Reading Kingdom

The Reading Kingdom
Curriculum Guide

The Reading Kingdom is a patented, adaptive, common-core aligned, online program that teaches children 4-10 how to read and write to a 3rd grade level.

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Overview: What is the Reading Kingdom?

The Reading Kingdom is a patented, adaptive, common-core aligned online program that teaches children 4-10 years old how to read and write to a third grade level. It is fundamentally different from other reading systems available today in both the skills it teaches and in the methods for teaching those skills. Until now, educators relied almost exclusively on the sounds of phonics and the whole words of sight reading to teach reading skills.

Phonics, the dominant method, teaches the sounding out of words. But there is a major problem with phonics which is that the vast majority of words in English cannot be sounded out.

Consider the following sentence:

> I knew in my h**ea**d and h**ea**rt that the th**ea**ter bur**ea**u's harsh r**ea**ction to the oc**ea**n & **ea**rth pag**ea**nt, which I thought was a gr**ea**t, b**ea**utiful production, was m**ea**n spirited – despite their cav**ea**t that their opinion was chang**ea**ble.

The "ea" letter combination in this sentence can be pronounced 13 different ways!

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.)

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. 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 that cause unnecessary difficulties in learning. Without any formalized structure, children find themselves adrift in a sea of unrecognized words – and reading failure often ensues.

It's because of these problems with phonics and whole language that schools across the nation show that 2 out of 3 children are failing to achieve proficiency in reading (Source: US Dept. of Education) and those who are succeeding are taking longer to learn than they need to.

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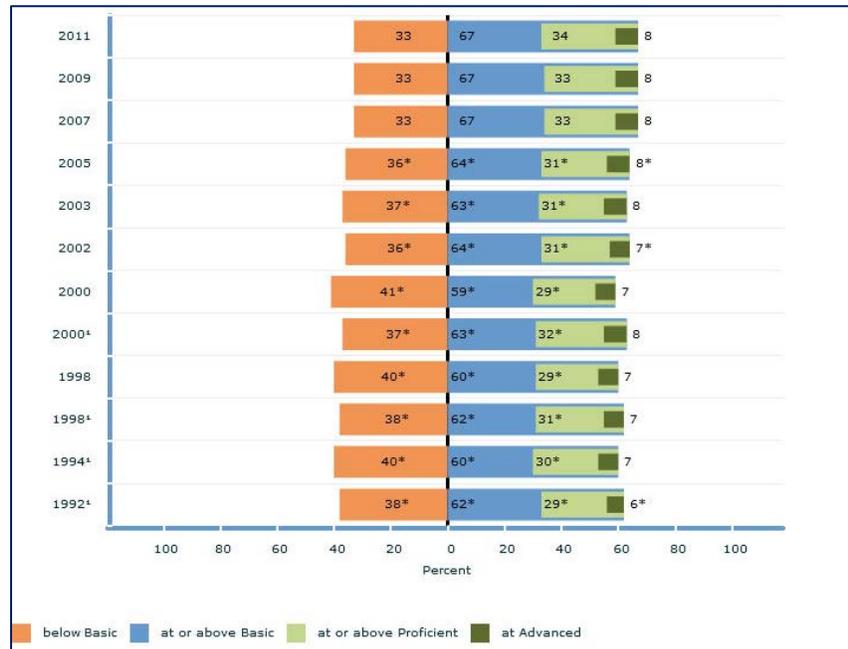

Source: US Dept. of Education

The Reading Kingdom program, on the other hand, offers a **new integrated 6 skill model of reading** instruction that incorporates the best elements of phonics and whole language while teaching additional skills required for reading and writing success without requiring students to learn any complicated rules. All of the six key language skills are taught in a synergistic fashion in which they complement and reinforce one another while always fostering the essential element of comprehension.

The Reading Kingdom is the brainchild of Dr. Marion Blank. She is a developmental psychologist with a specialization in language (both spoken and written) and learning. Dr. Blank 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. Her most recent book is *The Reading Remedy: The Six Essential Skills to Turn Your Child into a Reader* (published by Wiley). Described by Kirkus Reviews as "an invaluable resource," *The Reading Remedy* explains Dr. Blank's reading system in depth. Dr. Blank is also a recipient of the Upton Sinclair Award which honors individuals who have made a significant contribution to education.

