

How is the Reading Kingdom different from other reading systems?

Thank you for taking the time to find out about Reading Kingdom, a patented, adaptive, common-core aligned, online reading and writing program that teaches children to read and write to a 3rd grade level. The program is fundamentally different from other reading systems available today in both the skills it teaches and in the methods for teaching those skills.

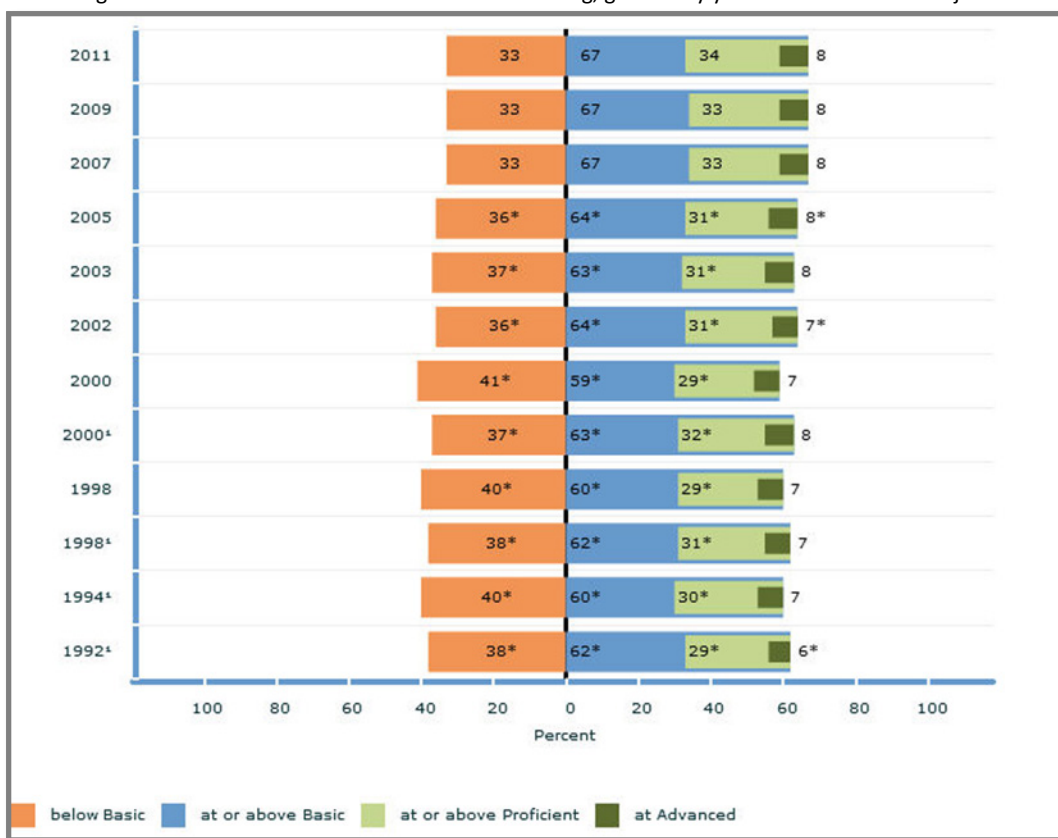
Reading Kingdom is the only program that teaches all 6 essential language skills for reading and writing in a fully integrated manner so that they complement and reinforce one another while simultaneously fostering comprehension at every level. It is also a comprehensive system that teaches the complete slate of English language arts skills including reading, writing, speaking and listening.

Do we really need a new reading program?

In a word, yes.

According to the US Dept. of Education **2 out of 3 children are failing to achieve proficiency in reading.** That's not a typo. 2 out of 3! And students who cannot read proficiently by the end of 4th grade are four times more likely to drop out compared to proficient readers. Even more disturbingly, 2 out of 3 will end up in jail or on welfare.

Percentages at or above each achievement level for reading, grade 4 by year for all students and jurisdictions.



Source: US Department of Education

How can this be?

