

Sent to the NY Times, Nov 5.

Dennis Callahan (letters, "The best way to teach a child to read" November 4) complains that he has trouble reading to this day because he was taught by the "whole word method." There is no research supporting the "whole word method" and neither side of the great debate, phonics or whole language, supports it.

Whole word is based on the memorization of sight words. In contrast, whole language is based on the idea that we learn to read by understanding what is on the page. We do this by using context, and also with our knowledge of the basic rules of phonics. Whole language teaches "basic phonics," the straight-forward rules that children can learn, remember, and apply to texts to make them more comprehensible.

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