

Accelerating Learning by Helping Students Get Ahead and Stay Ahead in Reading and Literacy

Comparing Microsoft* Reading Progress* and Google* Read Along* to identify opportunities for differentiated instruction for students



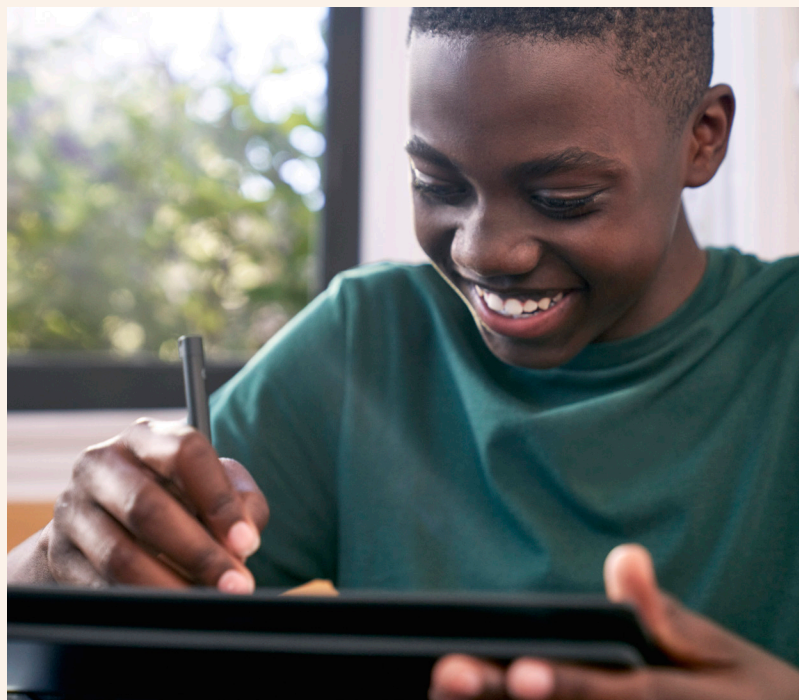
Executive Summary

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 54 percent of adults in the United States are not proficient in literacy, reading below the equivalent of a sixth-grade level. These adults likely struggled with reading through third grade.¹ In addition, 32 percent of basic and below basic readers in third grade were likely to drop out of high school compared to 4 percent of proficient readers.² Third grade is the last year students learn to read; in fourth grade, they read to learn. Without a strong foundation in reading, students can struggle with fluency and comprehension despite their intellectual capabilities because they can't easily access reading material.

Educators can help readers make significant gains in fluency and comprehension with timely and intentional interventions. Educators use oral reading records for diagnostic assessment of reading ability and evaluating the strategies a child uses. This process is necessary but requires one-on-one attention which is time-consuming and challenging to manage in large classes. This assessment is repeated at 4–8 week intervals, depending on each student's needs.

Microsoft Reading Progress can assist educators in reaching every student using less instructional time. Educators can do fluency checks more frequently, with less classroom disruption. They can individualize students' assignments based on reading level or interest using texts from the ReadWorks* library or by uploading their own passages into Reading Progress. Educators can access a student's recording at any time. This reduces classroom disruption, and redirects educator time to targeted instruction.

By comparison, Google Read Along does not offer the same level of customized options or actionable data that Reading Progress offers. Students are given



For students and educators alike, Reading Progress supplies a more inclusive, holistic, and data-rich literacy instruction solution than Google Read Along.

feedback through earned stars and virtual prizes, but there are no ongoing data points to inform an educator's practice or individualize student learning based on their unique needs. Read Along allows students to select their own texts and doesn't provide a video of the student reading. Educators can see how long a student reads in minutes but have no insight into challenging words or the reading strategies they utilized while reading.

¹ Source: *Assessing the Economic Gains of Eradicating Illiteracy*

² Source: *Students Who Don't Read Well in Third Grade Are More Likely to Drop Out or Fail to Finish High School*



For educators, Microsoft Reading Progress provides timely data to inform practice and apply intentional, personalized interventions, all while saving valuable time.

- Reading Progress tracks student fluency (words per minute), accuracy, number of attempts, level, and number of words in a passage.
- Educators can jump to the word in the passage to review the audio/video of a student.
- Highlighting words in the passage lets educators quickly mark errors from a drop-down menu.
- Utilizing the optional auto-detect for AI-powered analysis of student reading can mark errors like mispronunciations, omissions, insertions, repetitions, and self-corrections.
- Educators can quickly verify or change the auto-detection choice after watching a student's video using the jump to word option from that point.
- Reading Progress data is available through Education Insights dashboard, helping educators identify trends and patterns, inform their instruction, or suggest interventions.
- Education Insights shows individual, class, or school-wide student data to inform targeted initiatives.

Removing the Stigma

Reading Progress supports all readers from kindergarten to grade 12. Students that need evaluation and intervention after fourth grade can still use Reading Progress without feeling self-conscious. Age-appropriate, high-interest passages can be accessed in ReadWorks or uploaded by the educator meeting each student's unique needs. Assigning a Reading Progress assignment in Microsoft Teams for Education* lets students record their passage anytime, anywhere.

Rationale

The Cost of Illiteracy

Illiteracy doesn't just cost an individual; it impacts their families and communities. In the U.S., the cost is nearly \$301 billion.³ These losses span economic effects like wage stagnation, productivity loss, and social well-being like reduced health, increased crime, and need for welfare services. People who are illiterate earn significantly less than those who are literate and often do not possess a level of literacy skills to further their training or vocational education.

