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Organizational Updates

ReadWorks’ year at a glance
A quick snapshot of the progress we’ve made as an organization in 2023.

5M Students
Used the Student Library

485K Educators
Joined for the first time

1.2M PPA* Actions
Completed on new passages

50 States
Engaged year-round

Leaders in education
We’ve been recognized as leaders in our field for our resources and organizational structure.

Edtech Awards
Finalist
Edtech Digest

Literacy Awards
Honoree
Library of Congress

Four-Star Charity
Charity Navigator

Platinum Seal of Transparency
Guidestar

*PPA = Print, project, and/or assign
The past year was an introspective and empowering one for ReadWorks. While resolutely continuing our wide-reaching work during these critical times for reading comprehension, our team sat down to reflect on our long-term goals. More than ever, we asked ourselves, “How can we effectively deepen our impact on the communities that rely on ReadWorks?”

Through team meetings, ongoing conversations with our supporters, guidance from our Board of Directors, Advisory Council, and Educator Advisory Group, and feedback from our users, I am proud to share the goals we have created and the meaningful progress we have made. For more than a decade, ReadWorks has been striving to ensure every teacher, student, and family has access to free, high-quality reading comprehension support based on the science of reading.

In recent years, our work has become even more critical as the pandemic and school closures exacerbated an existing reading comprehension crisis. According to data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 33% of fourth-graders are proficient in reading — 2 percentage points lower compared to 2019.

To mitigate the learning loss caused by the pandemic, ReadWorks launched a new strategic plan to guide us as we deepen our impact on low-income communities, English language learners, early childhood learners, and more.

Our annual report showcases a few of the projects that will help us further support millions of teachers and students. All of this is made possible by our incredible community of teachers, generous supporters, and partners in the fields of research and education.

Like you, we have a deep-seated belief that all students can become successful readers, creating opportunities for a better life. Thank you for your shared commitment to a better future for our nation’s students and for helping ReadWorks reach over 13 million educators and students each year.

We look forward to continuing our work to improve reading comprehension in the years to come and are honored to have you on our side.

Gratefully,

Terry G. Bowman
Executive Director
Mission & Pillars

ReadWorks is committed to helping to solve America’s reading comprehension crisis and student achievement gap.

Driven by the scientific study of reading, we create proven high-quality content, teacher guidance, and integrated tools that improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

Our Pillars of Reading Comprehension

ReadWorks, as a supplemental resource, supports the development of successful, joyful reading comprehension in three key ways:

- Building Background Knowledge
- Growing Vocabularies
- Strengthening Strategic Reading

Our Research

ReadWorks applies the science on how diverse learners move toward reading comprehension to all of our offerings.

From our content and curricular supports to the digital tools and features of our website, this is our foundation. We continuously study our impact in multidimensional research studies, and our evidence base currently meets ESSA Tier 3. Visit our research page for more information.

Scarborough’s Reading Rope

Demonstrates how language-comprehension and word-recognition weave together to foster proficient reading skills.

- Background knowledge
- Vocabulary
- Language structures
- Verbal reasoning
- Literacy knowledge
- Decoding
- Phonological awareness
- Sight recognition

Increasingly Strategic
Increasingly Automatic

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**Strategic Plan**

At ReadWorks, our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan guides our operations.

With a dedicated and expanding team, we’ve made impressive strides toward our strategic objectives. We are proud to share our progress.

**Advance equity in education through reading instruction**

*Focus on product development*

To better serve all students’ needs, we are upgrading our vocabulary offerings. Following an educator’s request to expand vocabulary options, we have taken action. We are in the process of adding more key vocabulary words to our texts, allowing for increased vocabulary exposure and repetition to enrich students’ reading comprehension.

**Grow knowledge through varied and diverse voices**

*Expanding through partnerships*

This year, we have taken significant strides in our school and district engagement with our new district strategy. By offering additional support in the form of professional development, curriculum, and essential tools, we aim to amplify our presence and impact. Our school and district packages include both free and fee-for-service professional development options, enabling us to build stronger connections with our priority audiences.

**Deepen our evidence base and impact**

*Research studies*

Our research team conducted a pilot study at four schools in the Iredell-Statesville School District to assess the impact of Article-A-Day (AAD) on background knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Results showed promising evidence of AAD augmenting background knowledge and vocabulary. A follow-up study is planned.

**Build organizational infrastructure**

*Innovation and technology*

ReadWorks now has an upgraded homepage and improved analytics. Our new homepage offers enhanced accessibility for users with a more dynamic structure and upgraded navigation features. Additionally, our improved data analytics platform allows us to effortlessly gather the latest data, empowering us to better understand our users’ needs.

**Meet the new staff members!**

Liza Ware, Ph.D. | Research Project Manager

Liza received her Ph.D. in psychology from Northwestern University, with a specialization in cognitive development. Her research has focused on the development of cognition, language, and conceptual knowledge.

Ben Nichols | Senior Back End Engineer

Ben is a computer engineer who went to school in Boston before starting his career in the cloud computing industry. He specializes in system automation, infrastructure design, process improvement, and all things python.
How We Make Our Texts

High-quality and free don’t usually go hand-in-hand. At ReadWorks, they do.

