

The Exceptional Child Beneath That “Learning Disability” Label

by Ken Smith



A learning disability label is like pinning a "Scarlet Letter" on a child. That label can last a lifetime... ADD, ADHD, autism, dyslexia... or just "slow," "dumb," "unmotivated," "bored," "introverted," "hyper," "out of control."... labels that are often cruel... and often far from the real truth.

Most learning disability labels are judgments made on the basis of visible symptoms that mask underlying problems which could be addressed... and even FIXED... if only the labels could be cleared away.

This Report is about the truth beneath those cruel labels.

1. It's about the **UNIQUENESS** of each individual child, too often suppressed by a government-run school system focused on standardized testing -- unequipped and unable to deal with individualized education.
2. It's about the **WONDROUS GIFTS** that live within each child -- extraordinary abilities, sensitivities, strengths... even magical powers that can shine a bright light on the world when barriers are cleared away.
3. And this Report is so much about **WISDOM** -- the innate wisdom of parents to know their children unlike any teacher or professional could ever know them – a deep, intuitive wisdom that is the core of our uncompromising, selfless love for

our children -- our absolute commitment to their well-being and to helping them reach their full potential.

Michelle and Carl are a hard-working couple. Intensely proud of their four children. The oldest two, Chris and Paul -- ages 16 and 14, and the youngest, Jamie -- age 11, are a dream -- excellent students, athletic, respectful -- just all-around great kids.

And then there's Johnnie. Johnnie is 13, but he acts more like an eight-year-old -- flighty, unfocused, struggles in school with every subject, especially math and science. However much Michelle or Carl work with Johnnie on homework assignments, he just doesn't "get it." It's so frustrating.

In school, Johnnie's teachers have tried to motivate and engage Johnnie in the work, but he's just disinterested and not keeping up with his classmates. Parent/teacher conferences are a nightmare for Michelle and Carl, because they're filled with words like "slow," "falling behind," "behavior problem," and recommendations of "Special Ed."

They can see Johnnie withdrawing into a shell. Johnnie believes that the label given to him by adults -- teacher or professional -- must be right. It's like telling Johnnie he has measles. He doesn't know what measles are, but if adults say he has them, he accepts it.

Johnnie is unhappy, too. He is feeling the pain of knowing he's disappointing everyone. He knows he's in trouble, but he doesn't know why. And he doesn't know what to do about it.

Yet in the midst of all this negative aura surrounding their child, Michelle and Carl see something in Johnny that stirs them. There's more to Johnny than what everyone is seeing. They know it. They feel something.

They perceive an extraordinary level of sensitivity in Johnnie. They see it in the way he plays with younger children in the neighborhood -- how caring and helpful he is -- how expressive he becomes during summers away from the failures of homework and tests and putdowns by classmates.

Then one day Michelle notices a pile of small notebooks in Johnnie's room she hasn't seen before. She opens up one of the notebooks, and inside is page after page of poetry... beautiful, intimately expressive poetry... not about failures, fears or hurt... but rather about beauty, dreams and wondrous fantasy.

Michelle and Carl recognize the extraordinary gift inside Johnny. They find an ally among all the negativity in his school during the next term -- an English teacher who, too, sees the spark of genius in Johnny.

Together, they encourage and stimulate Johnny's gift. Johnnie's confidence and zest for life grow. He wins several poetry contests. His teacher helps the parents find a publisher who also sees the genius. Books follow. A scholarship to college majoring in creative

writing. A career as an acclaimed novelist. Fame. Fortune. And a mission to help children who, like Johnnie, have a spark of the extraordinary in them -- masked by a learning disability label.

Fairy tale?

Hardly. It happens every day in homes throughout the world as parents refuse to believe the labels pinned on their children by their school system, a professional or by anyone who cannot see what they see... the exceptional child beneath those labels.

1. Celebrating the UNIQUENESS of each individual child

Let's stop labeling and start helping our children. They have so much to contribute.

When we use the term "labeling," we are implying that we know what's wrong with a child. A child may be behaving in a manner that's not what is the expected norm in a learning situation. It may be different from other children.