According to the 2022 NAEP Report Card on reading, 67 percent of fourth and 69 percent of eighth graders read at or below the basic level.⁴ Research has shown that students who struggle to read in third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school making it crucial to provide students with personalized reading interventions.⁵

Fluent reading accounts for 25–50 percent of the difference in reading comprehension.⁶ It allows readers to make meaning from the text as they read. Proficient fluency depends on the mastery of processes like phonemic awareness and decoding. When students do not have to actively decode every word while reading a text, it reduces the cognitive load so they can make meaning as they read. The National Reading Panel (NRP)⁷ found compelling evidence that instruction to increase reading fluency is critical to both reading comprehension and future reading success.



Actionable Data and Timely Interventions

Effective, targeted, and student-specific interventions can help readers make gains in fluency and comprehension. A 2018 Data Quality Campaign (DQC) poll found that educators understand the power of data but face many hurdles when it comes to using data to inform their teaching. Fifty seven percent of educators lack enough time in the day to analyze and use data, 34 percent cite too much data, and 26 percent say the data is not accessible in a timely matter.⁸ To realize the full potential of data in education, educators need access to timely, actionable student data to implement interventions earlier, change instruction to address student needs, and give meaningful feedback.

Providing support with solutions like Reading Progress gives more students access to reading passages, optimizes educator time, and supports improved reading outcomes. Students can grow their reading skills and gain confidence and independence, while educators are more empowered to provide appropriate interventions based on real-time data.

³ Source: World Literacy Foundation Report: The Economic Social Cost of Illiteracy 2022

⁴ Source: NAEP Report Card: Reading 2022

⁵ Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation: Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters

⁶ Source: Reading Fluency: A Brief History

⁷ Source: National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction

⁸ Source: What Parents and Teachers Think About Education Data



Fluency and Comprehension

Effective, targeted, and student-specific interventions can help readers make gains in fluency and comprehension.

1 in 6 students
not reading fluently in 3rd
grade will not graduate
on time.⁹



67% of fourth graders
performed Below NAEP
Proficient in reading in 2022;
a larger percentage
compared to 2019.¹⁰



Fluent reading accounts for
25-50% of the difference
in reading comprehension.¹¹



Learning Scenario

The following scenario compares the step-by-step process that a representative kindergarten teacher would complete to assign and evaluate a reading passage using Reading Progress in Microsoft Teams for Education and Google Read Along. Additionally, this scenario showcases the student's process for accessing the assignment, practicing their literacy skills, and submitting their assessment.

At a Glance

Topic

Topic: Foundational Literacy Skills

Grade Level

Grade Level: Kindergarten

⁹ Source: Students Who Don't Read Well in Third Grade Are More Likely to Drop Out or Fail to Finish High School

¹⁰ Source: NAEP Report Card: 2022 NAEP Reading Assessment

¹¹ Source: Reading Fluency: A Brief History

Step-by-step Comparison

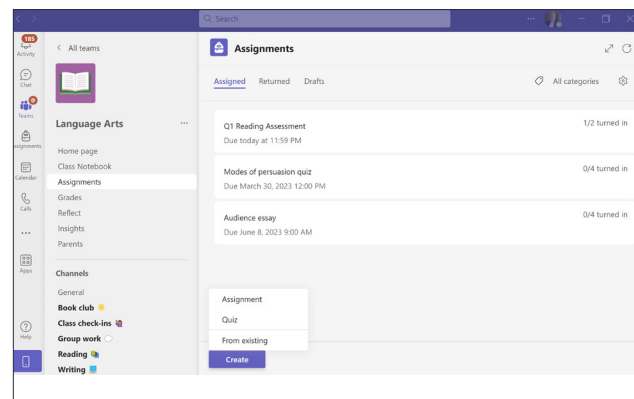
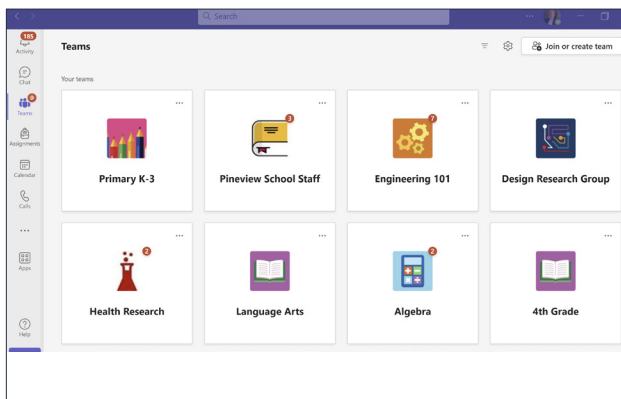
Test Devices

In conducting this comparison, the K-12 Blueprint team tested the following devices and configuration:

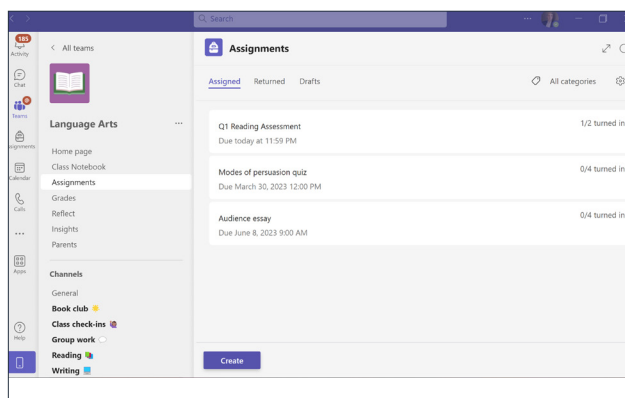
- **Dell XPS 00867** running Windows 11 Pro 22H2.674]
- **ASUS Chromebook Flip C436 7** running 104.0.5112.110 (Official Build) (64-bit)
- **Pixel 4a 5g** running Android 13 g7250-00220-221017-B-9183951

