

## Funding Alignment: Race to the Top

Race to the Top (RTTT) is authorized under section 14006 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Its purpose is to encourage education innovation and reform, improve student outcomes and achievement, increase graduation rates, and ensure student preparation for college and careers. The focus spans four areas: (1) adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace; (2) building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform educators about how they can improve instruction; (3) recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals; and (4) turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Rowland Reading Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving reading instruction in the primary grades. The Foundation publishes the Superkids® Reading Program, a core program designed just for kindergarten through second grade that teaches all aspects of reading seamlessly integrated with the language arts. Happily Ever After® is the Foundation’s literature-based reading readiness program. The table below shows the Race to the Top program requirements and alignment with Rowland Reading Foundation’s programs.

Race to the Top Requirements	What the Superkids and Happily Ever After Programs Do
<b>Demonstration of Raising Student Achievement and School Performance</b>	
<p>“(A)(3) <u>Demonstrating significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps</u>                      (ii) <u>Improve student outcomes overall and by student subgroup... (a) Increasing student achievement in reading/language arts... [and] (b) Decreasing achievement gaps between subgroups in reading/language arts...</u>”</p> <p>“(E)(2) <u>Turning around the lowest-achieving schools</u>”</p>	<p>Rowland Reading Foundation and independent third parties (such as university professors and academic research centers) have conducted scientific research to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs in nearly every region of the United States and with every major student group. Key findings include:</p> <p><b>National Pre-Post Study</b>                      In the 2006–07 and 2007–08 school years, the Superkids Reading Program was tested in a national trial (83 schools in 22 states) involving 3,200 kindergarten students in 193 classrooms. The data collected showed that Superkids students made dramatic improvements from fall to spring on the Stanford Early School Achievement Test, moving on average from the 54<sup>th</sup> to the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students of all abilities</b> made dramatic gains – on the fall test, 35% of students scored in the lowest quartile; by spring, only 11% of students scored in this quartile.</li> <li>• <b>African-American students</b> started the year at about the national average but finished the year well above the national average at the 73<sup>rd</sup> percentile.</li> <li>• <b>Hispanic students</b> started the year below the national average but finished the year well above the national average at the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile.</li> <li>• <b>Low-income children</b> scored on average at the 29<sup>th</sup> percentile in the fall; in the spring, they scored at the 66<sup>th</sup> percentile, well above the national norm with a gain of 37 percentile points.</li> <li>• <b>English language learners</b> scored on average far below the national norm at the 26<sup>th</sup></li> </ul>



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**What the Superkids and Happily Ever After Programs Do**

percentile in the fall; by spring, this group made striking gains, finishing the year above the national norm at the 63<sup>rd</sup> percentile, a gain of 37 percentile points.

- **The gender gap** was reduced by nearly half. A gender gap in reading is typically observed in the earliest years of school and it grows over time. Educators increasingly believe that it is critical for boys to get a strong start in reading in the primary grades.

**Two-Year Impact**

During the 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 school years, the Superkids Reading Program was tested in a national trial involving more than 400 students in 36 classrooms in 18 schools. Students used the kindergarten and first-grade levels over two years. The students started kindergarten at the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile in reading compared to children nationally and ended first grade at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. If these children had merely progressed as much as children do normally, they would have ended first grade at about the 54<sup>th</sup> percentile, so the 21-point gain is a truly remarkable result.

**Treatment/Control Studies**

The Center for Research on Educational Policy (CREP) conducted a quasi-experiment during the 2005–2006 school year in two schools. The sample consisted of 152 children in 8 kindergarten classrooms that used Superkids and 120 similar students in 7 classrooms that used other reading programs (control group). At the end of the school year, researchers administered the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. According to CREP, “The results were extremely positive favoring the Superkids students.” The median percentile rank for the Superkids students was 90, while the median percentile rank of the comparison group was 68. Effect sizes ranged from 0.27 to 0.46.

**Large-Scale, National Quasi-Experiments**

During 2006–2007 and 2007–2008 school years, the Superkids Reading Program was tested in two large-scale, national quasi-experiments.