But to give it a label is generally negative. The term "learning disability" has been used so commonly that it's a big bucket in which we just keep throwing any set of behaviors we see that does not fit our particular classroom or "normal" mode of behavior.

A term that would be better, not negative, and would really help parents start from a positive side is to say, "My child is showing some **learning differences**." Learning differences are not necessarily negative.

And there are so many examples of famous people who were different in some way. They weren't the norm. They were people who stepped out from the norm and overcame labels that might be diagnosed today as learning disabilities... but, in reality, reflect learning *differences* -- including sparks of genius that were developed and eventually treasured.

Many of these people have shaped the world, and made enormous contributions. At the back of this Report is a long list of renowned individuals that you may not have known experienced learning difficulties growing up. They were often labeled – sometimes formally – sometimes just because of their behavior.

2. Wondrous gifts... We must celebrate and nurture individual talents

Picasso could neither read nor write. Michelangelo was almost nonfunctional outside of his art. Einstein didn't really utter a meaningful word until he was close to five years old. He did poorly in school. He was seen as having a "floating mind." He couldn't focus.

How many times have we said this of our children in class who don't keep their hands clasped on the desk, and don't behave in exactly the way we want? We call that "misbehavior."

Einstein was a dreamer. In fourth grade math, his teachers said he "didn't get it." How many times has that been said about your child -- that he or she "doesn't get it?" Einstein flunked the entrance exam to the university he wanted to attend in Switzerland. He had a learning *difference*. His thinking was different. He saw problems that other great minds couldn't solve.

He even violated the rules of science. When a scientist publishes, it's expected that a fully annotated bibliography of references be provided outlining the foundation of the work. When Einstein published his famous $E=mc^2$ theories, he gave no references, because there was nothing to reference. The work was groundbreaking.

Today, Einstein would have likely been labeled. And, perhaps, even marginalized within an educational system that has difficulty dealing with learning differences. Winston Churchill and Charles Darwin were terrible students. George Washington, our first president, stumbled and fumbled with grammar and writing. Many of these famous people had forms of ADD, ADHD and dyslexia as well.

But what is ADD or ADHD? What is dyslexia? Autism? When you go to the diagnostic manual most professionals use, it gets very complicated. Anyone that understands measurement and objectivity in describing behavior, as scientists are supposed to do, would admit to you that these diagnoses are almost like Chinese menus.

And often the symptoms that prompted one or more of these learning disability diagnoses reflect an underlying development issue at the brain level that can not only be improved upon, but can often be FIXED with proper stimulating and challenging of specific brain areas.

So what good is a label?

How accurate or appropriate is it? And how much harm does that label do to the child and to the family? How much do we lose as a society when children come out of the school system with labels that follow them for the rest of their lives -- with the pain that they carry within their heart?

How much different would our world be if we, instead, stopped using terms like "learning disability" and started celebrating "learning *differences*?" How much better would our world be if we could look into each child's brain early in life and identify not only areas in need of development, but also identify strengths which, with continuous stimulation and challenge, could be developed into extraordinary talents that could enrich the world?

Every brain has unique preferences of how it wants to learn.

I call them the brain's "work rules." Some people are hands-on figural learners. Others learn best when information is presented semantically -- in words and language. And still others are blessed with a strength in symbolic systems and gravitate toward math or the sciences. If you can understand *how your brain prefers to learn*, and not fight these rules, dramatic progress is possible.

Couple this understanding of the brain's work-rule preferences with an understanding of the brain's innate strengths... add a program to integrate your brain's functions -- to tune it up like a performance race car -- and you have a prescription for potential greatness.

My mentor in this area of brain science, Dr. James Fadigan, told me about a recent visit to a local restaurant where he had a conversation with his waitress who started talking about her children. She was a single mother who had lost her husband and was raising two children alone. She told Dr. Fadigan about their school system trying to label her child.

