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MY VIEW RAYNA DINEEN

## Reading can and should be magical

By Rayna Dineen

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“Do I have to stop reading?”

Maria is a fourth grade student who learned how to read last year, and now she doesn't want to stop reading.

Maria begins her weekly tutoring session by reading aloud from a list her reading specialist creates of words that challenged her in the prior session. Together she and the specialist review phonics reading rules that guide her in figuring out the words: How many vowels are in the word? Is there a “magic e”? Are there “two vowels walking”? Does the vowel say its name, or does it make the “short” sound?

Using American Sign Language for each vowel supports a multisensory practice for the sounds the vowels make.

Next Maria reads a book that reinforces the phonics rules she has already learned while the specialist notes any words that challenge Maria. If she has mastered the rule, the specialist introduces another rule that helps with reading more complex words. Maria and the specialist complete the session by playing a reading game that incorporates writing and spelling.

Maria is a hardworking bilingual student who has thrived with individualized phonics-based support in reading. She is tutored during the school day by Reading Quest at her south-side school.

Reading Quest serves 400 students each week in grades 1-8, mainly from Title 1 schools in Santa Fe and West Las Vegas, in addition to offering professional development workshops for teachers parents and tutors.

We also offer six weeks of free Reading is Magic summer programming in partnership with Santa Fe School for the Arts & Sciences and Santa Fe Public Schools. Our weekly Afghan Children's program provides a creative literacy program of English classes and reading support for recent Afghan refugee families.

Reading Quest has created an instructional program that closely follows the complex science of how children learn to read English, but does so in a way that is fun, engaging, and “magical” that children who have not been able to master the basics of reading quickly grow into competent, enthusiastic readers.

“Reading Quest has made me feel happy. For once, I actually feel like I have somewhere to fit in. Before I figured out what Reading Quest was, I had a lot of trouble with reading — and when it was my time to read, I couldn't even read one word and everybody would just look at me and say ‘She doesn't know how to read and she's in third grade’ and so I would never like to be picked [to read aloud]. Reading Quest helped me a lot. Now that I have fully experienced Reading Quest, all I know is that there are multiple kids that are like me that can't pronounce one word and if I ever see a kid like that, I'll tell them ‘Reading Quest is the place to go.’ ”

Maria's spirit and curiosity for learning shines through in everything she does, and we feel lucky to have the opportunity to work with many inspiring students like her every day.

Fortunately, in Santa Fe, our school district recognizes the need for additional individualized support for students who are below grade level in reading proficiency, and has partnered with Reading Quest to deliver tutoring to students.

We deeply appreciate all of the hardworking teachers and principals who partner with us and put their hearts into their work with children every day.

Learning how to read can be joyful and magical. Our experience with over a thousand students has shown us that all students can learn how to read, and once they do, they don't want to stop.

To learn more, visit [readingquestcenter.org](http://readingquestcenter.org).

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*Rayna Dineen is the executive director for Reading Quest. Founded in 2015, Reading Quest provides equitable access to quality reading instruction for all students and empowers them to believe in themselves as they become strong, enthusiastic readers. Let us know if you are interested in attending our next parent workshop Jan. 22.*