Current reading education typically teaches a phonics approach, a whole language approach, or a combination of the two – attempting to fill in the other necessary reading and writing skills using a hodge-podge of additional methods.

Phonics, the dominant method taught for decoding (i.e., knowing what a word is “saying”), teaches the sounding out of letters and words. But there is a significant problem with phonics – the vast majority of words in English cannot be sounded out in any reliable way. In fact, in English, **there are 1,768 ways of spelling forty phonemes** (a basic sound unit in the language) – which is why English is one of the only languages with dictionaries that require a pronunciation guide. (In most foreign languages pronunciations are not needed because the spelling adequately represents the pronunciation.)

Consider the following sentence:

I knew in my **head** and **heart** that the **theater** **bureau’s** harsh **reaction** to the **ocean** & **earth** **pageant**, which I thought was a **great**, **beautiful** production, was **mean** spirited – despite their **caveat** that their opinion was **changeable**.

In this one sentence the common “ea” vowel combination can be pronounced 13 different ways!

In order to overcome the problems inherent in sounding out, phonics relies on children memorizing almost 600 rules, such as the “silent e” rule, the double vowel rule, the consonant combination rule and on and on. Remembering nearly 600 rules is impossible for a child - or even an adult for that matter. What's worse is that the rules themselves are riddled with exceptions (just try applying the double vowel rule to the “ea” sentence above). For better or worse, in English, irregularity is the rule. Put simply, if phonics worked as advertised it would be spelled “foniks.”

Whole language has had even poorer results. It provides very little structure for learning and as a result, children are often overwhelmed with unfamiliar words and sentence structures. Without any formalized structure, children find themselves adrift in a sea of unrecognized words – and reading failure often ensues.

Isn't this a recent problem?

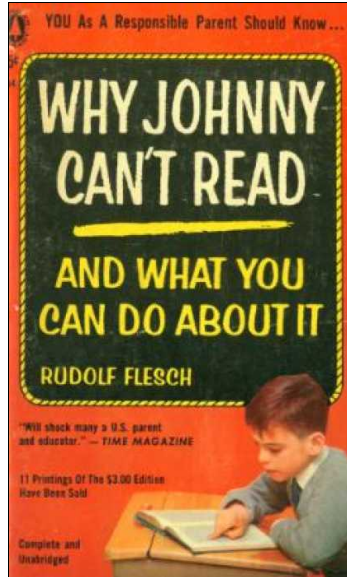
No, it isn't.

Many people assume that our current level of reading failure is a modern problem resulting from factors including demographic shifts, poverty, high tech gadgets that dominate children's attention, and a general breakdown in student diligence and discipline. While these factors do play a role, we have always had serious reading problems. But now, as manufacturing, farming and other manual labor employment has declined and a knowledge based economy has taken its place, reading is more important than ever.

Just take a look at some of the books that have been published on the challenges of reading education over the last 160 years:



1857
Reading Without Tears



1955
Why Johnny Can't Read



2000
Why Our Children Can't Read

Over time, phonics, which has always resulted in a high failure rate, has either been supplanted or supplemented by other methods such as whole word, look-say, whole language, etc. But the phonics approach, which is believed to date back to the beginning of alphabetic languages, has typically been viewed as the best way to help children decode the language. And it does work reasonably well for languages that are regular (such as Spanish) – but not for English.

This emphasis on Phonics has led to instruction that is stilted and leaves children unprepared for the text they find in the real world. Consider the following image taken from a competitor's website:

