us and her siblings. None of this was true, but F/C said it was. Therefore, we were investigated and had to seek expensive, humiliating legal counsel. The accusation was proven false. We are still paying the legal fees, and the emotional turmoil has not ended. Our younger children are receiving psychological counseling because of the experience. I shudder when friends express interest in F/C....I know they are setting them-

selves up for tragedy. [Biklen] has caused needless suffering to countless families.

An angry parent

### More success with DMG, B6

To the Editor:

In December 1991 my husband and I [began giving our son] DMG. We had a "nothing left to lose" attitude. Matt was four years and non-verbal for the most part.

Two to three weeks [after starting DMG] he began to babble, then use jargon. Two months later, he began to make many word attempts. By June 1992 he was speaking true words. Today, he speaks well over 200 words. He puts together about 50 or so two-word phrases. He can write his alphabet, upper and lower case, and his numbers 0-30, and knows the quantity of numbers 1-10. He can spell his full name and his address, and many other words, and can draw simple pictures and is toilet trained.

When I tell people about DMG, they ask, "do you really think the DMG did all of this?" I reply that I think it really helped. It's cheap, very easy to get and administer, and is a [nutrient] that can't hurt. It may not work with your child, but it's worth trying.

A New York Mother

To the Editor:

My son, though not autistic, has been diagnosed by an audiologist as having hypersensitive hearing. Only certain tones and frequencies bother him; the suddenness of noise also seems to contribute to his degree of reaction and sensitivity. Therefore, we're not sure if the hypersensitive hearing is the predominant cause of his hyperactivity and behavior problems. I just know that since taking B6 and magnesium, he appears to control his reaction to noise much better than before. His kindergarten teacher was absolutely amazed at the difference in him! She hadn't known he was on the vitamins until I had phased him off, and then after he re-started them, she was so surprised at the difference they made.

Pam Parsley  
Manchester, TN

### Treating Periodic Aggression

In ARRI 6/3 we described an autistic man who became aggressive every seven days, and asked for suggestions from readers as to the cause and treatment for periodic aggression.

Stephen G. Hayes, M.D., of Rosemead, CA, wrote to suggest the problem might be a symptom of rapid-cycling bipolar disorder, related to psychomotor epilepsy.

Lawrence J. Kotkas, M.D., of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, wrote to suggest it might be the result of a thyroid problem (and also suggested that B6 and magnesium be given).

Our thanks to Drs. Hayes and Kotkas. For copies of their letters, which contain information on diagnosis and treatment of periodic aggression, send ARI an SASE marked "aggression."