

# Story Artlinks

***A Project of  
Create Therapy Institute:  
Arts for Healing Studio Laboratory***

Wendy Miller, Ph.D., ATR, REAT, LPC  
Elizabeth Lerner, ATR-BC, LPC  
Karen Baer, ATR-BC

## PROSPECTUS

### I. Overview

Adults seek for themselves, and especially for their children, innovative ways to improve the methods through which they can learn, problem solve, and further develop themselves. This is what Story Artlinks represents—the rest of the story of the basic process of how we learn. In a sense, the Story Artlinks Project is the missing link in applying a true state-of-the-art approach based on the latest findings from 21st century brain science. When all is said and done, the simple reality is that most of the learning strategies that have been researched and then brought to the educational field for application primarily focus on the left side of the brain. The mental operations that are applied draw upon logical, analytic, linear, and verbal reasoning. They underutilize intuitive, synthetic, multidimensional, and spatial thought processes that reflect right brain strengths. This project creatively enlists the right brain, in conjunction with the left, in a more integrated and optimal approach to learning that taps into the full potential of learners. It also enables them to compensate for areas of unevenness within their spectrum of cognitive capacities.

New brain studies and the latest neuroscience research show us that while we use both sides of our brain when we learn, up until middle age we predominantly use only one side at a time. But as we move through middle age and later adulthood, it is as if our brain moves to all wheel drive, drawing upon both hemispheres of the brain simultaneously. (CITE REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES—Cabeza, Cohen) Story Artlinks is designed to provide learning techniques and content that target both hemispheres of the brain at the same time. For children, adolescents, and young adults, this design should foster more integrated contributions of both sides of the brain. For middle age and older adults, this design should optimally complement the brain’s own restructuring of how it operates through a more simultaneous mobilization of left and right brain hemispheres. to provide does a better job at simultaneously tapping into both sides of the brain, and in this way, acts as an integrative task.

(ART THERAPY  
SPEECH THERAPY

??? (meaning or point of this brief section is not clear) [“Lindamood-Bell enhances learning for all people, for all ages...for life.”

“Our approach to learning is global, balanced and interactive. Lindamood Bell has pioneered programs to develop the sensory-cognitive processes that underlie reading, spelling, math, visual-motor, skills, language comprehension, attention, memory and critical thinking.” ]]

## II. Audience for and Timing of the Project

There has been a very significant increase in the demand for both professional and public lectures, books, and videos on more effective approaches to educating children and adults alike. The audiences for these include large numbers of parents, teachers, therapists, counselors, tutors, and other educational specialists and advocates. (SITE

**REFERENCES AND EXAMPLES:** Mel Levine, T. Berry Brazelton, Greenspan, Stixrud, etc.). The reasons for this high demand vary. For a very long time, the public and the professionals alike were taught that your central nervous system is essentially fully developed by age three, such that most of the dedicated efforts to maximize potential needed to have been done in those first three years. But at the close of the 20th century, scientists and society alike learned that in fact we continue to make new brain cells (neurogenesis) throughout the entire life cycle, regardless of age. This discovery has triggered a new revolution in neuroscience research along with new hope, new expectations, and new demands for techniques that can be applied across the age spectrum to maximize early as well as lifelong learning.

The new brain science has motivated parents in new ways to do the best they can by their children. And for parents of children with mild or more severe learning disabilities, the new findings from neuroscience investigations have expanded awareness of new learning strategies that can be employed to mitigate these difficulties. For adults, growing public education about the positive impact of exercising your mind on mental resiliency and maintenance of function with aging has launched enormous new interest in the latest approaches to challenging one's mind and brain.

