

# READER, COME HOME

Letter One: Reading, the Canary  
in the Mind



Atlanta Speech School Professional Development

August 30, 2019 1:30-2:45  
Love Auditorium

READER,  
COME HOME



Atlanta Speech School Professional Development

# WHY ARE WE HERE?

Why are we studying together?

Why this book?

Why now?

TO HELP EACH  
PERSON DEVELOP  
THEIR FULL  
POTENTIAL  
THROUGH  
LANGUAGE AND  
LITERACY



# 1440 – An Awakening

- Before the printing press (BPP), only the wealthy had access to books and reading. Their brains changed and the brains of their children changed. Only the "upper class" could look forward to possessing a deep reading brain.

- "Reading became the transformative catalyst for intellectual development within individuals and within literate cultures."

- "The quality of our reading is not only an index of the quality of our thought, it is our best-known path to developing whole new pathways in the cerebral evolution of our species."











Dr. Guinevere Eden

# Construction of the Deep Reading Brain

Optimal Ecosystem of Language for a Lifetime



Preparing

## 3rd trimester - 5 yrs old

Adults seeks connection vs. compliance; be a "conversational partner," every adult engages, activates student listening, avoid silencing, establishes language and routines, fosters self-regulation and internal locus of control, empowers student voices. Read aloud daily and nightly, ask why and how questions, encourage thinking aloud.



Monitoring & Teaching

## Kindergarten - 3rd grade

Teacher uses explicit, research-proven reading programs that align with all five components of NRPs (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension) along with language, executive functioning, critical thinking and empathy. Differentiate based on assessment data (Pre, Post and progress-monitoring) Fluency is critical.



Expanding

## 3rd grade and beyond

The reader reads for knowledge, understanding, reflection, critical thinking, imagination, empathy. The reader exhibits self-regulation, fluency, more sophisticated vocabulary and syntax. During this time, the reader reads to learn and uses written language that integrates ideas, emotions, knowledge and reflection.

# What Do We Hope to Understand?

**READER,  
COME HOME**



The Reading Brain in  
a Digital World

**MARYANNE WOLF**

*Author of Proust and the Squid*

- That the deep reading brain is complex and that our brains are changed by the medium with which they are engaged.
- That the impact of the shift from a print-based culture to a digital-based culture is proven and is a basis for concern and care.
- That we must carefully foster the Construction of a Biliterate, Deep reading Brain in ourselves and our children, paying close attention to our most human cognitive processes of critical thinking, personal reflection, imagination and empathy. The preservation of our society and our democracy demands it.

Learning to read changes the brain by repurposing primitive auditory, visual, and oral circuits to construct a reading brain and make it possible for children to learn through reading.



Proficient reading changes the brain through interactions with character relationships and interactions as areas related to empathy, personal reflection, critical thinking, imagination and language are activated.



# A Preview of Our Journey Together...



Letters 1-3: Research & Knowledge of the reading brain and how the characteristics of various mediums are reflected in brain circuitry



Letter 4: How critical Deep Reading is for a democratic society



Letters 5-8: Building a biliterate brain – the raising of children in a Digital Age



Letter 9: *Festina lente*, Reader, Come Home

# An Invitation to Our Future - What Does It Hold?



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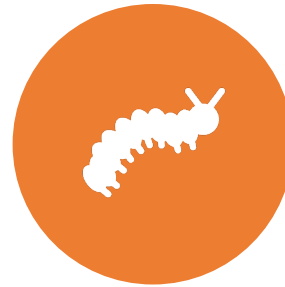
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- Dr. Wolf offers an invitation to consider "**an improbable set of facts** about reading and the reading brain, whose implications will lead to significant cognitive changes in us, the next generation, and possibly our species."
  - Our children are spending more and more time engaged with digital media, not reading, other than what is required and, often, not that. **"tl:dr' (too long, didn't read)" They are changing their brains in new ways that may very well change who they are.**
  - We must look at the subtle changes in each of our reading brains and consider whether we have moved away from what reading once was for us.
  - **For most of us, these changes have begun...and we don't even realize the change.**



# Improbable Facts to Remember...



1. Human beings were never born to read.  
There is no specific reading circuit.



2. The acquisition of literacy was one of the most important epigenetic (non-genetic) achievements of the human species. No other species has ever acquired it.



3. Learning to read added an entirely new circuit to our human brain's repertoire.



4. The long process of learning to read deeply and well changed the very structure of that circuit's connections, which rewired the brain, which transformed the nature of human thought.