Educator's Steps for Creating an Assignment using Reading Progress

1. Open Microsoft Teams for Education and select class.
3. Select Create and then Assignment.

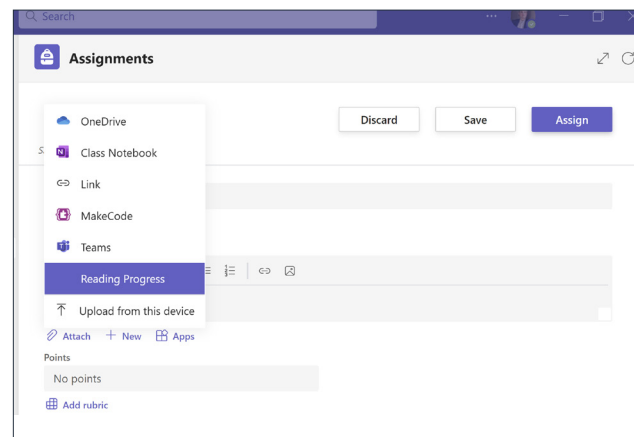


2. Select Assignments.

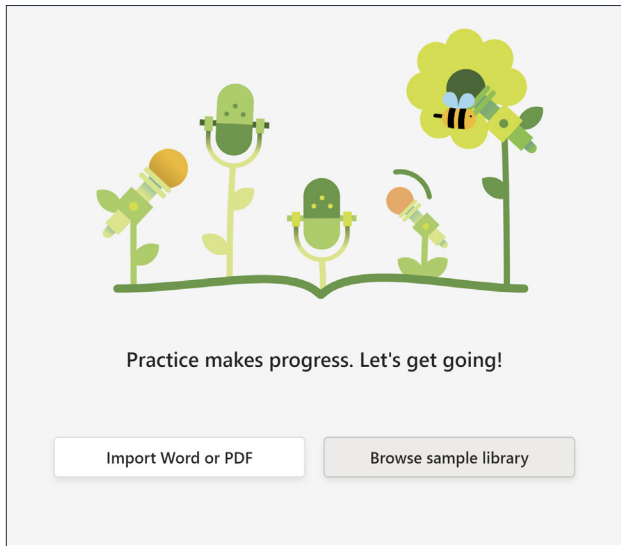


4. Add title and description.

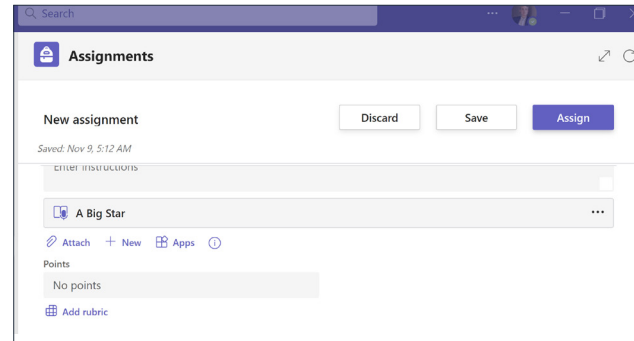
5. Select Attach and then Reading Progress.



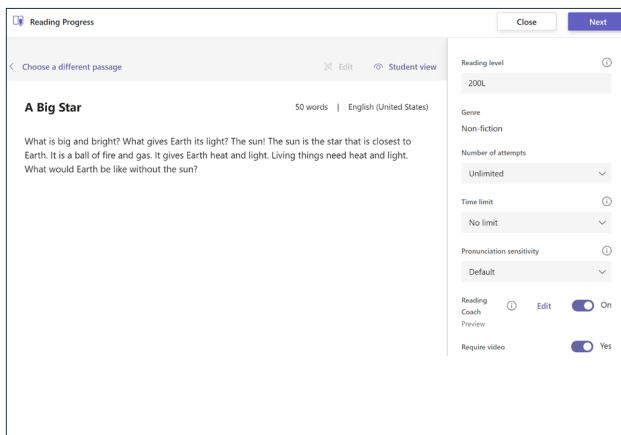
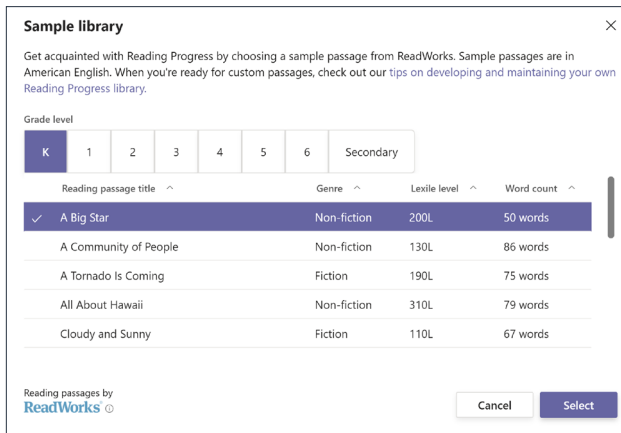
6. Select Browse sample library.