- In one kindergarten study (conducted by Dr. Geoffrey Borman at the University of Wisconsin), 23 Superkids classrooms were compared to 20 traditional basal reading classrooms in the same schools across six states. The 390 Superkids students were very similar to the 360 control group students in demographics, teachers’ experience, and baseline reading achievement. Students were tested at the beginning and end of the school year with the Stanford Early School Achievement Test. Results showed that Superkids students’ performance was superior to the control group’s in all reading domains tested. Effect sizes ranged from 0.11 to 0.25. (See: G. D. Borman and N. Dowling, “Student and Teacher Outcomes of The Superkids Quasi-Experimental Study,” *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)* 14, no. 3 (2009): 207–225.)

- The second study (conducted by Dr. Jerome D’Agostino, associate professor at The Ohio State University) also compared Superkids classrooms to control classrooms, but the classrooms were in



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different schools (21 Superkids classrooms in 11 schools and 22 well-matched classrooms using other reading programs in 11 demographically similar schools across seven states). The 382 Superkids students and 368 control students were tested at the beginning and end of the year with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Superkids students outperformed control students in four measures of reading skills. Effect sizes ranged from 0.23 to 0.41. Dr. D'Agostino said, "The effect sizes mean that the *average classroom* using Superkids performed from 9 to 16 percentiles higher than the average control classroom after one year...."

**DIBELS and SESAT Results**

Reading assessment data from 2004–2005 were collected from three matched pairs of first-grade classrooms in Alaska, Kansas, and Pennsylvania. Analysis showed that Superkids classrooms gained more than control classrooms on nine out of ten assessments. Further, when standardized scores from assessments of phonological awareness and knowledge of the alphabetic principle were analyzed, Superkids students significantly outgained the control students, with an effect size of 0.57.

**Top Ratings By Teachers**

Structured telephone interviews were conducted in April 2007 and 2008 with 235 Superkids teachers. Additionally, 41 control teachers were interviewed, and their responses were compared to the responses of 45 matched Superkids teachers.

- **Teachers rated the Superkids Reading Program at least 4.5 on a 5-point scale in every category:** (1) overall satisfaction; (2) effectiveness at teaching children to read; (3) effectiveness at motivating students to learn; and (4) ease of use. In addition, 88% said Superkids was more effective than other programs they had used, 97% wanted to use Superkids again, and 97% would recommend Superkids to a colleague.
- **Researchers found that Superkids teachers were more satisfied with their program than control teachers.** Superkids teachers reported greater overall satisfaction (4.65 versus 3.85), greater perceived effectiveness (4.74 versus 3.90), greater perceived motivation of students (4.83 versus 3.75), and easier implementation (4.63 versus 3.95) than control teachers.
- **Superkids teachers reported spending less time per day teaching language arts than the control teachers, yet Superkids students had larger reading gains** (105 minutes compared to 132 minutes in the one study, and 99 minutes compared to 141 minutes in another study).



