

WHITEPAPER

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# Maximizing Literacy with Readability

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By Jen Gibson



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# ABSTRACT

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This whitepaper explores Readability, an AI-driven reading platform designed to boost literacy among young learners using evidence-based strategies. Readability integrates research-backed methodologies and expert guidance, aligning its features with the key pillars of reading instruction found in [the National Reading Panel Report](#)<sup>1</sup> and the [Science of Reading Brief](#)<sup>2</sup>. The research that these organizations conducted on best practices for teaching reading found that children need to develop skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension to become proficient readers. Systematic and explicit instruction in these areas, particularly in phonemic awareness and phonics, leads to significant improvements in reading and spelling skills. They also emphasized the importance of teacher training and the use of multiple instructional approaches, including computer technology, to address

diverse student needs and improve literacy outcomes.

Readability's platform focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, comprehension, and advanced computer technology to create an engaging and effective reading environment.

This paper highlights Readability's significant impact on readers, demonstrating increased engagement, improved comprehension skills, and notable advancements in reading levels.

**These results underscore the power of combining advanced technology with research-based strategies to enhance literacy outcomes.** Readability proves to be an invaluable tool for educators aiming to develop proficient readers. Readability is committed to unlocking every student's potential through equitable access to quality reading instruction.

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<sup>1</sup> National Reading Panel Report (2000, April 13). *National Reading Panel Report*. <https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/migrated/NRP-2000.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> National Center on Improving Literacy (2022). *The Science of Reading: The Basics*.

Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Improving Literacy. Retrieved from <https://www.improvingliteracy.org>.

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## THE AUTHOR

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Jen Gibson is an experienced education consultant with a strong focus on literacy, supporting non-profits and edtech organizations in developing education strategies, literacy programs, digital badging, business development, and adult learning initiatives. Over the past 5 ½ years, she has worked extensively with clients across the education sector to enhance literacy outcomes and support learners of all ages.

In 2023, Jen expanded her role by joining the Krause Center for Innovation (KCI) as Director of Strategy & Marketing. In this position, she leads efforts to amplify the center's influence across California, bringing her passion for literacy and education into her strategic work.

Jen's background in literacy began during her 17 years in public education, where she served as a teacher, adjunct faculty member at Chapman University, TOSA, and curriculum coordinator. Her roles included developing literacy-focused curricula and fostering instructional practices that enhanced student reading and comprehension skills. Following this, Jen transitioned to executive roles at edtech companies like Lesson Planet and ABC-Clio, where she further applied her expertise in literacy to educational technology solutions.

Jen holds a B.A. in International Politics from Cal Poly Humboldt, a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential from Chapman University, an M.S. in Education from Grand Canyon University, and a Business Certificate in Marketing from UCLA.

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# ABOUT READABILITY

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## EXPERIENCE

Readability has seamlessly blended over two decades of technological innovation with the expertise of child development professionals, reading specialists, and educators. Founded by technology entrepreneurs with a passion for leveraging tech to advance education, Readability reflects a deep commitment to transforming literacy outcomes through data-driven pedagogical research and a focus on educational equity.

## MISSION

Readability is dedicated to providing an unparalleled reading and comprehension tool that supports a diverse range of learners, including students on the Autism spectrum, those with dyslexia, English Language Learners (ELL), and children who have yet to develop a love for reading. The platform fosters confidence and joy in reading, helping young learners progress from learning to read to reading to learn while prioritizing equitable access to quality education for all students.

## TECHNOLOGY

Continuous innovation is at the core of Readability's approach. Using advanced AI technology, Readability listens to children read aloud, providing real-time feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. It tracks progress through key metrics like reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension while delivering personalized reading materials tailored to each child's level. Speech recognition enables instant corrections, acts as a virtual tutor, and provides detailed progress reports that give parents valuable insights into their child's development. This combination fosters a dynamic, independent learning experience that builds strong literacy skills.

By leveraging the latest technological advancements and data-driven insights, Readability remains a powerful and adaptive tool designed to meet the evolving needs of young readers and deliver impactful results.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Employing evidence-based strategies is crucial in elevating literacy among young learners. [Readability](#), an advanced AI-driven reading platform, stands out by embedding research-backed methodologies and expert guidance into its design. This whitepaper explores how Readability was meticulously developed to enhance literacy through strategic, research-based approaches and highlights the influential role of educators and literacy experts in its evolution.

## FOUNDATION IN RESEARCH

Readability's development is anchored in the comprehensive, evidence-based strategies recommended by the [National Reading Panel Report](#)<sup>3</sup> and the [Science of Reading Brief](#)<sup>4</sup> research. These research-based approaches both emphasize that effective reading instruction must address five key areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Readability's platform aligns its features with the key pillars of reading instruction identified in the report, including phonemic awareness, phonics instruction, fluency, and comprehension. Additionally, Readability leverages cutting-edge computer technology to create an engaging and effective reading environment.

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*By harnessing the principles of the Science of Reading, we designed our AI technology to analyze students' reading in real-time and deliver personalized voice instruction that aligns with the cognitive processes involved in learning to read. This ensures that every student receives the targeted support they need to build strong reading foundations, fostering lifelong literacy.” - Readability, CTO*

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<sup>3</sup> National Reading Panel Report (2000, April 13). *National Reading Panel Report*. <https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/migrated/NRP-2000.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> National Center on Improving Literacy (2022). *The Science of Reading: The Basics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Improving Literacy. Retrieved from <https://www.improvingliteracy.org>.

## OVERALL IMPACT

The data from 2023 compellingly illustrates Readability's transformative influence on young readers. It demonstrates substantial engagement, improved comprehension skills, and notable advancements in reading levels. This success story underscores the potential of integrating advanced technology with research-based strategies to enhance students' literacy outcomes significantly.