Some of the books and products authored by Dr. Blank:
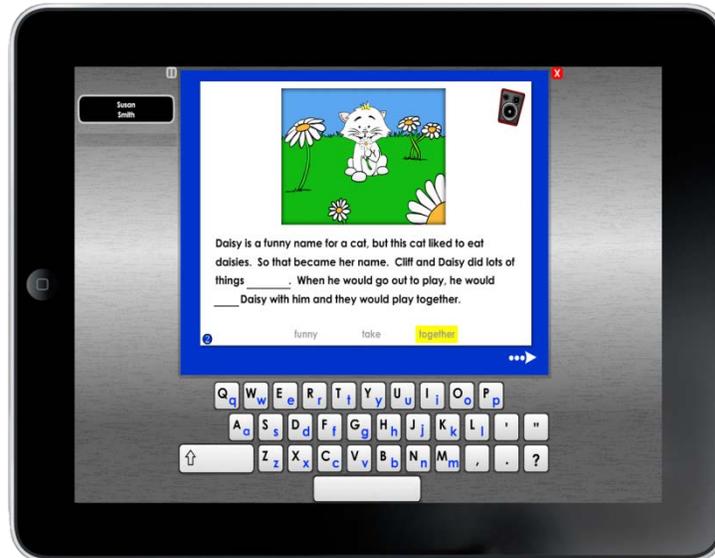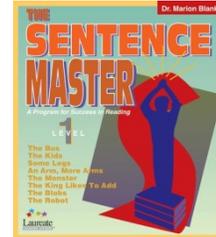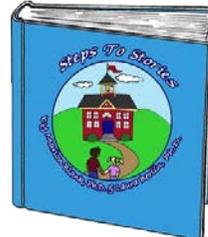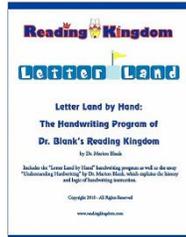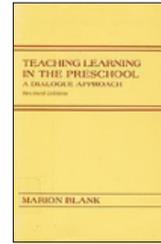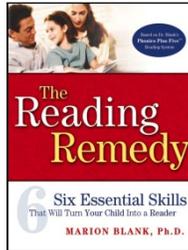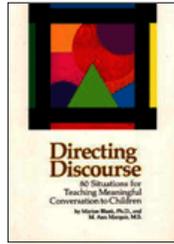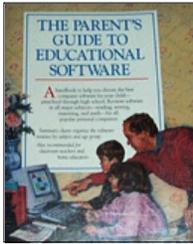
The Six Skills of Reading & Writing

The six skills of reading and writing are: sequencing, motor skills, sounds (phonology), meaning (semantics), grammar (syntax) and comprehension.

Dr. Marion Blank's "Integrated Six Skill Method"

	Sequencing	Motor Skills	Sounds	Meaning	Grammar	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 learn that their sequence, or order, doesn't matter. For example:
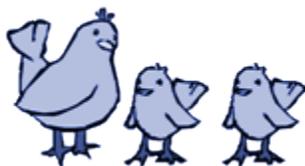
here are some birds   & here are the same birds...   & here are the same birds...
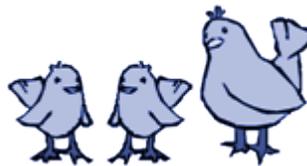
Our experience has taught us that these are all the "same" group of birds. The order they appear in doesn't make any difference. However, when we learn how to read, suddenly, the sequence of the objects becomes essential.

Sequencing is what allows us to read the same letter combinations as different words by changing their order – 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. Amazingly, 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.

Motor Skills (Writing)

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. With paper and pencil material, this means handwriting; with computers, this means keyboarding. Fortunately, for young children, keyboarding does not entail 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.)

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" do not work for many children.

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 they are riddled with exceptions.

Fortunately, there are easier and more effective methods for converting letters into sounds without requiring children to learn complicated and error-prone rules. All the Reading Kingdom materials offer carefully designed techniques that lead to rapid sound and word identification and they do not require children to memorize any rules.

Meaning (Semantics)

In early reading children are typically presented with 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.

Grammar (Syntax)

Our language contains many 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," "to " and "does" and are often referred to as "non-content" words because they seem to lack any clear meaning.

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

All this overlooks **an** amazing fact. One hundred **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** first-grader **or a** college student.

(In the sentences you just read, the **bolded** "non-content" words add up to 25 of 42 words, resulting in 60% of the total.)

These words are also essential to the structure of any sentence and our system of grammar. 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 these one hundred words, they will be able to read 50%-60% of all the words they see and it will help them understand 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.

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. These books are often too long and complex for many children, with the result that children find themselves adrift in a sea of unrecognized words. When this happens, the experience for novice readers is not pleasure, but rather pain as they experience repeated errors. And nothing is more devastating to learning than high rates of error.

Any teacher whose student 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 learning and also to facilitate reading comprehension.

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 (sometimes referred to as 'knowing how without knowing why').

By the time a 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 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 empower all children — even those who have been struggling — to become star readers.

Adaptive learning

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 a child's strengths and to help him or her overcome any weaknesses. As a child moves through the program, the path is adapted to his or her particular needs. Because of this, each child's experience in the Reading Kingdom is unique. 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).

The Reading Kingdom is a comprehensive program that teaches a child all the skills needed for reading and writing success from Pre-K to approximately a third grade level. Teaching has two key components: one is what is taught (the content), the other is how it is taught (the method). The Reading Kingdom offers key innovations in both areas.

The Reading Kingdom program was designed for children to do one session per day, 4-5 days per week. However, children can, if they want, do more.

The Reading Kingdom program contains the following components:

Introduction to Reading & Writing

Keyboard and Mouse Training (Optional)

Goal: This optional portion of the program develops smooth handling of the keyboard and mouse for children who are not yet adept with these devices. If this is needed, it is important that it be done before beginning the program.
Components: With the assistance of an adult, a child uses the keyboard to type letters and the mouse to click on pictures.
Length of time to complete: 1 week, depending on a child's skills and abilities.