Her pain came right from her heart. She said, "They want to give him drugs. Everyone is giving him a different label. No one can agree on exactly what's wrong with him. There's *nothing* wrong with him. They just don't know how to deal with him. **I won't let them label my child.**"

Thank God parents have enough faith in their children and in their own wisdom that they do not buy 100%, without questioning, what professionals are telling them about their child... when they know there is something exceptional there. And they refuse to allow a negative label hold their child back from progressing, from finding their way through life, from reaching their potential.

We must celebrate these wondrous gifts within our children.

We must clear away the anxiety and fear, the shame and humiliation, the lowered expectations and compromising because a label masks a wondrous gift.

Several of the TV news magazine shows profiled a young man who personifies in the extreme how critical it is to look for the exceptional strengths beneath a learning disability label. This young man cannot dress himself. He cannot feed himself. He cannot read, cannot write. He has a small vocabulary, emotions -- smiles, etc. -- but his verbalizations are very limited. For all practical purposes, he must be treated like a small child.

One day, the woman that the family had hired to stay with him during the day started playing a piano. The boy came over to the piano and started to play what the woman had been playing. She was shocked, but proceeded to encourage the boy. She could not believe how quickly he was picking up the piano on his own -- just sitting there playing around with it. He certainly could not read a note of music, and he was not exceptionally coordinated.

This young man is now touring the world giving concerts. He has to have a woman with him to take him on stage and off stage and take care of his basic needs, but so what!

Look at the genius. Look at the exceptional ability. He was labeled with a learning disability that could have defined him for the rest of his life. But is he learning-disabled in the music area? Of course not. Every single one of us has our exceptional areas. Every brain has differences -- *learning differences*.

Is our job as adults -- teachers, professionals or parents -- to point out a child's differences and label that child on the basis of some weaknesses? Or is it our job to search out and identify strengths and capabilities that *are* there? To celebrate and nurture those abilities -- to build confidence and self-esteem so that working on developing the weaker areas will not traumatize the child -- because a strong foundation of self-image is already in place?

Dr. Fadigan related to me an experience he had in Kansas City that illustrates why labeling children as learning-disabled can be such a disservice to the child, to the parents and to the world. Dr. Fadigan was speaking to a large Special Ed class where his Learn To Learn program was being implemented. There were about 20 children in the room.

In one corner of the room there was a large platform with shelves above it. Any time a child wanted to take something from a shelf, like Legos to build things, they were free to express themselves, as opposed to sitting at a desk. And whenever someone did something special, the teachers would take that item, put the child's name on it and put it on the shelf to show what the child had accomplished.

One day the teachers came into the room and found a very complicated object on the shelf that someone had assembled from different parts. It was rather extraordinary. So they asked around the room, "Who did this?"

There was one little girl that was so shy and "backward" that even the other children in this Special Ed class took care of her. Using negative labels, she was probably the most "learning-disabled" child in the class. The teachers did not expect a lot from her. Inadvertently, even the children had put her down with low expectations.

No one claimed ownership of the object. Finally, one of the children who had watched her do this said, "It was Annie." Everyone laughed.

Then one of the teachers brought her over and said, "Annie, did you do this?" And she nodded her head, yes. The teacher said, "Will you show us how you did this?" She proceeded to take the object apart and put it back together again as if it was a simple task. Yet there was not another person, not a single child (or teacher) in that room that could have done it.

Dr. Fadigan commented how he just sat there and thought, "Every now and then you see it all come together -- a situation that wakes you up to this wondrous mass of neurons we have in our brain that we didn't do a single thing to develop. It was a gift. We must have respect for it. We must cherish it. Nurture it.

Differences are positive, not negative. It's how we label those differences that become negative. We should look for the genius in our children. It is not always world-changing, but there are almost always exceptional, extraordinary abilities. They're there if we will only look for them.

3. Look to your Wisdom

This is addressed to you, the parent. Your child needs you. Those differences that may be manifesting in behavior problems, poor grades, disinterest or any number of symptoms, so easily attract labels that only harm your child. You must look past those symptoms, and identify strengths and abilities that you can celebrate and nurture.

You must balance the negative impact of those differences -- almost inescapable in today's school systems and competitive job market -- with the self-building, confidence-building celebration of your child's strengths and abilities.