8. Complete Assignment details > Select Assign.

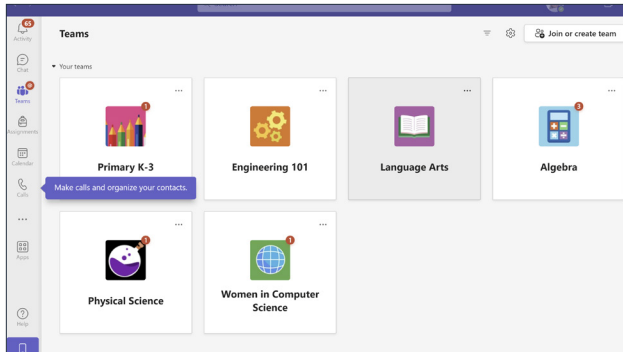


7. Filter for grade level or Lexile level > Select passage.

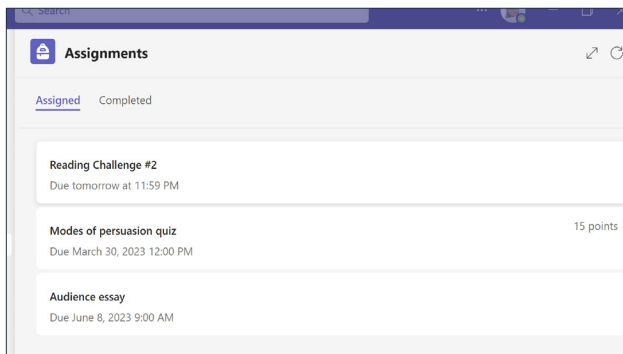


Student's Steps for Accessing, Recording, and Submitting an Assignment in Reading Progress

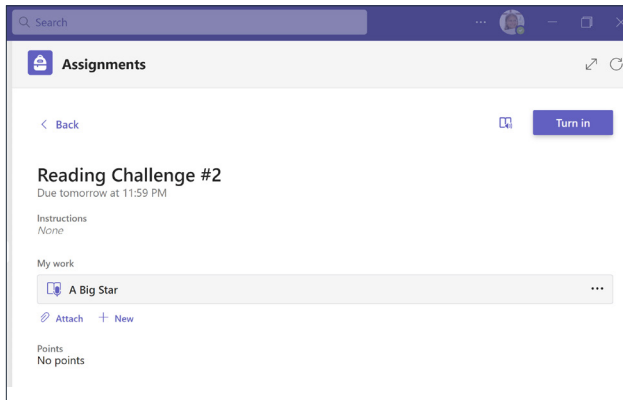
1. Open Teams for Education > Select Class Team.



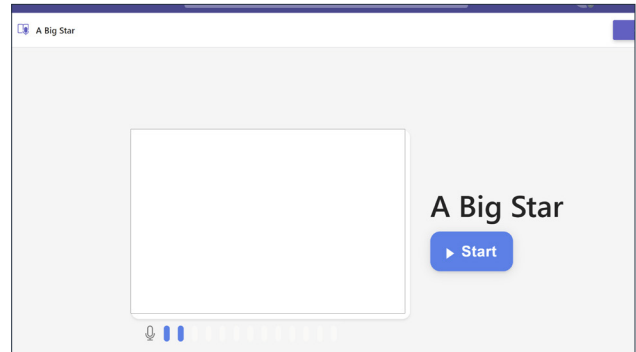
2. Select Assignments tab > Select Reading Challenge #2.



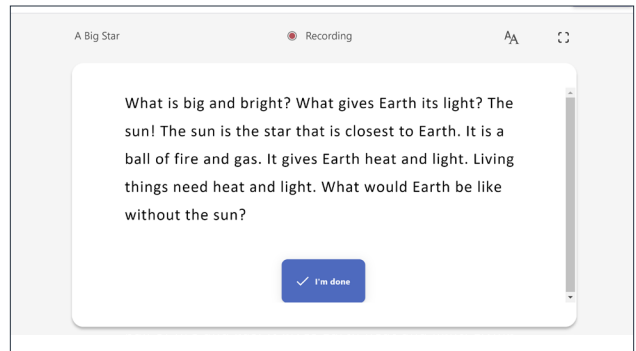
3. Select "A Big Star."



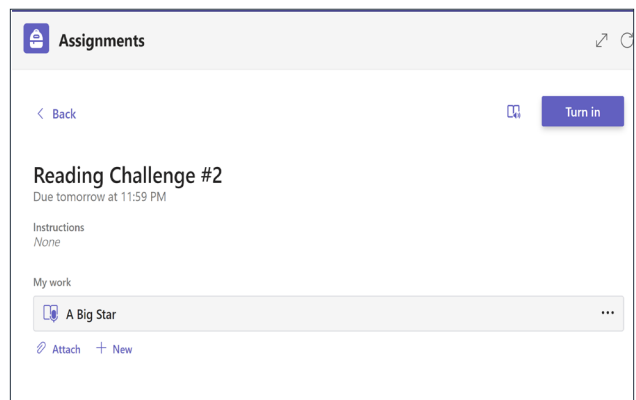
4. Select Start.



