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## RICHARDS LEARNING SYSTEMS

### THE MAGIC PATH TO LEARNING READING



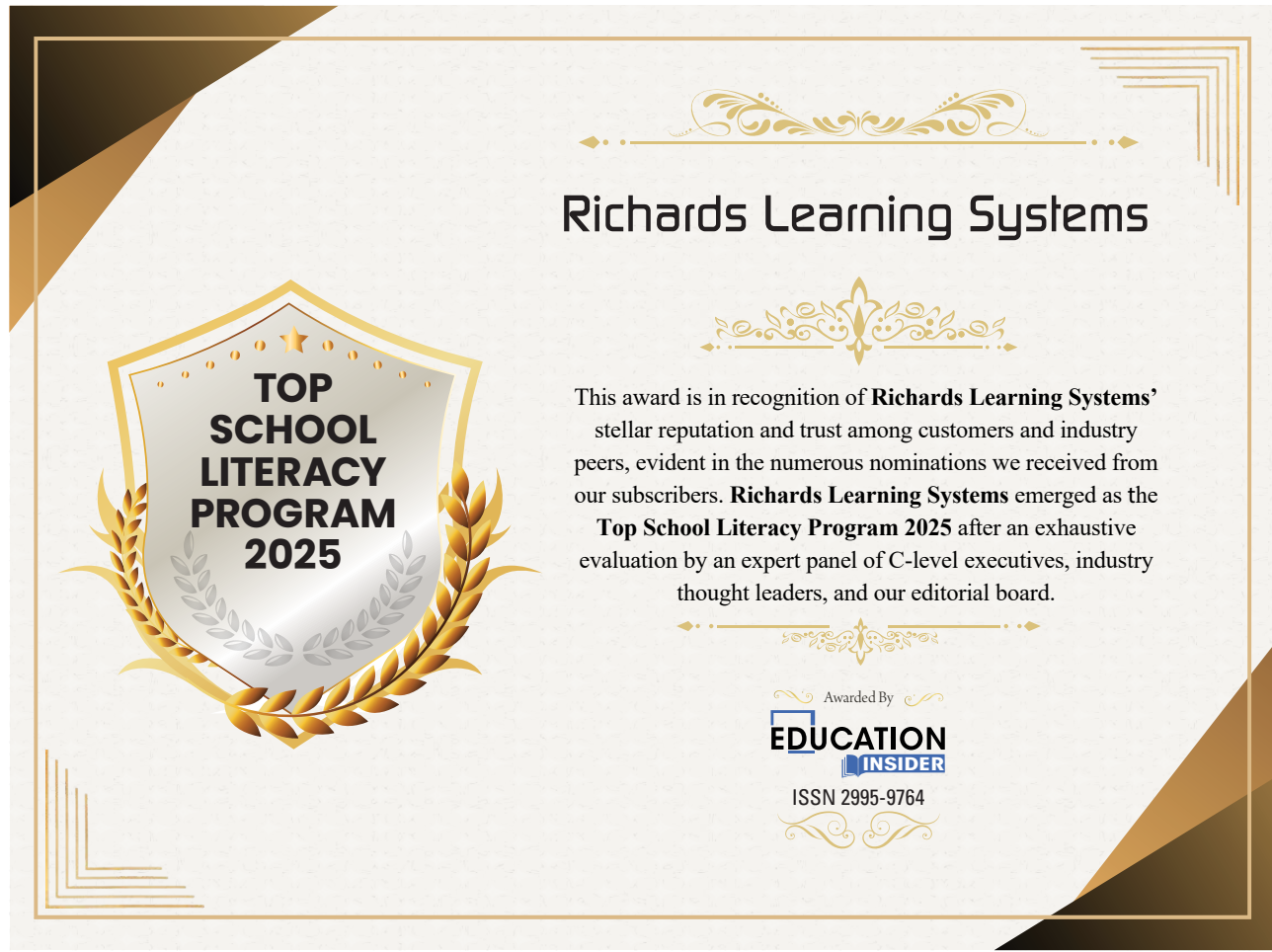
Carole Richards, Founder



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**Richards Learning Systems**

**TOP SCHOOL LITERACY PROGRAM 2025**

This award is in recognition of **Richards Learning Systems'** stellar reputation and trust among customers and industry peers, evident in the numerous nominations we received from our subscribers. **Richards Learning Systems** emerged as the **Top School Literacy Program 2025** after an exhaustive evaluation by an expert panel of C-level executives, industry thought leaders, and our editorial board.

