



MAGPIE LEARNING

00

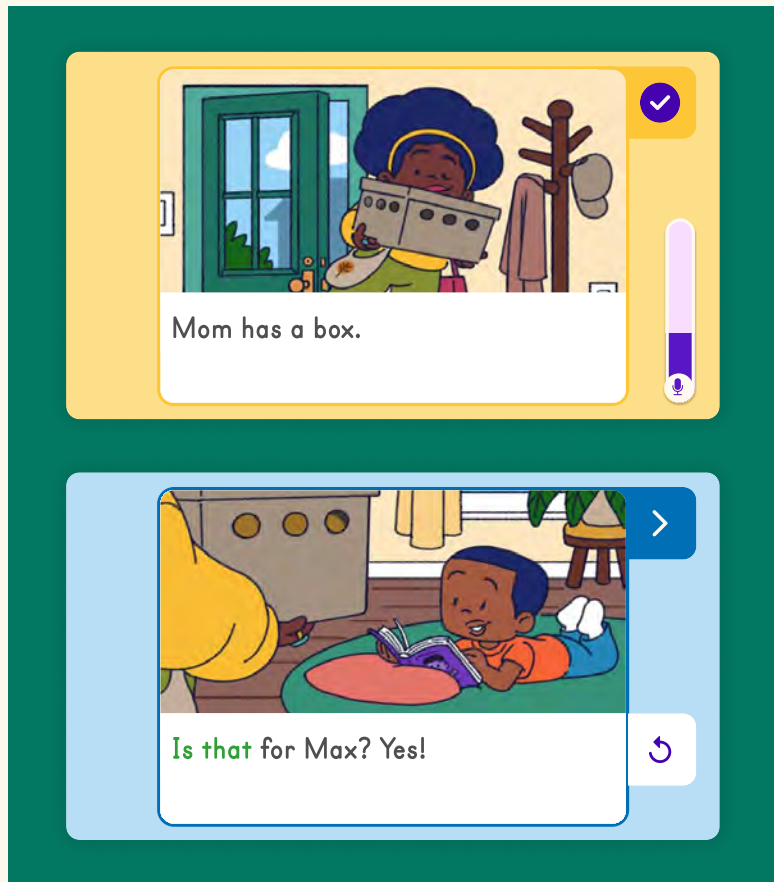
Rebecca Kockler is the Founder and CEO of Magpie Literacy and Program Director at AERDF's Reading Reimagined. As Louisiana's former Assistant Superintendent of Academics, she redesigned the state's assessment system, driving record-high graduation and college enrolment outcomes

She built Magpie on proven literacy impact, strong funding relationships, and academic backing from Stanford University and other research institutions through Reading Reimagined's \$40 million national research initiative. What the team hadn't done before was build a product. I joined right as Magpie was kicking off, to help translate deep literacy and curricular expertise into an actual digital experience, and to help shape product direction with the tech experience the founding team didn't have yet.

Problem

Magpie's pedagogy worked. It had been tested, validated, and refined by educators for years, as a teacher-led, in-classroom, often pen-and-paper experience. The question wasn't whether the curriculum was good. It was whether it could survive becoming a product a child uses mostly on their own, in the classroom, with a teacher present but stretched across twenty-five other kids.

