THE SCIENCE BEHIND MY ROAD TO READING

My Road to Reading is Built on a Simple but Powerful Idea:

When children are taught to read in a clear, structured way, in which they learn sounds and letters systematically, one step at a time, they become stronger readers.

This approach, known as structured literacy, is backed by decades of research into how children learn to read. Structured literacy teaches the building blocks of written language explicitly, down to the sounds that letters represent.

Major research reviews, including the National Reading Panel (2000) and guidance from the Institute of Education Sciences (Foorman et al., 2016), consistently point to the same conclusion: phonics instruction that is explicit (meaning direct and structured, with teachers clearly teaching the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent) and systematic (meaning delivered in a carefully planned sequence, building one skill on another) is one of the most effective tools we have for teaching children to read. Educators who use frameworks like LETRS, developed by reading expert Louisa Moats, put this research directly into practice in their classrooms every day.

My Road to Reading is designed to extend and reinforce that classroom instruction. Each decodable text is intentionally matched to the phonics skills students are learning in grades K–3, so children can apply new knowledge in connected text. Rather than relying on memorization or guessing from pictures, students encounter words they have the tools to decode.

This kind of aligned, connected reading practice is a core principle of structured literacy. Reading experts like Wiley Blevins emphasize that students need immediate, meaningful opportunities to use what they've been taught, a principle also reflected in leading reading programs like UFLI Foundations. By pairing explicit instruction with carefully matched texts, My Road to Reading helps turn taught skills into independent reading ability.

The science behind this design goes deeper than just "practice makes perfect." Researchers like Linnea Ehri have shown that when children decode words (sounding them out using what they know about letters and sounds) they aren't just reading those words in the moment. **They're forming lasting word memories by connecting spellings, pronunciations, and meanings in memory.** David Share's research adds to this picture: every time a child successfully decodes an unfamiliar word, it's an opportunity for that word to move into long-term memory. And as David Kilpatrick's work makes clear, this is how a strong sight word vocabulary develops; through meaningful, repeated decoding practice. In other words, the fluent, automatic word recognition we associate with confident readers isn't a separate skill that gets taught alongside phonics; it's the natural outcome of phonics done well.

That's what My Road to Reading is designed to do. Every book, at every stage, gives children the opportunity to practice the right words at the right time, so that reading practice becomes reading progress.

Blevins, W. (2016). *A fresh look at phonics, grades K–2: Common causes of failure and 7 ingredients for success.* Corwin.

Blevins, W. (2023). *Phonics from A to Z: A practical guide (4th ed.).* Scholastic.

Ehri, L. C. (2014). Orthographic mapping in the acquisition of sight word reading, spelling memory, and vocabulary learning. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2013.819356

Foorman, B., Beyler, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., Furgeson, J., Hayes, L., Henke, J., Justice, L., Keating, B., Lewis, W., Sattar, S., Streke, A., Wagner, R., & Wissel, S. (2016). *Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade* (NCEE 2016-4008). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/21

Kilpatrick, D. A. (2015). *Essentials of assessing, preventing, and overcoming reading difficulties*. Wiley.

Moats, L. C. (2020). *Language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling (LETRS)* (3rd ed.). Voyager Sopris Learning.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read — An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). U.S. Government Printing Office.

Share, D. L. (1995). Phonological recoding and self-teaching: Sine qua non of reading acquisition. *Cognition, 55*(2), 151–218. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(94)00645-2

800.245.9540 mrtr@mackin.com MyRoadToReading.com

Designed and Created by Mackin Educational Resources and Cherry Lake Publishing