5. Read the passage > Select I'm Done > Select Use this Recording.

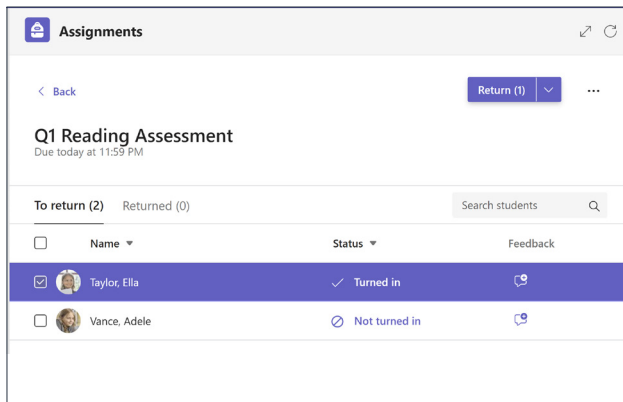
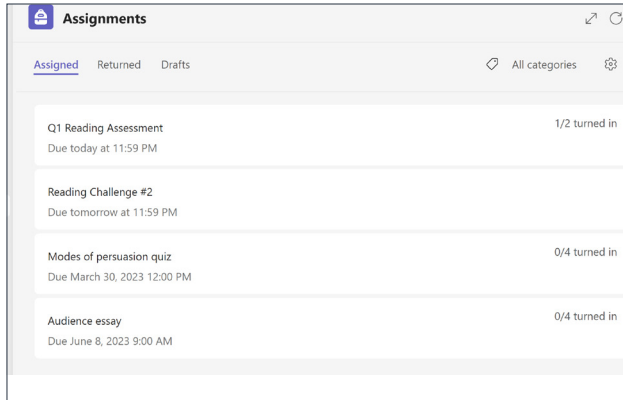


6. Select Turn In.

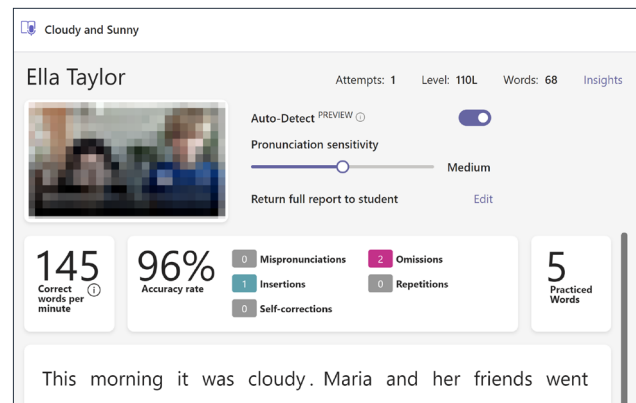
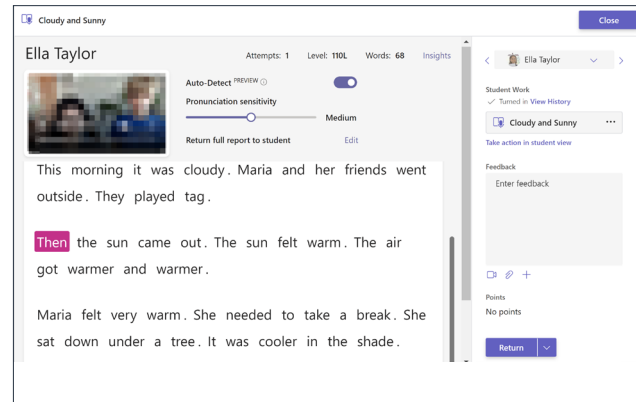


Educator's Steps for Accessing and Reviewing Reading Data

1. Select Assignment > Select student.

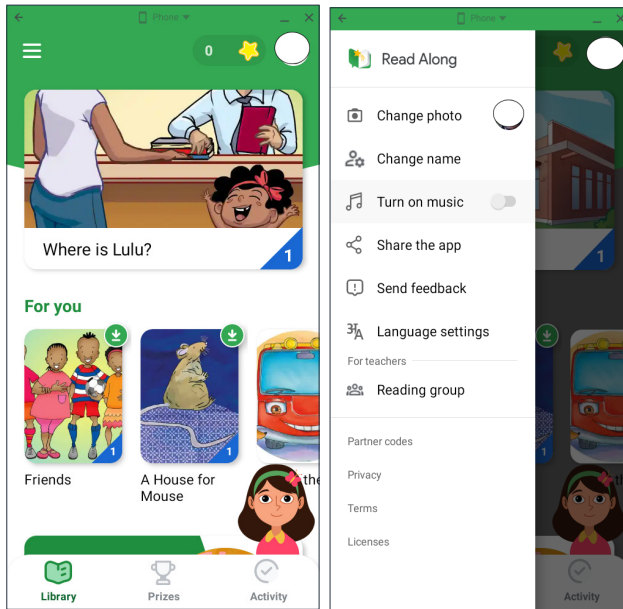


2. Access Reading Progress Insights reports and analysis.

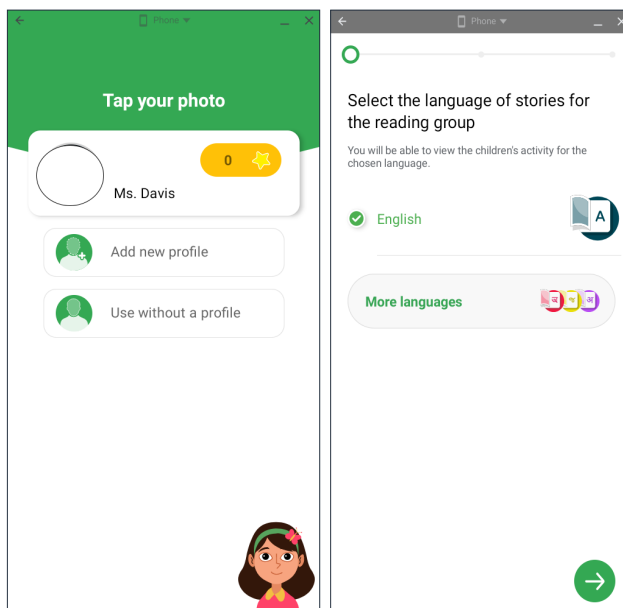


Educator's Steps for Creating Reading Groups in Read Along

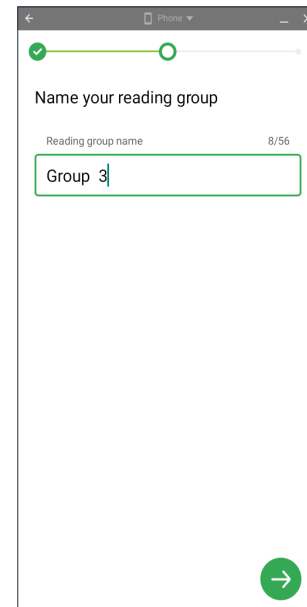
1. Open Read Along > Select top-left menu > Select Reading group.