Please note that this portion of the program is recommended for any child whose teacher has any doubts about his or her ability to effectively use a keyboard or a mouse. This portion of the program may be used for any desired duration. At any point the teacher can choose to move the child on.

Skills Survey Part One
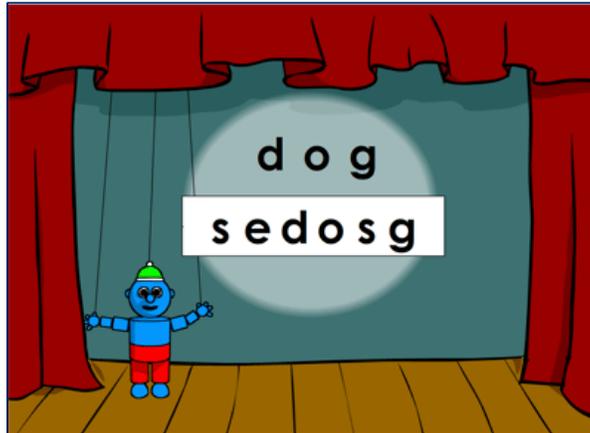
Goal: This portion of the program determines a child's ability with introductory skills that are essential to effective reading and writing. The introductory skills for the Reading Kingdom program are visual sequencing and the ability to use the keyboard to type words.

Components: A child is assessed on skills related to left-to-right visual sequencing and the ability to use a keyboard to type words. If a child does not already possess these skills, he or she will be guided to the Seeing Sequences format (which teaches sequencing skills) and/or the Letter Land format (which teaches keyboard skills). If the program determines that a child already possesses both sequencing and keyboard skills, the child will be guided to Part 2 of the Skills Survey.
Length of time to complete: 1 session.

Seeing Sequences

Goal: This portion of the program teaches the visual scanning and memory skills needed for reading words and sentences. It is important to remember that prior to reading a child never experiences situations where the identity of a set of objects is determined by left-to-right order. With words, however, the left-to-right sequence is crucial. That is why the Reading Kingdom program teaches this key skill. Smooth sequencing skills prevent numerous reading problems later.
Components: A child is asked to reproduce sequences of letters in left to right order that build up from two-to-four elements by both copying from a model and then recalling the sequence from memory.

Length of time to complete: This format has 3 levels with 4 sessions each. This segment generally takes 1-2 weeks.

Letter Land

Goal: This portion of the program develops the smooth, efficient ability to type the letters and punctuation keys on the keyboard. This skill is essential for using the Reading Kingdom program, and it is important to note that while a child may already possess some reading abilities, if he or she is not yet comfortable in using a keyboard in a smooth, steady manner, the child will be guided to this format.
Components: Building up from one row of the keyboard to three rows, a child learns to rapidly locate the letters and punctuation keys as well as the appropriate use of the shift key to create upper case letters and some punctuation.
Length of time to complete: This format has 4 levels with 3 sessions each. This segment generally takes 1-2 weeks.

Notes on the Introduction to Reading & Writing formats:

1. If both Seeing Sequences and Letter Land are needed, the program will guide a child to do both formats simultaneously so that a teaching session contains both segments.

2. We understand the desire to have a child move as rapidly as possible into the Reading & Writing formats of the Reading Kingdom program. However, these formats require certain fundamental skills that are honed in the Keyboard & Mouse Training and the Seeing Sequences and Letter Land formats. Mastery of these introductory skills will yield tremendous benefits as a child moves on to the Reading & Writing formats.

Skills Survey Part Two

Goal: This portion of the program determines the reading and writing skills a child already possesses so that the teaching can start at the optimum level for success.

Components: A child is assessed on his or her ability to read and write words and sentences that become increasingly complex.

Length of time to complete: 1 to 2 sessions (the Skills Survey stops when a child's performance shows the best level at which to start the program)

Reading & Writing Levels 1-5

The reading and writing formats of the Reading Kingdom program are divided into 5 levels with 6 books at each level (for a total of 30 books). Prior to reading a book a child is taught all the words of that book using 4 different teaching formats. In this way, once a child reaches a book, he or she can already read and understand the meaning of all the words in that book. As the levels progress, the words and books become more complex and a format that reinforces reading comprehension is added as well. [See below for a more detailed explanation and images of the formats used to teach reading and writing.]

Goal: This portion of the program teaches the skills of reading, writing and comprehension, starting with short, simple words and phrases and moving on to increasingly complex language.

Components: each of the 5 levels offers the following in terms of new words and new books:

Level	New Words	New Words + Variants	New Books
1	36	63	6
2	60	96	6
3	62	177	6
4	63	180	6
5	62	151	6

Many words are taught with multiple variants. For instance, a word like "park" will be taught along with "parks," "parking," and "parked." Consequently, the total number of words taught in the program is considerably higher than the number of new words alone.

Each word is taught through a series of 4 fun and game-like formats that take about 15-20 minutes to complete. The word teaching formats have been scientifically designed to teach all the components in reading and writing including word recognition, spelling, comprehension and sentence construction.