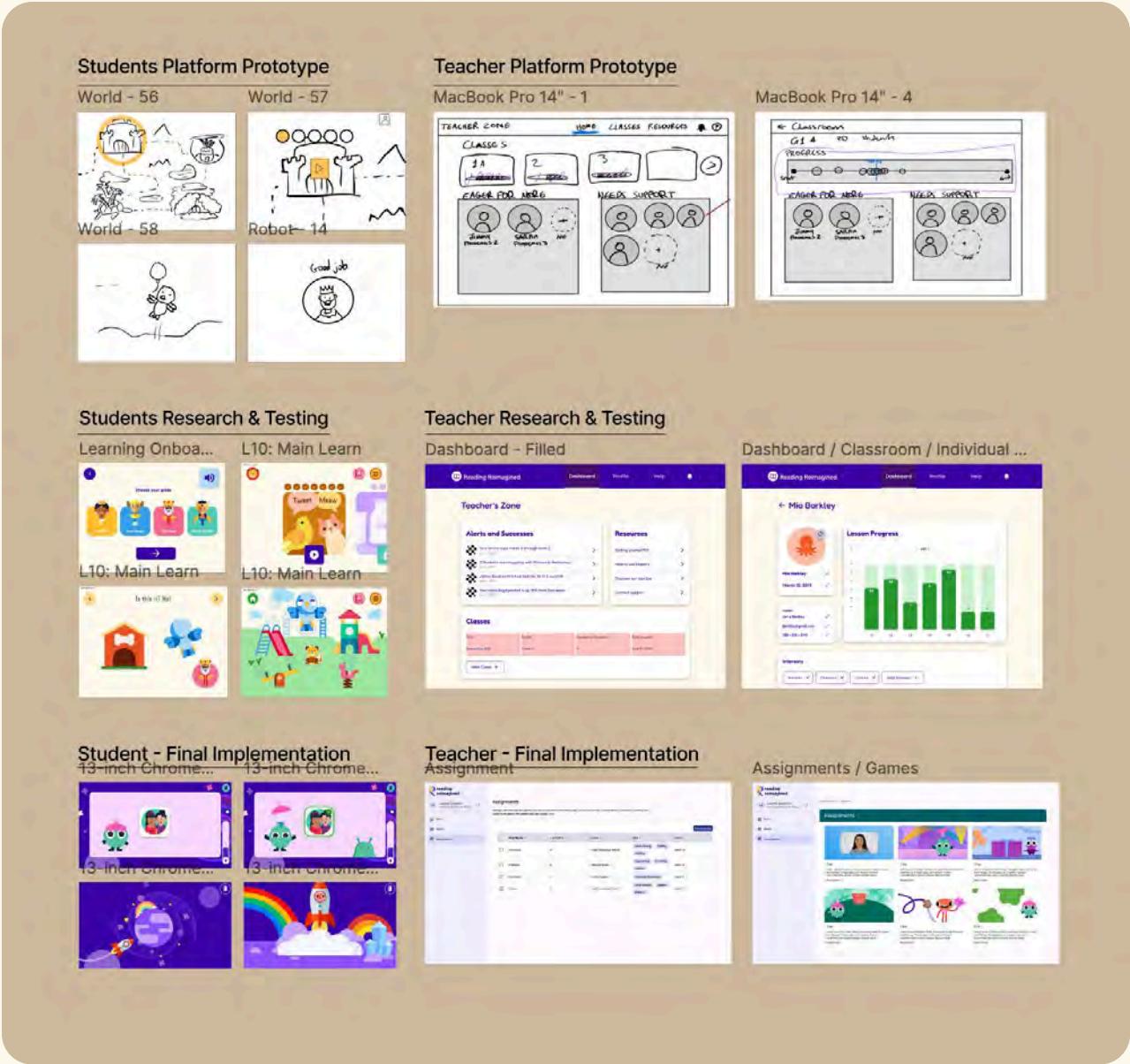
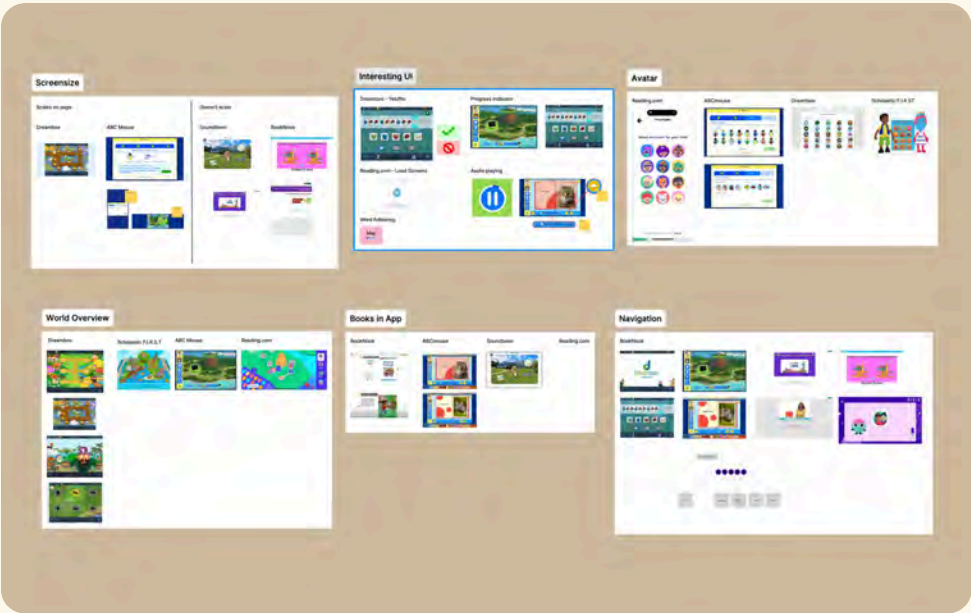
That's a harder translation than it sounds. A teacher notices when a kid is confused and adapts mid-lesson. The whole point of moving this to software was to not need that, to free up the teacher's time rather than lean on it. Support could still be there if a student truly got stuck. But every decision point a teacher would normally make instinctively had to get built into the product itself, so kids could work through it independently by default.