## Changing World, Changing Brains

"It allows us to share large amounts of information quickly and in huge numbers. In fact, it is so significant that it has come to be known as one of the most important discoveries of our time. It has drastically changed the way society evolves."

# Changing World, Changing Brains

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# In *Reader, Come Home*, Dr. Wolf raises three difficult questions:



Will the next generation, immersed in multitasking and digital mediums, learn to develop "slower" and essential cognitive processes such as critical thinking, reflection, and empathy – all parts of deep reading?



Will the seemingly continuous demands for our attention and immediate access to voluminous information change the development of personal storehouses of knowledge and affect our ability to make analogies, draw inferences, and arrive at independent judgements?



Will the chain of digital influences ultimately impact critical analysis and empathy in our citizens – core elements of a democracy?



# COLLABORATION

- What changes have you noticed in yourself and your own reading over recent years?



# Our Plastic Brain

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Our reading brain circuits are developed by both natural and environmental factors. Our cognitive processes are evolving as a result of digital mediums and depend on environmental factors.

1. Natural factors
2. Environmental factors



# COLLABORATION

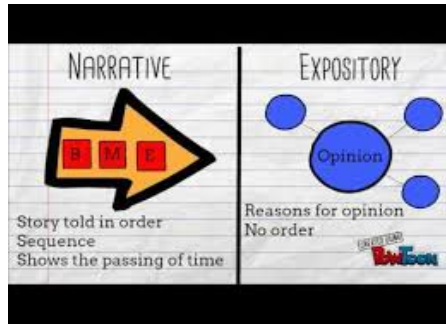
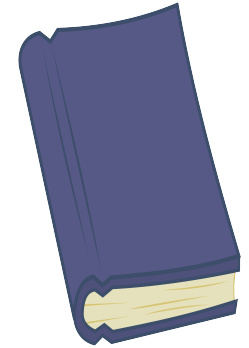
- Brainstorm natural and environmental factors





# The Changing Brain

What is Read



How it is Read



How it is Taught



# Excitement and Caution

How will growing up in a digital world  
impact our children?



## What are the Possibilities for young Readers in a digital World?

1. Develop a deep reading brain
2. The Reading brain could be short- circuited
3. Acquire whole new networks with different circuits

# Construction of the Reading Brain in a Digital Culture

- Dr. Wolf asks..."Will immersion in digital experiences from social media to games, impede the formation of slower cognitive processes such as critical thinking, personal reflection, imagination, and empathy? Will distractions of children's attention and immediate access to information create less incentive for young readers to build knowledge?"

# Construction of the Reading Brain in a Digital Culture

"In our almost complete transition to a digital culture, we are changing in ways we never realized would be the unintended collateral consequences of the greatest explosion of creativity, invention, and discovery in our history."

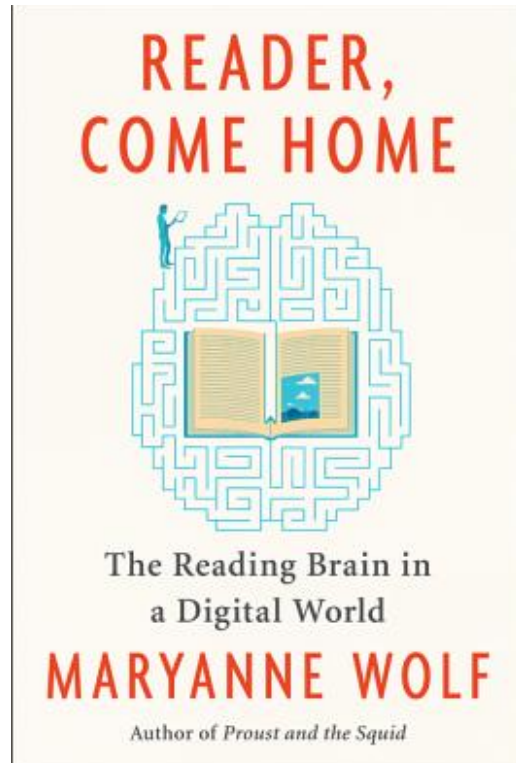


# COLLABORATION

- What changes in reading have you noticed with your own children or students over the past few years?



# An Invitation...



- There are no binary solutions
- We are working toward global literacy
- It is important to be informed by the growing knowledge on the impact of different media if we are to prepare all of our children to read deeply in whatever medium



# COLLABORATION

- In anticipation of the Letters to come, what will your focus be as you read?