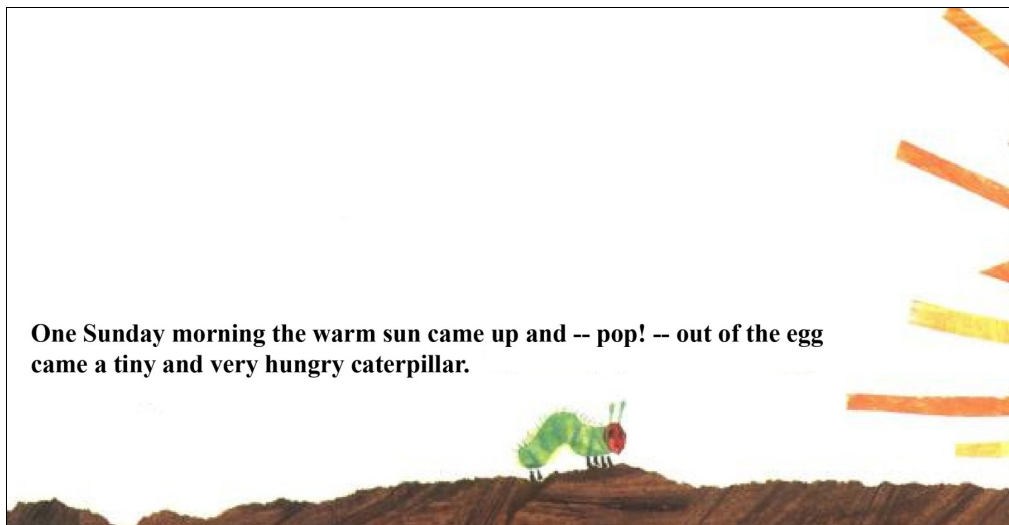
Our competition:



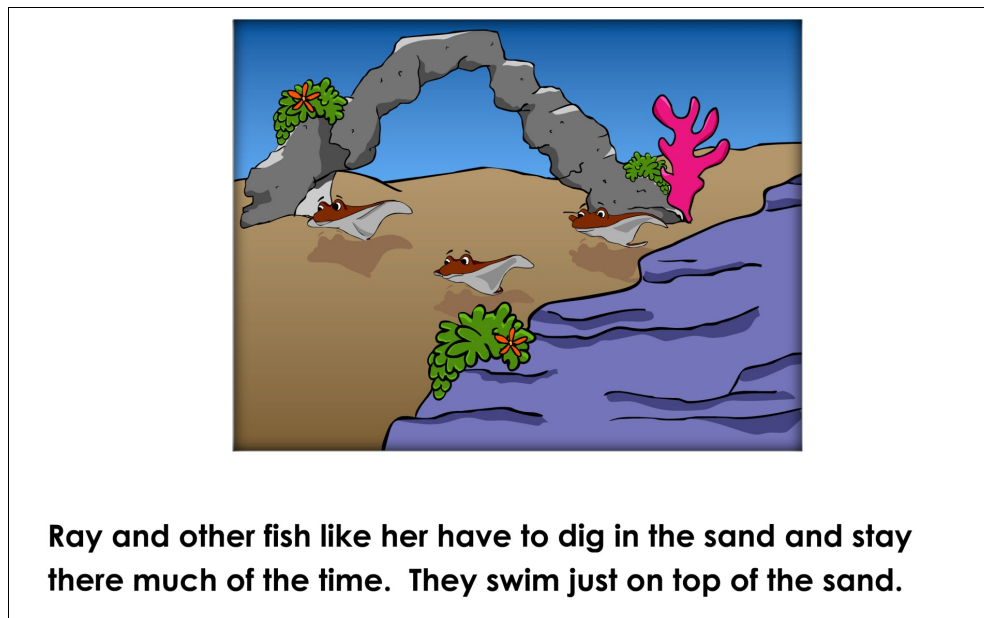
**The peel is old.
"I can fling the old peel."
Can Scout free his wing?
Fling holds the peel.
Scout is free!**

Why would a reading company advertise that they teach children sentences that amount to gibberish? Because that is considered normal when the words being taught are structured based on sounds – which is typical of all phonics-based decoding instruction. It is also worth noting that this text has many other strange characteristics such as centered spacing (as opposed to the left justified spacing found in

virtually all books), quotations appearing without any attribution, bizarre proper names (“Fling”), etc. As soon as children pick up a real book, they find something completely different. Consider “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” which has been on the Amazon children’s best seller list for many years.



