

FAMILY TIMES

A Home-school Newsletter for New Testament Christians
General Editors: Bev & Dave Hewitt, Karen & Dave Pratte
Curricula review editor: Wayne Walker
7846 St. Joe Rd., Ft. Wayne, IN 46835



All subs run by school year. Subs sent after September receive back issues. Subscriptions are: 3 years by email for \$6.
3 years by regular mail, \$12. 1 year by regular mail, \$5 (USA only).

Send e-mail to truth@gospelway.com, reviews to wswalker310@juno.com
Web site: www.gospelway.com/familytimes/

Send change of mailing address to 7846 St. Joe Rd., Ft. Wayne, IN – 46835.
To change your address for e-mail subs go to www.gospelway.com/change.htm

September-November, 2003

Family Times Curricula Reviews Available Soon!

FREE TO FAMILY TIMES SUBSCRIBERS!

Finally, it's about to happen! After years of collecting reviews of home-school materials from faithful Christians, we are about to make this information available at a single source (we hope). And not only are we hoping to make these reviews available, we plan to offer them free to subscribers to *Family Times*!

The plan is to put all the reviews together as a single file on the *Family Times* web site, but it can only be accessed by those who know a special access code. We will make this access code available free to all *Family Times* subscribers. Alternatively, anyone can have access to the material by sending \$5 to *Family Times*, and we will email them the access code. The material will be copyrighted, of course, so we will require all who receive the code on their honor to not share the code with others.

These are reviews that have been written over the years by members of non-institutional churches of Christ. This means home-schooled materials are reviewed from the unique perspective of those of you who subscribe to *Family Times*. We plan to include reviews of most major curricula available to home schoolers and of individual subject curricula and textbooks.

Furthermore, we intend to add new reviews from time to time as they are submitted to us. Everyone who has the access code will be able to visit the web site and download new reviews anytime they want. However, the access code will change at the beginning of each new school year, so people who have the code will only be able to use it for the remainder of the current school year. *Family Times* subscribers, however, will be told the new code each year. So if you subscribe to *Family Times* for 3 years by email for \$6, you not only get 3 years of *Family Times*, you also have 3 years to access the reviews!

Those who subscribe to *Family Times* for one year by regular mail will have only the remainder of one school year to access the reviews. And they will still have to access the material on the web site (they will **not** receive the material in printed form). If they do not have web access at home, they can access it from a friend's home or the library, etc.

The benefits to *Family Times* subscribers are obvious. We hope this encourages more people to subscribe to *Family Times*, and especially to subscribe by email, since email subs are much easier for us to process and mail.

We make no definite promise as to when this will be online, but we hope to have it available within a few months, surely before the current school year is over, Lord willing.

Tell all your friends!

Home schoolers and 4-H

by Stephanie Farmer

If there is any organization I would recommend a home schooler to join, it would be 4-H! A few years ago I started looking for something to enhance our school and came across 4-H. I used to think that it was just baking and sewing, but I have learned it is much, much more than that! Each year, 4-H puts out a booklet of events that seems to be at least 25 pages long. There are 4-H events like rocketry, photography, government, plants, livestock, sewing, cooking, etc. In all there are over "110 different program areas" available. See <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu/aboutus/main.asp?subid=39&catid=4> for a look.

Through 4-H our boys can enter state and county events and fairs. We deal mainly in livestock (sheep and poultry), but through these shows our boys have gleaned much, much more than I could do in a classroom, and they are learning from someone other than just me. They have learned how to give a speech, how to write project stories, how to keep financial records, art (by entering a poster contest), how to deal with the public, how to read aerial photographs, and tons of other skills. The really great thing about all this is that instead of *me* trying to grade them on their speeches, essays, art, etc., someone else does it! They learn economics with their record books (I understand there are record books with the plant and other contests too, depending upon the show), and they learn about the politics of the real world as a sideline.

4-H also offers the children free classes on how to make a speech, poster, and other things. Their 4-H leader taught them how to do record books and has the kids practice their speeches with gentle critiques during their meetings, before a contest.

The main thing about 4-H is the leader and choosing a group. First talk to your family and feel out their interests. Our family [interest] is animals, so we found a group that mainly deals with that. In our county there are different groups that tend to deal in other areas like government, dogs, archery, sewing, etc. Find a group that meets your family's interests, then when you prepare for a contest, that leader is knowledgeable in that area and can help you.