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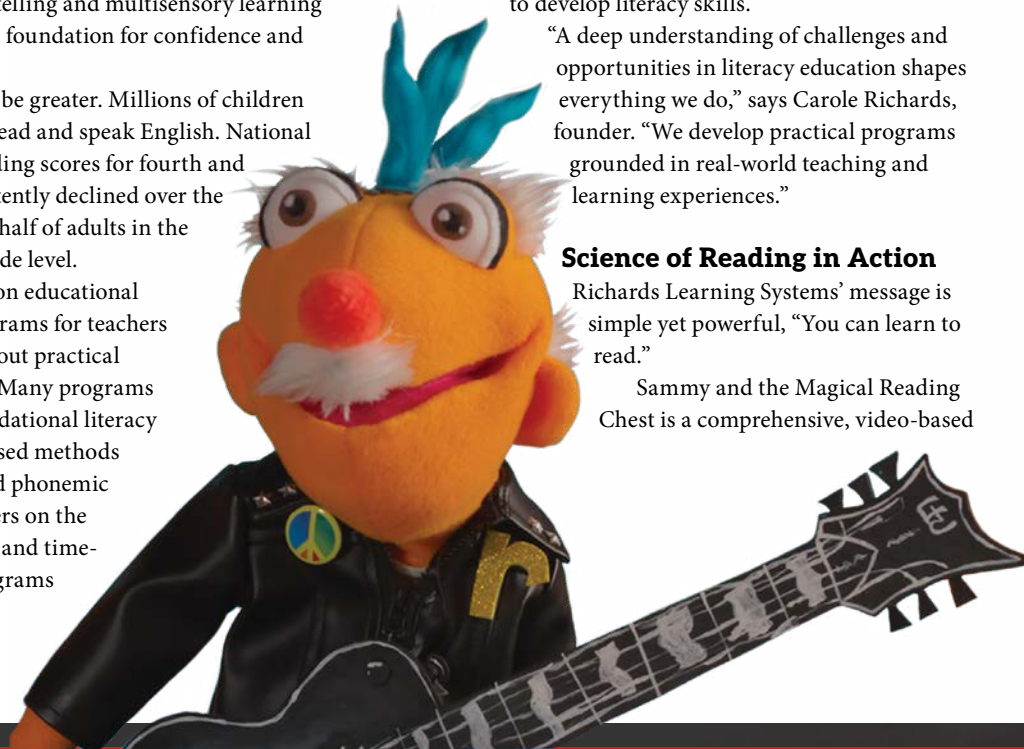
## THE MAGIC PATH TO LEARNING READING

The growing movement around the science of reading reflects a timeless truth that every person deserves the ability to read and speak English. Proficiency in English is a gateway to higher education and economic mobility that empowers communities in the U.S. and beyond.

Richards Learning Systems unlocks the key to reading through Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest, a highly engaging and effective science-based literacy program. It blends research with storytelling and multisensory learning to transform literacy into a foundation for confidence and opportunity.

The urgency could not be greater. Millions of children globally are struggling to read and speak English. National assessments show that reading scores for fourth and eighth graders have consistently declined over the past three decades. Nearly half of adults in the U.S. read below a sixth-grade level.

The burden has fallen on educational institutions. Training programs for teachers often focus on theory without practical methods to teach reading. Many programs are outdated and lack foundational literacy instruction in evidence-based methods like systematic phonics and phonemic awareness. Training teachers on the science of reading is costly and time-consuming with some programs requiring up to 700 hours.



When trained teachers leave, school districts face the challenge of starting the expensive process again. This creates a cycle where the promise of literacy remains elusive.