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<b>Standards and Assessments</b>	
<p>“(B)(1) ...commitment to <u>adopting a common set of high-quality standards</u>...                      (B)(3) <u>Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments</u>...a high-quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally benchmarked K–12 standards that build toward college and career readiness... and high-quality assessments...tied to these standards. State or LEA activities might, for example, include: ...developing or acquiring, disseminating, and implementing <u>high-quality instructional materials and assessments</u>...; developing or acquiring and delivering <u>high-quality professional development</u> to support the transition to new standards and assessments; and <u>engaging in other strategies that translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students, including high-need students</u>...”</p>	<p>The Superkids Reading Program and Happily Ever After include summative and formative assessments to help educators evaluate performance and progress and plan instruction. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Initial Formal Assessment</b> – Happily Ever After and the Superkids Reading Program provide tests, one per grade, to formally assess children’s skills at the beginning of the school year.</li> <li>• <b>Ongoing Informal Assessment</b> – Every day in the Superkids Reading Program and Happily Ever After begin with Daily Routines that provide a quick, informal assessment of recently taught skills. Teachers have many opportunities to assess children’s individual strengths and weaknesses by observing them during lessons and reviewing completed work. When a child has weaknesses in a particular skill area, teachers can choose Quick Assessments from the <i>Superkids Skill-Building Book</i> to help pinpoint the problems. Teachers can record their informal observations on the Student Record Forms in the Assessment Books.</li> <li>• <b>Periodic Formal Assessment</b> – Teachers can formally assess children’s understanding of skills using the Progress Tests provided in the Assessment Book for each level of the program. Each test has separate parts that cover skills taught in the units just completed. Teachers can use these results to identify skills to reteach and students who may need additional support. The Assessment Books for second grade also include formal fluency tests to administer at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.</li> <li>• <b>End-of-Level Assessment</b> – When students complete a level of the Superkids Reading Program, teachers can use the End-of-Level Test to formally evaluate students’ understanding and retention of the major skills taught in the level. Test results help teachers identify students who may need extra support when they start working in the next level.</li> <li>• <b>Standardized Tests</b> – Teachers can supplement the various program assessments with common standardized tests—such as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test (GMRT), Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), Stanford Early School Achievement Test (SESAT), STAR Reading, or Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI)—for student placement.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Development to Support Instruction</b>	
<p>“(C)(3) Using data to improve instruction                      (ii) ...<u>providing effective professional development</u> to teachers, principals and administrators on how to use these systems and the resulting data <u>to support continuous instructional improvement</u>...”</p>	<p>The Superkids Reading Program and Happily Ever After include initial in-service training and ongoing professional learning and coaching opportunities. For any district or school partnership, the Rowland Reading Foundation customizes services to meet teacher and administrator needs on requested days and times. A cadre of literacy coaches, in-service training professionals, and program experts are located throughout the country to provide implementation support. A recommended training plan involves:</p>



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<p><b><u>“(D)(5) Providing effective support to teachers and principals</u></b>                      (i) Provide <b><u>effective, data-informed professional development, coaching</u></b>.... Such support might focus on, ...designing <b><u>instructional strategies for improvement; differentiating instruction; ...designing instruction to meet the specific needs of high need students</u></b>...; and aligning systems and removing barriers to <b><u>effective implementation of practices designed to improve student learning outcomes</u></b>; and                      (ii) <b><u>Measure, evaluate, and continuously improve the effectiveness of those supports</u></b> in order to improve student achievement....”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Year 1:</b> Initial in-service implementation training, including Foundations of Primary Literacy and Literacy Leaders Workshop; three coaching visits per classroom; a parent orientation package; three professional development seminars; and three grade-level meetings.</li> <li>• <b>Years 2–4:</b> In-service implementation training for new teachers, two coaching visits per classroom each year, administrator meetings for principals and district administrators, two professional development seminars each year, two grade-level meetings each year, a Super Tutor package for training community volunteers, leadership development sessions for leaders and mentors, and LETRS® (<i>Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling</i>) training for all interested teachers and administrators.</li> </ul> <p><b>Hands-On Workshops</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Foundations of Primary Literacy</b> – This session is designed for all primary teachers and administrators. It’s offered the morning before the grade-level in-service implementation training. The session lays the groundwork for understanding the process of learning to read. The science of reading and contemporary research are presented in an interactive format. Participants will gain a firm understanding of how the neural pathways for reading are formed, what “systematic, explicit instruction” really means, and how the Superkids program is truly research-based.</li> <li>• <b>Implementing the Superkids Program</b> – This session prepares teachers to implement the Superkids program. Separate training is provided for each grade level. Participants engage in role-playing lessons and debrief the “what” and “why” of the Superkids program. Teachers will leave this session prepared to use all program materials. Initial training will be provided each year to all teachers new to the program or new to a grade level. Experienced users are welcome to attend the session as a refresher course. Training DVDs—one for each grade—are provided for teachers unable to attend the initial training. The DVDs can be used as a refresher, too.</li> <li>• <b>Literacy Leaders Workshop</b> – This session is exclusively for administrators, reading specialists, and reading coaches, and is offered in conjunction with the grade-level in-service trainings. The session provides an overview the entire Superkids K–2 program for literacy leaders who will be working with students and teachers. Administrators are provided with a “What to Expect” document for classroom walk-throughs.</li> <li>• <b>Administrator Orientation Workshop</b> – Rowland Reading Foundation will provide a presentation for administrators to acquaint them with the Superkids program and the Foundation’s research. This session can be customized, depending on whether administrators have already attended the Literacy Leaders Workshop during in-service training. Administrators are provided with a “What to Expect” document for classroom walk-throughs.</li> </ul>