Visit a meeting and make sure you like the leader and the kids. 4-H is family oriented. The leaders are normally moms like us. Some are home-school moms, and some are not. Our leader is not, but she is totally awesome! Last year, she singled out our oldest son and told him he was capable of making Champion Youth in Sheep at the State Fair, a contest that is 90% academic. At every meeting she quietly took him aside and told him he could do it. The Lord blessed him and he did! He later told me he worked hard to win, because she had faith in him. She gave him a goal and then encouraged him along. When our youngest son was sad that he got 7th place in sheep showmanship, she told him to keep working at it, that he could do it. She even practiced with my kids one day. Two shows later, as a blessing from God he won Champion Showman in sheep at the Strawberry Festival. So, a good leader is *very* important.

As your children get older, they can also enter many different kinds of contests for college scholarships.

If you are unable to find a 4-H group in your area, you can start one of your own. Just go to the 4-H website for information. Originally all the ones in our area were full and 4-H suggested I start one up. But I patiently waited for an opening, as I wanted my kids to have another teacher besides me, and I wanted a teacher that knew *more* than I do about livestock, so they could keep learning. Oh, I still have to help them with all their projects, but a good leader is a great source of information and encouragement.

If you have a child that has difficulty reading, that is not a problem! By law they can do the same things as everyone else. Just make sure you alert someone that your child needs help and they will set up a mentor. The first time they did this for our youngest son, he came out beaming from a written contest and said, "I can do what the other kids can!" He also learned why reading and writing is so important.

When you join 4-H, make sure you ask for the booklet I mentioned earlier and plow through it. 4-H is rather informal, so if you see an event you are interested in, but the "group" is not, your kids can still enter! For instance, our group is mainly livestock, but our youngest wanted to enter a wildlife contest. I told our leader, who said it was fine with her if we entered, but her hands were full, so it would be my responsibility. I then put together a small group with our boys and one girl (no one else was interested), and we competed under our chapter name.

The time to sign up is mainly August through October as many fair entry forms require you to be in 4-H or FFA several months ahead of time. Well, I hope you find a good group and enjoy it as much as we do!

Internet Filtering Services: A Survey

The purpose of this survey was to evaluate Internet filtering services. We simply asked home schoolers for their evaluations of any Internet filter they have used. Here are the questions we asked, in order. Following the questions, we will simply list without editorial comment the responses we received.

THE QUESTIONS

- 1) What is the name of the filtering device or system you used? _____
- 2) Is this filtering system: _____ Part of your Internet Service Provider, or _____ separate software, _____ other (please describe) _____.
- 3) How much did/does it cost? _____ - per month; _____ - one time fee; _____ - included in monthly ISP fee; _____ - other
- 4) What sources does it filter (indicate all that apply)? _____ - web sites; _____ - email; _____ - chatting/chat rooms; _____ - newsgroups; _____ - other
- 5) What content does it filter? _____ - pornographic pictures; _____ - foul language; _____ - gambling sites; _____ - suggestive language; _____ - violence; _____ - other (please describe) _____ (Add comments if you wish): _____
- 6) How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the system? I.e., on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective), how well does the system remove objectionable material? _____ (Add comments if you wish): _____
- 7) How much work is required by parents/subscribers to install and/or maintain the filtering service? I.e., on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? _____ (Add comments if you wish): _____
- 8) Would you recommend this system to other parents? I.e., on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? _____ (Add comments if you wish): _____
- 9) What other comments do you have to help others evaluate whether or not they might want to use this system? _____

THE RESPONSES

America Online (AOL)

- 1) What is the name of the filtering system? AOL
- 2) Is this filtering system: X Part of your Internet Service Provider.
- 3) How much did/does it cost? \$23.80 (?) - per month
- 4) What sources does it filter (indicate all that apply)? X - web sites; X - email; X - chatting/chat rooms; X - newsgroups
- 5) What content does it filter? X - pornographic pictures; X - foul language; ? - gambling sites; X - suggestive language; X - violence
- 6) How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the system on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective)? 5
- 7) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? 1
- 8) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? 5
- 9) Other comments: This system filters so well that our younger children can't receive e-cards from other family members. The card sites are not accessible (they send them to my address instead.) The different levels of control for different age groups works well for all the age levels we have at home. Our college student has complete access, so she can do research; our middle daughters have limited access; while our ten-year-old has restricted access.

