

The Superkids Reading Program

Zaner-Bloser Publisher's Response to The Reading League's Curriculum Navigation Report for
The Superkids Reading Program © 2017

Introduction

Zaner-Bloser would like to express our gratitude to The Reading League for their comprehensive evaluation of *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2017, which meticulously assessed the foundational literacy components supporting students in grades K–2. Their detailed review offers valuable insights into both the strengths of the program and areas for enhancement. The evaluation from The Reading League reinforces our dedication to ensuring all students become confident, successful readers by the end of grade 2. Building on this commitment, *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2026 will be launched in fall 2025. This updated version will address the identified areas for enhancement and align with the latest scientifically based reading and writing research practices.

Science of Reading

The science of reading is a vast body of research accumulated over the past fifty years, focused on how children learn to read and write. This compelling evidence sheds light on the brain's processes during reading and identifies the instructional strategies needed to develop skilled readers and writers. Pleasant Rowland, the author of *Superkids*, sought to create a program that blended research-based methods with a sense of joy for her students. After studying the work of leading developmental psychologists, reading experts, and education theorists, she developed and released the original version of *The Superkids Reading Program* in 1978. From the very beginning, *Superkids* has been aligned with the principles of scientific reading research.

Lesson Organization

Superkids offers a well-rounded curriculum with lessons organized into three key strands: Word Work, Reading, and Writing. Each of these strands is designed to complement and reinforce the others, with skills overlapping and integrating across the strands to create a cohesive and

comprehensive English language arts program. The Reading League reviewers conducted an in-depth evaluation of the lessons and materials within these three strands in *Superkids* © 2017. However, it is important to note that the review did not include an examination of the online component of the *Superkids* curriculum.

Program Strengths

The reviewers observed that *Superkids* provides students with developmentally appropriate, engaging texts that are both enjoyable and accessible, with topics designed to spark curiosity and foster a genuine love of reading. These texts are carefully selected to captivate young readers and keep them engaged day after day. Additionally, the characters in *Superkids* serve as a consistent thread throughout the program, helping students make connections to previous lessons while reinforcing and building upon their prior learning. *Superkids* instruction is both clear and supportive, making it easy for students to follow. The reviewers noted that the program uses simple, straightforward language to explain complex concepts, breaking them down into smaller, manageable parts. This approach not only enhances student understanding but also boosts their confidence, empowering them to master new skills and progress in their reading development.

We are pleased that the approach used in *Superkids* was recognized as strong, effective, and positive. The review team highlighted several key aspects of the program that either fully “met” or “mostly met” the established guidelines of best practices in literacy education. This acknowledgment reinforces the value of the *Superkids* program and its alignment with research-based, effective strategies that support student learning and development. The review team specifically noted the following areas where *Superkids* excelled, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering student success.

- Word Recognition Non-Negotiables
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Practices
- Phonics and Phonic Decoding Practices
- Fluency Practices
- Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing
- Language Structures Practices
- Verbal Reasoning Practices
- Literacy Knowledge Practices
- Reading Comprehension Practices
- Handwriting Practices
- Writing Composition Practices
- Non-Negotiables for Assessment
- Assessment Practices

Program Enhancements

Zaner-Bloser is dedicated to ensuring that *Superkids* aligns with the best practices in literacy instruction, is firmly rooted in research, and fosters a fun and engaging learning environment that maximizes student outcomes. The Reading League’s review and feedback have been invaluable in identifying opportunities for further enhancement of instructional practices and playing a crucial role in our ongoing efforts to continuously improve. The report highlighted areas where the program could be strengthened, including building background knowledge and vocabulary, providing more opportunities for students to monitor their own comprehension, and increasing meaningful spelling practice.

It’s important to note that The Reading League did not review the online component of *Superkids* © 2017. This digital platform offers valuable additional resources for educators. For example, teachers can access extended read-aloud lists that complement the units’ instruction at each grade level, along with a suggested read-aloud routine designed to build background knowledge and enhance vocabulary. The platform also includes specific read-aloud lessons, providing a structured approach for teachers to follow.