**Seventy-four percent** of the students in the sample set showed significant improvement in reading fluency. By aligning with the Science of Reading

Brief and the National Reading Panel Report's recommendations and incorporating insights from educators and literacy experts, Readability has emerged as a powerful tool for educators aiming to develop proficient readers. Through continuous research and collaboration, Readability remains dedicated to unlocking every student's potential, ensuring equitable access to high-quality reading instruction.

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*As a seasoned English teacher, I tip my hat to Readability and its platform. I love how the app prompts children to read out loud opposed to just silent sustained reading. The comprehension questions are also great to ensure children are understanding what they are reading. The app also gives readers points which can be used to incentivize progress monitoring. So glad I came across this gem!” - Teacher MSB.*

**See full review in [Appendix I](#)**

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## IMPACT OF READABILITY ON STUDENTS

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In 2023, Readability profoundly impacted its users' reading habits and literacy skills helping them to achieve their reading goals. The platform's holistic approach, combining personalized reading experiences with evidence-based instructional strategies, yielded impressive results. Key performance indicators (KPIs) and detailed reading level distributions reflect this impact.

In addition, the analysis of reading fluency data showcases the significant progress made by students using the Readability platform. The data reveals the range of improvements in reading fluency, with many children making substantial gains across various improvement brackets.

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*To say this app is amazing is an absolute understatement. My child in third grade has been with a reading tutor since first grade. This year, the school pulled us aside to let us know that there is a possibility he may have to be held back because of his reading level. Even though he had been with the reading tutor for the last two years, he was still reading at the first-grade level. We struggled to find something that really helped, we tried everything. In four months of using the app, his improvement has been so drastic that the school called us wanting to know what we had done. The school system is now purchasing the app and instituting it in their reading program, not just for tutor base, but for early reading education as well. I would give this 100 stars if I could!" - Father of a struggling student.*

**See full review in [Appendix I](#)**



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# TECHNOLOGY GROUNDED IN EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

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The development of Readability stems from a comprehensive understanding of evidence-based strategies recommended by the National Reading Panel Report and the principles of the Science of Reading Brief research. Across key pillars of reading instruction highlighted in these reports, Readability aligns its features and functionalities with the following key pillars:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Readability provides feedback on students' phonemic awareness skills by using real-time assessment while students read.
- **Phonics:** Readability supports phonics instruction by providing feedback on students' ability to decode words accurately. The tool highlights words that students may struggle with and helps them say the full word aloud.
- **Fluency:** Readability provides feedback on students' fluency by analyzing their reading speed and accuracy. Students, parents, and teachers can see their reading progress via the dashboard.
- **Vocabulary:** Readability supports vocabulary development by providing feedback on students' understanding of key vocabulary words and word meanings. The tool highlights unfamiliar words and provides definitions and synonyms to expand students' vocabulary.
- **Comprehension:** After each book, Readability assesses students' comprehension skills by asking them comprehension questions aloud, which the student can respond to verbally. The tool provides feedback on students' ability to identify main ideas, make inferences, and draw conclusions, helping to improve their overall comprehension ability.

In addition to aligning with the five essential components of reading instruction, Readability also aligns with best practices in reading instruction, including the science of explicit and systematic instruction, the use of evidence-based practices, and the importance of differentiation and individualized instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

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# DATA COLLECTION METHODS

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The data was collected from students using the Readability App, each reading for at least 10 minutes per day over a minimum of 30 reading days, with an average of 146 reading days per student. The app captured data in real-time for each session, tracking a variety of key metrics, including:

- Reading duration (in minutes)
- Reading accuracy
- Reading speed (in words per minute)
- Fluency levels (in words correct per minute)
- Comprehension questions answered

## STRENGTHS

**Extended Tracking Period:** Data was collected over a minimum of 30 reading days, with an average of 146 reading days per student, providing a more comprehensive view of long-term reading progress and fluency development.

**Diverse Metrics:** The inclusion of various factors (reading duration, accuracy, fluency, speed, comprehension) offers a multi-dimensional understanding of each student's reading abilities.

**Real-Time Data:** Data was collected in real-time through the app, increasing data accuracy and reflecting each student's true reading performance during each session.

**Longitudinal Analysis:** By tracking progress over 30 or more reading days, the data provides insights into the development of fluency over time, rather than being limited to short-term observations.

## LIMITATIONS

**Individual Variability:** Student's reading fluency might fluctuate daily based on mood, environment, or external factors, which could lead to inconsistent data for some sessions.

**Excludes Short-Term Readers:** The data only includes students who read for at least 30 days, excluding those who may have read for shorter periods but still made significant progress.

**External Influences:** The data does not account for outside factors (e.g., additional reading practice outside the app, classroom instruction, or parental involvement).

This dataset was then used to generate scatter charts, mapping each child's fluency over the course of their reading sessions. A fluency trendline was computed to analyze fluency progression and the impact on overall reading levels over time.

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# THE EFFECT OF READABILITY ON STUDENT LITERACY

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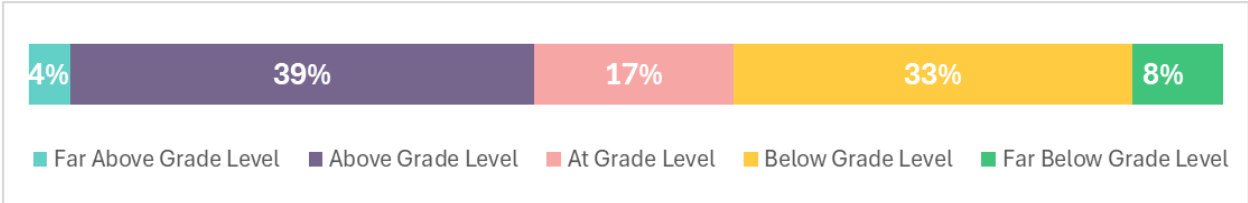
We evaluated Readability's impact on literacy by taking a sample set of 598 students who used the platform in 2023. This diverse group of students spanned all reading level brackets, ranging from Far Below Grade Level to Far Above Grade Level. Our objective was to assess the platform's effectiveness in improving reading habits and literacy skills by closely tracking student progress over the course of the year. The data collected provided insights into how Readability's personalized, AI-driven features supported learning for students at various literacy levels.