Level 1 starts with simple words and phrases such as *a kid* and *Here are some toys.*
By Levels 4 and 5, the child is reading and writing sentences like:

> *One of the things in the sky is the moon. The moon does not look the same all the time.*
>
> *There was a baby bullfrog. He was also very bullheaded. He liked to go to places on his own and did not stay with his mother.*

At every point, the words are carefully combined to form relevant sentences. For example, on its own, a word such as "they" has little meaning. It takes on meaning only if it is referring to a set of objects that has been noted. So, even in Level 1, in learning the word "they," children read and write sentences such as:

> The kids can jump, but they are not jumping.

As the program progresses, the concepts and the sentences increase in complexity. For example, in learning the word "just," the content includes sentences such as:

> There were two mice who wanted to eat. Just as they were getting near some food, a cat saw them. They did not like that at all.

As these examples illustrate, throughout the program, words and sentences steadily interact to both (a) teach the meaning of the words and (b) build a child's linguistic knowledge.

Length of time to complete: Typically one new word or one new book is offered in a session. As children become more proficient, they are taught two new words per session. Assuming 4 to 5 sessions a week, each level takes approximately 10-15 weeks to complete. A child does not have to do all the levels. Based on the Skills Survey, he or she enters at the level that is appropriate to the skills he or she already possesses. In addition, prior to teaching a word, the program determines if a child already knows that word, and if so, the program skips that word and moves on to the next word.

Progress Check Levels 1-5

Goal: This portion of the program determines if a child has mastered the material after each level of the reading and writing formats.

Components: Using content appropriate to the particular level, a child is asked to read and write a range of words and sentences.

Length of time to complete: Each Progress Check takes one session. If the Progress Check shows that a child has mastered the skills of that level, he or she moves on to the next level. If the Progress Check shows that some review is required, the child is guided to the Review format for that particular level. Each review takes 1-3 weeks.

Post Session Options

At the end of each teaching session, a child has the option to re-do a range of earlier sessions. These activities are optional.

In reading, there is so much emphasis on letters and sounds that you might think that's all there is to learn. Reading, though, is much more than "sounding out." At a minimum, you need to be able to
- look at a word and instantly know what it "says"
- recognize the many different sounds that the same letters can make
- blend sounds together to form words
- keep track of the lines of print which carry the words
- write words smoothly and accurately
- know the meaning of the words
- see how the words fit in with other words to create meaningful messages.

To achieve these skills, the Reading Kingdom uses a unique set of formats that are clustered into two groupings: one is for content words - words like boy, car, go, happy, and fast which refer to concepts in the real world; the other is for non-content words—words like the, is, was, then and to which are essential to combining words into meaningful sentences.

Mini-Test

As part of the customization feature of the Reading Kingdom program, before each content word is taught, the program tests whether a child already knows the word. If he or she does know the word, the teaching formats for that word are bypassed and the program moves to the next word. If the child does not yet know the word, he or she begins the teaching formats for that word.

Savvy Sounds - an easy way to learn to blend sounds

In "sounding out," it is not enough to put a sound on each letter. To arrive at words, the individual sounds have to be blended together—a difficult process for many children.

Savvy Sounds 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 **sleep**, the computer will show and say the first part of the word (e.g. "slee"). Then the screen shows a set of words and while the audio says the target word (e.g. "sleep") which the child has to select:

Since the beginning blends are already in place, the child has to deal only with the final sound in selecting the word.

Pick the Picture - learning the meaning of words

For some words, it's easy to show the meaning of the word. For a word like **girl**, for example, all that's needed is an appropriate picture. But for many words, this will not work. Carefully constructed language is needed to link the word to the visual information. That's what Pick the Picture offers.

For example, In teaching the word "change" the child sees the following:

and is told "click the one who can change the place where it stays.

Find and Fill - learning to spell

In teaching spelling, it's common to ask children to write the same word several times in a row. Unfortunately, this tends to be ineffective. It's important to get the child to focus in a more thoughtful manner. The Find and Fill format is designed for that purpose.