In real books, words are always structured based on meaning, which is exactly how Reading Kingdom is organized. Here is a typical page from a Reading Kingdom book:



In Reading Kingdom, children are taught words that are used to build meaningful sentences which then combine with other sentences to make meaningful messages – just like the books children find in real life.

Why would you teach children to read using text that is unlike anything they will encounter in the real world? To be frank, we don’t know. It doesn’t make any sense. Just think about any other skill we learn – such as musical instruments, sports, or foreign languages, etc. We start off learning the basics – but we

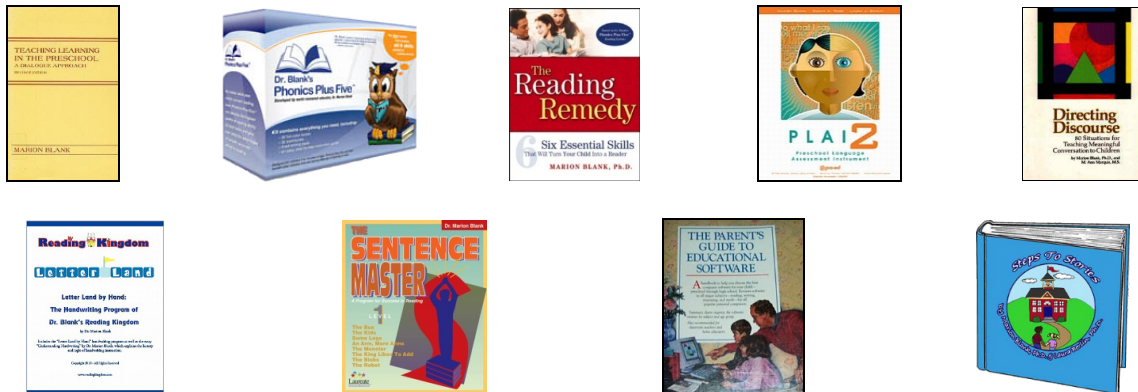
learn the form correctly. We don't begin by learning a stilted, incorrect and inappropriate version of the skill we want to learn! Why should reading be any different?



Reading Kingdom offers a research-based, award-winning and innovative reading system that can teach any child to read and write successfully. Developed by Dr. Marion Blank, it uses a patented “Integrated Six Skill Method” of reading instruction that incorporates elements of phonics and whole language while teaching additional skills required for reading and writing success – without requiring kids to learn any complicated rules.

Dr. Blank is a developmental psychologist with a specialization in language (both spoken and written) and learning. She has spent over forty years studying how children learn to read and is recognized by her peers as one of the world's top experts in literacy. In addition to her work at Reading Kingdom, she is on the faculty at Columbia University where she developed and directed the Light on Learning Program.

Dr. Blank has lectured extensively around the world, authored over sixty articles and six books on language, and developed numerous large scale programs and assessment tools designed to effectively and economically address significant education problems. Dr. Blank is also a recipient of the Upton Sinclair Award which honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to education.



(A selection of books and programs authored by Dr. Blank.)

Reading Kingdom is the only system using this innovative approach. And when children are taught all six skills in an integrated fashion, they easily master both reading and writing. To get a sense of their power, let's briefly consider what the six skills entail.

The Integrated Six Skill Method of Reading & Writing

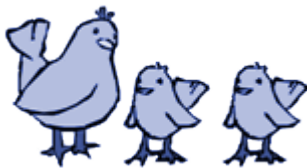
The six skills of reading and writing are: sequencing, writing, sounds, meaning, grammar and comprehension.

Dr. Marion Blank's "Integrated 6 Skill Method"						
	Sequencing	Writing	Phonology	Semantics	Syntax	Comprehension
Dr. Blank's Reading Kingdom	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Phonics			✓			
Whole Language						✓

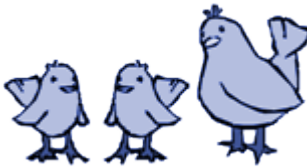
Sequencing (Letter Order)

When we are young children and see items that are grouped together, we are taught that their sequence, or order, doesn't matter. For example:

here are some birds



& here are the same birds...