Readability's approach, which blends adaptive technology with research-backed instructional strategies, proved to be highly effective in driving meaningful literacy gains. The platform's ability to tailor reading experiences to individual needs allowed students at every level to engage with content suited to their abilities, promoting steady progress. As a result, we observed significant improvements in key performance indicators (KPIs) and noticeable advancements across reading levels. These findings highlight Readability's potential to enhance literacy development in students, regardless of their starting point on the reading spectrum.

## Student Sample Set Selection Criteria

- Unique students that read a minimum of 10 minutes a day for at least 30 days
- Reading Period January 1, 2023- December 31, 2023

## Distribution of Reading Level Brackets Across the Student Sample



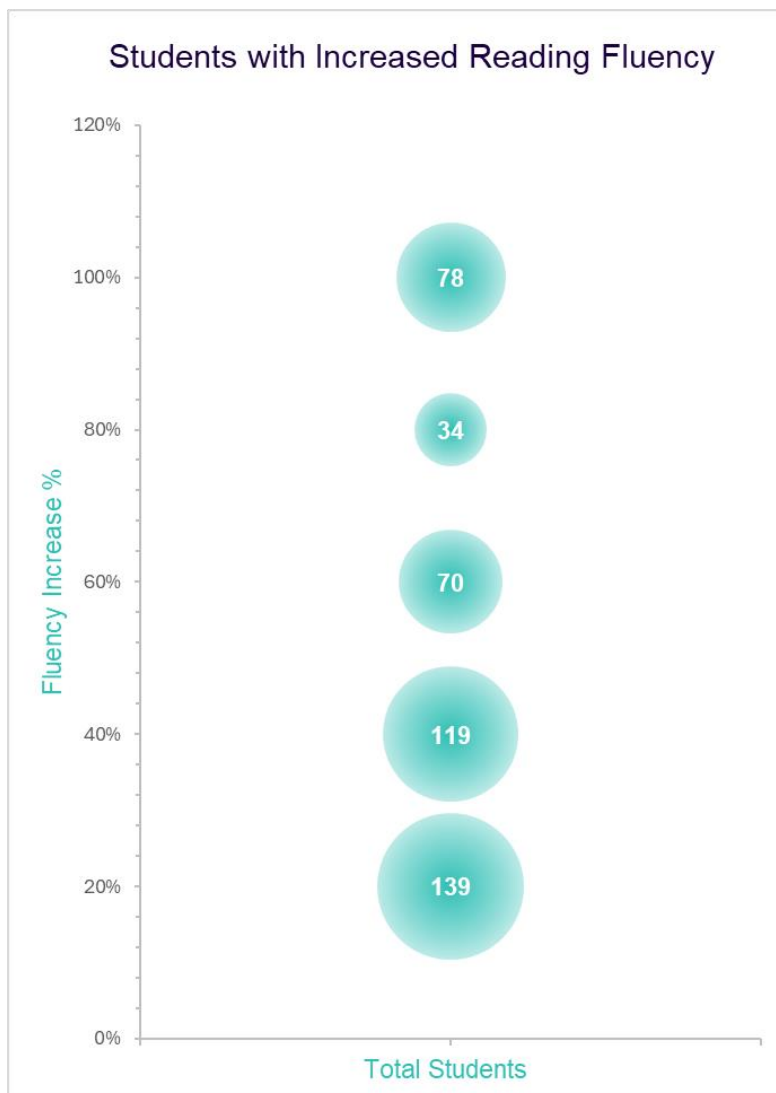
# Broad Key Performance Indicators

The following illustrates the 2023 student dataset, which included 598 unique students, along with key performance indicators (KPIs) reflecting their engagement and progress. Collectively, these students read an impressive 83,026 books, averaging 138 books per student. They dedicated a total of 1,414,657 minutes to reading, equating to 2,365 minutes per student, with an average of 146 reading days each. Additionally, they answered a total of 270,794 comprehension questions, averaging 453 questions per student. These KPIs demonstrate a high level of reading activity and consistent use of the platform, highlighting the positive impact on literacy development.



## Fluency Impact

**Seventy-four percent (74%)** of the students in the sample set showed significant improvement in reading fluency, offering a clear and detailed picture of Readability's impact. The following bubble charts, "**Students with Increased Reading Fluency**" and "**Students with Increased Reading Fluency by Reading Level Bracket,**" provide a detailed analysis of the Readability platform's impact on students' reading skills. The chart illustrates the percentage range of fluency improvement, showing how many students fall into each bubble. This visualization offers valuable insights into student progress and clearly demonstrates the platform's effectiveness in driving significant gains in reading proficiency.