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<p><i>Continued from earlier page</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Professional Development Seminar</b> – Rowland Reading Foundation provides content seminars for a district’s or school’s professional development days. These seminars are custom-designed and can include keynote presentations and breakout sessions on topics related to primary literacy. Breakout sessions can also be Superkids-specific for program users. (A list of seminar topics is available upon request.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Ongoing Training &amp; Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coaching</b> – In year 1, each classroom receives two coaching visits in the fall and one in the spring. In subsequent years, each classroom receives one coaching visit in the fall and one in the spring. Superkids coaches are highly trained primary educators with experience in teaching and coaching the program. Classroom visits can include observation and feedback, discussion on topics chosen by the teacher, or lesson modeling, including differentiated instruction. Coaching visits may also include a team or grade-level meeting, either during the day or after school. (See the description of grade-level meetings below.) If indicated, a classroom may receive additional coaching days to support successful implementation.</li> <li>• <b>Administrator Meetings</b> – In years 2–4, meetings will be held with new administrators to acquaint them with the program. Experienced administrators are also welcome to attend to further their understanding of the program and to learn of any new materials, practices, or research.</li> <li>• <b>Leadership Development</b> – As part of an ongoing relationship with the Rowland Reading Foundation, schools or districts may wish to pursue a customized program, such as training reading specialists to deliver Superkids training, or training experienced Superkids teachers to mentor colleagues new to the program.</li> <li>• <b>Grade-Level Meetings</b> – Rowland Reading Foundation will facilitate grade-level meetings as a forum for answering questions about the program, discussing best practices of primary literacy, and sharing ideas.</li> <li>• <b>Parent Orientation Package</b> – Rowland Reading Foundation will provide a presentation (electronically) that can be delivered to parents by classroom teachers or other personnel to acquaint them with the program and the Foundation’s research. The package also includes handouts and a brochure that can be customized for a parent meeting.</li> <li>• <b>Super Tutor Package</b> – Super Tutors are community volunteers who have a desire to help children. This electronic training module is designed to provide an overview of the reading process, introduce tutors to Superkids materials, and prepare tutors to provide valuable and purposeful assistance during reading instruction.</li> </ul>