& here are the same birds...



No matter what order the birds appear in they are still called "birds." However, when we learn how to read, suddenly, the sequence of the objects becomes essential for the first time.

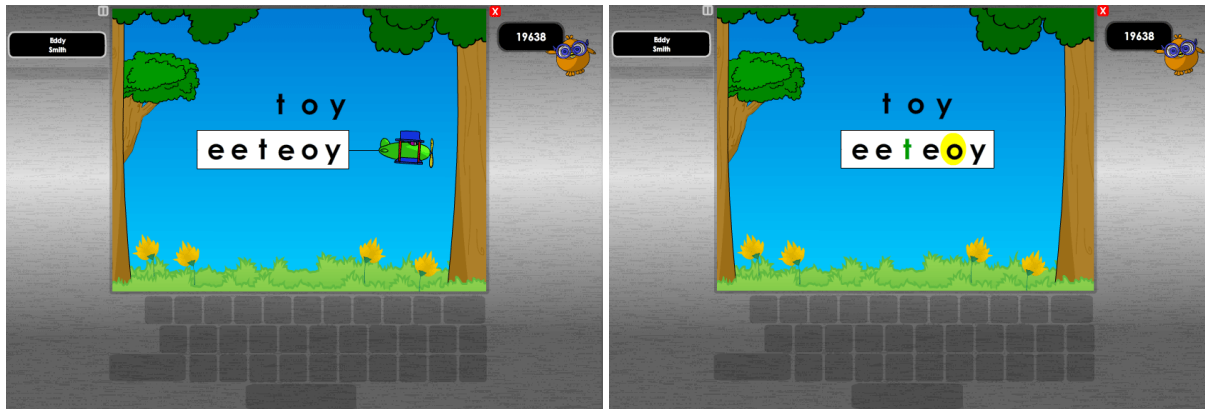
Sequencing is what allows us to take combinations and by changing their order, arrive at totally different words – as you can see in these words:

now won own

pale leap plea

live evil veil

These differences in sequencing are obvious to us, but not to a young child who has not yet learned to read. Typically, children are not taught this essential aspect of reading. However, in the Seeing Sequences segment of the Reading Kingdom, children easily and rapidly acquire the sequencing skills they need.



Seeing Sequences

Writing (motor skills)

Writing is reading's sister skill and is an essential part of reading education. In school, children are asked to compose many messages such as stories and journal entries. To do this successfully, they need to have mastered the physical skills involved in creating written words – so they can focus on the content of what they are writing and not the mechanics of how they are writing. With paper and pencil material, this means handwriting; with computers, this means keyboarding. Fortunately, for young children, keyboarding does not require their having to use all ten fingers. A single finger is enough. But the movements of that finger must be guided by teaching which leads the children to have a solid sense of the keyboard layout. With that mental map in place, hunting and pecking vanishes to be replaced by smooth, accurate movements on any keys they need.

The solution is provided in the Letter Land segment of the Reading Kingdom which offers an integrated system for teaching children the skills for recognizing and selecting the letters they need to produce for effective spelling and writing. This segment teaches upper and lower case letters, as well as the beginnings of punctuation.

(The Reading Kingdom also offers an easy-to-use handwriting program that teaches children the fine motor skills and the production of shapes that handwriting requires.)



Letter Land

Sounds (Phonology)

Phonology is the skill that allows you to take a set of letters (such as "c", "a", and "t") and translate them into sounds that form real words (e.g. "cat"). Unfortunately, the current methods for teaching "sounding out" just don't work in real life. As already noted, the vast majority of words in English cannot be sounded out. For a novice reader English's irregularity is incredibly confusing.

The "solution" that traditional phonics approaches offer to get around this obstacle is to have children learn "rules" about the way letters work. But the problem with the "rules" is that even if children could remember them (which they can't) the rules typically don't work most of the time.

