by Mark Katz, PhD

MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach

MINDPLAY VIRTUAL READING COACH (MVRC) is a web-based reading intervention program that offers new hope to struggling readers in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Adults with longstanding reading challenges can benefit from the program as well.

Participants are guided through MVRC's sequence of lessons by virtual reading coaches who appear in short video segments throughout the program. All virtual coaches are experienced in using evidence-based practices to help students improve reading skills and/or overcome reading challenges.

MVRC lessons are also mastery-based. If the student doesn't master a particular skill area, the concept is re-taught, but in a different way. This helps students sustain their attention and eventually master the skill. The program's goal is to strengthen reading skills so that users will be able to comprehend grade-level text and read grade-level text fluently.

MVRC lessons encompass the five nationally recognized components of reading—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—which are described below. An additional sixth component, grammar for meaning, is included as well.

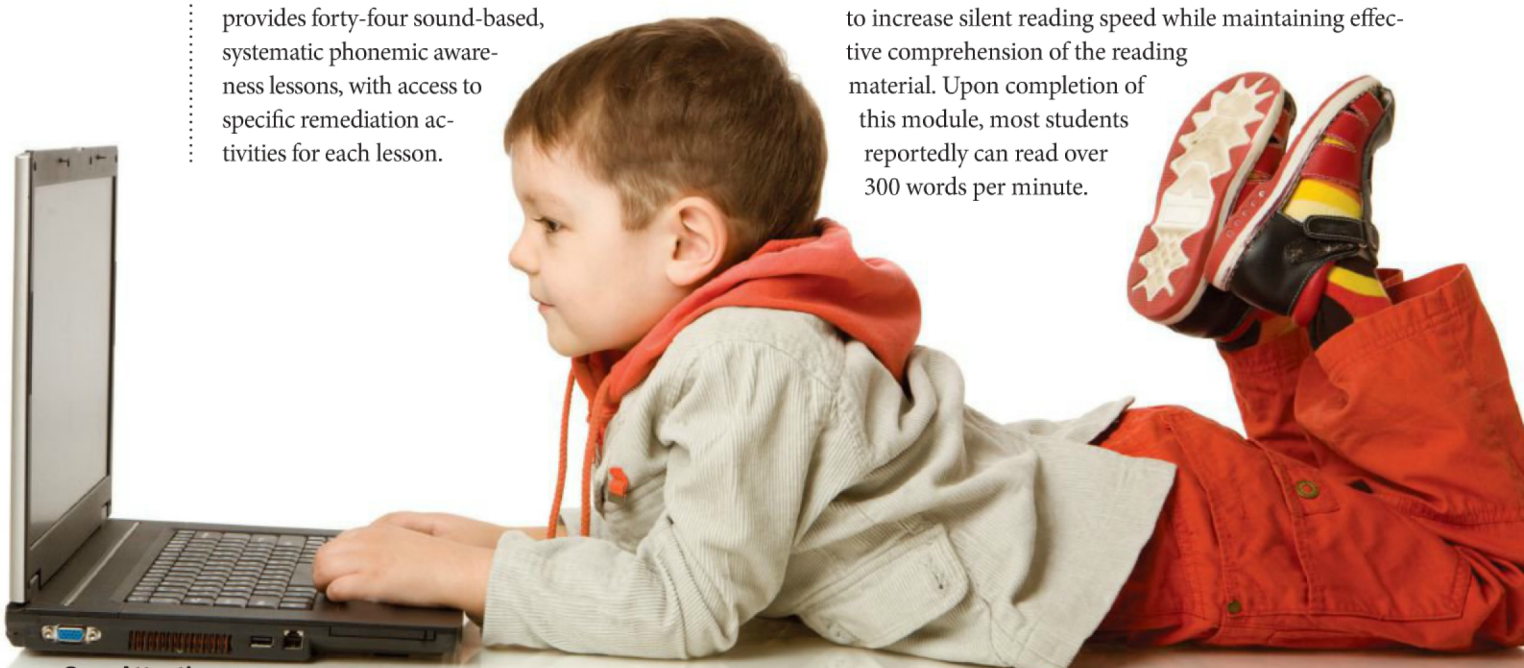
PHONEMIC AWARENESS. A number of children with reading disabilities lack skills in phonemic awareness. MVRC provides forty-four sound-based, systematic phonemic awareness lessons, with access to specific remediation activities for each lesson.

PHONICS. Lessons teach phoneme–grapheme correspondence, or how sounds in the English language correspond to the letters that represent them. Through sixty-six direct lessons, students learn and practice letter recognition, keyboard positions, sound-spelling correspondence, articulation, spelling patterns, alternative spelling patterns, spelling rules, syllabication, multi-syllable decoding, and irregular word recognition.

VOCABULARY. Through innovative activities and instruction, students learn new words, gain greater depth in their understanding of existing known words, and learn how to derive word meanings from context and structural analysis. Students also learn strategies for retrieving words from memory and developing a memory image of words. The vocabulary program contains over twenty thousand words to draw from.

COMPREHENSION. Drawing upon over a thousand high-interest stories, reading comprehension lessons teach and reinforce a wide array of reading comprehension skills. Both expository and narrative texts are provided at all grade levels. Students learn to answer such question types as comparing and contrasting, detecting author's purpose, drawing conclusions, following a sequence of ideas, understanding the main idea, making inferences, among others.

READING FLUENCY. Lessons systematically teach students to increase silent reading speed while maintaining effective comprehension of the reading material. Upon completion of this module, most students reportedly can read over 300 words per minute.



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GRAMMAR FOR MEANING. Students receive instruction in how to effectively identify, sort, and manipulate parts of speech. Students also learn to effectively read and organize sentences and paragraphs. Areas covered include sentence structure, paragraph construction, visualization, parts of speech, abstract nouns, abbreviations and acronyms, syntax, and capitalization.

Pinpointing strengths and weaknesses

MVRC includes *MindPlay Universal Screener*, a web-based assessment tool that evaluates reading skills and then formulates an electronic individualized learning plan based upon a student's unique strengths and challenges. It also provides ongoing monitoring of student progress through automatic re-testing. It's thus compatible with Response to Intervention (RtI) requirements. Areas of ongoing assessment include reading comprehension grade level, reading fluency (words per minute), phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary grade level, and visual tracking.

Professional development training

MindPlay Teacher Companion is an eight-hour professional development course that provides teachers with updated information on effective practices for teaching reading and other academic skills. MindPlay also offers a three-hour online course titled *Understanding Dyslexia*. Coauthored by Nancy Mather, PhD, and Barbara J. Wendling, MA, the online course is recommended for any individual who wishes to learn more about these advances in understanding and treating dyslexia.

Several studies have been conducted to date on the effectiveness of MVRC; initial findings are promising. Learn more about these studies at http://mindplay.com/results. Other studies are planned, and results will be published on the MindPlay website when the studies are completed.

MORE INFO

Visit mindplay.com to learn more about MVRC, including costs of the program. Program staff can also be reached by phone at 800-221-7911.

A clinical and consulting psychologist, **Mark Katz, PhD**, *is the director of Learning Development Services, an educational, psychological, and neuropsychological center in San Diego, California. As a contributing editor to* Attention *magazine, he writes the Promising Practices column and serves on the editorial advisory board. He is also a former member of CHADD's professional advisory board and a recipient of the CHADD Hall of Fame Award.*