### III. Rationale

**WRITE ABOUT THE CRISIS IN LITERACY- why, how it manifests, the national focus on this**

Up through grade three in our schools, education focuses on “learning to read”—on phonological awareness, phonemic skills, and capacity to decode (decode what?). These skills greatly impact reading, spelling, and facility with language. After third grade, the focus shifts to “reading to learn”—on language comprehension, cognitive skills, research, writing,

and problem solving. As this transition transpires, there is a gigantic change in the formatting of books—***the pictures go away***. Actually, the transition starts in the second grade with reading chapbooks; the only pictures that accompany the written expression are usually on the first page of each chapter or an image created out of the first letter of the first paragraph of each chapter. The absence of pictures in books impedes whole brain cognition, the consequence of which highlight the profound significance of the Artlinks Project. A loss of imagery reduced prompting of the right brain and it reduces efficient integration of the contribution of both brain hemisphere of effective learning. The Art Links Project aims to restore this efficiently and effectiveness in the learning process.

### ***Why does reading to learn mean you no longer need pictures?***

What is the role of a picture anyway? “Oh”, they say. “it’s just an illustration of the text and in learning to read, it is a helper, but in reading to learn, it isn’t really primarily necessary—it’s just a distractor.” The fault in this logic is that when you lose the picture, an image that relates to meaning, you lose an entire method of processing. The simple reality is that cognitive and language skills are still developing. They benefit from a more holistic learning structure. A corollary of the phrase that a “picture says a thousand words” is that an image helps to integrate a thousand words. It is not just those whose language skills may be developmentally lagging or to a degree impaired who could benefit from the Art Links approach, but even those on schedule developmentally are deprived of optimal developmental challenge that promotes a better integration of reading, language, and cognitive skills when they are reading without adequate imagery stimulation.

Interestingly, families intuitively recognize something is missing when words and sounds are so fundamentally separated from imagery. It does not reflect the world around us. We do not have conversations at the dinner tables with the light out. It is also important for us to see an

orchestra and their mannerisms when they play a symphony. And culturally we crave an integration of text and verbal exchange within an environment of imagery—whether you are talking about a theatrical play or a comic book. Even the newspapers have brought back pictures and color as have encyclopedias. When commentators question, “where are our Renaissance thinkers today”, revisit the books that Renaissance thinkers from days of old read while they were growing up and maturing as thinkers—typically far better illustrated than today.

Arguably, writing itself is a way of using pictures to tell a story, as we can see by looking at Egyptian hieroglyphics. While some of the hieroglyphs became abstract symbols, others remained small images (e.g., owls, hawks, etc.). Our alphabet developed through various stages from such pictorial writing. Hieroglyphs and conventional pictorial representation often coexisted in tomb paintings. In the Middle Ages, hand-copied books were extensively decorated. Initial letters of sections of a text were illuminated—often enlarged and decorated with brilliant colors as well as containing small pictures. The borders of many medieval manuscripts were also decorated with small pictures and elaborate frames. Imagery from the start of writing was intuitively recognized as being very important.

Economics began to override aesthetics and sound educational technique. Picture became more expensive to include, and for the bottom line were deemed dispensable. Historical wisdom that intuitively recognized the added impact of integrated words and imagery on mental processing and learning was lost. This book on Art Links draws upon that historical wisdom with the new insights from contemporary neuroscience to advance the state-of-the art of learning and mental stimulation from books to a new level. Its relevance to the public and professionals alike is high, and will likely be readily recognized as sound, novel, and providing a critical new path to enhance the process of learning.

The importance of learning through words is not being questioned. It is not a question of a wrong approach, but an incomplete and not optimally balanced learning strategy when words are used alone. Moreover, the point is not that the role of illustration is simply to amplify the meaning of words, but that the meaning of imagery may at times be better grasped when well integrated with words. Often enough we see a solution before we can say it; this was one of the lessons that came from studying how Einstein gained some of his greatest insights. We need innovative opportunities to maximize the creative dance between words and pictures, between imagery and verbal expression. In the process, we will promote a more creative and holistic approach to learning and reading that promises more tangible, satisfying, and effective outcomes. It is an approach to mobilize all of our mental engines to promote more imagination, curiosity, and intuition—with all of the positive developments that emanate from such a brew. This is the promise of the Art Links approach and of this book.