And your greatest asset as a parent in this challenge is your WISDOM... your innate wisdom to know your child unlike any teacher or professional could ever know your child. This deep, intuitive wisdom will tell you what is true.

You know your child is more than the world may outwardly see. You know there are strengths and abilities there. Your wisdom tells you so. Your child's brain is so capable... so remarkably capable. That brain is your child's doorway to success in this competitive, rapidly-changing 21st century.

Look to your wisdom to know what must be done to identify and nurture **the exceptional child beneath that "learning disability" label**. Your reward will be the knowledge that you prepared your child for success in this century... and your pain and sense of helplessness will be replaced by a joyous sense of fulfillment that will live with you forever.

*The author, Ken Smith, is the co-founder of EverAgeless.com. **Learn To Learn**, developed by Sr. James Fadigan, is the world's first online program to assess, develop and integrate the 14 underlying brain skills most critical to learning success in the modern world – at any age... \$4.1 million in development... 11 years of scientific validation studies involving more than 17,000 children and adults nationwide.*

High achieving individuals labeled as or suspected to be “learning disabled” during their school years

Some were formally diagnosed (ADD, ADHD, AUTISM, DYSLEXIA, etc.); others exhibited symptoms that today would fall within the “learning disabilities” spectrum. Each individual overcame their label(s) and/or poor self-image growing up to exploit their uniqueness and excel in their chosen profession... and in life.

ARTISTS & ARTISANS

Andrew Dornenberg – award-winning chef. Says that cooking "saved" him from his struggle with dyslexia.

Robert Graham – sculptor struggled with dyslexia. His wife, actress Anjelica Huston explains, “Robert didn’t realize he had a form of dyslexia until his own son was diagnosed. But Robert's artistic gift immeasurably outstripped his difficulty.”

Tommy Hilfiger – internationally-known fashion designer – dyslexia and reading problems.

Robert Rauschenberg – multi-media artist who had significant influence in the world of modern art and was even called the "Picasso of the 21st century."

Chuck Close – one of the nation’s most celebrated contemporary artists.

Mackenzie Thorpe – world-famous painter; he urges people at an exhibit of his work to "stop looking with your eyes and see with your feelings." Difficulty reading is often a visual disability in terms of succeeding in our school systems.

Robert Toth – acclaimed artist has paintings, sculptures, and bronzes on display in museums throughout the world, including the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Willard Wigan – acclaimed artist – the creator of the smallest works of art on earth; he is emerging as the most celebrated micro-miniaturist of all times.

ATHLETES

Billy Blanks – world class martial artist and television and movie actor; has created a foundation to promote self-sufficiency among high-risk women and children.

Terry Bradshaw – former NFL quarterback, now host of Fox’s NFL pre-game show, recently wrote a book in which he reveals that he has ADHD.

Scott Eyre – San Francisco Giants pitcher – was diagnosed with ADHD at age 30.

Magic Johnson – one of the best known NBA players in history

Carl Lewis – Olympic champion in the sprints

Cammi Granato – two-time Olympian in ice hockey and a U.S. National Women’s Team member since 1990 – ADD and dyslexia

Bruce Jenner – 1976 gold medalist in the Olympic decathlon – described as the "World’s Greatest Athlete" – ADHD & dyslexia.

Chris Kaman – center for the NBA’s Los Angeles Clippers.

Hank Kuehne – PGA star – used golf as an escape from his troubles at school.

Mike Lorenz – lineman for the New England Patriots.

Greg Louganis – received an Olympic gold medal in diving in the 1984 and 1988 games – Dyslexia

John E. Morgan – PGA champion – was bullied as a kid because of his learning disabilities.

Jim Shea, Jr. – earned a gold medal competing in the skeleton (small sled) event at the 2002 Winter Olympics, making him the first third-generation Winter Olympian in U.S. history.

Molly Sullivan Sliney – former Olympic fencer – has made it her mission to speak to students and encourage them to believe in themselves and follow their dreams. She rose above her own struggle with dyslexia to become a world-class athlete.