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<p><i>Continued from earlier page</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>LETRS® Training</b>- Rowland Reading Foundation is proud to be a LETRS affiliate site. LETRS (<i>Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling</i>) is a professional development program that responds to the need for high-quality literacy educators at all levels. Developed by Louisa C. Moats, EdD, <i>LETRS</i> provides the deep foundational knowledge necessary to understand how students learn to read, write, and spell—and why some of them struggle. The <i>LETRS</i> modules teach teachers the meaning of scientific findings about learning to read and reading instruction, and are delivered in a three-day interactive workshop. University credit is available to participants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Training DVD</b> - Teachers can use the training DVDs to learn how to implement the Superkids program for the first time or to review what was taught in the hands-on workshop. The 30–50 minute video-based sessions—one for each grade level—provide an overview of the instructional materials and discuss the pedagogical foundation.</li> <li>• <b>Website and Helpline</b> - As teachers use the Superkids program, they have access to ongoing support via the Superkids website and helpline. The website provides a range of resources, including Q&amp;A and tips on classroom management, phonemic awareness, phonics, handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, expressive writing, fluency, and grammar, usage, and mechanics. Additional tips by teachers using the program are posted on the website. The helpline gives access by phone to a program expert who can answer questions.</li> </ul>
<p>“(F)(2) Ensuring <b>successful conditions for high-performing charter schools</b> and other innovative schools                      (F)(3) Demonstrating other significant reform conditions ...other <b>conditions favorable to education reform or innovation that have increased student achievement</b>...narrowed achievement gaps, or resulted in other important outcomes....”</p>	<p><b>General Conditions for Success</b></p> <p>Rowland Reading Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving reading instruction in the primary grades. In doing so, the Foundation has supported charter school children across the country in addition to public and private school children. The Foundation publishes the Superkids Reading Program, a core program designed just for kindergarten through second grade that teaches all aspects of reading seamlessly integrated with the language arts. Happily Ever After is the Foundation’s motivating, literature-based reading readiness program.</p> <p>The Superkids Reading Program and Happily Ever After align exceptionally well with the findings of the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000) across five areas of reading instruction: <b>phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension</b>. The programs support best instructional practices by integrating systematic reading instruction with other language arts instruction in <b>spelling, handwriting, expressive writing, grammar, and mechanics</b>. Finally, the <b>latest brain research</b> concludes that intensive phonics instruction (such as the instruction in the Superkids Reading Program) strengthens neural pathways and automaticity in the brain, which leads to permanent improvements in the reading abilities of struggling learners.</p>



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<p><i>Continued from earlier page</i></p>	<p><b>Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension Instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p><b>Phonemic awareness prepares children to read.</b> In Happily Ever After and the kindergarten levels of the Superkids Reading Program, children learn to notice, think about, and manipulate sounds (phonemes) in spoken language. Daily phonemic awareness activities give children practice isolating, identifying, blending, and segmenting sounds in various positions in spoken words. In kindergarten, children are also taught to associate one sound with each letter of the alphabet. Phonemic awareness skills are reinforced throughout the first- and second-grade levels of the program as children are taught the remaining phonemes heard in the English language, including the sounds for consonant digraphs, long vowels, <i>r</i>-controlled vowels, and other variant vowels. Along with phonemic awareness, the two programs help develop children’s phonological awareness through activities that work with onsets and rimes, rhyming words, and syllables.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Phonics instruction gives children a reliable way to unlock the written word.</b> Phonics is taught explicitly and systematically in all levels of the Superkids Reading Program. Letter-sound associations are introduced in a clearly defined sequence and at a pace that’s manageable for students. In kindergarten, children are taught short-vowel sounds and one sound for each consonant. In first grade, they learn consonant digraphs, long-vowel patterns, <i>r</i>-controlled vowels, and other vowel variants. Second grade reviews all the major sound-spelling relationships that have been taught and teaches a few additional sound-spellings. The program gives children substantial practice in applying their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships to reading words, sentences, and stories. On a daily basis, children practice decoding and encoding (spelling) words with newly taught letter-sounds. For reading practice, all levels provide decodable stories in which the majority of words contain only sound-symbols that have been explicitly taught. Reading phonetically controlled vocabulary encourages children to decode unknown words rather than guessing at them, and builds their confidence and motivation to independently tackle more challenging material.</p> </li> <li> <p><b>Fluency frees children to focus on comprehension.</b> The Superkids Reading Program develops children’s automaticity in word recognition and their fluency with connected text. Through daily practice, children learn to blend letter-sounds effortlessly and decode words quickly. They are also taught to quickly recognize by sight a selection of Memory Words, high-frequency words that they cannot decode. Fluency skills with connected text are explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced in each level of the program. Skills include reading with expression, with natural phrasing, with appropriate stress, and at an appropriate rate, as well as observing punctuation. After a skill is modeled, children practice applying it as they read aloud a section of text repeatedly with their teacher, with a partner, or by themselves. Students practice fluency skills with decodable text in kindergarten through second grade. In second grade, children also practice fluency skills with a wide</p> </li> </ul>



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variety of fiction and nonfiction genres. Teacher read-alouds and recorded readings on CD provide additional models of fluent reading. Children, particularly struggling readers, are able to build their fluency by reading aloud along with the recorded readings on CD.