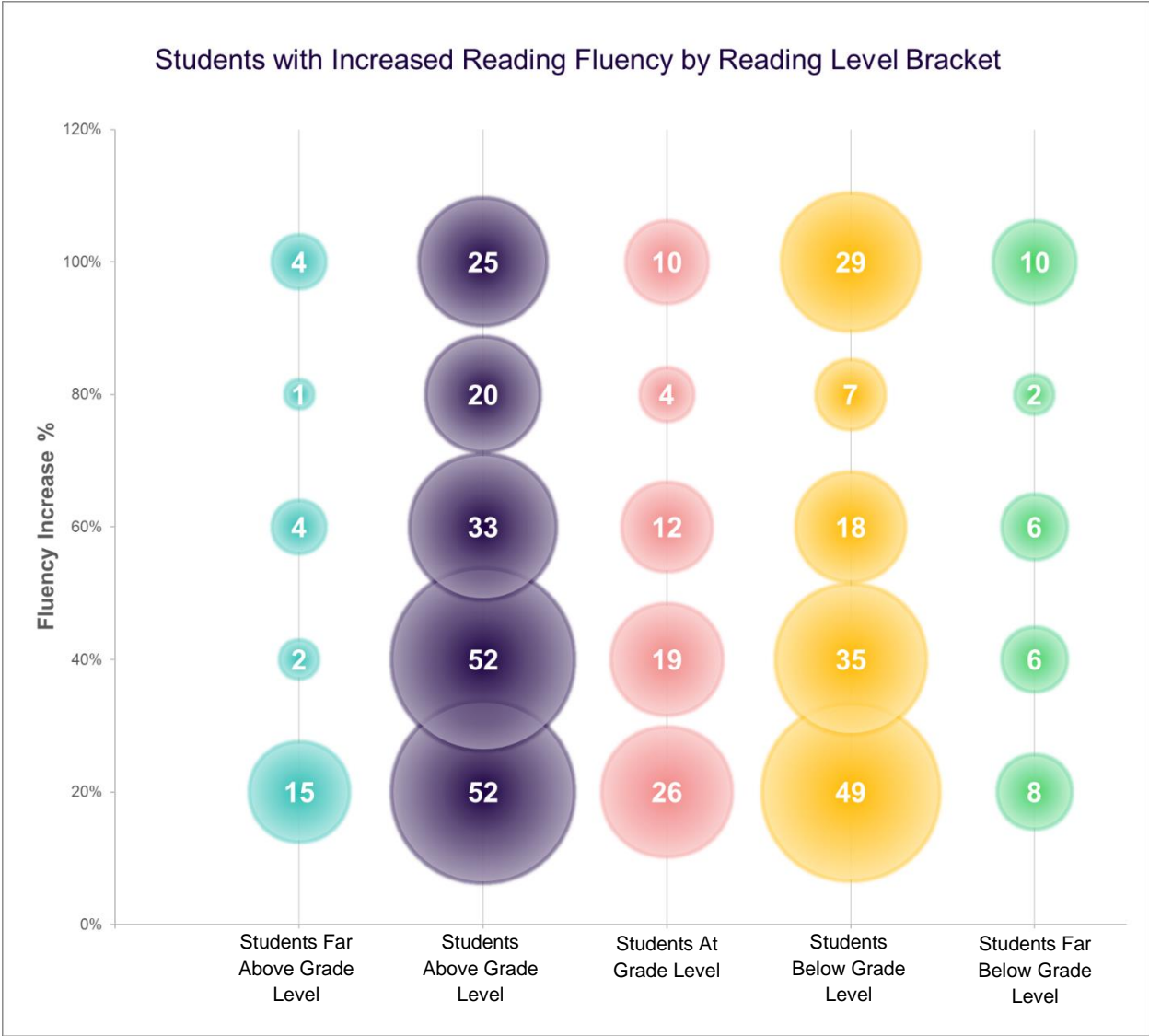


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*The first time she tried Readability, not only was she able to read at her own pace, but the technology UNDERSTOOD her unique speech patterns, and she was able to complete an entire book without breaking down into tears. She is now starting to choose her own books and reads every night on her own, and she even told me she 'secretly' likes her new app, even though it has to do with reading. Her attitude towards reading has completely changed now because she feels successful and is able to do this independently. So from the bottom of my heart and soul, thank you for this. Your program helped my little girl who had given up believing in herself again.” - Ms. Garibay*

See full review in [Appendix I](#)

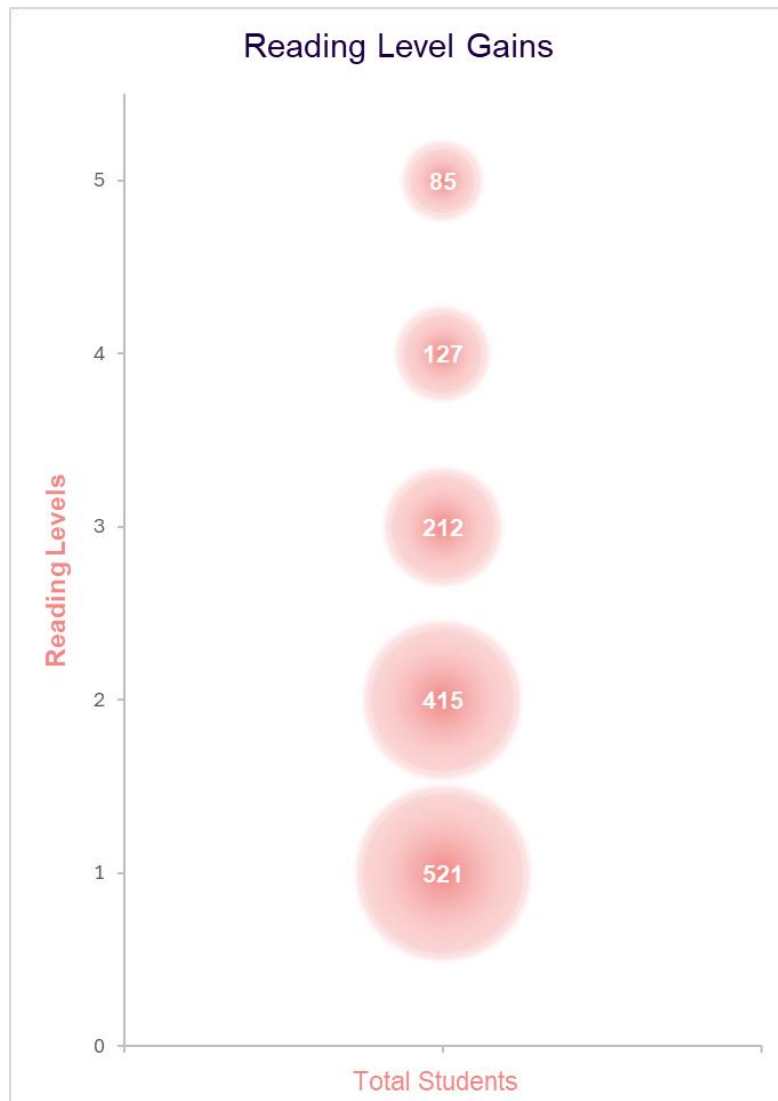
The fluency improvement, categorized by the reading level bracket in which students began their journey, clearly highlights the significant progress made by a diverse range of learners. This data reflects the effectiveness of Readability's tailored and adaptive reading strategies. The variation in improvement levels underscores the platform's ability to address the individual needs of each student, fostering measurable growth in reading fluency across all proficiency levels.