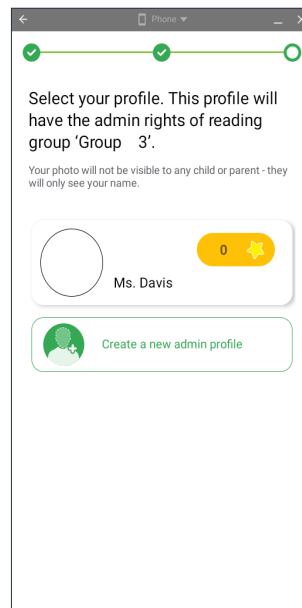
2. Click through the Create reading group overview screen.



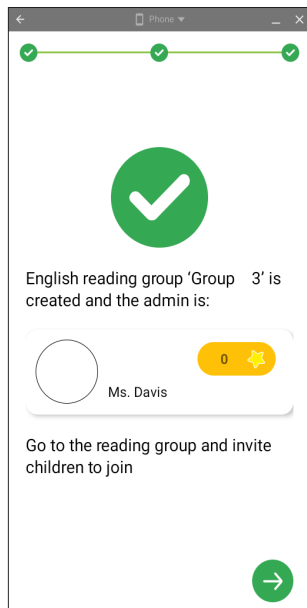
3. Title the reading group.



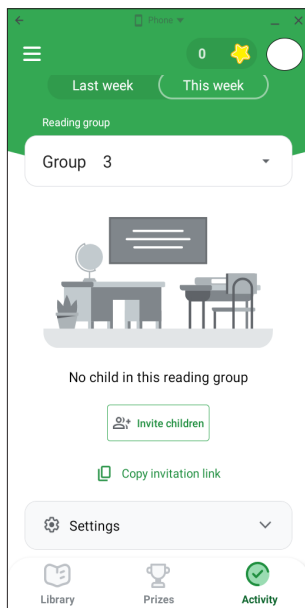
4. Select Create a new admin profile.



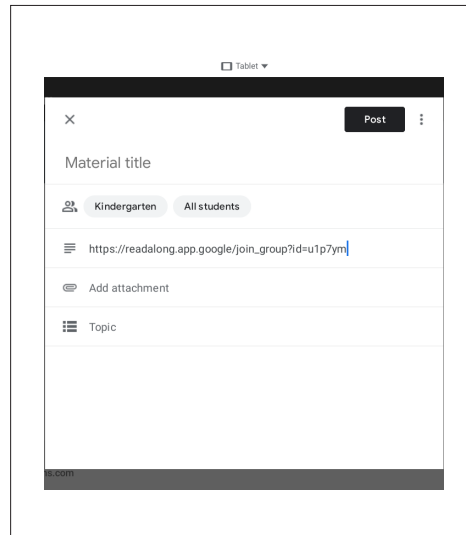
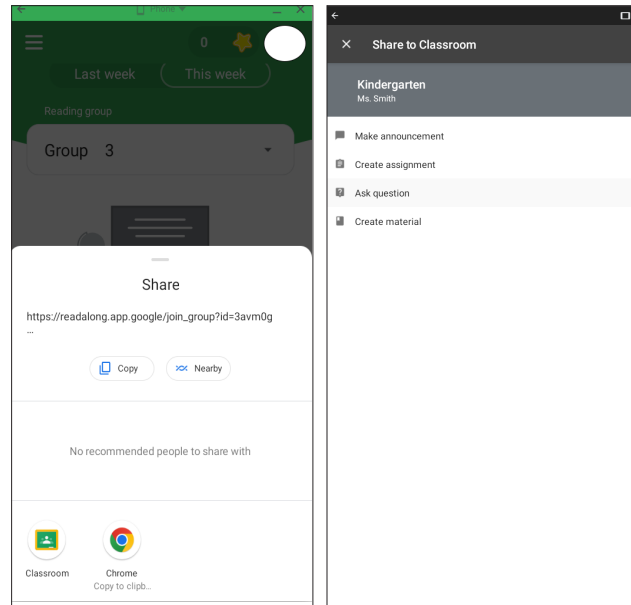
5. Add photo > Enter teacher name > Select green arrow to advance.