• **Vocabulary development is essential for helping children make sense of text.**

Happily Ever After and the Superkids Reading Program teach vocabulary indirectly through everyday experiences with language and directly through instruction on specific words and word-learning strategies. In both programs, but especially in Happily Ever After and the first level of Superkids, children develop vocabulary as they listen to and discuss stories read aloud. Lively songs and richly illustrated scenes in the Superkids student materials are also used to prompt conversations based on the Superkids characters and their interests. These conversations create a common background that helps ensure all students, including those with limited language, will be able to understand vocabulary in the reading materials. In addition, before children listen to or read a text in the programs, they are taught specific words that are important to understanding the text. Other words and idioms from the text are discussed in context during reading and then expanded to other contexts after reading. Happily Ever After also teaches important function words and abstract concepts, such as the names of colors and shapes, words for sizes, position words, sequence words, and verbs used in directions, such as *cut*, *trace*, *fold*, *color in*, *draw*, and *circle*. Superkids teaches about relationships between words with activities on categorizing, synonyms, antonyms, and multiple-meaning words. Word-learning strategies using context clues, word parts, and dictionary skills are also taught.

• **Comprehension instruction helps children understand, retain, and connect with what they read.** In Happily Ever After and the first level of the Superkids Reading Program, children's comprehension is primarily developed with stories read aloud to them. Then starting in Level 2, comprehension instruction focuses on text children read. Lessons teach vocabulary and build background before children read. Discussion questions in the lessons help teachers guide children's understanding as they read and help them make connections and form opinions after reading. Each question gives practice with a particular comprehension skill, such as determining important ideas, understanding characters, drawing conclusions, or recognizing cause and effect. Starting in first grade, children are also explicitly taught how to apply a specific comprehension skill, often using a graphic organizer, to each story they read. In second grade, children are taught how to apply comprehension skills to a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction genres. Lessons in all the levels include think-alouds to help teachers model comprehension strategies, including asking questions, self-monitoring and using fix-up tips, recognizing text structure, and summarizing.



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**Language Arts Skills**

The Superkids Reading Program includes instruction in these language arts:

- **Handwriting** – In the kindergarten levels of the Superkids Reading Program, children are taught how to write the capital and lowercase form of each letter as they learn the letter’s name and a sound associated with it. They are also taught the proper letter spacing for words and between words and sentences. In all levels of the Superkids Reading Program, children practice writing letters, words, and sentences every day during the Daily Handwriting Routine. The program also includes an optional cursive writing component for the second half of second grade.
- **Spelling** – The spelling strand is taught explicitly as part of core instruction in all levels of the Superkids Reading Program. As children are taught how to decode, they are also taught how to encode words by writing the letters that stand for the sounds they hear. In addition, children are taught to memorize the spelling of a few high-frequency irregular words in kindergarten and many more in first and second grade. (By the end of first grade, children should know how to encode, or spell, by memory all 220 words on the Dolch list of high-frequency sight words.) The Daily Dictation Routine in all levels gives children practice encoding phonetically regular words and spelling irregular Memory Words every day. Activities in Student Books (K-1) and Word Work Books (grade 2) also reinforce spelling skills. In first and second grade, children have regular spelling tests that include both encodable words and irregular Memory Words.
- **Simple Grammar and Mechanics** - Superkids teaches children how words function in the English language. Nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, pronouns, and conjunctions are taught at the best opportunities. For instance, when the phoneme /hw/ is introduced, children learn to recognize and spell interrogative words such as *when*, *why* and *where*. They are taught the difference between a question and a statement and to form a question mark as they practice writing their own questions. All these activities support reading and simultaneously enhance writing.
- **Written Expression** - All levels of the Superkids Reading Program provide explicit, systematic writing instruction appropriate for children’s developmental stage. In kindergarten, children are instructed through shared writing activities in which the teacher models how to write and asks children to contribute ideas. Children also produce their own writing products by writing letters and words they know, using temporary spelling, or having the teacher write words for them. In first grade, students are taught how to write a variety of products—such as lists, labeled diagrams, sentences about topics, and stories—and they do more and more of the writing independently as the school year progresses. First graders are also introduced to the writing process, using it to produce several published pieces. In second grade, children are taught in greater depth about different types of writing products and they use the writing process in each unit to produce these published pieces: an autobiography, poem, friendly letter, book review, personal story, imagined story, research report,