Neil Smith – NFL professional football player – is defensive end for the San Diego Chargers.

Jackie Stewart – a race car driving champion who has been inducted into the Grand Prix Hall of Fame – chronic problems with school subjects - ADD

Stan Wattle – up-and-coming race car driver in the Indy Racing League.

BUSINESS LEADERS

Richard Branson – enormously successful entrepreneur and founder of 150 enterprises that carry the Virgin name, such as Virgin Airlines. Failed school subjects; dyslexia, visual problems.

John T. Chambers – CEO of Cisco Systems – has revolutionized the technology industry and is recognized as one of the most fascinating business leaders of our times.

Barbara Corcoran – founder of one of New York City’s largest residential real estate agencies – recently authored *Use What You’ve Got & Other Business Lessons I Learned from my Mom*.

Henry Ford – founded Ford Motor Co.

Ingvar Kamprad – Swedish founder and chairman of IKEA stores – claims he adapted the inner workings of his business to compensate for his dyslexia.

David Neeleman – founder and CEO of Jet Blue Airways – started his first airline while he was still in college even though he had continuous difficulties in school – dyslexia.

Paul Orfalea – founder and chairperson of Kinko’s, an international, billion-dollar copy service company.

Charles Schwab – founder, chairperson, and CEO of the Charles Schwab Corporation, the largest brokerage firm in the U.S. – dyslexia.

Diane Swonk – Senior Managing Director and Chief Economist for Chicago based Mesirow Financial, one of the nation’s largest banks.

James Levoy Sorenson – Utah entrepreneur who brings his talents to a wide range of ventures.

Donald Winkler – CEO of Ford Motor Credit – has inspired businesses to overcome obstacles to success. He actively supports individuals with learning disabilities.

COMMUNITY ADVOCATES & ACTIVISTS

Erin Brockovich – inspiration for the movie of the same name – now serves as Director of Environmental Research at the law offices of Masry & Vititoe.

Dexter Scott King, – son of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. – President and CEO of The King Center in Atlanta, GA. His memoir, *Growing Up King*, was published in 2003.

Valli Kugler – Miss Tennessee 2002 – who set up a summer camp for children with learning disabilities when she was a student at the University of Tennessee – used the pageant as a platform to increase understanding of learning disabilities.

Kelly McCorkle – legislative correspondent for Representative Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) – a former Miss South Carolina who made learning disabilities part of her pageant platform.

ENTERTAINERS & CELEBRITIES

Princess Beatrice of England – daughter of Prince Andrew and fifth in line to the throne – speaks out about dyslexia.

Daniel Bedingfield – British pop star/composer – recorded his first hit record in his bedroom.

Sylvester Stallone – screenwriter and actor – Rocky

Steve McQueen – actor

John Lennon – The Beatles

Tony Bennett – singer – best known for his hits *Rags to Riches*, *Fly Me to the Moon*, and *I Left My Heart in San Francisco* – a 2005 Kennedy Center honoree and the recipient of 12 Grammy Awards.

Orlando Bloom – the popular English actor, played Legolas, the elf warrior in the film, *Lord of the Rings*.

Cher – an Academy Award-winning actress, is also well-known for her pop music and 1970s hit TV variety show.

Patrick Dempsey – actor – his 20-year acting career includes leads in the recent films *Sweet Home Alabama* and *Scream 3*. He currently stars in the television medical drama *Grey's Anatomy*.

Danny Glover – acclaimed actor of theatre and film, has used his celebrity status to advance many community programs and worthy causes, such as AIDS awareness in South Africa and the advancement of minority youth.

Whoopi Goldberg – actress and comedian who has used her stardom to raise money to eliminate homelessness.

Brian Grazer – successful producer of movies such as *A Beautiful Mind* and *Apollo 13* recalls his personal struggle with dyslexia.

Woody Harrelson – actor – rose to fame as Woody on TV's hit series, *Cheers*. His movie career includes many starring roles and an Academy Award nomination.

Salma Hayek – Mexican-born actress who co-produced and starred in the film *Frida*, about artist Frida Kahlo.