American Family Association

1. American Family Association filter
2. Separate, I believe goes the service provider
3. Approx. \$20 per month
4. Web sites, not e-mail, not sure about newsrooms, chat rooms, etc.
5. I think all objectionable material, language, images

6. I think very effective. We've only had occasional problems with spam e-mails, but we've never had difficulty while on the Internet (but we do not do a lot of random searching. We usually know where we are going) - 5

7. No work

8. 5

9. Works for us. My personal feeling is that outside filters are safest and provide the best protection against "suspected" abuses by outsiders who know you use the internet and who know what can be accessed. The percent of "Christian" men who use the internet to access pornography is high (around 50% in some reports I've seen). In my opinion, every Christian man needs to have an outside filter to avoid temptation and to preserve reputation - in addition to the very important motivation of protecting his family against inappropriate and spiritually damaging material.

Christian-Net

1) What is the name of the filtering system? Christian-Net

2) This company offers this as part of your internet service or you can get it to go with your own internet provider, we have chosen it to go with our current provider

I copied this info from the web site: With our exclusive client/server filtering technology, you install a small piece of software onto your Windows-based PC that communicates with our constantly-updated filtering server. Every time you access a web site, your computer talks to the filtering server, which will either allow or deny the viewing of any web page. With Christian-Net's filtering service you can choose the way you want your Internet to be filtered. You can define different profiles for each person in your family with different filtering levels. For example, you can give your 8-year-old child the most restrictive access to disable chat and communication with others; while you may want to only block pornographic sites for yourself. It's all your choice, and if you need to access a site that is blocked, you can override the filter with your administrator password. (You can also request that the override option be disabled by e-mailing us.)

3) How much did/does it cost? You can pay 4.95 per month or 49.95 for a year for the service that goes with your own provider.

4) What sources does it filter? yes - web sites; yes - email; although it does not keep spam out. We changed to a internet provider that would do this; yes - chatting/chat rooms; yes- newsgroups

5) What content does it filter? It filters all of these or only some of these depending on what you want: pornographic pictures; foul language; gambling sites; suggestive language; violence

6) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective), how well does the system remove objectionable material? 5__ We are very pleased with this service!

7) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? 1 very easy

8) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? 5. We have had others and this is our favorite.

You can visit www.christian-net.com to learn more.

Content Barrier

1) What is the name of the filtering system? Content Barrier

2) Is this filtering system: separate software

3) How much did/does it cost? One time fee about \$50

4) What sources does it filter? All I wish to select

5) What content does it filter? All I wish to select

6) How satisfied are you with the effectiveness of the system? 4

7) How much work is required? 1 - Not hard at all.

8) Would you recommend this system to other parents? 5 - Yes

9) It seems to be working fine, although I have just begun using it.

Cyber-Sitter

1) What is the name of the filtering system? Cyber Sitter

2) Is this filtering system: X separate software

3) How much did/does it cost? 39.95 - one time fee

- 4) What sources does it filter? - web sites; - email; - chatting/chat rooms; _____ - newsgroups; - other
- 5) What content does it filter? - pornographic pictures; - foul language; - gambling sites; _____ - suggestive language; - violence; - other _drugs, racial, cults_. It really works well, completely blocks screen, never see anything
- 6) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective), how well does the system remove objectionable material? 5
- 7) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? 1 Set and forget
- 8) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? 5
- 9) Extremely good system with good price, I use a hardware version in my fire wall at work at \$500/yr and this Cybersitter works better_

Internet 4 Families

- 1) What is the name of the filtering system? Internet 4 Families
- 2) Is this filtering system: Part of your Internet Service Provider
- 3) How much did/does it cost? 21.95 - included in monthly ISP fee
- 4) What sources does it filter? - web sites; - email. I've never gone to a chat room, nor been involved with newsgroups; and I really don't know if it filters e-mail; although we've never gotten any obscene e-mail.
- 5) What content does it filter? - pornographic pictures. I have found at least one instance in which it didn't block foul language, where it was part of the text in an e-mail posted on a website.
- 6) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective), how well does the system remove objectionable material? 4 I have found that it is very effective with the vast majority of things that one might come across accidentally; however, as with nearly anything, if one is dedicated to overcoming the system I would suspect that one could find something. One feature I do like is that it will filter portions of websites as well, so that some ads that are objectionable are blanked out.
- 7) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? 1
- 8) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? 4
- 9) Although their technical support has not been helpful at times (I don't believe that it is an in-house tech support group), their customer service is great. Fortunately, it is rare that one needs tech support.

