

Service Associate Q&A

Featuring Barbara Johnson,
Rowland Reading Foundation

Each issue, we pose questions to a WASB Service Associate to share the good work that these businesses are doing with Wisconsin public schools.

Q. What services does Rowland Reading Foundation offer to school districts?

A. Rowland Reading Foundation is a Madison-based nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that all children become fluent readers and writers by the end of second grade. We publish Superkids, a K–2 core reading and language arts program that has proven to be highly effective with children from diverse backgrounds. The Foundation also provides teachers in schools that use the program with free in-service training and one-on-one coaching.

Q. Can you give a recent example of how the Foundation has helped a district?

A. Parkway Elementary is a school with a diverse student population in the Glendale-River Hills School District near Milwaukee. Parkway piloted Superkids in two kindergarten classes in 2010, then implemented Superkids in all of its K–2 classrooms in 2011. Teachers there say that as a direct result of adopting the program, Parkway's students' reading has improved dramatically, as have their test scores. Students are more motivated and successful than they've ever been. The teachers also tell us that Superkids has restored the joy of teaching for them.

Q. How is your organization different than other providers?

A. We're unique in two important ways. First, we are a nonprofit publisher. The proceeds from the sale of our reading materials are reinvested in teacher training and research. Second, we are the publisher in the education market today whose sole focus is K–2 reading. We are the experts in K–2 reading. It's all we do. Our founding premise is that children must be fluent, grade-level readers by the end of second grade or, research shows, they will struggle in school and in life thereafter.

Q. How does your curriculum align with the new Common Core State Standards?

A. Superkids is fully aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In fact, it teaches the Common Core's foundational skills in reading more thoroughly than other programs. The program incorporates the major areas of instruction that are critical to teaching children how to read—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. And it provides rich informational and complex text at each grade level.

Q. What is an important issue in your field that school leaders should be aware of?

A. Two-thirds of American children do not read proficiently at grade level in fourth grade, according to the most recent National Assessment of Educa-



Barbara Johnson is president of Rowland Reading Foundation.



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tional Progress (NAEP) results, and the percentage is the same among Wisconsin fourth-graders. Wisconsin's students ranked third nationally in 1994. They rank 31st today. We know our students can do better — much better — with effective reading instruction. Fortunately, there is now a solid consensus among researchers regarding how to teach children to read. We want to work with Wisconsin teachers and administrators who want a better outcome for our children. We are eager and willing to work with any school or district in Wisconsin that wants to improve its students' reading skills. For information, call 855-871-5404. ■

The WASB Service Associates Program includes more than 20 businesses and organizations that have been recognized by the WASB Board of Directors as reputable businesses and partners of public education in Wisconsin. For more information, visit wasb.org and select "Service Associates."

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