## Reading Level Impact

The following bubble chart, “**Reading Level Gains**,” offers an insightful overview of the Readability platform's impact on improving student reading levels. The data reveals that most students have progressed by one or more reading levels, highlighting these improvements.

The data illustrates the substantial progress made by students using the Readability platform, with a significant majority leveling up in their reading proficiency. The high percentages of students advancing by multiple levels underscore the platform's effectiveness in providing targeted reading interventions and fostering literacy growth. The detailed breakdown of improvement levels further emphasizes Readability's role in supporting diverse learners in their journey to becoming proficient readers.



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*My 9 year old daughter has severe dyslexia. We held her back to try to help her catch up but it did not work. We downloaded your app a couple weeks ago. She is reading around 45 books a week and moved from a level 1 to a level 3. She loves seeing her progress on the app and enjoys all the books. Thank you for this amazing program. We have tried too many to list over the years and this is the first one that has worked. No tears, just confidence.”*

- Julia Hill

See full review in [Appendix I](#)



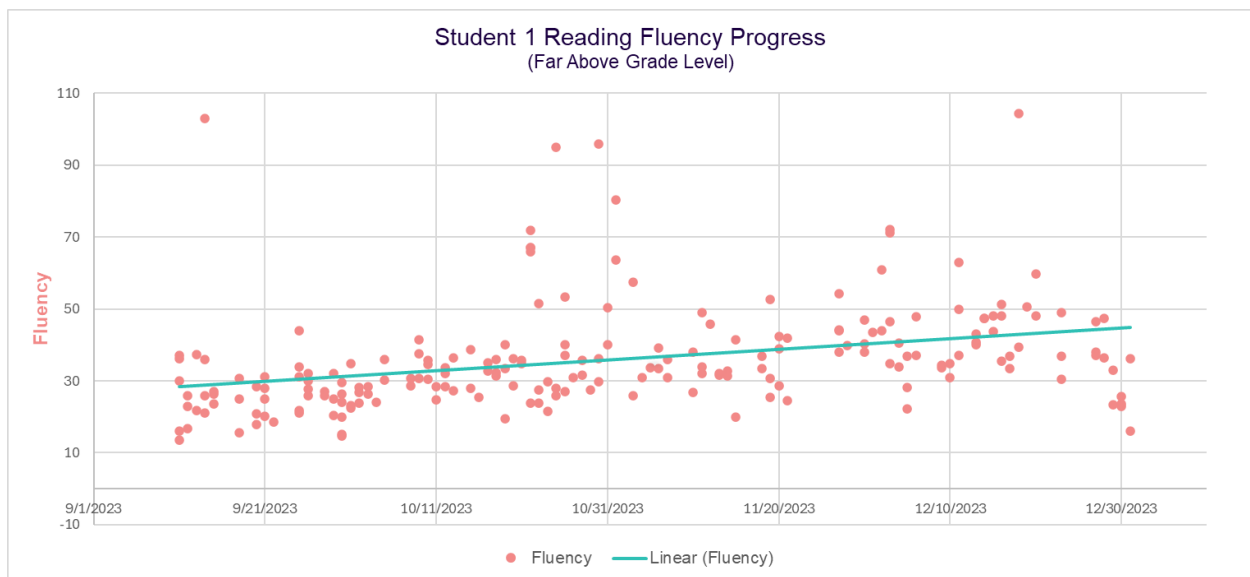
## Individual Student Analysis by Reading Level – Snapshots

Overall, the data from 2023 vividly illustrates the transformative influence of Readability on young readers, demonstrating substantial engagement, improved comprehension skills, and notable advancements in reading levels. This success showcases the potential of integrating advanced technology with research-based strategies to enhance student literacy outcomes. The following provides a snapshot of individual student progress from various reading levels.

We have pulled a sample student profile from each level to show growth and overall improvement.

### Student 1 – Far Above Grade Level

- Age: 8
- Grade: 3rd
- Starting Reading Level: 2
- Ending Reading Level: 5
- Fluency Impact: 38% increase
- Time in Program: 9/11/23 – 12/31/23