Fortunately, there are easier and more effective methods for developing phonological awareness and converting letters into sounds without requiring children to learn complicated and error-prone rules. Reading Kingdom's Savvy Sounds format overcomes these hurdles by having the program contribute to the blending process using a unique method we call "bit blends." For example, for a word like **water**, the computer will show and say the first part of the word (e.g. "wa"). Then the screen shows a set of words and while the audio says the target word (e.g. "water") which the child has to select:



Savvy Sounds format

Meaning (Semantics)

In early reading children are typically presented with endless pages of words that have nothing to do with one another except for sharing sets of letters. For instance, they may share:

- initial sounds: as in "shed", "shirt", "shoe", "shell"
- or middle sounds: as in "food", "boot", "pool", "roof"
- or final sounds: as in "lake", "cake", "make", "take", "rake"

The result of this approach is that children get accustomed to worksheets showing endless sets of disconnected words. In real reading material, of course, words never cluster this way. Even in the earliest readers, words are linked together on the basis of meaning – not sounds. A story about a hungry animal, for example, might read as follows:

"The bear was hungry. She was looking for some food. She spotted a tree with berries..."

None of these words shares common letter patterns. To read this material, a child must be able to shift rapidly from one different word to the next. The sound-sharing words of worksheets do not prepare children to do this, leaving them at a loss when they have to do actual reading.

For children to become effective readers, from the start, they must learn how words combine when they convey meaningful messages. The reading and writing materials in the Reading Kingdom all pay close attention to meaning so that a child is always working with words and sentences that actually mean something – just like the words and sentences they encounter in real life.



Stay and play format

Grammar (Syntax)

Our language contains lots of words. Some estimates put the number as high as one million. Out of that vast number, there is a very small, unique group made up of only 100 commonly used words. They are words such as "the", "is", "was", "they", "how", "what", and "does" and are often referred to as "non-content" words because they seem to lack any clear meaning. (They are also referred to as "high frequency," "function," and "sight" words.)

Because these words cannot be sounded out, they are labeled as "exceptions" and they are given minimal teaching time.

All this overlooks **an** amazing fact. 100 **or so of these** words occupy **the** majority **of any** page **of** print **you will ever** see **in the** English language — **regardless of whether the** book **is for a** child **or an** adult.

(In the sentences you just read, the **bolded** "non-content" words add up to 25 of 40 words, resulting in 63% of the total.)

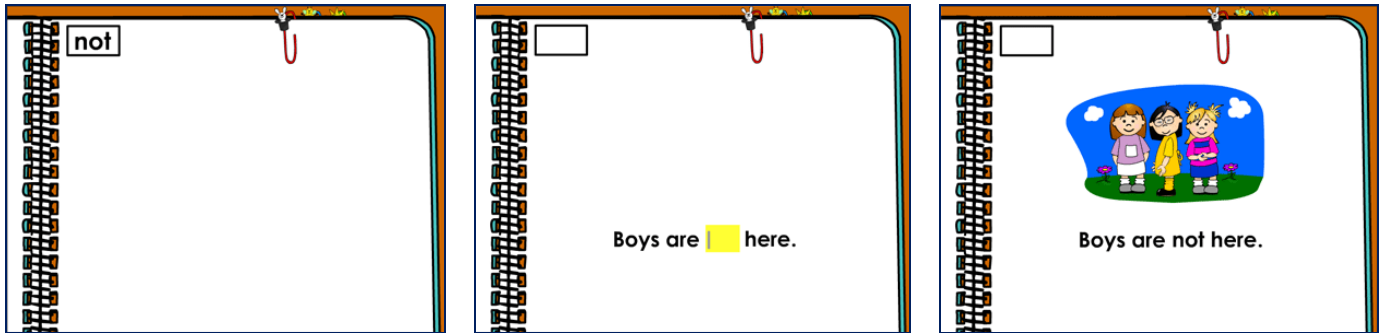
Moreover, these words are also essential to the meaning and grammar of any sentence. For instance consider these two sentences:

The boy walked the dog.
The boy walked **to** the dog.

The introduction of the word "to" completely changes the meaning of the sentence.