Keira Knightley – English film actress – starred in *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

Jay Leno – a popular comedian and late-night talk show host.

Brad Little, – star of the Cincinnati production of *Phantom of the Opera* – also works to preserve African wildlife.

Jamie Oliver – Britain's "Naked Chef", whose programs appears on the Food Network – known for his lively personality and easy-to-prepare recipes.

Edward James Olmos – celebrated actor, entrepreneur, and activist who supports and advocates for Latino culture in the U.S.

Joe Pantoliano – television actor in *The Sopranos* – survived life on the streets as a kid. Chronic school problems related to dyslexia & ADHD.

Walt Disney – founder of the Disney empire

Tom Cruise – world famous actor

Robin Williams – actor and comedian – ADHD

Ty Pennington – celebrity designer and host of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* – diagnosed with ADHD as a teenager and now talks openly and publicly about his experience managing the disorder. He wants to "help other kids and families understand that there are people out there ready to help them and that it's possible to live a productive life with ADHD."

Suzanne Somers – actress and Las Vegas entertainer who has also become a successful entrepreneur – was a poor student – diagnosed with dyslexia

Vince Vaughn – movie actor who was featured in *The Break-Up*, *Wedding Crashers*, *Dodgeball*.

Lindsay Wagner – most famous for her title role on the 1970s TV series *Bionic Woman* – has dedicated much of her time to raising awareness about learning difficulties.

Henry Winkler – also known as "The Fonz" from the TV series *Happy Days* – a producer, author, Yale graduate, and children's advocate. Serious dyslexia and other semantic problems.

Anthony Hopkins – actor – thought he was a "moron" as a child because he was so hopeless in school

Tom Smothers – The Smothers Brothers

LEGAL, POLITICAL, AND ARMED FORCES LEADERS

David Boies – a runner-up in 2000 for Time Magazine's Man of the Year – a prestigious lawyer involved in high-profile cases.

James Carville – one of America's most famous political consultants. According to E. Clarke Ross, CEO of Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD), "Mr. Carville is perhaps one of the best-known people in Washington, and he lives with ADHD." Carville is also an author, restaurateur, and co-host of radio and television shows. Today he concentrates on international political and corporate consulting.

Gavin Newsom – youngest mayor of San Francisco in 100 Years.

Nelson Rockefeller – served as governor of New York for 12 years and as Vice President of the United States under Gerald Ford.

Peter Wright – attorney and advocate who represents children with special educational needs.

Napoleon Bonaparte – struggled with dyslexia

Winston Churchill – Prime Minister of England during World War II

Woodrow Wilson – U.S. president 1913 – 1921 – severely dyslexic – couldn't read until he was 10 years old

George Patton – World War II general

George Washington – First president of the U.S., – could barely write and had poor grammar skills

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

Harvey Cushing, M.D. (1869-1939) – world renowned neurosurgeon – dyslexia.

Helen Taussig, M.D. (1898-1986) – successful cardiologist struggled with dyslexia, which made school difficult for her. Even so, she graduated from Johns Hopkins Medical School.

Delos Cosgrove, M.D. – cardiothoracic surgeon, inventor of several medical devices, and CEO of the Cleveland Clinic. He says, “I didn't know I was dyslexic until I was 33 years old. I went all the way through medical school without knowing it.

MUSICIANS

Harry Belafonte – famous African American singer, actor, entertainer and political activist who, even into his seventies, uses his position as a celebrity to promote human rights worldwide – auditory – visual integration problems.

Jon Finn – active in the music business as a musician, songwriter, and engineer/producer – dyslexia

Stephan Jenkins – former University of California at Berkeley valedictorian and singer-songwriter for *Third Eye Blind*, a rock group with two platinum albums to its credit.

Jewel – young pop-music artist who recently wrote an autobiography of her life growing up in Alaska.

Phillip Manuel – one of the country's leading jazz vocalists, was diagnosed with ADHD in 2000 and says only then did his life journey begin to make sense to him.