Richards Learning Systems breaks this cycle with a 30-year history of proven effectiveness in advancing literacy for students of all ages. It guides learners from pre-K through high school, helping them build skills step by step with measurable progress. The program is also offered to corporate organizations to support employees who never had the chance to develop literacy skills.

“A deep understanding of challenges and opportunities in literacy education shapes everything we do,” says Carole Richards, founder. “We develop practical programs grounded in real-world teaching and learning experiences.”

### Science of Reading in Action

Richards Learning Systems’ message is simple yet powerful, “You can learn to read.”

Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest is a comprehensive, video-based

reading program that includes 77 episodes up to seven minutes each. Simplicity and compassion are at the heart of the program. Every video introduces just one concept distilled to its simplest form, with fewer rules to memorize. It is effective in mainstream classrooms and supports specially challenged students. While the pace of progress varies, the outcome is steady and undeniable; children discover that reading is possible and empowering.

The program unfolds in an episodic TV-style series to draw learners into a world where reading feels like a thrilling adventure. Engaging episodes are presented in a storytelling format to maintain interest. Repetition and scaffolding are built in for skill retention and mastery.

The storytelling approach is brought to life through various characters like Bearly, a teddy bear who sits at the corner of the classroom, worried that he cannot read like the others. He learns through gentle encouragement that everyone progresses at their own pace. Slowly, Bearly begins to read words and shows learners that they can also learn to read with persistence.

Manipulatives provided with the curriculum guide students in practicing the multisensory techniques modeled in the episodes. Core reading skills are strengthened through visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic pathways. Every lesson comes alive with tools, a workbook and all the materials demonstrated in the videos. Bumpy alphabet cards, perceptual letter tracing and felt boards allow students to trace and build words by touch. Jet Pilot swoops across the sky and traces letters and sounds in playful arcs while the Finger Spelling



Carole Richards,  
Founder

Hand teaches them to sound out words with their hands. These multisensory methods transform learning into a memorable experience.

### From Letters to Mastery

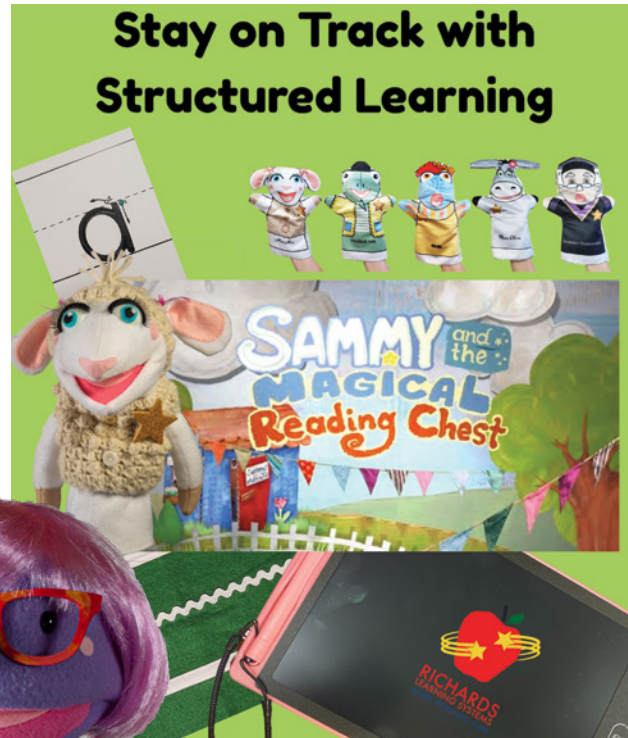
Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest is built on the science of reading and guides children through a carefully designed four-season journey. The first two seasons lay a strong foundation for young readers to crack the code of language by showing how letters and sounds work together. What feels like play soon becomes real progress.

Students in a whole-class setting can significantly improve their reading proficiency by practicing as little as 15 minutes a day. Short lessons are easy to integrate without disrupting the existing curriculum.

Traditional methods start with memorizing the alphabet. Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest takes an optimal approach, focusing on letter sounds rather than letter names. We read words by using letter sounds not names. For example, students first learn the sounds of a, t and s. Then, they blend them to read words like at, sat and as.