Think about it: if you teach children to decode and understand the usage of these one hundred words, they will be able to read 60% of the words they see and it will help them see the relationships between the other words! The importance of this to reading instruction cannot be overstated.

The Reading Kingdom is the only system that has been designed to leverage the power of this group of words. As a result, children are provided with a potent tool that makes reading easier, smoother, and easier to understand.



Write in to read format

Comprehension (Text)

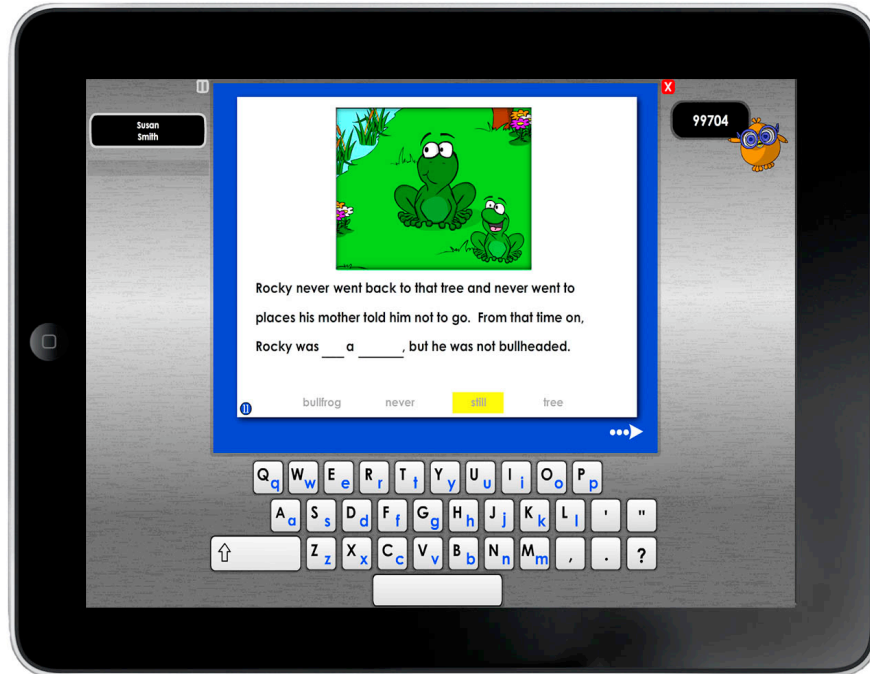
Books represent the heart and soul of reading. Unless they have been beset by failure, young children have no deeper yearning than being able to read books on their own.

Unfortunately, motivation is not everything. Good books tell stories. To do that, they need to use a fair number of complex words, ideas, and sentences. It is wonderful to read those stories to children. It is not wonderful to have children read those stories on their own. They are too long and too complex, with the result that children find themselves adrift in a sea of unrecognized words. The experience for novice readers is not pleasure, but rather pain as they experience repeated errors. Nothing is more devastating to learning than high rates of error.

Any parent whose child struggles with the printed page will tell you the real story. With repeated failure, motivation is transformed into tension and misery. Children will love reading only if they can read the messages on the printed page easily and effortlessly and if they see the way ideas are put together to create meaningful stories. Without comprehending the “main idea” conveyed by the books, children aren’t really reading.

That’s why the Reading Kingdom uses a series of 30 custom books that are scientifically designed to provide motivation while simultaneously providing the structure and control children need for effective reading with comprehension.

Another key feature of the program is that before children read a book, they learn all of the words in that book via 4 of 8 different formats that teach the word’s spelling, pronunciation, meaning and usage in context. This way, once children reach a book, they are guaranteed to be able to successfully read it.



Book 30

The Special Ingredient - Our Hidden Abilities

Amazingly, some of the most critical skills for reading are ones we don't even know we have – our hidden abilities!

By the time your child starts to read, they have already mastered a great deal of spoken language and as a result, they have assimilated an incredible amount of knowledge that forms the basis for what we call their hidden abilities. For example, even a young child may know that the statement “I am looking at she” is incorrect while the statement “I am looking at her” is correct. While they may not know the technical reason why it's correct, they just know what “sounds right.”

