

Case Study #3: Matt

Matt never really got the hang of reading. His phonics skills have always been marginal. In the first grade, he discovered the strength of his auditory and verbal skills and found that he could memorize just about everything teachers said! He loves getting noticed when he speaks. His peers' and his teachers' laughter and smiles confirm his sense of self-worth.

When teachers would test oral reading skills, they would call students to the desk and have them read passages from the test manual. As other kids read their assigned passages, Matt would memorize them. When it was his turn to test, he relied on his memory and his partial knowledge of phonics to convince his teachers that his skills were at least adequate. This bright kid slipped through the cracks fooling everyone until middle school. Now, his carefully built façade has collapsed. Matt's becoming disruptive. He figures it's better to be noticed as the class clown than not to be noticed at all.

Because Matt's a great baseball player, it's always been assumed that he has no vision problems but there are subtle visual skills that separate great ball players from great readers. If Matt's never seen a developmental optometrist, now is the time. Glasses may resolve his issues.

In any case, Matt's phonetic and comprehension skills need to be rebuilt. This will involve some testing to determine his areas of weakness and strength. Then, a course of

study/treatment will be written. I employ a variety of educational materials from my extensive personal collection and utilize techniques that I've learned and developed over the years. These include direct instruction and recorded lessons that focus on specific skills, as well as tachistoscopic film strips projectors. They flash letters, words and phrases at increasingly greater speeds on a screen to build recognition skills. Controlled readers do the same thing for entire passages to develop comprehension. Other comprehension materials will spotlight finding the main idea, identifying the sequence, discovering details, and drawing conclusions. Matt will learn how to develop graphic organizers and charts. I will also incorporate reading games into the mix. Since the reverse side of the reading coin is writing, Matt will learn how to compose grade-appropriate essays and recognize that translating his verbal skills into good writing will earn him the praise he craves from peers and teachers.