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<p><b>Absolute Priority – Comprehensive Approach to Education Reform</b></p>	
<p>“...how the State, in collaboration with its participating LEAs, will <b>use Race to the Top and other funds to increase student achievement, decrease the achievement gaps across student subgroups</b>, and increase the rates at which students graduate from high school prepared for college and careers.”</p>	<p>Grounded in proven pedagogical approaches to reading, the Superkids Reading Program and Happily Ever After support best practices in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. It integrates reading instruction with other language arts skills—including handwriting, expressive writing, spelling, and grammar—using motivating, enriching student materials and activities. Key strategies employed by the programs include:</p> <p><b>The Superkids Reading Program (Kindergarten–Grade 2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Motivation is key to children’s success.</b> The Superkids Reading Program features a cast of delightful characters that keep children engaged and motivated as they go about the serious work of learning to read and write. Each Superkid has a distinctive personality, special talents and interests, and problems and predicaments that young readers can relate to. With songs and stories, the Superkids carry children from lesson to lesson, capturing and sustaining interest in rigorous, disciplined, yet fun lessons.</li> </ul>



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- **Explicit phonics instruction gives children a reliable way to unlock the written word.** The systematic, explicit phonics instruction at the heart of the program is thoughtfully and thoroughly designed so that children learn to decode words with continuous practice until they reach automaticity and fluency. As children decode, they are learning to encode (spell) words with the letter-sounds they have learned. Thus, the relationship between written and spoken language is made explicit as children write what they speak and read what they write.

- **Phonetically controlled vocabulary enables children to really read, not guess.** In the kindergarten and first-grade levels, children’s reading consists almost exclusively of sound and symbols that have been explicitly taught. Reading phonetically controlled vocabulary encourages children to build the habit of decoding, rather than making guesses, until they can read automatically. In second grade, decodable stories are offered alongside SUPER Magazine and authentic literature, to further reinforce fluency.

- **The program seamlessly integrates all of the language arts.** Reading skills are developed in concert with other language skills so that children understand the integration of written and spoken language. Children advance with balanced skills that can be applied to accessing, processing, and reproducing language as they “hear it, see it, say it, and write it.” In this way, all the skills are taught in multiple modalities—visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

**Happily Ever After (Prekindergarten)**

- **Motivation is key to children’s success.** Happily Ever After includes beautifully illustrated stories; lively discussions; and a variety of hands-on activities, group games, and art projects—all of which delight children. Throughout the program, clear instruction builds success step by step, giving children confidence as they develop the skills they need to learn to read.

- **Early reading skills are most effectively taught when integrated with the other language arts.** Happily Ever After keeps children engaged by fully integrating reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Children listen to stories and discuss them. Children see educators write and they write themselves by dictating their ideas. Children begin to understand that written words stand for spoken thoughts and that communication is the goal of all the language arts.

- **Explicit instruction supports children at every step.** Happily Ever After assumes nothing. Instead, it carefully breaks down and explains tasks. For example, children aren’t just asked to draw a line. First, they learn what a *dot* and a *line* are, to put a crayon on the dot, and to trace the line. Then, they draw a line, learn the meaning of *under*, and apply that to *underline*. This explicit, systematic approach makes children successful and gives the strongest possible foundation for learning to read.