Consider the following examples:

We ought to **record** that he broke the **record**.
 A large farm was used to **produce** the **produce**.
 This is not a good time to **present** the **present**.

In each sentence, our hidden grammatical abilities lead us instantly and automatically to offer two different pronunciations and assign two different meanings for what appears to be the identical word.

The power of our hidden abilities is truly remarkable. They allow us to construct amazingly intricate sentences without knowing how we do it, or why they are correct. They are the key ingredient that makes reading smooth, effortless and automatic.

The Reading Kingdom is the only system with activities to foster the smooth and rapid development of our vital hidden abilities and then to capitalize on these abilities to allow all children — even those who have been struggling — to become star readers.

Adaptive & Personalized Instruction

Every child is different! We all know this instinctively, but our education system, due to budget concerns and historical precedent tends to take a one-size-fits-all approach. The Reading Kingdom has been designed to take advantage of children's strengths and to help them overcome any weaknesses. As children move through the program, the path they take is continuously customized to their particular needs. In other words, Reading Kingdom provides an adaptive, personalized learning experience for each child. This prevents children from wasting time learning something they already know (which leads to boredom) or being faced with tasks that are too difficult (which leads to frustration).

Reading Kingdom System Highlights

- It is fun and easy to use. After a few lessons, children can use the program completely on their own.
- It adapts to each child's skill level so the teaching material is matched precisely to a child's ability. Children do not waste any time learning something they already know or being frustrated by material that is too advanced.
- It places a major emphasis on accurate spelling and accurate writing, including correct punctuation, so children attain proficiency in reading's sister skill – writing.
- It is designed to minimize error – something that occurs all the time in learning and something which can destroy self-esteem if not kept to a minimum. When error does occur, it offers specific techniques to overcome the problem and reach success.
- It offers regular checks of a children's progress to determine if they are ready to move ahead or if they need to review certain material.
- Each session requires only 15- 30 minutes – so children rapidly progress without ever feeling overwhelmed.
- Another ingenious feature of the Reading Kingdom system is that children never have to learn or memorize the boring, difficult and exception-riddled rules of language. The scientifically designed system teaches the rules implicitly, while children have fun with the material.
- It is aligned to the common core, it works as a curriculum, supplement, or intervention program, and it can be used for all children, including those who are ESL or special needs.

Here's what people are saying about Reading Kingdom:



"There are **so many great things about Reading Kingdom** ... It's easy to use, builds on success, and your child really enjoys it."

--Cindy Crawford, whose kids used Reading Kingdom



"Reading Kingdom is **a monumental work** that makes available to educators, therapists and families a simple, straightforward time-tested approach."

-- Dr. Jeffrey Lieberman, Columbia University



"The program addresses deficiencies in phonics and whole language ... **I highly recommend it.** The financial investment will garner huge returns for you."

-- Anitra Elmore, teacher



"Reading Kingdom is the only program I recommend. It is fun for kids, easy to use, well grounded in research and it works! **There is no better program.**"

-- Karen Quinn, Testing For Kindergarten



"All three of my children report that they **love Reading Kingdom** because it is a lot of fun! It's an exceptional program that expands on traditional phonics."

-- Maureen Ruble, parent



"Reading Kingdom provides the most complete method for teaching reading & writing that I have seen. **Thank you for this outstanding program.**"

-- Catherine Smith, teacher



"My son loved Reading Kingdom from the start. **In his words, 'Mommy, I can read!'**"

-- Jennifer McQuillan, parent



"**I love how the program is customized** to teach the students exactly what they need & keeps me up to date on their progress. Thank you Reading Kingdom A++!"

-- Melissa Holyfield, teacher

For more reviews please visit: <http://www.readingkingdom.com/testimonials/>

For a complete description of how the Reading Kingdom program works, see Dr. Blank's book, "[The Reading Remedy](#)".