**A deep understanding of challenges and opportunities in literacy education shapes everything we do. We develop practical programs grounded in real-world teaching and learning experiences**

As students progress to seasons three and four, they step into multi-syllabic word mastery, advanced word recognition and powerful decoding strategies. The first episode of season three reviews all the basic sounds to ensure no learner is left behind. Students unlock the secret to decode and spell longer and more complex words by applying rules and breaking words into syllables. This eliminates the anxiety associated with memorizing large quantities of sight words. Most sight words are



decodable, with about 100 non-decodable words introduced across the program.

“Students build a strong phonics foundation and transition to syllable decoding naturally. It’s an emotional connection that alleviates reading anxiety and builds confidence,” says Richards.

By the 77th episode, students will be confidently reading antisestablishmentarianism, which was once considered the longest word in the English language.

### Multisensory Learning for Faster, Deeper Comprehension

Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest is inspired by the pioneering research of Dr. Samuel Orton, a renowned authority in dyslexia research. The program became one of the earliest applications of the science of reading. It engages sight, sound, muscle movement and touch based on a core principle of structured literacy and Orton-Gillingham-based instruction. Reading becomes more accessible, especially for learners who benefit from multiple pathways to process and retain information.

A powerful testament to the approach comes from a 15-year old student who

struggled with severe reading difficulties, despite years in special education. Richards Learning Systems worked with him intensely for two years. The team’s support helped him earn high school credits and avoid falling behind academically. By the end of that period, his reading comprehension had risen to the college level. Currently, he is a practicing lawyer.

When Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest is introduced at the beginning of a child’s education, it can reduce the number of students later identified with learning disabilities and rewrite outcomes for an entire generation.

Another remarkable example involved an autistic seven-year-old who was nonverbal and unable to name letters or make their sounds. After beginning with Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest, he could trace letters and crack small words. In two years, his steady steps led him to read big words that once seemed far beyond reach.

**Students build a strong phonics foundation and transition to syllable decoding naturally. It's an emotional connection that alleviates reading anxiety and builds confidence**

### Affordable Literacy within Every Family’s Reach

Affordability and accessibility are the hallmarks of Richards Learning Systems. Many families cannot afford one-on-one tutoring or extensive intervention programs. Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest serves as a practical alternative at a fraction of the cost, ensuring that reliable, science-based literacy instruction is within every family’s reach.

The student, parents and teacher are trained simultaneously. There is no bulky teacher’s guide or lengthy training. Instead, all instructions for adults are placed at the bottom of workbook pages, making the program easy to follow. Anyone, regardless of teaching experience, can help a child learn to read.

This is especially useful in underserved areas, where qualified educators are scarce and retention rates are low. Trained parents or guardians can continue guiding children effectively at home. Designed to be user-friendly, the program opens the door to literacy for communities that might otherwise be left behind.

### Literacy for Every Age and Ability

Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest is a culmination of over 40 years of accumulated knowledge and hands-on experience in literacy instruction. During her early years as a teacher, Richards observed the lack of scientific teaching methods and tools to teach students how to read.



Recognizing the need for a completely new model to deliver the literacy program, she embarked on a 12-year journey to bring Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest to life. The effort gained crucial momentum when the CEO of the Cleveland Metropolitan School District invested \$500,000 of COVID-19 relief funds to help complete the series.

The program was first delivered through workshops that trained school teachers and tutors. Over the years, it has extended its impact into corporate settings by helping adults gain vital literacy skills.

In one instance, the team engaged with a class of 10 shop workers, including the union steward, who were non-readers. Richards began the session by introducing a sock puppet, easing the tension in the room and disarming the shame surrounding illiteracy. The goal was to create a space of psychological safety and make reading feel possible. Over the course of three weeks, workers began to read, proving that real learning begins when a learner feels respected and safe.

Steering ahead, Richards Learning Systems plans to extend its focus on serving third-world countries in collaboration with not-for-profit organizations dedicated to improving literacy and education.

The ultimate goal is to make Sammy and the Magical Reading Chest a forward-thinking innovation that makes English literacy accessible across borders and education settings. [ED](#)



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