<b>Race to the Top Requirements</b>	<b>What the Superkids and Happily Ever After Programs Do</b>
<p><i>Continued from earlier page</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A multimodal approach develops the learning styles of all children.</b> Strengthening the ability to learn in all modalities prepares children for reading (which involves mainly the visual modality), spelling (auditory), and writing (kinesthetic). Multimodal practice helps children master skills and concepts regardless of strengths or preferred learning styles. Throughout the program, children learn new skills, concepts, and vocabulary by seeing, hearing, and participating in physical activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Invitational Priority – Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes</b>	
<p><b><u>“...programs to improve educational outcomes for high-need students who are young children (prekindergarten through third grade) by enhancing the quality of preschool programs.</u></b> Of particular interest are proposals that support practices that (i) <b><u>improve school readiness</u></b> (including social, emotional, and cognitive); and (ii) <b><u>improve the transition</u></b> between preschool and kindergarten.”</p>	<p>By implementing the Superkids Reading Program as well as Happily Ever After, LEAs can design an effective, coordinated program that supports students from prekindergarten through second grade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Happily Ever After (Prekindergarten)</b> Happily Ever After teaches a rich curriculum of early literacy skills, including story structure and appreciation, print and book awareness, letter recognition and naming, auditory discrimination, phonological and phonemic awareness, listening and direction following, fine motor skills, recognizing colors and shapes, instructional concepts and vocabulary, oral language development, and emergent writing through children’s dictation. It provides the foundation that children need to be successful when they begin formal reading instruction.</li> <li>• <b>The Superkids Reading Program (Kindergarten–Grade 2)</b> The Superkids Reading Program teaches all aspects of reading seamlessly integrated with the language arts, and provides explicit and systematic instruction in reading, spelling, handwriting, expressive writing, and simple grammar and mechanics.</li> </ul> <p>As these two programs help students meet rigorous state standards, and align to the Head Start, International Reading Association (IRA), and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommendations for teaching students to read, LEAs can assist children as they transition from early childhood programs to the primary school classroom.</p>
<b>Invitational Priority – School-Level Conditions for Reform, Innovation, and Learning</b>	
<p>“...conditions for reform and innovation as well as the conditions for learning by providing schools with flexibility and autonomy in such areas as–</p> <p>(v) <b><u>Providing comprehensive services to high-need students...</u></b> (e.g., ...through local partnerships with...<b><u>nonprofit organizations, and other providers</u></b>);</p> <p>(vi) <b><u>Creating school climates and cultures that remove obstacles to, and actively support, student engagement and achievement</u></b>; and</p> <p>(vii) <b><u>Implementing strategies to effectively engage</u></b></p>	<p>The Superkids Reading Program and Happily Ever After encourage educators to develop strong connections with families. Teachers frequently report children’s progress, suggest activities that adults can do at home, and actively involve parents in student learning. Ideas promoted in the programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a <b>parent orientation</b> at the beginning of the school year to give families an overview of how Happily Ever After or the Superkids Reading Program will help develop their child as a reader. Throughout the school year, host <b>family reading nights</b> in the classroom so children can share with their families what they’ve been reading and writing.</li> </ul>



Race to the Top Requirements	What the Superkids and Happily Ever After Programs Do
<p><u>families</u> and communities in supporting the academic success of their students.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the <b>take-home letters</b> (provided in English and Spanish) to let families know what their child has been learning in the program and suggest activities to do at home to reinforce the skills taught.</li> <li>• <b>Share students’ work with their families.</b> Send home completed Student Books or Word Work Book pages, Daily Dictation and Handwriting work, blackline masters, expressive writing assignments, Book Talk Journals (grade 2 only), spelling tests, Progress Tests, and End-of-Level Tests. Retain some materials for at-school conferences, particularly work that shows how a student is struggling, making progress, or excelling.</li> <li>• Encourage <b>at-home activities</b>, such as:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Reading aloud to a child.</b> Send read-aloud book suggestions home to help families choose books that connect to concepts and topics students are currently reading or learning about at school.</li> <li>- <b>Independent reading.</b> Allow children to take home Superkids Library Books or other books so they can experience the pleasure of reading on their own or aloud to their family.</li> <li>- <b>Talking about books and ideas.</b> Give families engaging questions and topics to discuss related to what children have been reading or studying.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

