

FOREWORD

BY Maryanne Wolf

Educators are the guardians of knowledge.

Unfortunately, they are insufficiently acknowledged as such, making the book, *Climbing the Ladder of Reading & Writing: Meeting the Needs of All Learners*, even more important. Supporting educators and families who encounter a wide range of ease in children as they learn to read and write represents one of the primary goals of this book and one of the most important responsibilities of society.

Nancy Young and Jan Hasbrouck disseminate the work of some of our field's most respected scholars and practitioners. Each of the contributors unpacks an area of critical importance in the teaching and learning of reading and writing. The result is a tremendous resource that gives any reader the knowledge needed to make research-based decisions that propel all children toward better literacy outcomes.

The very impetus for this book has its origins in Nancy Young's efforts to visually depict what educators need to know to teach reading and writing. The power of her infographic is its basis in research and its central goal: to ensure that regardless of where a child is on the continuum of ease, they receive the instruction and support they need. This entire volume reflects this goal through multiple lenses.

Although my particular lens is grounded in cognitive neuroscience, I share that goal with the authors. Indeed, it was my use of neuroscience research in creating the first RAVE-O Intervention program that formed the basis of my friendship with Nancy Young. Her insights then and now are a prime example of the *reciprocity between teacher and researcher* that should always guide our work together.



Maryanne Wolf

Director of the UCLA Center for Dyslexia,
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From a slightly different perspective, I have worked side-by-side with Jan Hasbrouck for several years. We are both long committed to building and implementing the science of reading. We are also similarly committed to an evolving conceptualization of science. Such a view incorporates past research and propels new directions that should never be narrowly constrained to one particular emphasis in teaching or one hypothesis about learning to read and write.

I want to end this Foreword with my debt to the teachers I have known. Specifically, Meryll Pischa, who taught my son, Ben, and other children with dyslexia. To the children she said, "I want you to know that the hardest thing you will ever learn is the first thing you will learn: how to read. And you will learn!" To colleagues and parents, she said, "How can we teach all children to read if we don't give them the bottom rungs of the Ladder and just expect them to leap to the middle?" As conveyed throughout, this timely volume is accessible for all who care about fostering young readers and writers. The authors skillfully capture both the scientific research and classroom applications needed to empower literacy instruction.

I salute the authors of this book, educators like Meryll Pischa, and all who teach children to climb the difficult, beautiful, always ascending rungs of the Ladder that lead to deep readers, writers, and thinkers—the citizens of tomorrow. Godspeed!



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PART I

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WHY WE CREATED THIS BOOK

FROM Nancy Young

The first version of my infographic, entitled *The Ladder of Reading*, was created in 2012 as part of a Master's course assignment. My goal was to visually represent the continuum of ease in reading acquisition and implications for instruction and practice. Once created, the infographic became my standby tool to explain reading challenges as I worked with families and schools.

“ The infographic became my standby tool to explain reading challenges as I worked with families and schools. ”

As I began to provide professional development further afield, and used my infographic during conference presentations, many people told me how helpful it was to understand the range of ease in reading skill mastery in order to address reading difficulties. When I joined the world of social media, to my amazement, my infographic went “viral”!

Over the years, I was glad to see schools abandoning the teaching of strategies (such as “guessing”) that research has shown to be ineffective. Yet an unexpected result of this shift was that I also observed schools now implementing whole-class instruction during which all students were being directly taught the same way using the same materials—every day. It seemed the differentiation that had been integral to previous reading instruction was being abandoned, too.

The shift to “one-sized-fits-all” that I saw happening greatly concerned me. As an educator, differentiation had been integral to my practice. As the mother of two children who were reading before Kindergarten, I also worried about the unmet learning needs of students who were more advanced in reading skills.