S4F

- 1) What is the name of the filtering system? S4F <http://s4f.com/home/filterpak/index.asp>
- 2) Is this filtering system: other - Server Side Software
- 3) How much did/does it cost? \$49.95/yr
- 4) What sources does it filter (indicate all that apply)? - web sites; - email; - chatting/chat rooms; - newsgroups;
- 5) What content does it filter? - pornographic pictures; - foul language; - gambling sites; _____ - suggestive language; - violence;
- 6) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective), how well does the system remove objectionable material? 4
- 7) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? 1
- 8) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? 5

WeBlocker

- 1) What is the name of the filtering system WeBlocker
- 2) Is this filtering system: [separate software] downloaded off internet
- 3) How much did/does it cost? FREE
- 4) What sources does it filter (indicate all that apply)? - web sites

5) What content does it filter? X - pornographic pictures; X - foul language; X - gambling sites; X - suggestive language; X - violence;

6) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the most effective), how well does the system remove objectionable material? 5

7) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being a lot of work), how hard is it to install the system and keep it working? 1 Every time you connect to internet, it asks if you want to update websites you've blocked.

8) On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being the highest satisfaction), how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the system and recommend it to others? 5

Inexpensive Phonics 101

by Wayne S. Walker

One of the biggest debates in elementary education for the past fifty years or so has been called “the language wars.” For many years, the primary method of teaching children how to read involved the use of “phonics,” or learning the sounds of letters and using them to sound out words. This resulted in an extremely literate population. However, in the early twentieth century a new method, called “look-say” or now referred to as “whole language,” was developed. It is claimed that there is a difference between “look-say” developed around 1930 and the more modern “whole language,” and while that may technically be true, the fact is that “whole language” is derived from the “look-say” concept. Based on the idea that children learn how to talk just by hearing adults talk, it was decided that children could learn to read just by starting to read through a process of learning most words by sight and guessing at words according to context clues.

Statistics can be and have been adduced by each side to show that its way is better (someone has said that figures do not lie, but liars sure do figure!), so statistics alone probably cannot prove whether one way is better than the other. It is true that many children have learned to read by whole language instruction. Of course, some children have learned to read by just being given a book and told to read it. And it is true that other children have had difficulty reading even after intensive phonics instruction. However, it is interesting to me that this nation had almost no literacy problem when phonics was the standard method of reading instruction; but after the 1960's, when whole-language instruction became almost universal, books had to be written to explain “Why Johnny Can't Read,” even when he had graduated from high school!

The McGraw-Hill Parent Newsletter, March/April, 2003 (Vol. 5, No. 2), edited by Tracey Dils, in an article “Phonics-Based or Whole-Language Teaching,” noted first, “According to The Great Debate Revisited” (*The Atlantic Monthly*, December 1994), 20% of Americans age sixteen and older are considered functionally illiterate — unable to use print to perform essential tasks.” Then, after discussing both phonics and whole language, the article continued, “Emerging research has cast doubt on the whole-language concept with little scientific results to confirm the theories. On the other hand, valid reading research has been conducted by numerous organizations including Harvard University, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Academy of Education” demonstrating that “a solid knowledge of phonics makes word recognition automatic, allowing the reader to concentrate on the meaning (comprehension)” and that “good readers understand alphabetic letters and their speech sounds and how they combine to form words.”

As home schooling parents, we want our children to learn how to read and read well. If we do not teach them anything else, by teaching them how to read, we open up all kinds of doors for them to be able to develop a lifestyle and lifetime of learning for themselves. Experience strongly suggests that a good phonics approach is the best way to accomplish this aim. Those who prefer to follow a complete curriculum — such as A Beka, Bob Jones, School of Tomorrow's Accelerated Christian Education, Mott Media's Classic Curriculum, Rod and Staff, Alpha Omega, etc. — will find that most of them have a phonics program included. However, for those who take a more eclectic approach and wish to develop their own curricula, there are many phonics programs and supplements available. Hooked on Phonics is probably the most popular. I have heard Frontline Phonics advertised on radio and seen The Phonics Game advertised on television. Jump Start Phonics is another well-known name.

