John T. Bruer served as the president of the James S. McDonnell Foundation from 1986 through 2014. Dr. Bruer was the first full-time professional to head the McDonnell Foundation and developed and initiated major new programs for the Foundation. In collaboration with the Pew Charitable Trusts, he established the McDonnell-Pew Program in Cognitive Neuroscience. His program Cognitive Studies for Educational Practice supported applications of cognitive science to improve educational outcomes.

Bruer’s work in applied cognitive science resulted in the book, Schools for Thought: A Science of Learning in the Classroom, which explains in clear, straight-forward language why extending and applying the research base for education must be an integral component of any serious attempt at school reform. John’s book The Myth of the First Three Years: A New Understanding of Early Brain Development and Lifelong Learning debunks many popular beliefs about the all-or-nothing effects of early experience on a child’s brain and development urging parents and decision-makers to consider for themselves the evidence for lifelong learning opportunities.