



**For Immediate Release**

Press Contact: Lena Hanson  
847-740-0749  
[lhanson@donjohnston.com](mailto:lhanson@donjohnston.com)

**Don Johnston Releases Start-to-Finish® Literacy Starters Curriculum**  
*A new, research-based reading curriculum for students with complex needs*

**VOLO, Ill., February 10, 2014**—Don Johnston Incorporated has released Start-to-Finish® Literacy Starters Curriculum, a comprehensive literacy curriculum for students in grades 4-12 with complex support needs. The program guides teachers to build early reading skills through step-by-step lesson plans paired with age-appropriate picture books.



“We believe all students should be on a path to reading, including students with cognitive disabilities and autism,” explains Ruth Ziolkowski, president of Don Johnston Incorporated. “Traditionally, many of these students were never expected to read, but new curriculum overhauls, like the Common Core, raise these expectations. We’re excited that Literacy Starters Curriculum is one of the first curricula designed to put students on the path to emergent reading.”

With Literacy Starters Curriculum, special education directors and curriculum coordinators can deliver a comprehensive, accessible reading curriculum to their students with significant cognitive disabilities. The curriculum was designed for emergent and non-readers in grades 4-12 who can identify most letters most of the time, are engaged and interested when books are read to them, and have a means of communication.

“Start-to-Finish Literacy Starters Curriculum was designed to meet the needs of the older beginning and transitional readers,” says Dr. Karen Erickson, Director of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies at UNC-Chapel Hill and the lead researcher behind the curriculum. “Comprehension is addressed as a central component through book-specific lessons that help students relate what they are reading to life experiences while building important language understandings. In addition, teachers are provided with the ready-made lessons they need to address student literacy needs in a comprehensive way.” Dr. Erickson is recognized as a leader in special education curriculum development and has spent over a decade researching the best ways to assess and teach reading to children with the most severe disabilities.

A five-step instructional framework helps teachers deliver lessons paired with sections in each book. “The consistent lesson format is important for student skill development and it brings the added benefit of minimizing teacher planning time,” explains Mary Krenz, director of professional development for Don Johnston Incorporated. “Each lesson only requires 10 minutes of prep time from the special education classroom teacher, which gives them more time to plan individualized instruction.”

The curriculum includes:

- 5 sets of Literacy Starters—each set includes 3 paperback books, 3 computer books on CD, and teacher materials (on CD)
- Literacy Starters Curriculum Guide
- 43 book-specific comprehension lessons
- 50 phonics lessons with teacher directions
- Reproducible worksheets
- Literacy Starters Workshop Professional Development DVD—Training by Dr. Karen Erickson
- Literacy Starters Teacher Guides

Start-to-Finish Literacy Starters Curriculum is available for shipping immediately. K-12 School districts can purchase the complete curriculum program for \$499 per classroom set.

**Resource Links:**

To learn more about Start-to-Finish® Literacy Starters Curriculum, please visit: <http://donjohnston.com/literacy-starters-curriculum/>

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**About Don Johnston Incorporated**

Don Johnston Incorporated (<http://donjohnston.com>) develops accessible reading and writing technology and curriculum products to support K-12 and postsecondary students with cognitive, physical, and learning disabilities. Since 1980, the special education and assistive technology company has partnered with literacy experts, assistive technology (AT) specialists, SLPs, OTs, special education teachers, university researchers and DSS coordinators to improve access to learning and to increase reading and writing independence. Tens of thousands of students with dyslexia, autism, dysgraphia, down-syndrome and diverse learning challenges use our curriculum, software and hardware devices to accommodate their learning needs in schools, the workforce and at home.

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26799 W. Commerce Dr. • Volo, IL 60073 • 800.999.4660 • Fax 847.740.7349

[www.donjohnston.com](http://www.donjohnston.com)