Our skilled content writers and partners spend countless hours thinking deeply about student needs and how to create resources that promote a love of and confidence in reading and comprehending.

How a ReadWorks article gets created:

Writing process
ReadWorks texts and articles are written by our team members and our museum/organization content partners. We do not automate our writing.

Editing & revision
Each article or text receives at least three passes during the editing process. We review for flow, grammar, voice, and tone or bias.

Fact-checking
This is an incredibly important and thorough process due to the variety of topics, subjects, and cultures represented in our articles. We cross-reference at least 2-3 reputable sources to confirm accuracy.

Review
The final text and images associated with the text are reviewed.

Curricular support creation
The article or text will go through a final review for grade and reading level evaluation. Vocabulary words are selected and question sets are written and reviewed.

Decodables

Build background knowledge while practicing the letter-sound code.

This summer, we introduced decodables to ReadWorks — a series of short, uniquely nonfiction texts designed to enhance phonics curricula and teacher instruction for early readers.

Often, knowledge and vocabulary development are sacrificed for early readers because the texts they are reading are solely focused on word recognition.

Teachers can deliberately support their students’ knowledge-building by pairing ReadWorks content-rich, listening-level passages with ReadWorks free decodables.

Working in step with our Article-A-Day scope and sequence, decodables seamlessly integrate into weekly instruction.

What are decodables?
Decodables are short texts crafted to support developing readers with words that they can decode using phonics skills.

See how a real teacher integrates decodables into a rich 15-minute lesson, simplified into a 1-minute summary.

You can also watch a 5-minute lesson overview or the full 15 minute lesson on our Vimeo and Youtube channels!
Author Spotlight

Our growing library of over 5,600 high-quality and diverse texts exists thanks to our incredible authors. Meet two of our contributors!

Ron Anahaw

Playwright, screenwriter, and ghostwriter based in Austin, TX, Ron started writing after being mute for the first 4 years of his life. It gives him joy to tell stories that help audiences feel seen. He was also a 2021 Sesame Workshop Fellow and co-hosts the podcast Apocalypses Now!

Sondra Segundo-Cunningham

Multi-faceted artist and Haida Language Warrior based in Seattle, WA, Sondra is a published children’s book author and illustrator, an educator, a singer/songwriter, and the Lead Female Vocalist of Tribal Funk Band, Khu’éeex’, where she shares stories and songs in her Alaskan Haida dialect. Sondra is also the founder of Haida Roots, an organization created specifically to preserve the Haida Language.

Featured Passages

Are You Lonesome Tonight?

J.R. and his grandmother return to her hometown of bustling Manila, where Filipino folklore reigns and faded memories come alive.

Bear and Berry Wisdom

A child of the Haida tribe visits her family’s remote village and learns the ways of Haida tradition, spirituality, and expression from her ancestors.

When I was younger, I struggled with English and took ESOL classes. I know how lonely it can be to struggle with communication and language. I hope my stories can help young readers feel a little more connected with themselves and each other.

Sharing my stories with ReadWorks has been such an enlightening experience! My hope is to reflect the deep love I have for my Haida culture and people. My writings come from a healing place in my heart. Haw’aa (thank you) to the ReadWorks team who respectfully challenged me to write more descriptively (without using illustrations) so my words can come alive in the readers’ imaginations.
Partner Feature:  
International Quilt Museum

The ReadWorks team is deeply grateful to our partners at the International Quilt Museum. We collaborated with the museum’s team to create and share 42 texts that highlight the diverse cultural traditions, history, and art of quiltmaking. These passages make valuable knowledge from the museum’s collection accessible and exciting for 6th-8th grade audiences.

Our partnership with the International Quilt Museum is made possible through the generous support of the Robert & Ardis James Foundation. We are very grateful for their support for this partnership and for their longtime support of ReadWorks’ mission and resources.

Partner Feature:  
Tailor-ED

Thanks to our partners at Tailor-ED, we’ve made significant progress in supporting low-income students with our new recommendation engine. Our recommendation engine is more than just a passage suggester. It offers an opportunity for reading success. Studies from TNTP and BetaEd reveal that low-income students are assigned below-grade-level passages at higher rates compared to higher-income students. To bridge this gap, our recommendation engine analyzes past performance on question sets and suggests more challenging — and topically relevant — materials to students who can benefit from them. Students increased success rate of 80% or higher on question sets from before to after the recommendation engine launched.

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**International Quilt Museum texts have been used by**

Lifetime to the end of Q2 2023, nationally

- 170,000 teachers
- 53,000 schools
- 630,000 students

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**Supporting teachers**

Teacher recommendation usage data  
2/24/2023 — 7/26/2023

- 25,000 teachers

**Uplifting students**

Student question set success rate at 80% or higher

- On grade level: 40% → 84%
- Above grade level: 18% → 58%
Tremendous Teachers

For Teacher Appreciation Week, we shared the results of our first ever ReadWorks Super Teacher awards.