6. Select Invite children.

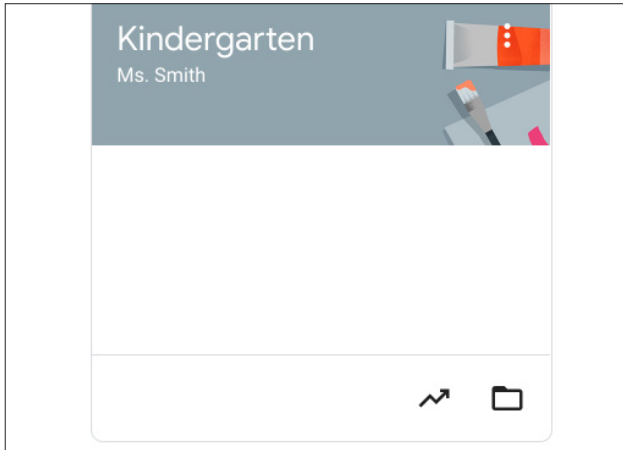


7. Share link to Google Classroom class.

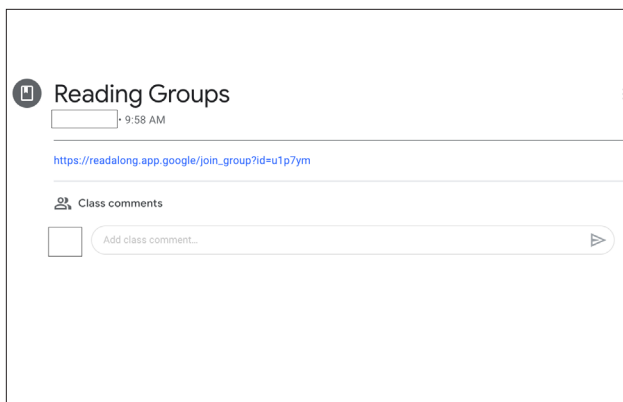
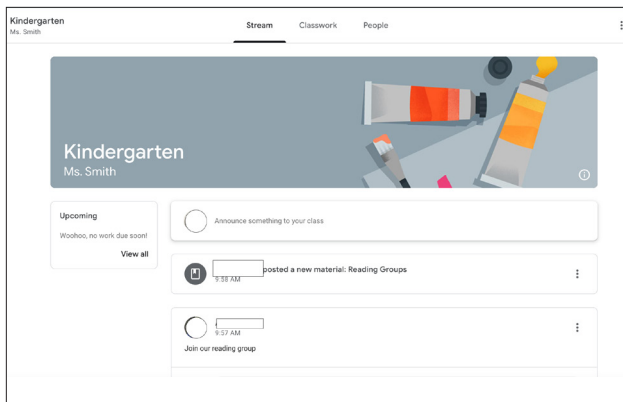


Student's Steps for Accessing and Using Google Read

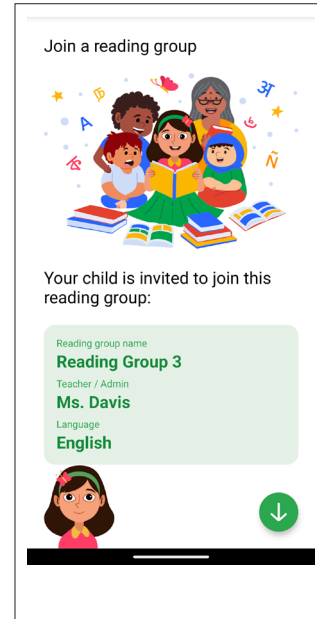
1. Access Google Classroom > Select class.



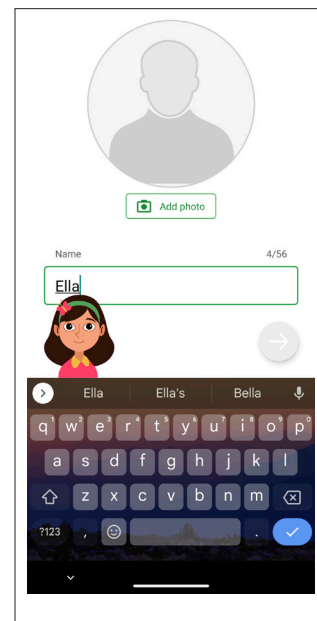
2. Select Reading Group link to join.



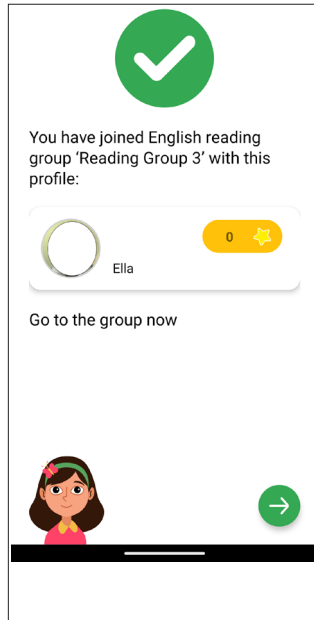
3. Click on green arrows to enroll.



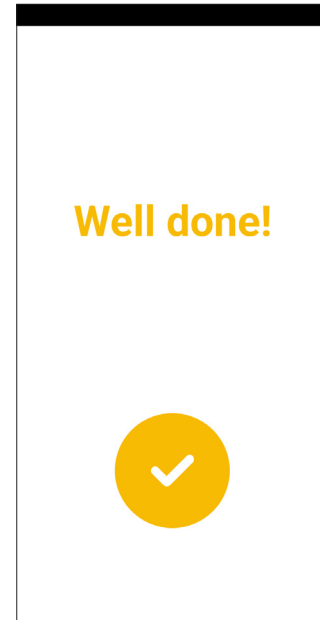
4. Add photo and name.