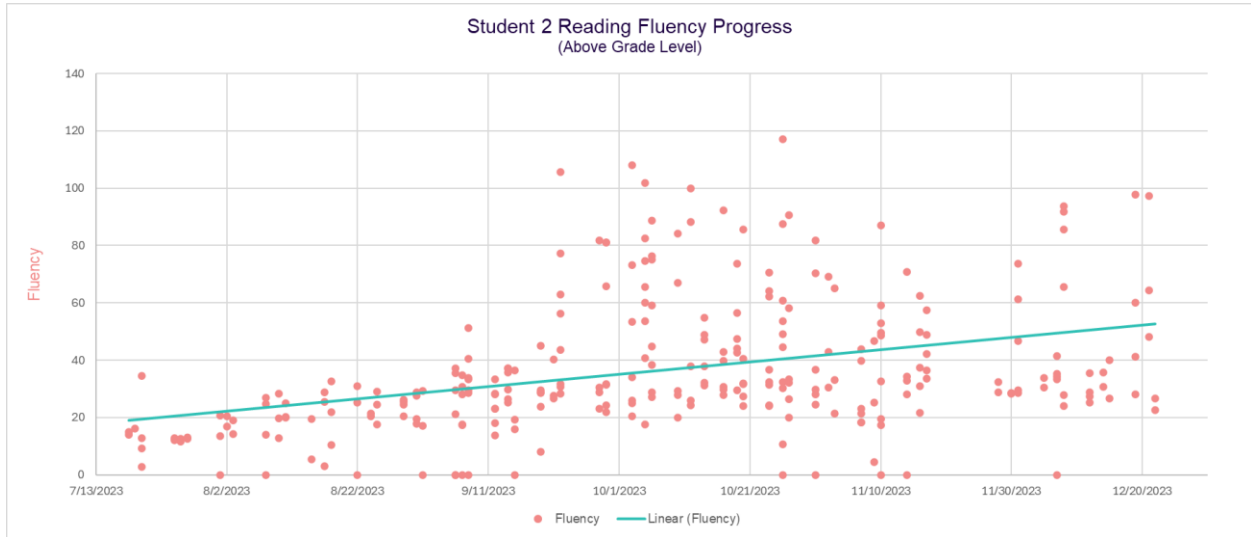


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*I really love Readability in that it gives the child the opportunity to learn at their own pace without the pressure and expectations. It helps relax the child and promotes internal motivation and success in the child, rather than self-doubt and anxiety that can come from having to do all these things in one go.” – Nicky Palmer, Child Psychologist, MS, LMFT*

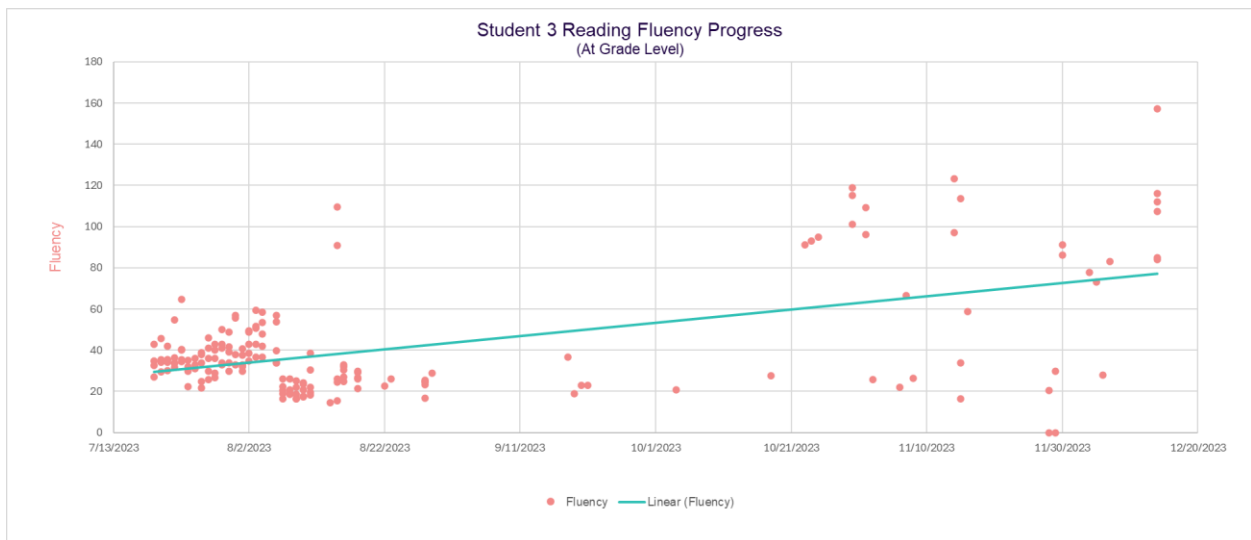
## Student 2 - Above Grade Level

- Age: 8
- Grade: 2nd
- Starting Reading Level: 1
- Ending Reading Level: 3
- Fluency Impact: 190%
- Time in Program: 7/18/23 - 12/22/23