Super Teachers are an extraordinary group of educators whose consistent use of ReadWorks resources fosters success in the classroom. The ReadWorks team is proud to recognize the hard work and dedication of these teachers and their students. Super Teachers are selected based on the criteria below.

- **Article-A-Day Fidelity**: Top 10% of users
- **Question Sets Fidelity**: Top 10% of users
- **Print, Project, and Assign**: Top 1,000 users

Superstar Students

Last Halloween, we hosted a National Illustration Contest for *Alien Kids*, a series read by over 170,000 middle school students.

Our national illustration contest celebrated the new series, which was created as part of our fiction library expansion project. The contest encouraged students to creatively showcase their understanding of the story. Our winner was Ada Hernandez, a 5th-grade student from Texas. Ada's illustration is published alongside "Surrounded!" on our site.

Drawing the illustrations made the story more meaningful than reading it alone.

— Ada Hernandez
2023 Illustration Contest Winner

View the runner-ups:

- **Avery B.**
  8th grade

- **Annabelle C.**
  7th grade

- **Mia D.**
  6th grade

- **Emilia S.**
  5th grade

[ReadWorks] has made a significant impact on the adult students in my classrooms. They take the articles home to read to their children and grandchildren.

To be able to find success in reading has built confidence that is carried over to over assignments. Thank you again for this great program.

— Dinise Mustain | Top 10 Super Teacher
Literacy Coordinator, Adult Education & Literacy
Meet Our Interns

Heidi Alkoutami | Marketing & Technology Intern
Heidi is a rising senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, studying in Psychology, Data Science, and Education.

Paige Evans | Executive Intern
Paige is a 2023 graduate from the University of Texas at Austin, with a BA in English Literature and a minor in German.

Maria Gieg | Executive Intern
Maria is a 2022 graduate of Duke University, with a BA in International Studies, Economics, and Markets and Management. She recently completed a Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship in Madrid.

What our interns learned:

I was in awe of how ReadWorks’ mission guided every aspect of the organization. Every decision is aimed at impacting teacher instruction and student achievement in reading comprehension. It was a unique experience to feel my work had a direct impact on this mission!

I learned how to use SQL programming to generate data requests for a research project and gained exposure to multiple software tools for marketing purposes.

I learned the power and importance of learning from one another. The teams consist of talented individuals, and ReadWorks prioritizes sharing updates and lessons, which expanded my perspective and fostered a strong sense of connection.

Our Newest Board Member

Mandy Casamassima  
Vice President, PBR Executive Search

Mandy is a longtime supporter of ReadWorks, with over 20 years of experience in and with the nonprofit sector, and close to 15 years in public education as a teacher and administrator.

Mandy began her career as a corps member with Teach For America in the South Bronx and then joined KIPP NYC where she built the region’s Shared Services Team. In 2017, Mandy joined the PBR Executive Search, where she currently runs day-to-day operations in addition to leading and supporting searches; PBR Executive Search focuses exclusively in the nonprofit sector.

A cum laude graduate of Boston College, Mandy lives in Greenwich, CT with her husband, three boys, two dogs, and a handful of chickens. She also serves on the board of Teach For America Connecticut.

Mandy’s guidance has been critical over these last few years as ReadWorks responded to the pandemic and remote learning and now shifts to supporting learning recovery nationwide.

We are so grateful for the opportunity to work more closely with Mandy and know that her expertise in the nonprofit field will immensely benefit our mission and the over 13 million educators and students using ReadWorks each year.

— Terry Bowman  
Executive Director, ReadWorks
Partners

Content

Learning

Research

Our Team

Terry Bowman
Executive Director

Susanne Nobles, Ph.D.
Chief Academic Officer

Cameron Swaim
Chief Technology Officer

Manjula Raman
Senior Director of Content & Curriculum / Senior DEI Coordinator

Anh Hua, Ph.D.
Senior Quantitative Researcher

Nathalie Karimian, Ed.D.
Content & Curriculum Support Developer

Tamika Reese
Educator Support Project Manager

Liza Ware
Research Projects Manager

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Ben Nichols
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UI Engineer

Keith Mukai
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Becca Vaughn
Director of Development

Maha Kemal
Finance & Operations Executive Manager

Margo Doolittle
Revenue & Partnerships Specialist

Samuel Siegel
Marketing & Development Specialist

Susanne Nobles, Ph.D.
Chief Academic Officer

Cameron Swaim
Chief Technology Officer

Terry Bowman
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Manjula Raman
Senior Director of Content & Curriculum / Senior DEI Coordinator

Maha Kemal
Finance & Operations Executive Manager

Margo Doolittle
Revenue & Partnerships Specialist

Samuel Siegel
Marketing & Development Specialist
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Our Team

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Generous support from our funding partners keeps ReadWorks free for the nearly 1 million educators and 11.5 million students using ReadWorks each year.

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See our financials at about.readworks.org/our-financials
We want to give a special thanks to the more than 50,000 individuals — many of whom are ReadWorks teachers — who support our mission of solving America’s reading comprehension crisis and student achievement gap.

Thank you to our generous Board of Directors who each help sustain ReadWorks’ mission.