Nancy Young

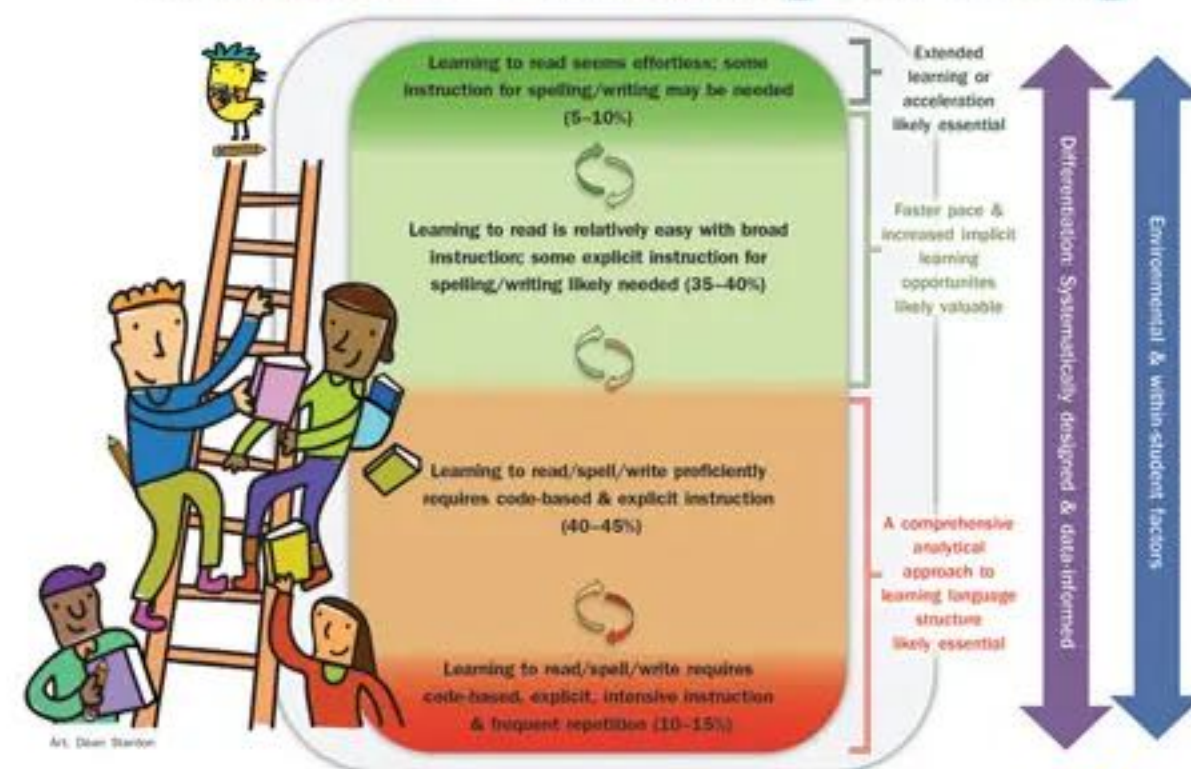
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Along the way, I had made occasional revisions to my infographic. I realized I needed to make clearer my original intent that every student deserves to grow in their reading and writing skills, and that it is the responsibility of schools to provide the appropriate instruction and related support for this to happen.

The idea of a book to bring even greater clarity to the importance of needs-based instruction was simmering when I reached out to Dr. Jan Hasbrouck in 2021. Thus began our exciting collaboration which not only led to a major revision of my infographic later that year, becoming *The Ladder of Reading & Writing*, but also to the co-editing this very book you are reading. (A few further tweaks to the wording in *The Ladder of Reading & Writing* happened along the way; the 2023 update with those changes was released ahead of the publication of this book.)

For more than two years now, I have communicated daily with Jan as we've shared thoughts, dug into the research, reached out to experts, and questioned constantly (always smiling!) in our journey to create a book about the infographic I created many years ago, never dreaming it might positively impact students, teachers, and parents/caregivers across the globe. I will be forever grateful to Jan for this amazing learning adventure! ★

The Ladder of Reading & Writing



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Nancy Young

FROM Jan Hasbrouck

I don't remember when or where I first saw Nancy's *The Ladder of Reading* infographic, but I do remember thinking it was wonderful! I immediately recognized that it would be a valuable addition to my toolkit in working with educators.

I have worked in the field of reading instruction my entire professional career, first as a reading specialist and coach, then as a university professor and researcher and, more recently, collaborating with colleagues around the world to help translate the ever-growing and evolving body of research now referred to as "the science of reading," or SOR, into effective classroom practice. It was clear to me that the image of happy students climbing a ladder to represent the journey of learning to read, combined with accurate information about the continuum of ease and the instructional considerations for each group, would help educators think deeply about the incredibly complex processes involved in teaching students to read and write.

“ We started on a joyful and intense period of thinking about, discussing, and drafting versions as *The Ladder of Reading* expanded into *The Ladder of Reading & Writing*. ”

In fact, with Nancy's gracious permission, I included the infographic in my book *Conquering Dyslexia* (Hasbrouck, 2020) to help readers understand that while powerful, appropriately differentiated instruction would benefit all students, they would still climb the Ladder with various levels of ease.

I finally had a chance to meet Nancy in person at a reading conference and so began our professional collaboration. I was honored when she reached out to me in 2021 as she first started thinking about the idea of a book about her infographic, along with a major update of the infographic itself, and asked if I would join her in that work. I agreed, and we started on a joyful and intense period of thinking about, discussing, and drafting versions as *The Ladder of Reading* expanded into *The Ladder of Reading & Writing*. Once that was released, the joy continued as the book became our focus! More thinking and many fun discussions, along with extensive reading, collaborative writing, and co-editing as the content of the book evolved to what you see here (and, along the way, a few more tweaks to the infographic, too!). ★



Jan Hasbrouck

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FROM Nancy & Jan

Throughout the creation of this book, we have strived to include varying perspectives about reading and writing instruction. We are both mothers who have worn the shoes of parents concerned about our children's learning needs not being met; Jan's daughter has dyslexia and Nancy's children were both reading before the start of Kindergarten. We have both spent decades in various teaching roles serving a wide range of learning needs (both for students and their teachers) in North America and around the world. Jan brought to the table her knowledge as a researcher and university professor. Nancy brought her knowledge of the field of giftedness. We have seen the gaps, and we are all too aware of the social-emotional ramifications that can stem from unmet academic needs.