Process

Translating research into a working experience was one of the toughest problems on this project, so we leaned heavily on the academic team throughout. They were our go-to people for domain expertise, proxies for the research itself. Rather than just bringing them finished options to approve, we facilitated sessions that gave them room to propose ideas themselves, treating them as part of the design process rather than a checkpoint at the end of it.

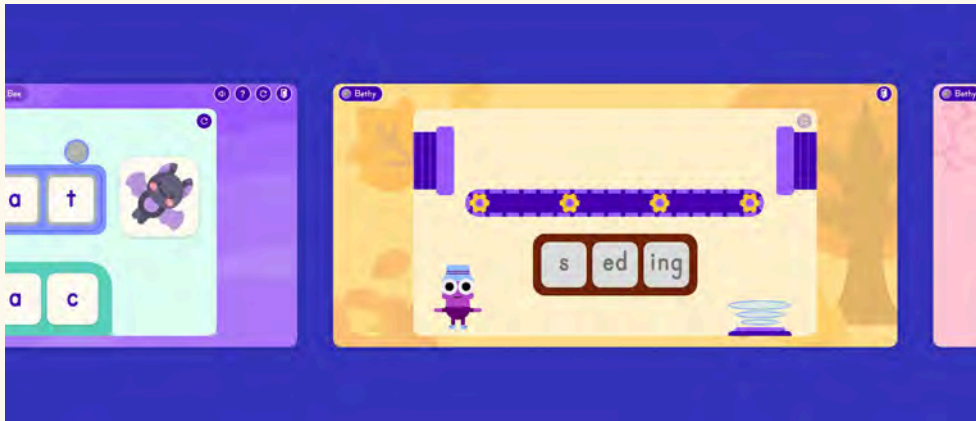
In parallel, we ran competitive and engagement research across the field, looking at Duolingo, ClassDojo, and others, benchmarking against how established products sustain motivation over time, and using that research to inform pacing, reward structures, and visual tone rather than academic content itself.



Process

Engineering capacity was tight. One team was on the hook for building both the entire curriculum's worth of games and the CMS on a tight timeline. That constraint could have forced a lot of compromise, which we couldn't afford in particular around the academic rigour. So we created a systematized, plug-and-play component library of game elements, built by identifying the patterns that recurred across the curriculum rather than designing each game as a one-off. It took more time upfront to build a robust enough system that would account for all the different game types but it was well worth it.

