

## **Unlocking the Literacy Mystery**

**By Carole Richards**

Literacy is my biggest passion. Over the years, I have written numerous articles on the topic. The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) has collected data on children ages 9, 13 and 17 since 1971. But literacy scores haven't changed in 45 years.

According to a study conducted in late April by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Institute of Literacy, 32 million adults in the U.S. can't read. That's **14 percent** of the population. 21 percent of adults in the U.S. read below a 5th grade level, and **19 percent** of high school graduates can't read. [The current literacy rate isn't any better than it was 10 years ago.](#)

The Nation Center for Education Statistics, "Profiles of the National Prison Population", completed a study of the literacy levels of the prison population. They found that 70% of the population read at the two lowest literacy levels.

The Center for Disease Control conducted a study of the effects of lead poisoning on our nation's children in 2015, "A randomized controlled study of 4,700 preschool children compared school readiness outcomes such as language, literacy, ... each year through the end of the first grade for children enrolled in Head Start with a control group of children who were not enrolled in a Head Start program. The study found that the early gains in school readiness of the Head Start group "faded out" by the end of the first grade as control group children caught up to their Head Start peers." *I question whether the control group "caught up" or lack of effective literacy instruction caused all of the children's skills to slow down in development.*

Reading is made up of two basic skills: decoding (*word reading*) and comprehension (*understanding what you read*). Most children and adults without Autism or a low IQ struggle with word reading. If we could train our teachers in multi-sensory systematic phonics instruction it would dramatically improve our children's reading skills, but retraining is costly.

The Creative Education Institute in partnership with CEO Eric Gordon and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) are proposing an innovative solution.

Richards Learning Systems (RLS) offers a different and distinctive concept to deliver its reading methods to children and teachers at the same time. RLS blends a cost-effective and time-efficient teacher-training program with a research-based, teachable and effective reading program for children. Students rapidly learn to read as the teachers learn the program with an abbreviated "learning curve". Student retention and mastery of reading is greatly increased with kinesthetic (*touch and muscle-movement*) learning.

**Delivery System:** The RLS DVD includes, short episodic "Disney-esque" video lessons (*to be produced*), plus a teacher resource manual, student workbooks and manipulatives (*already created*). Each DVD video lesson begins with a brief concept introduction (3 to 5 minutes in

length) that explains the “skill of the day” to both teachers and students.

Then students practice the skill in workbooks using manipulatives to reinforce understanding of the day’s concept. The teacher moves around the classroom informally assessing mastery, and may ask students to do board work to further assess students understanding.

**Want to Help?** Once the videos are produced, we can begin our initial project in 27 kdg. to grade 2 classrooms. And, once proven, CMSD and can afford to use RLS throughout the school district.

Want to know more, request a Richards Learning Systems video describing the project. Email me for more information or to request a link to the video.

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