For example, as you can see with the word **again**, the child first sees a model of the word.
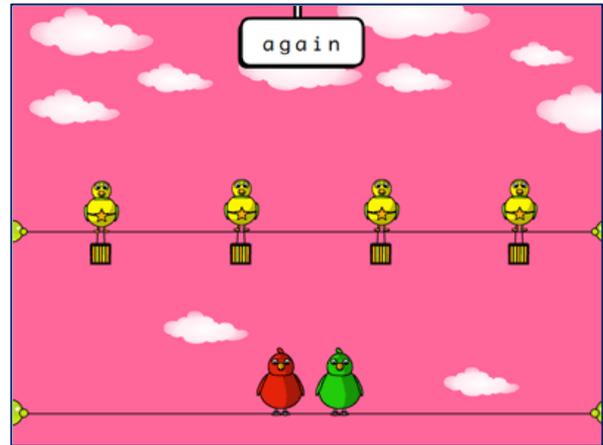
Then a set of incomplete words appears and the child is asked to find the one that can become again.
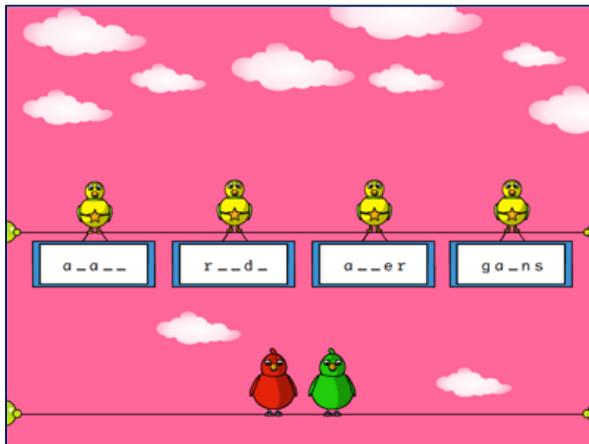
Following that, the child has to fill in the incomplete word to make it into the target word
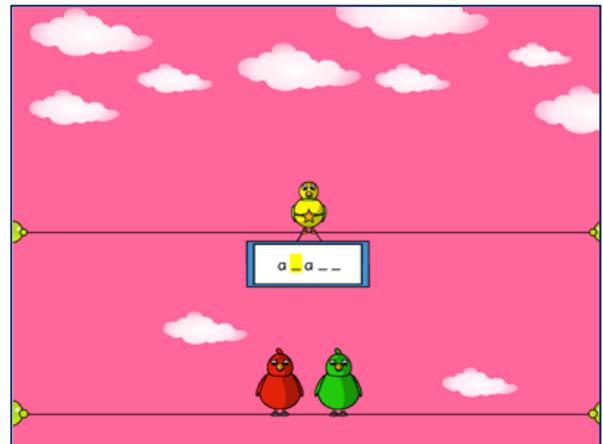
Stay and Play – learning how words combine in messages

In learning to read, it's important to go beyond single words and deal with words as they appear in books; namely, when they are used in combination with other words. Stay 'n Play achieves this goal.

First, in learning a word, in this case, the word **cold**, the child sees a set of words:
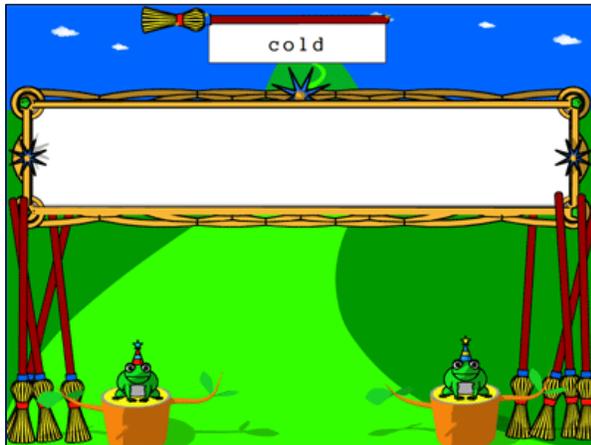
Based on the audio instructions, the child has to read and then click on selected words that then form a meaningful sentence. The sentence is followed by a graphic that illustrates its meaning


Then for the final step, guided by audio instructions, the child has to type some or all of the words in the sentence - including its punctuation.

Write in to Read - learning the meaning of the "high frequency words"

The non-content words (such as he, was, be, the, does) are often referred to as "sight" words or "high frequency words." Because they cannot be "sounded out," they receive relatively little teaching time. Yet these words typically occupy 50% or more of any page of text and they are critical to meaning as you can see in the following sentences which differ by the single word "to."

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

While it's not possible to offer a definition of these words, it is possible to teach their meaning. Write in to Read does this by carefully pairing words and graphics. For example, in learning the word "not" the child first sees a sentence where the word has to be inserted.
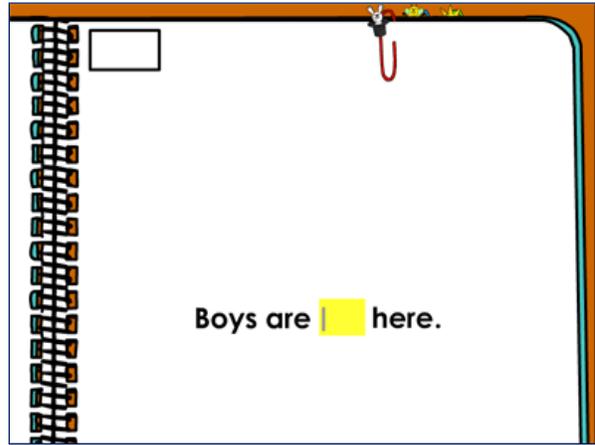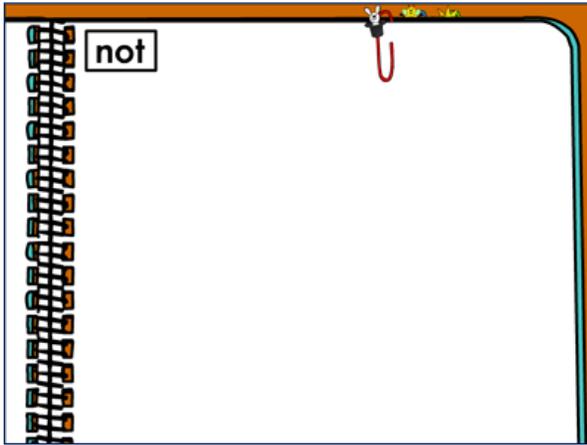
The sentence is followed by a graphic that illustrates its meaning.