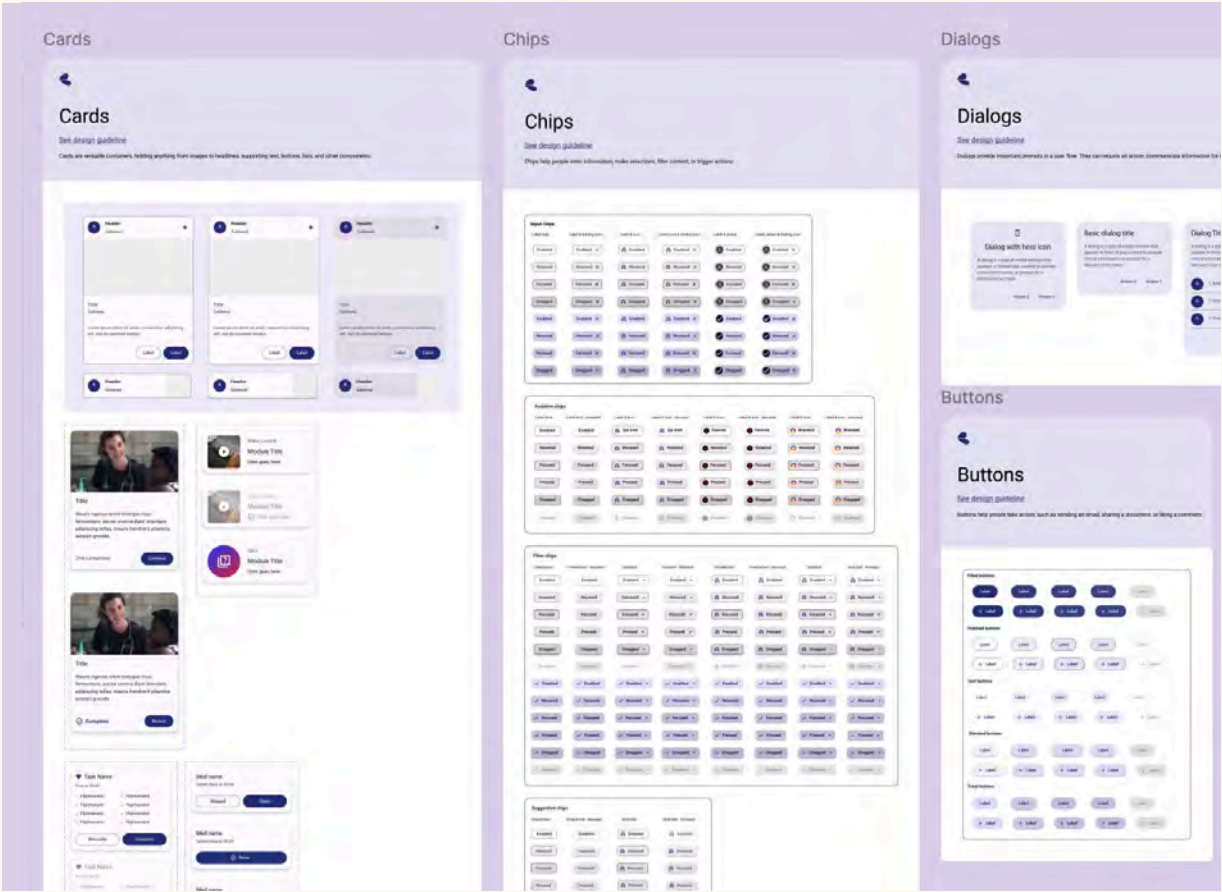
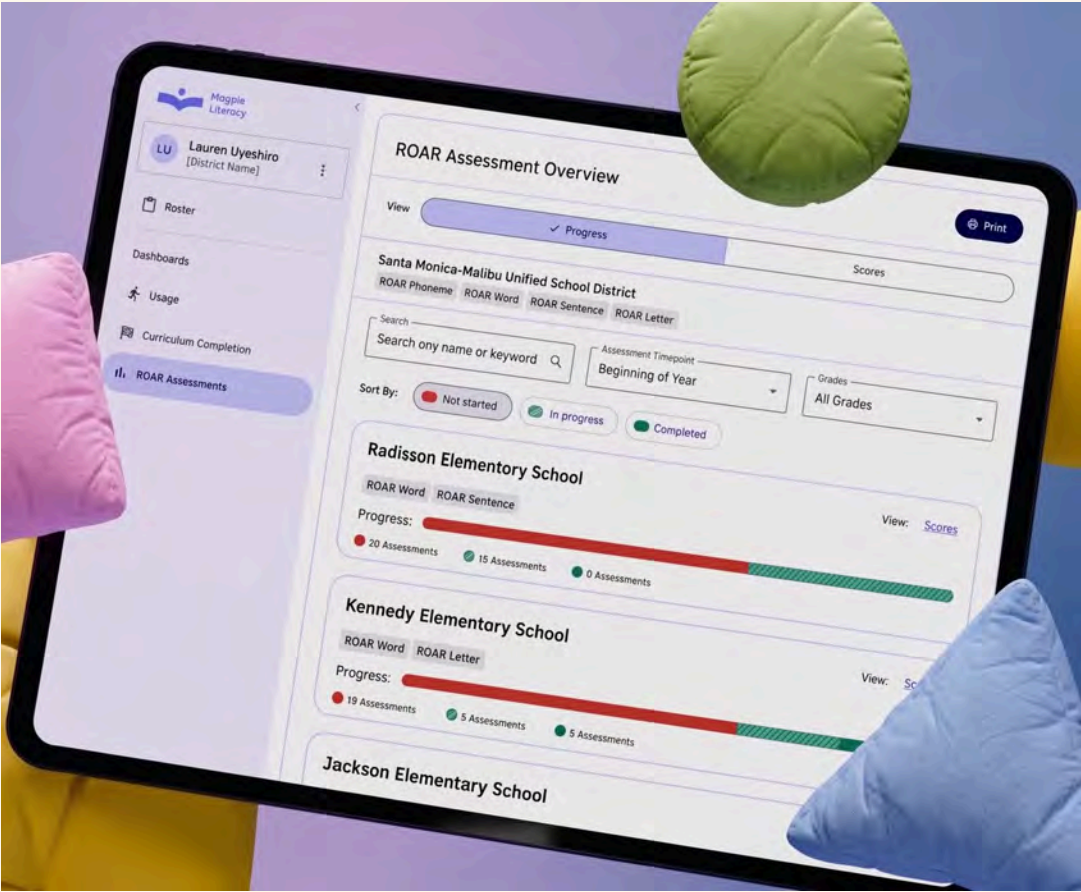
That system solved the engineering problem and the fidelity problem at the same time, because the components were built around the recurring pedagogical structures themselves. Every new game built from the library came pre-validated against the curriculum standards that mattered to the academic team, instead of needing to be checked game by game.