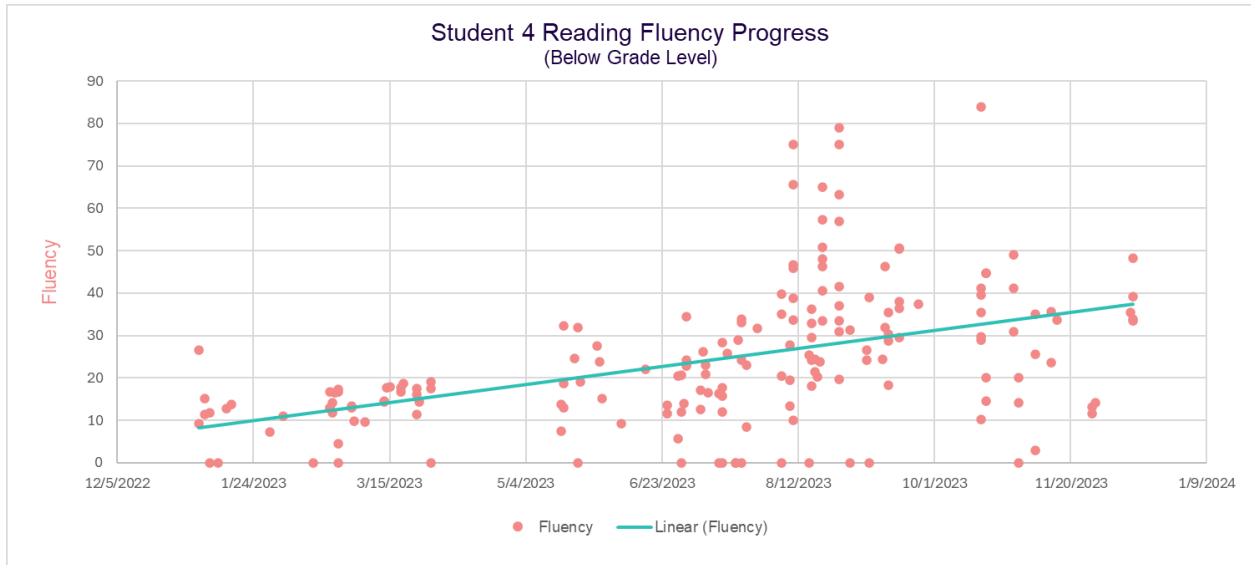
## Student 3 - At Grade Level

- Age: 11
- Grade: 5th
- Starting Reading Level: 1
- Ending Reading Level: 5
- Fluency Impact: 142%
- Time in Program: 7/19/23 - 12/14/23



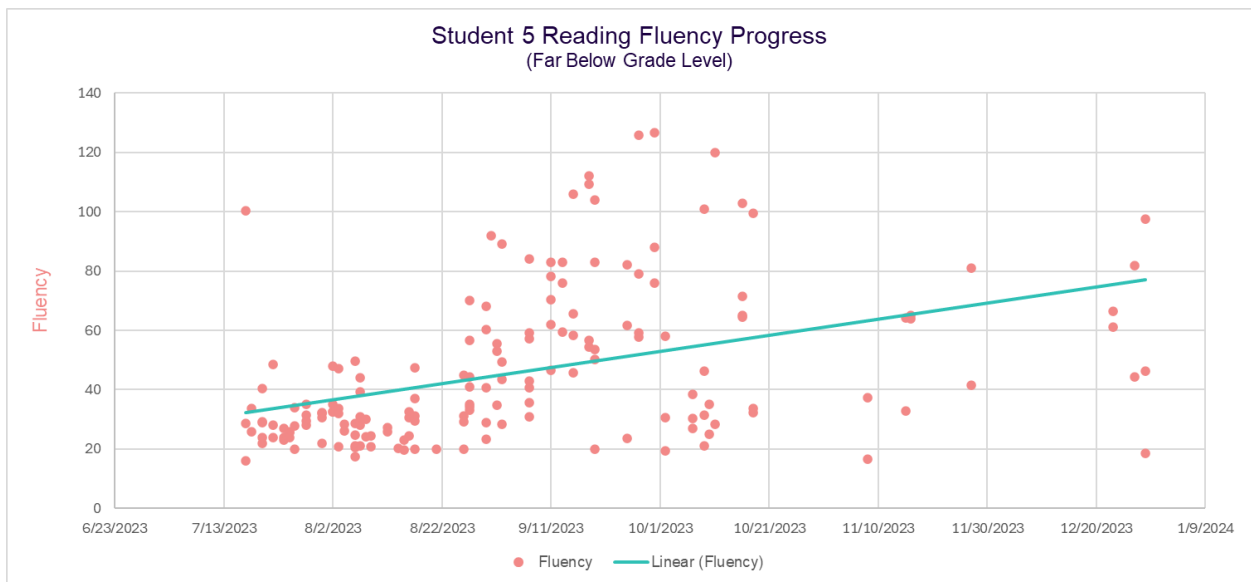
## Student 4 -Below Grade Level

- Age: 8
- Grade: 2nd
- Starting Reading Level: 0
- Ending Reading Level: 1
- Fluency Impact: 288%
- Time in Program: 1/4/23 - 12/13/23



## Student 5 -Far Below Grade Level

- Age: 10
- Grade: 6th
- Starting Reading Level: 1
- Ending Reading Level: 3
- Fluency Impact: 124%
- Time in Program: 7/17/23 - 12/29/23



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# PILOT STUDY WITH SALISBURY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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A recent pilot conducted at Salisbury Elementary School in Pennsylvania underscores Readability's efficacy in improving reading fluency among third-grade students. Partnering with educator Lori McGinley, Readability implemented a structured program focusing on oral reading fluency practice using AI and speech recognition software.

**Challenges Addressed:** Ms. McGinley identified a pressing need for her students to improve reading fluency, a critical component highlighted by the National Reading Panel Report. Insufficient practice and exposure to fluent reading hindered student progress, prompting the adoption of Readability to address this challenge.

**Approach:** Collaborating with Ms. McGinley, Readability structured a pilot program wherein students utilized the app for 20 minutes daily, split between school and home. The app provided personalized, AI-driven feedback on oral reading fluency, comprehension, and progress tracking, aligning with evidence-based strategies for effective reading instruction.

**Outcomes:** The results of the pilot study were impressive. Students who consistently used Readability showed a 41% increase in reading fluency. Additionally, their enthusiasm for the app significantly boosted engagement and accountability in independent reading, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective.

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*I definitely see more growth in the students who are using it consistently than the students who are not using it consistently. ALL students have access to a large, growing library at their fingertips. Readability has leveled the playing field for my students. Readability makes it possible to monitor the amount of time students are reading at home. This is HUGE for teachers.” –*

Lori McGinley, Third Grade Teacher

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## FINANCIAL COSTS OF NEEDS

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Investing in a child's literacy development is essential, yet many schools and districts face challenges in providing sufficient reading support due to limited resources and a shortage of reading specialists. Readability created a solution that bridges this gap, making high-quality reading intervention accessible to all students. This in turn provides accessibility and access for all students.