Home schooling catalogues and bookstores sell all kinds of phonics programs — Teach Your Child to Read in 100 Easy Lessons by Engelmann, Haddox, and Bruner; Explode the Code Phonics Workbooks and Primers; Saxon Phonics from the makers of Saxon Math; Alphaphonics by Sam Blumenfeld; Turbo-

Reader by Phyllis Schlafly; TATRAS; and a host of others. This raises a question. Suppose the whole-language advocates are correct about the negative effects of phonics. Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer in *The Well Trained Mind* note that “many parents have been told by a reading teacher that phonics will somehow ‘ruin’ their child’s reading skills.” If that is true, why are there are so many phonics programs available? Some of these are identified as “intensive phonics” while others are called “fake phonics” or “incidental phonics” by many phonics promoters. Some of them are “vertical” and others are “horizontal” (if you want to know more about the difference between these two, you will have to go elsewhere). Some are rather inexpensive, but others are quite costly.

It is not my intent in this article to survey and review all or even a large number of the phonics programs available. I cannot say anything personally for or against any of them, other than the one that we used, which is the subject of the rest of this article. All of them undoubtedly have some advantages and some disadvantages. Many children, I am sure, have learned to read using each one of them, whereas other parents have probably tried the very same program and had problems with it. However, I do have experience with a relatively inexpensive phonic program by which I taught both of our boys to read and hence think is quite good.

Several years ago, before we actually started the formal part of our home schooling, we were visiting some friends who home schooled their children. Knowing that we were planning to home school as well, they offered to sell us some of the materials that they had used and no longer needed. One of them was a set of books called Professor Phonics, which I think they had purchased used from a “Christian School.” I had never heard of it, but it sounded good and they were offering the whole set for \$5.00, so we bought it. The set consisted of an intensive, comprehensive phonics book and reader, a manual of instructions, a spelling and reading word list, and a companion advanced reader entitled *A Sound Track to Reading*, all written by Monica Foltzer, M.Ed., and published by the St. Ursula Academy of Cincinnati, OH.

If my memory serves me correctly, the program was developed primarily to teach phonics to older children who had not learned to read well using other methods. When we began the formal part of our home schooling, we decided to join an academy which provided both materials and support. However, at the time our older son Mark was to start “first grade” (public school opening day in our district when he was age six as determined by Ohio law), we had a little trouble coming up with the money. As a result, the materials from the academy were late in arriving. Since I already had the Professor Phonics, I decided to start with it and am glad that I did. I really did not care as much for the program that the academy sent and think that Mark had a much better basis for reading from the Professor Phonics than with the other. I have also used it for our younger son Jeremy with similar result.

To provide a little extra practice on the different sounds, I also used *A Handbook for Reading*, published by A Beka, also called *The New Blue-Backed Speller* because it is based on Noah Webster’s famous *American Spelling Book*, which was familiarly called *The Blue-Backed Speller*. However, rather than going through that book from beginning to end as intended, I simply turned to the page that went along with the letter or sound that we had learned that day from Professor Phonics, which remained our primary phonics learning source. The only home schooling guide that we had when we began was an older copy of *The Big Book of Home Learning* by Mary Pride that had been given to us, and it did not mention Professor Phonics. It was not until many years later that I obtained a copy of *The New Big Book of Home Learning* and found the following information about Professor Phonics, which in at that time was retailing for \$14.70.

“Professor Phonics is an inexpensive program that works well for children six years of age or older, for whom it was designed.... Marva Collins, a woman who has had phenomenal success in teaching inner-city, minority children, recommends Professor Phonics highly as being ‘one of the simplest methods of teaching children to read.’ That it certainly is. What it lacks in tinsel and pizzazz Professor Phonics provides in simplicity. Reading begins on the very first lesson page, as children learn the sounds of m, s, t, and a and immediately blend them into words. This immediate reading, and the association of pictures with the sounds, differentiates Professor Phonics from the other systems. You will notice that Professor Phonics is the least-expensive total phonics program around.”

Also, Cathy Duffy, in her *Christian Home Educators’ Curriculum Manual: Elementary Grades*, reviews Professor Phonics. “This is an inexpensive, simple approach for teaching beginning phonics and reading. Start with the alphabet cards, introducing letters for identification and sounds. Then use the student’s manual containing all phonics rules and some reading material. A very simple teacher’s manual is included along with a spelling word list. Since the included reading material is minimal, you might

wish to purchase a set of phonetic readers to use with this program....This is a good tool for those who wish to teach their children to read with real books as described above.”