Additionally, the online component houses a wide range of resources on the “Materials” page, offering supplementary materials that support differentiation and further enrich the three core strands of Word Work, Reading, and Writing.

What’s New?

Zaner-Bloser is excited to announce the upcoming release of *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2026, beginning in fall 2025. This new edition builds on the solid foundational literacy skills highlighted in The Reading League’s review, while also addressing the growth areas identified in the feedback to enhance the program further. *Superkids* © 2026 will introduce a fresh instructional focus centered on Big Topics—overarching themes that encourage students to connect their reading to larger ideas and concepts. Through listening, reading, discussing, and writing about what they’ve learned, students will engage with Essential Questions that help solidify their knowledge and deepen their understanding. The Big Topics will evolve in complexity and depth throughout grades K–2, enabling students to build on their prior knowledge and progressively expand their understanding within each subject area.

Read-Aloud books will play a more central role in comprehension instruction and knowledge development within *Superkids* © 2026. These books, carefully selected for their quality and complexity, include authentic fiction and nonfiction trade books that align with the Big Topics. To reinforce vocabulary acquisition, each unit will feature Words to Know—carefully chosen sophisticated vocabulary words from the Read-Aloud books. These words will be reviewed

multiple times throughout the unit, with child-friendly definitions and context-rich sentences provided via picture cards, ensuring that students grasp and retain the vocabulary.

A key feature of *Superkids* © 2026 is the inclusion of Big Topic Projects, which will serve as culminating tasks where students can demonstrate their understanding across all three strands—Word Work, Reading, and Writing. These projects will be integrated into Writing instruction and are designed to engage students in a variety of language arts skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As students advance through the grades, the complexity of the Big Topic Projects will increase, providing increasingly sophisticated tasks that challenge students to apply their knowledge more deeply.

Spelling instruction will be woven into the weekly lessons, with students practicing both Pattern Words and Memory Words. Pattern Words are words that feature the phonetic or structural elements introduced in the current unit, while Memory Words are words with irregular spelling patterns or those that students have not yet encountered. Throughout each unit, students will have multiple opportunities to practice and review these spelling words, with ongoing reinforcement of previously taught patterns. Teachers will be able to differentiate and adjust spelling lists to meet the needs of their students. Memory Words will be introduced through engaging activities such as songs or short stories and will be taught by emphasizing sound/spellings that students are already familiar with. This will help students learn to encode the words using letter-sound mapping. To aid in this process, sound boxes will be used, allowing students to focus on the sounds in each word and visually connect the appropriate letters to those sounds.

Superkids © 2026 is designed to provide an even more robust, engaging, and research-based literacy experience, fostering students' growth as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Student Outcomes

At Zaner-Bloser, we are committed to providing high-quality educational materials that not only ensure student success, but also make learning enjoyable. We take immense pride in having The Reading League review our *Superkids* curriculum; it's a partnership that we deeply value. Their expert feedback plays a pivotal role in refining our program and allows us to offer an exceptional user experience for both teachers and students. Educational practices evolve through scientifically based research, and organizations like The Reading League are instrumental in helping us meet the ever-changing needs of districts, schools, teachers, and students.

Being a part of this review process fills us with tremendous pride, as it validates our continued efforts to provide effective, research-backed instructional tools. The insights shared by The

Reading League will guide us as we further enhance our curriculum, ensuring we continue to foster a positive and impactful learning environment.

Learn More

To learn more about the *Superkids* curriculum and how it positively impacts both teachers and students, please view the case studies and independent studies that measure outcomes at <https://www.zaner-bloser.com/reading/superkids-reading-program/superkids-reading-program-2017/program-results>. If you would like to explore how *Superkids* can be implemented in your school or district, visit our website at <https://www.zaner-bloser.com> or contact us at 800.421.3018. We look forward to connecting with you and supporting your educational journey!