Key benefits of Readability:

- **Affordability:** A single monthly subscription to Readability costs significantly less than employing additional reading specialists or hiring external tutors, providing a cost-effective solution for large-scale literacy support.
- **Scalability and Convenience:** Readability is available anytime, anywhere, allowing students to access reading support beyond the classroom and school hours. This flexibility ensures consistent practice without the need to schedule and pay for external tutoring sessions.
- **Personalization at Scale:** The AI-driven platform adapts to each student's unique reading level, offering personalized support that mimics one-on-one tutoring, but across a whole district, ensuring every student gets the help they need.
- **Student Engagement:** With interactive, child-friendly content, Readability keeps students motivated and engaged, fostering a positive attitude toward reading that drives long-term literacy success.

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## CONCLUSION

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Readability exemplifies the fusion of cutting-edge technology with evidence-based strategies to maximize student literacy outcomes. By aligning with recommendations from cutting edge literacy research and leveraging input from educators and literacy experts, Readability emerges as an affordable solution for educators striving to cultivate proficient readers. Through ongoing research and collaboration, Readability remains committed to unlocking the potential of every student, ensuring equitable access to quality reading instruction.

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## APPENDICES

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### Appendix I: Quotes from Parents and Teachers

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*Eli is ten years old and started elementary school at six years old. Eli has a diagnosis of moderate Autism, world developmental delay, and speech delay. Eli is shy, timid, and, for the most part, non-verbal.*

*It is crucial to know that Eli is ten years old and has the speech capacity of a three- to four-year-old. We have struggled with teaching Eli and encouraging him to take the initiative to read. Learning progress has been slow in reading, so we noticed progress immediately using Readability. I'm not sure what it is, but Readability motivates Eli to read. Eli has definitely been reading a lot more and likes how he has different choices to choose from using this app.*

*Readability is amazing. It is easy to use, and I love how data is tracked, which helps me stay informed about his progress. Family, friends, and his speech therapist have noticed that Eli has been showing amazing growth with his reading. I can't wait to see how much more Eli will improve, and I'm excited to hear about more amazing stories.”*

- Magaly Garcia

“

*As a seasoned English teacher, I tip my hat to Readability and its platform. I had my nephew for a few days who is struggling with reading and utilized this tool to assist him. I love how the app prompts children to read out loud opposed to just silent sustained reading. The comprehension questions are also great to ensure children are understanding what they are reading. The app also gives readers points which can be used to incentivize progress monitoring. So glad I came across this gem!”*

- Teacher MSB

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*My 9 year old daughter has severe dyslexia. We held her back to try to help her catch up but it did not work. We downloaded your app a couple weeks ago. She is reading around 45 books a week and moved from a level 1 to a level 3. She loves seeing her progress on the app and enjoys all the books. Thank you for this amazing program. We have tried too many to list over the years and this is the first one that has worked. No tears, just confidence.”*

- Julia Hill

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*I tried Hooked on Phonics with my son but it was too much 1 on 1 and it took too long and he lost interest very quickly. We tried Readability and this is so much easier especially for kids with short attention spans and busy parents. One book took like 5 mins or less and he felt great that he could finish a book from start to finish. I noticed that he would remember words he was corrected on so the next time it came up, he said it with no help. I also love the reading report. Summer break is way too long and kids tend to forget a lot. With this I feel like it's preparing my son for school which is great.”*

- Cybersec Chica

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*To say this app is amazing is an absolute understatement. My child in third grade has been with a reading tutor since first grade. This year, the school pulled us aside to let us know that there is a possibility he may have to be held back because of his reading level. Even though he had been with a tutor for the last two years, he was still reading at a first grade level. We struggled to find something that really helped, we tried everything. I then stumbled across this app in the last ditch effort. In four months of using the app, his improvement has been so drastic that the school called us and wanting to know what we had done. We showed them this app and explained how it worked. The school system is now purchasing the app and instituting it in their reading program not just for tutor base, for early reading education as well. I cannot give this review 100 stars or I would.*

- Father of struggling kids



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*“I don't even know what to say other than thank you! To whoever designed and created this...THANK YOU!! My daughter is 9 and is severely dyslexic with speech apraxia. She's reading at about a 1st grade level, if that, and the mention of 'reading' would cause a huge meltdown because of how difficult it is for her. I've tried every app out there that 'guaranteed' success but all they did was cause her to get frustrated and break down because she couldn't succeed on them. Because of her speech apraxia, apps could never decode what she was trying to say and it was heartbreaking to see her give up. I decided to try this and the free month long trial is what sold me, to be honest, because I didn't want to pay for something that wasn't going to work. The first time she tried Readability, not only was she able to read at her own pace, but the technology UNDERSTOOD her unique speech patterns and she was able to complete an entire book without breaking down into tears. She is now starting to choose her own books and reads every night on her own and she even told me she 'secretly' likes her new app, even though it has to do with reading. Her attitude towards reading has completely changed now because she feels successful and is able to do this independently. So from the bottom of my heart and soul, thank you for this. Your program helped my little girl who had given up believe in herself again.”*

- Ms. Garibay

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*“If your child is reluctant to read at all I would highly recommend this app. While my child did not have a dyslexia diagnosis he was more delayed with his reading and showed little interest. This app was fun for him. He looked forward to reading with the app each day. I was able to change the font and other features which made a big difference in his reading speed. I really appreciated the objective graphics that the app records such as rate of reading, comprehension, and accuracy. This helped me to focus on the areas of reading that needed more encouragement. This app was a great help to us and we would recommend it to others as well.”*

- JiReCr

## Appendix II: Research

- National Center on Improving Literacy (2022). *The Science of Reading: The Basics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Improving Literacy. Retrieved from <https://www.improvingliteracy.org>.
- National Reading Panel Report (2000, April 13). *National Reading Panel Report*. <https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/migrated/NRP-2000.pdf>