Then guided by audio instructions, the child has to type some or all of the words in the sentence—including its punctuation.

Replace the Space- extending the meaning of the "little words"

This format gives the child additional insight into the meaning and use of non-content words. It offers the target word (in this case, the word **both**) and embeds it in a sentence where several of the other words have missing letters.
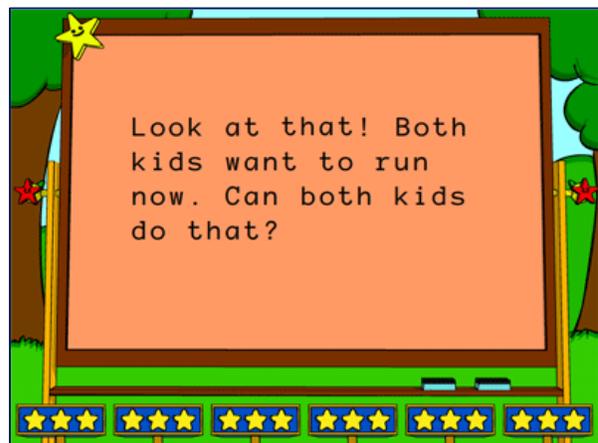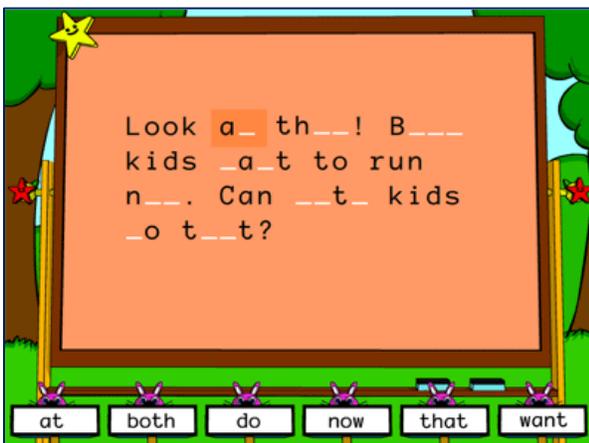
After the words are filled in, a graphic appears that illustrates the meaning of the sentence.

Detect and Select - learning to scan lines of print

Successful reading requires a steady scanning of words from left-to-right. For example, the same words (**can fly they**) convey very different messages depending on their order (e.g., **they can fly** vs. **can they fly**). To help children achieve smooth scanning, the Detect 'n Select format shows lines of text. For the word **can**, for example, they see the following:
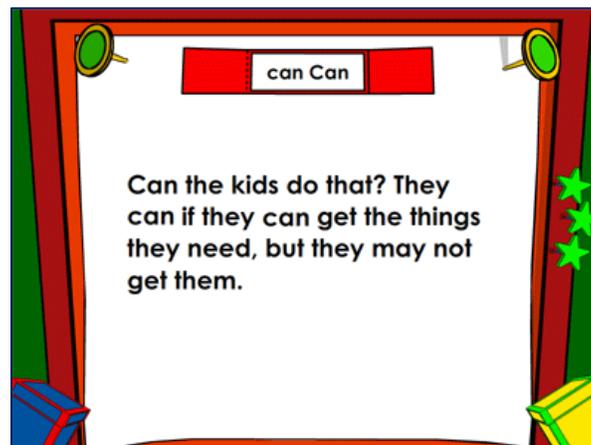
The child's job is to scan the lines and click on each instance of the target word.

The books are divided into five levels with six stories at each level (for a total of 30 books).

Level 1: Characters such as kids and animals are central to any story. This first level presents the simple, basic phrases and sentences needed to discuss these key "residents" of the story world.

some kids

Book 1

The rockets are flying.
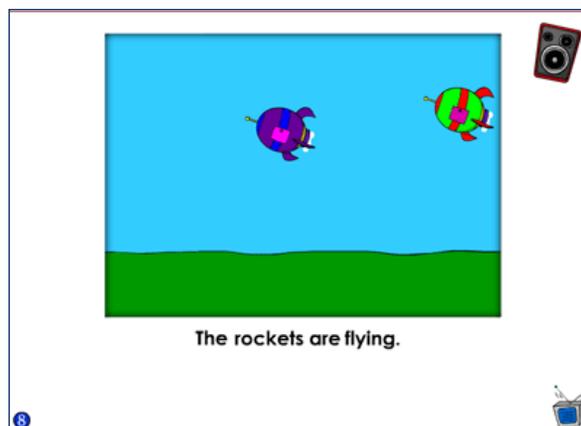
Book 6

Level 2: After being introduced, in Level 1, to characters (such as kids and animals) and key properties of those characters, Level 2 increases the complexity of the writing to introduce longer sentences, more sentences on a page and some unique features of text such as quotations and the punctuation they require. This level also offers pages of text unaccompanied by pictures--a key component of effective reading.

Here are some things. One is a thing that can fly. It is not a plane, but it can fly like a plane. What is it? It is a bird.

