

Boost your bottom line.

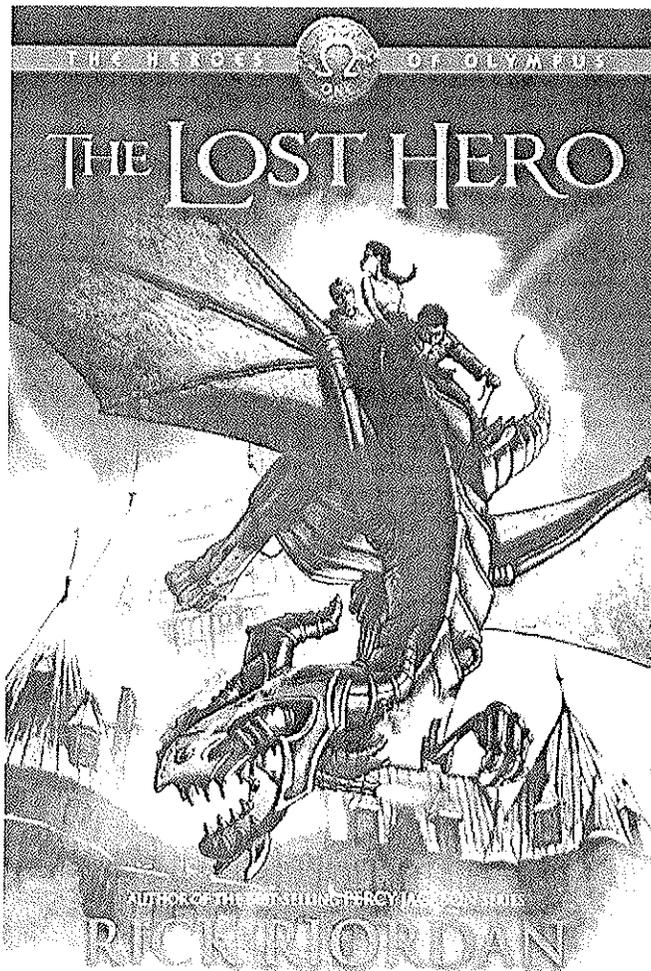
Start today with
**The Wall Street Journal
 Online Small Business Channel.**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

OCTOBER 15, 2010 3:00 AM ET

Rick Riordan on Four Ways to Get Kids with ADHD to Read



My sixteen-year-old son Haley recently came into my office and announced that he'd finished a six-hundred-page manuscript. I suppose that would be unusual coming from any sixteen-year-old, but given my son's background, it's especially stunning.

Haley is ADHD and dyslexic. At seven, he hated school. He would hide under the dining room table to avoid reading or doing his homework. My novels about Percy Jackson began as bedtime stories for him – a father's desperate attempt to keep his son interested in reading. That's also why I made Percy Jackson ADHD and dyslexic, and made those two conditions indicators of Olympian blood.

Over the last nine years, so much has changed. Percy Jackson became a five-book series. Haley took his own hero's journey from reluctant reader to an avid devourer of books. Now, as I launch a new series "The Heroes of Olympus," which returns to Percy Jackson's world, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on what I've learned about getting ADHD/dyslexic kids to read. I can't promise that every child with learning differences will become a novelist, but I do think all children can become lifelong readers. Below are four essential things I've learned as a dad and a classroom teacher:

1. Model reading at home. If the parents are too busy to read, it's a safe bet the children will feel the same way. Set aside time for family reading each night. It doesn't matter so much what the kids read, as long as you provide them

space for reading and a sense that it is a valuable part of your daily routine. Sometimes the Riordan family will read books together. Sometimes we're all reading different things. But we value books, and we have great conversations about our favorite authors and stories.

2. Match your children with the right books. By the "right" books, I mean the ones that will leave them wanting to read more. Every child's taste is different. Don't worry if they're not reading "War and Peace" at age 12. First, build a good foundation and a positive attitude about reading by letting them pick the stories they enjoy. Make friends with a bookseller or librarian. They are a wealth of information on finding books that kids enjoy.

3. Create a productive environment for reading. Usually, this means few distractions. Reading with music or TV? Not such a great idea. On the other hand, many ADHD kids can focus better if they can have something to fiddle with like a stress ball, an eraser, or some other small object that absorb their kinesthetic energy. Let your child participate in finding the most comfortable space to read – a chair, a sofa, a loft, a patio.

4. Most importantly, keep the long view. Your child will grow up to be a successful person. ADHD and dyslexia really are differences, not disabilities. A disproportionate number of millionaires are dyslexics. ADHD adults are valuable in the workplace because they can focus like a laser on things that really interest them. Kids with learning differences naturally become out-of-the-box thinkers, because they have to find different ways to solve problems. If we can get these kids through the school years, they will excel.

Take it from this dad. It seems like just yesterday my son was hiding under the table to avoid reading. Now, he's writing books longer than mine!

For more on "The Heroes of Olympus" go [here](#).

To visit Rick Riordan's web site, go [here](#).

What do you think? Leave your thoughts in the comments.

Copyright 2008 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com