5. Select the green arrow to go to the group.



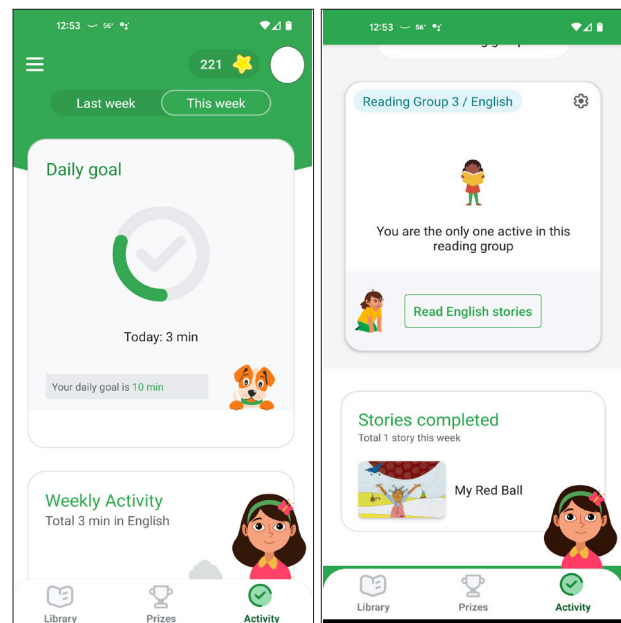
7. Click through completion screen.



6. Begin reading the story.

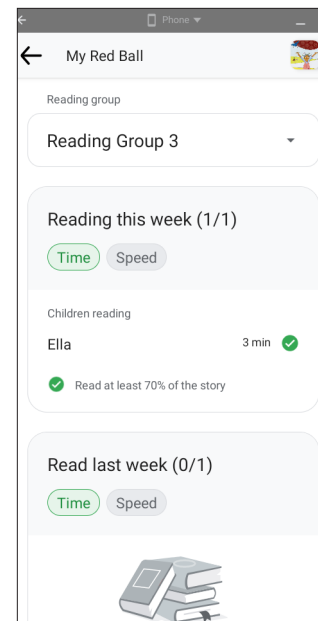
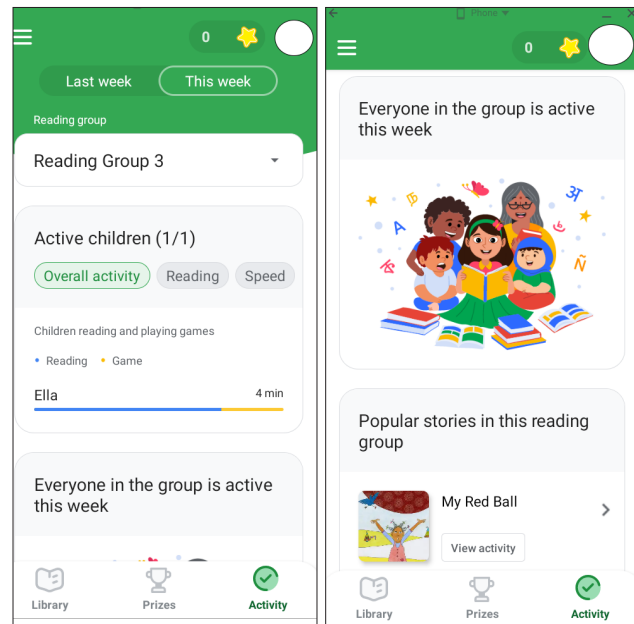
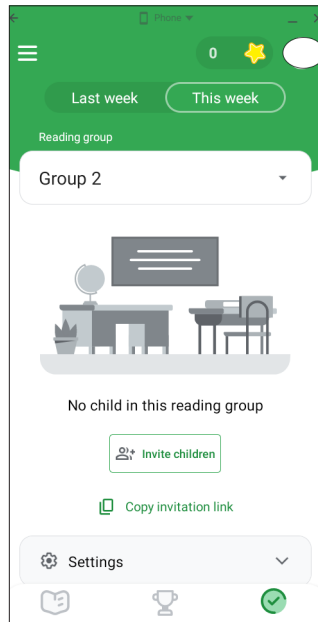


8. Review recent activity.



Teacher's Steps for Accessing Reading Data Dashboard

1. Select Activity > Select Reading Group from drop-down menu.
2. Explore student reading data.



Conclusion

Students benefit from targeted literacy instruction. Educators are unquestionably committed to supporting reading literacy, but frequently face challenges to meeting each student's needs due to barriers such as the amount of time required to assess and diagnose each student. Digital literacy tools help bridge that gap by providing students choice about what to read on their level; empower educators with rich, actionable data; and, most importantly, adapt to meet the individual's learning needs and preferences. When equipped with the right resources, educators better help each student grow and improve their literacy skills.

With Microsoft Reading Progress, educators can save time while providing targeted feedback and offering intentional interventions for each student. Using the real-time data from Reading Progress combined with the bigger picture of growth and trends in Education Insights, educators are more empowered to provide appropriate interventions for their students and inform their practice to maximize learning outcomes.

When comparing how students interact with reading passages and how educators access literacy data, Reading Progress in Microsoft Teams for Education provides a superior experience than the equivalent experience using Google Read Along.

Read Along, the Google equivalent, focuses solely on lower elementary grades, leaving out older students. Additionally, Read Along data is limited to only the amount of time a student reads, the number of students who have been active, and words read per minute.

	Reading Progress	Read Along
Words per Minute	☑	☑
Amount of Time	☑	☑
Accuracy Rate	☑	
Lexile levels	☑	
Fluency analysis	☑	
Recording for Optional Manual Review	☑	
Challenging Words Analysis	☑	
Phonics Rules Analysis	☑	
Automated Assignments based on a student's Challenge Words or Phonics	☑	
Analysis Based on genres	☑	
Schools and District analysis	☑	