Book 9

Are there other things that can also do that? Yes, other things can fly and swim. Which things can do that? Some bugs can do that. Water bugs can do that. Like birds, water bugs have wings that are good for flying.

Book 12

Level 3: In Level 3, the books systematically introduce the past tense - a form that is critical to effective retelling of events. In addition, the stories are longer and extend over two books. Comprehension activities are introduced aimed at teaching children the vital skill of knowing how to summarize stories.

This frog was not like other frogs. He only liked to jump. The frog did not stop jumping. He jumped all the time.

Book 13

There was a park that was very _____. Some kids wanted to get out of the   . But some other kids wanted to   . They wanted to fix all the   . All the kids did stay and they did clean the   . They put all the dirty things into   . Then the park was a nice place for   .

| dirty | happy | like | swing |

Book 18 – Gleaning Meaning comprehension exercise

Level 4: Non-story books such as books on science are critical to reading success. At this level, children are introduced to science-related texts such as the habits of animals and the manned space flight to the moon. Presentation of this material naturally entails more complex vocabulary and more sophisticated sentences.

Book 19
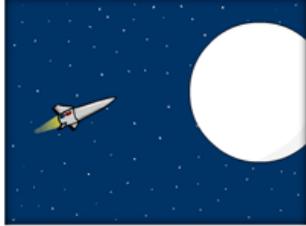
Book 24

Level 5: At this level, the books offer richer, fantasy-based stories that contain characters who experience complex thoughts, emotions and experiences. This sets the stage for the children to independently and successfully read the wide array of appealing books that are aimed not at teaching reading, but at enjoying reading.
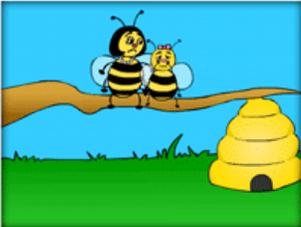
Book 27

Book 30

Key features of the books

- All the books have engaging graphics, animations, sound effects and music.
- Children are taught all the words in a book before reading it via 4 of 8 different formats that teach each word's spelling, pronunciation, meaning and usage. This way children can always read each book successfully.
- A child can click on any word to hear the word said aloud.
- The even books are fill-in books that require children to select and type words to complete the missing spaces.
- Starting with book 13 children are given a comprehension section at the end of each book called Gleaning Meaning. This helps children to capture the "main idea," a critical aspect of reading.

A Lot of Varied Repetition

There is an old saying that "practice makes perfect." This has long been known to be a key to success. But repeated practice can be dreary - unless it is enlivened by interesting devices. Computers are ideal for this purpose. Throughout the teaching, the formats offer multiple trials involving the same information. But the variation in the presentation (via different graphics, animation, reinforcements, music and sound effects) makes the practice fun and appealing.

For example, here are four sentences from the Stay n Play format used in teaching the word "clean" (and its variants cleaned, cleaning, cleans).

This variety gives the child multiple opportunities to write the words and to see their meaning in different contexts.

The Power of Feeling Competent

Though rarely discussed, the phonics demands of traditional reading programs lead many children to experience a great deal of failure. Despite trying hard, these children often have great difficulty remembering the sounds, doing the required blending, and recalling the letter names. This sets them off on a path of failure that leads many to feel that reading is a skill they will never master.

The Reading Kingdom has been designed to minimize the range of difficulties that children experience. For example, throughout the program, this speaker symbol appears on the screen. When it is present, it means that it's possible to click on any word and hear what the word is "saying."

The girl can swim, but the girl cannot fly.
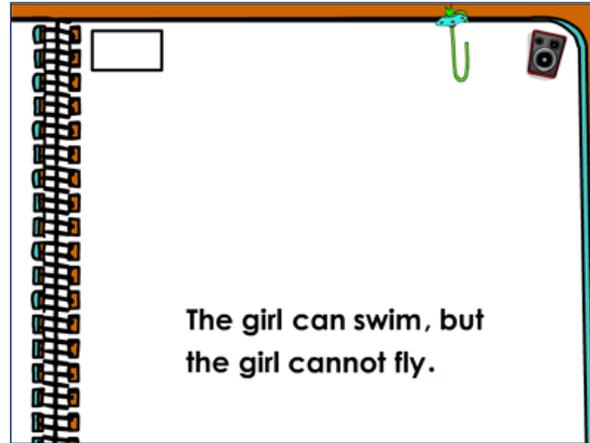
Design features like this lead a child to know that success is always within reach.

Moving Beyond Error

No matter how well designed material might be, some mistakes are inevitable. But if their numbers are few, the negative effects are kept to a minimum. That is why throughout the program, techniques are offered to help children move past wrong responses to correct responses.

For instance, if a child fails to write a word correctly, the computer offers appealing characters that, via simple actions and sounds, tell the child that a mistake has been made.

An amazing feature of using software for education is that it can tell a child that a mistake has been made and it will lead to none of the dismay or shame that can result from an adult communicating the same information.