Bob Weir – guitarist and vocalist, formerly with *The Grateful Dead* – now bandleader of *RatDo*

SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS, & TECHNOLOGY LEADERS

Albert Einstein – physicist/mathematician; didn't speak until age 3. Described as mentally slow by teachers. Weak at arithmetic calculation, flunked entrance exam to the university he wanted to enter. Posthumously labeled as having Dyslexia, ADD and Autism Spectrum.

Alexander Graham Bell – inventor of the telephone

Thomas Edison – inventor; he couldn't read until he was twelve years old and had a very difficult time writing even when he was older.

Werner Von Braun – German pioneer in rocket science – father of the U.S. space program. Often flunked his math tests in high school.

William “Bill” Hewlett – cofounder of Hewlett-Packard, the 2d largest computer company in the world.

Dr. John (Jack) Horner – famous paleontologist and dinosaur expert, who advised Steven Spielberg on films such as *Jurassic Park* and *The Lost World* – flunked out of college 7 times

Louis Pasteur – inventor of pasteurization

Leonardo daVinci –

Don Johnston – CEO of Don Johnston, Inc. His mission is to support diverse learners with proven instructional models, effective literacy strategies, and innovative technologies to help them reach grade-level performance.

John Roberts – CEO and co-founder of SugarCRM,. A pioneer in commercial open-source software applications that businesses use for tasks such as managing sales and keeping track of customers.

Richard Rogers – one of Britain's most-admired architects; known for his many stunning buildings and his pioneering views on sustainable cities.

Bill Wilson – fire investigator with a “seventh sense” – has a reputation for solving the unsolvable in car crash mysteries.

Galileo – astronomer

The Wright Brothers – credited with the first airplane flight

WRITERS & MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

Avi – award winning author of more than 50 books for children and young adults.

Robert Benton – a three-time Academy Award-winning screenwriter and director who is dyslexic – still finds reading and writing laborious.

Gareth Cook – Pulitzer Prize winning science writer for the Boston Globe newspaper.

Stephen J. Cannell – successful novelist and an Emmy Award-winning TV writer and producer who has created or co-created over 40 different shows.

Anderson Cooper – CNN news anchor who gained public attention for his coverage of Hurricane Katrina.

John Dunning – Denver mystery writer who's also a bookstore proprietor.

Fannie Flagg – writer and actor who is most famous for her novel *Fried Green Tomatoes* which was later produced as a movie.

Richard Ford – author who won both the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award for his novel, *Independence Day* in 1996 — a first in the literary world.

Jackie French – author of numerous kids' books, as well as books about gardening and Australian history.

Terry Goodkind – author of 8 best-selling fantasy novels.

John Irving – novelist and screenplay writer of *World According to Garp*, *Hotel New Hampshire*, and *Cider House Rules*, a movie that recently won acclaim and award nominations.

H.G. Wells – author of *War of the Worlds*

F. Scott Fitzgerald – author

Lewis Carroll – author – *Alice In Wonderland*

George Bernard Shaw – author – ADD

Richard Moore – poet – has struggled with dyslexia all his life, yet it hasn't kept him from doing what he loves. A graduate of Yale University, he has published a novel, a book of literary criticism, and 12 books of poetry — the first of which, *A Question of Survival*, earned him a Pulitzer Prize nomination in the 1970s.

Patricia Polacco – prolific children’s author and illustrator – didn’t learn to read until she was 14.

Victor Villaseñor – Mexican-American author who has written 9 novels, 65 short stories, and a critically-acclaimed screenplay.

Art Rodriguez – California author who documents his challenging childhood in children’s and young adult books.

Atosa Rubenstein – was successful as the editor in chief of *Seventeen* magazine. Today she has her own digital business and a consulting firm advising companies how to speak to the teen market – dyslexia

Philip Schultz – poet – recent winner of the Pulitzer Prize – suffers from dyslexia and didn't learn to read until he was in the fifth grade.

Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006) – writer and playwright – won multiple awards for her play, *The Heidi Chronicles*, including the Pulitzer Prize.

Ahmet Zappa – son of the late rock musician, Frank Zappa – has authored the first book in a planned trilogy of monster stories.

Jules Verne – *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*