Early on, we realized how beneficial it would be to invite subject-area experts to write specific parts of the book that related to their areas of professional expertise. Their voices would enable us to not only provide clarity in our goal of helping educators, parents/caregivers, and community members better understand how to interpret and apply certain parts of the infographic, but such expertise would clarify terms and concepts in an easy-to-understand way grounded in solid research.

Over the many months of working with our amazing contributing authors, we have been continuously grateful for their time, expertise, and flexibility as the book evolved into what all of us hope will help move the field forward to better serve all students. We had an idea; our authors embraced our idea and became a part of the adventure as we worked with our publisher to create a unique book around a unique infographic. Teamwork in its truest sense!

As we extend our sincere thanks to our contributing authors for their time, dedication, and expertise, we also thank you, the reader of this book. We hope that the combined voices in this book will help you, whatever your role, lend your own voice to improving the teaching of reading and writing to better serve the wide range of needs within today's classroom. It is truly our wish that *The Ladder of Reading & Writing* will build bridges of understanding in the field as educators, parents, and community members work together in positive ways to address the reading and writing needs of ALL students! ★



PUTTING IT IN PERSPECTIVE



The *Ladder of Reading & Writing* infographic illustrates what we know from research: that learning to read and write in English is a complex process influenced by multiple internal and external factors. Therefore, instruction cannot be “one size fits all.” Rather, students vary widely in the ease with which they master the interwoven skills of reading and writing. It is the responsibility of educators to provide appropriate, differentiated instruction to support each student wherever they are on their learning journey. Navigating the delivery of appropriate, differentiated instruction for all students, however, can be overwhelming. This book serves to shed light on efficient and effective ways to approach that very task.



WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?



This book is primarily written for *teachers*, those who carry the precious responsibility day in and day out of teaching all students to read and write. Today’s classrooms are arguably more diverse than ever. Or at least research has made us more aware than ever of this diversity as well as the vast complexities involved in rewiring the brain for literacy. This book explores the nuances and instructional implications of *The Ladder of Reading & Writing* infographic. It serves to provide a perspective for understanding students’ diverse instructional needs.

This book is also for *school administrators* and the many *other professionals* who support teachers, whether in the classroom or through ongoing professional development. Understanding the diverse exceptionalities and environmental considerations that affect student learning can help all members of the team work collaboratively to provide appropriate support as teachers differentiate instruction and practice for their students.

Finally, this book is for *parents, caregivers* and other *community members* who love and care for children as they climb the Ladder. Truly, it takes a village ... and the better we can communicate and coordinate our support for specific students, the more effective those efforts will be.



WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO USE THIS BOOK?



Consider using this book in the following ways:

If you are a teacher ...	If you are an administrator or professional leader ...	If you are a parent or caregiver ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read through Part 1 to gain a thorough understanding of the concepts presented in the infographic. Consider your own classroom and students to determine what recommendations from Part 1 will have the most impact on improving your efficiency or effectiveness when delivering appropriate, differentiated instruction for students. Use Parts 2 and 3 for reference as you consider how to address specific students' needs. As needed, consult and/or create instructional goals and plans for individual or small groups of students with related needs to access grade-level content or advance in their climb up the Ladder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read through Part 1 to gain a thorough understanding of the concepts presented in the infographic. Consider your role in helping teachers understand and apply these concepts, which may mean dialoguing with specific teachers to identify next steps for application. Be sure to read Chapter 20 Teacher Development and use Parts 2 and 3 for reference. Write down actionable steps to support teachers as they implement specific recommendations from Part 1 to enhance their delivery of appropriate, differentiated instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read through Part 1 to gain a thorough understanding of the concepts presented in the infographic. Consider where your child is on their climb up the Ladder. Be sure to read Chapter 18 Home-School Connections and use Parts 2 and 3 for reference. Collect and study any available information or data to help you understand your child's instructional needs. Reach out to teachers, administrators, or professionals working with your child to plan and/or monitor your child's progress. Engage your child in frequent conversation about their learning, interests, and goals.

HOW IS THIS BOOK ORGANIZED?

PART I expands on concepts illustrated in *The Ladder of Reading & Writing* infographic. Chapter 1 explores the message behind the infographic that ALL students deserve appropriate instruction differentiated to their unique needs. Chapter 2 unpacks each of the features in the infographic, and Chapter 3 explores the instructional implications of those features. Chapters 4 and 5 expound on the importance of using data to inform instructional decision-making and managing the classroom environment to create a structure in which effective differentiated instruction may occur.



PART II explores a range of exceptionalities that students may bring to the classroom. This part of the book is intended for reference as you address the needs of specific students. These exceptional needs include dyslexia, specific reading comprehension disability (SRCDD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), deaf or hard of hearing (d/hh), and others. These affect how students learn and what types of scaffolding may be best to support their climb up the Ladder.



PART III addresses other issues related to student learning including age, language, and home environment. As we are all aware, students' learning does not take place in a vacuum and these issues must also be considered when planning and providing appropriate instruction. You may use this part also as a reference to quickly access information applicable to individual students or your current planning needs.