Further, the program is designed to then immediately help the child by offering a correct model of the word which the child can copy.
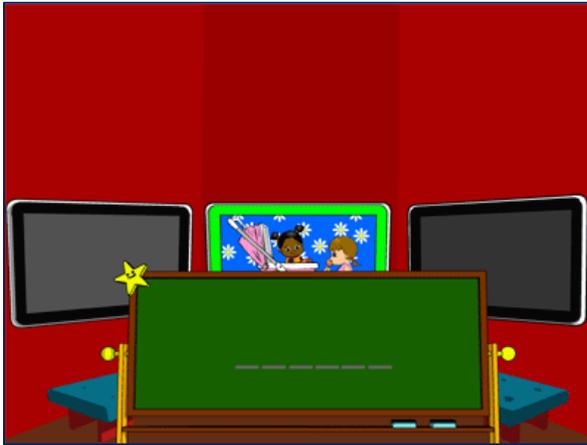
When the copying is completed, the model is withdrawn and the child is asked to write the word from memory. So within a few seconds, the task that was originally incorrect is now completed successfully. The blend of content and technique represents an unbeatable combination for success.

Comprehension

Comprehension is what reading is all about, but it has been given short shrift in reading instruction. Phonics programs, with their concentration on sounds, offer strange, confusing texts like "*Sam has ham."* Whole language programs, with their concentration on "authentic literature," offer stories that are often too complex for beginners readers to decipher. Typically, these methods lead children to fend for themselves in attempting to figure out how written ideas are organized and what those ideas are designed to say.

The stories of the Reading Kingdom represent the first instructional program to offer well-designed books that systematically advance from the simplest levels of language to steadily more complex structures. In addition, all the books offer animations that hold the child's interest, while illustrating the ideas on the page (e.g., a sentence such as "the rockets are flying " will show those objects in flight).

Reading Kingdom Curriculum Benefits

- It offers an adaptive program that is personalized for 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 requires minimal adult supervision. After a few lessons, children can use the program completely on their own.
- It is fun, entertaining, and easy to use.
- 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 errors do occur, the program offers specific techniques to overcome the problem and reach success.
- It offers regular checks of a child'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.
- Provides teachers, parents, tutors and other adult supervisors immediate access to reports on a child's progress available by email and on the website.

Reading Kingdom Requirements

- A computer with a mouse. It does not have to be the latest and best computer. Any computer will do (Windows, Mac, or Linux).
- Internet access. It does not have to be the best and fastest connection. Any connection will work (though faster is preferred).

- The computer needs a free web browser (such as Firefox, Internet Explorer, or Safari) and the free Flash player (available from www.adobe.com). Please note that most computers already have these installed.
- A quiet place to work. Multiple computers can be set up in one location as long as the children have headphones to listen to the audio.
- An adult to supervise a child logging on and getting started. Adult supervision is typically only required at the beginning of the program. Once a child has gotten familiar with the program, he or she can normally use it completely independently. In fact, the program relies on adult supervisors not assisting a child so that the program can accurately determine a child's reading level and whether he or she has learned the material. One adult can supervise multiple children simultaneously.
- Children should be at least 4 years old, be able to sit quietly and pay attention for 15 minutes, and they should be able to use a mouse (the ability to use a mouse with some adult assistance as outlined in the program's included instructions is fine).
- To ensure success, a child should use the program at least 4 days per week.

Q: Why is a child not able to randomly access different elements of the program or go back and redo a portion of the program?
A: A key strength of the Reading Kingdom program is that it has been scientifically designed by Dr. Marion Blank, the creator of the system, to guide children to exactly the lessons they require for the appropriate amount of time. Consequently, elements of the program are not randomly accessible. A child will be directed to the lessons they require to learn to read as quickly and effectively as possible. In effect, using the Reading Kingdom is like having Dr. Blank teaching a child how to read.

Q: Why does the Reading Kingdom teach visual sequencing?
A: To read words and sentences, a child requires often neglected left-to-right sequencing and visual memory skills that lay the basis for instant word recognition - a key to reading success.
So if the Skills Survey shows a need to strengthen a child's visual sequencing skills, the first teaching segment for that child is Seeing Sequences.

Q: Why does the Reading Kingdom teach keyboard skills?
A: Teaching reading requires the teaching of writing as well. To create words and sentences, a child has to be skilled in using the keyboard. This does not mean ten-finger touch typing. But it does mean being able to smoothly find the required keys. Once a child has basic keyboarding skills, time can be spent on learning and not on hunting for keys.

Q: Why is a child with some reading skills being directed to that portion of the program which teaches the introductory skills related to keyboarding?
A: The Reading Kingdom program relies on children being able to use the keyboard to type words effectively. So while a child may already have reading skills, they may still require development of the visual and motor skills required to easily and effectively use a keyboard.

Q: Why is a child spending additional time on a section once they seem to already have the skills?
A: Children can learn very quickly under the right conditions, but for learning to be solid and secure a certain amount of repetition is required. Consequently, the Reading Kingdom program will keep a child in a given section until that level of learning has been achieved.

Q: Can the Reading Kingdom be used with children who have learning disabilities?
A: Reading Kingdom be used successfully with children who have learning disabilities, including dyslexia, language processing problems and attention difficulties. The children get the repetition they need, they have the opportunity to overcome error without feeling defeated and they achieve a level of success that is enormously motivating.

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