



Superkids eases returning to the classroom

Dedicated teachers at Will Rogers Elementary School commit themselves to helping their students succeed, but they were stymied by their students' reluctance to read. Teachers put different programs together for early literacy work, but they had little consistency between teachers and grades. New principal Lace Davis prioritized reading when she arrived and saw deep support from teachers. "We were working on vertical alignment in all our subjects, and our teachers were working tirelessly, trying to be successful in our test scores and state report card. Our prior programs weren't working for us." They chose *The Superkids Reading Program*—which fortunately made returning to the classroom exciting for students who had been learning from home.

Well before the pandemic school closures, principal Davis convened a committee to look for a reading program that would work for their students in rural western Oklahoma, where more than three-quarters receive free and reduced-price lunch. Kindergarten teacher Donna Cansler recalls, "Our committee looked over several different reading programs. *Superkids* got great reviews." Committee members pored through educator blogs where other teachers raved about the program. First-grade teacher Laci Stegall even observed another school using *The Superkids Reading Program*. "When we received our sample *Superkids* materials," she says, "we could see that even though the program had a lot of components, they all worked together."

“
A great 'selling point' for our superintendent was that Superkids was based on the science of reading.
”
—Lace Davis, Principal

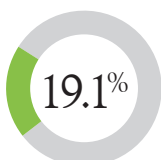
No "fluff," no gimmicks

Assistant principal Desarae Simmons praises *Superkids* for its thoughtful components. "What ruled out a lot of other programs was that teachers thought some components were silly. *Superkids* stood out because teachers found them useful and easy to use."

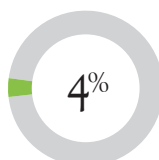
Stegall agrees. "*Superkids*' components didn't feel like an 'experiment,'" she says. "We didn't want a program that had a lot of components that would just sit in a closet."

School Profile: Will Rogers Elementary

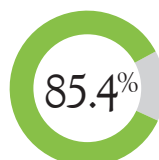
A school in rural, western Oklahoma in the Burns Flat–Dill City Public Schools district
All elementary students, 2019–2020 school year



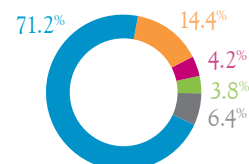
Students with disabilities



English language learners



Economically disadvantaged students



Ethnicity
White: 71.2%
Hispanic: 14.4%
Black: 4.2%
American Indian: 3.8%
Other/two or more: 6.4%

It was important to principal Davis that teachers felt *Superkids'* array of resources would help them in the classroom. "I really wanted them to follow the program, and not feel like they had to pick and choose," she says.

One reason the teachers and administrators recommended *The Superkids Reading Program* to the superintendent of schools was the program's foundations in the science of reading. "We were able to take the research and program samples to the superintendent and even give a presentation to the board," Davis says. As a result, the district made its investment in early literacy.

Supporting a complex implementation

All three grades, K–2, started *Superkids* during the 2020–2021 school year. The prior spring, COVID-19 restrictions meant Will Rogers Elementary students were suddenly learning from home. "I don't have a true sense of where my students would have ended up last spring," says Stegall. Kindergarten teacher Cansler was worried because students lose academic gains over the summer in general. Yet when school started in fall 2020, students immediately embraced *Superkids*. Cansler observes that "diving into something that was exciting and fun for them made a huge difference" when students were back in the classroom for full-time learning.

Starting a new reading program can be stressful, but "*Superkids'* professional development is second to none," says assistant principal Simmons. "We've never had that with any other program. They are amazing. They came out in person and were hands-on to help us." Simmons explains that along with directly supporting teachers, *Superkids* professional development coaches held workshops with administrators so they could understand the program, too.

“*With the online lessons taught by a real teacher, I knew students at home were getting the same benefit students at school were getting.*”

—Lace Davis, Principal

“*Superkids engages my students; before I'm even teaching, they're excited about the stories and characters.*”

—Donna Cansler, Kindergarten Teacher

Beginning a new program during a pandemic had challenges. Even though most students were back in school in the fall, *Superkids'* online resources were instrumental in getting some children through quarantines during the year. Instead of having to livestream directly from their classrooms and wrangle complicated technology, Will Rogers teachers benefited from *Superkids'* full-lesson videos. "I loved having the videos when kids were quarantined," says Stegall. "I could send the link of the teacher teaching the lesson, and students could follow with the binder of materials I sent home."

Student surprises

Teachers knew that *Superkids* would challenge their students. They didn't guess that students would rise to meet those challenges. Principal Davis explains, "Other schools might think, 'Oh, well, our kids would never do that' or 'we live in such a poor district.' Well, we do. We do live in a very poor area. And a transient community where school funding is tight." But Will Rogers students surprised them all.

Because of school changing abruptly in the spring, teachers knew students wouldn't need a jumpstart. "We thought they would need to be turbocharged!" Stegall laughs.

Cansler was initially concerned about the intensive writing for her kindergartners. "That's a little tough on our kids. Probably seven of my 21 students can really write without me having to help them. But even though they struggle, they still love *Superkids* and they aren't discouraged." Stegall adds that "even my struggling readers have a boost in confidence. They want their opportunity to read in their small groups because they're excited about the stories and characters."

"To see how far my kids have come in one year without having any prior exposure to *Superkids*," Stegall concludes, "I can't wait to get my kids next year!"