As Cathy Duffy noted, supplementary reading material is very helpful with Professor Phonics. In fact, the author of Professor Phonics suggests, “The selection of good readers is of utmost importance. The easiest readers to use with Professor Phonics are phonetic readers which use words containing the short sound of ‘a’ almost exclusively in the beginning and then proceed to the other short vowels.” With Mark, we did not have a lot of resources available to us. However, he did have *The Beginners Bible: Timeless Children’s Stories* by Karyn Henley from Gold ‘n’ Honey Books. It has a fairly simple vocabulary for young readers, and I used that with him. With Jeremy, we had access to more resources in addition to *The Beginners Bible*, such as one of the A Beka beginning readers (*See Saw*), some *Let’s Read Together Books* written by Barbara deRubertis and published by The Kane Press of New York, and the Bob Books.

Karen had picked up the first box of Bob Books some time before Jeremy started learning how to read. When I used that box with him, I liked it so much that I went out and bought the other four boxes! They are recommended in *The Well Trained Mind* by Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer, who wrote, “Each Bob Book is a box with eight paperbacks inside. These are the first books your child will be able to read alone. Children love the Bob Books because beginning readers can start on them after only a few weeks of phonic lessons. The experience of reading an entire book, independently, just at the beginning of the learning process provides young readers with immense encouragement. Highly recommended.” Also Dr. Ruth Beechick, a well-known and respected name among home schoolers, wrote, “I heartily endorse Bob Books...a natural and easy way to learn.” You can check their website at www.bobbooks.com.

Since we learn even better by doing along with hearing and seeing, it has always seemed to me that some kind of activity which accompanies each lesson to reinforce it is good. There are all sorts of phonics activity books available which can be picked up for little or nothing in most bookstores, department stores, and even many grocery stores. However, my favorite is *Mrs. Silvers Phonics Workbook*, published by Mott Media, 112 E. Ellen St., Fenton, MI 48430. This is a “pre-primer” which helps students learn consonant sounds, short vowel sounds, and common digraphs by looking at and circling pictures that contain the sound. There is a teacher’s manual which explains how to use the book to teach reading, but rather than following the book in order, we just turned to the page with the sound on it that we had studied from Professor Phonics and used it as a reinforcement.

Professor Phonics is still available. I have seen it advertised recently in several home schooling magazines. It is now published by EduCare, 4700 Hubble Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45247, owned by Susan Greve. The phone number is 1-866-385-2022, and the fax is 385-7920. Or you can e-mail sue@professorphonics.com. There is also a website: www.professorphonics.com. According to the ads, the program has obviously been updated, with an interactive CD ROM and fun filled games for reinforcement. Many may find these additions helpful. For me, however, I prefer the simple approach because I have used it and it works! The same set that we purchased used for \$5.00 is now retailing at \$48.00 (minus the flash cards for \$8.00 which were not with our set). Two instructional videos cost \$40.00 each, and two accompanying CD ROMS cost \$15.00 each. However, the books are still sold separately.

Jessie Wise and Susan Wise Bauer in *The Well Trained Mind* have an excellent section on “Whole Language and Phonics: Whole to Parts versus Parts to Whole” which is well worth reading. The task of teaching a child to read may seem somewhat intimidating, so I will close with this advice from Mrs. Wise and Mrs. Bauer. “Here’s the good news: Reading is easy. We’ll repeat that: Reading is easy. One more time: Reading is easy. Unfortunately, the First Commandment of American Education seems to be ‘Thou shalt be an expert before attempting to teach reading.’ It isn’t true.... Between the ages of four and six, any child who has been read to since toddlerhood and is not suffering from an organic disorder can learn to read. And any reasonably literate adult (which includes anyone who can read this book) can serve as tutor for basic phonics skills.” The experience of untold numbers of home school parents corroborates this observation. Many resources exist to help in this endeavor, but I recommend Professor Phonics.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Thanks to Stephanie and Wayne for their articles. My apologies to all who submitted material that I was not able to include in this issue. The Internet filter survey was just too lengthy to allow other material, but I believe the survey was worthy of the space. We plan to include several good articles submitted by our readers for our next issue. **Tell your friends about *Family Times*!**