Process

Alongside the games, we designed the companion CMS, the portal district admins, school admins, and teachers use to see whether the product is actually moving the needle on a child's reading. Measurement wasn't an afterthought bolted on at the end; without it, nobody could tell if any of this was working.

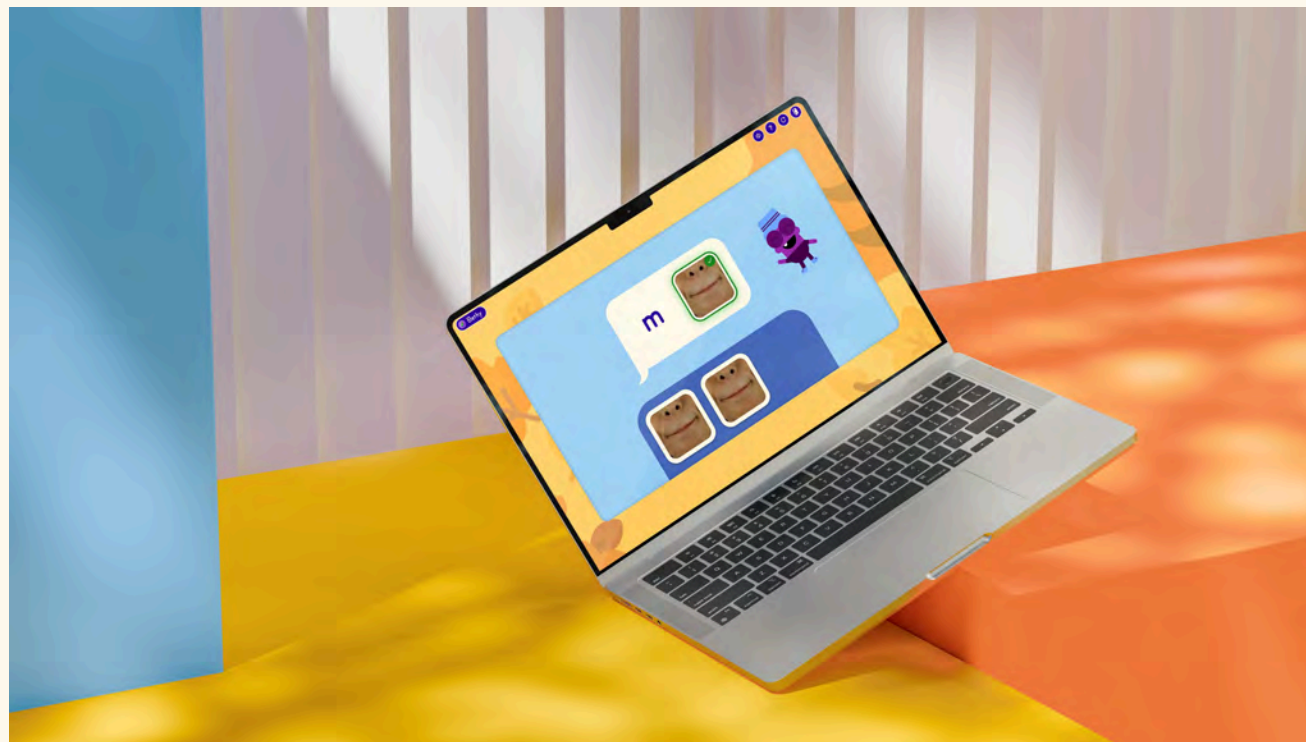
We leaned on Material Design and existing component libraries for everything that didn't need to be bespoke, reserving custom build time for where it actually mattered, which kept handoff to engineering fast and meant nobody was translating half-finished ideas against a closing deadline.



Process

Over the course of the project I traveled to Monroe, NC to sit in real classrooms, watch children play the games directly, and interview parents, teachers, and administrators, in English and in Spanish. Magpie is built for lower-income districts, where the literacy gap hits hardest and support resources are weakest, so testing in that context specifically mattered.

Watching a game inside an actual classroom showed things remote testing couldn't have. How a teacher actually spends their attention across twenty-five kids, not just what they say they care about in an interview. Where a design that looked fine on a desk needed a kid to ask for help anyway, the opposite of what we were trying to build.



With a tool like [Magpie], we ensure consistency and equitable access to high-quality and impactful research-based instruction and practice opportunities for students.

Elaine Shobert, Literacy Coach, Rock Rest Elementary, Monroe, NC



Designing
for Scale

Pilots reaching 50,000 students showed learning gains that met robust standards for evidence. Students were twice as likely to hit literacy benchmarks, with the strongest gains among kids who started below grade level.

That evidence led to a partnership with Great Minds, a curriculum provider serving 4.8 million students. Starting fall 2027, Magpie's digital tool gets embedded directly into Great Minds' English Language Arts curricula, taking the product from a handful of pilot classrooms to national scale.



VISION RESEARCH PRODUCT CONTACT

Together,
we can eradicate
illiteracy.

BUTTON





Our Why - The Problem

Today, only one-third of students read at grade level due to systemic inequities. Our kids deserve better.

BUTTON

The Research

Research tells us that readers who do not exceed a certain decoding level – known as the decoding threshold – cannot access reading comprehension, and thus will show no growth in reading proficiency.

BUTTON





The Solution

We at Magpie are developing research-based, identity-affirming PK-8+ digital literacy tools that leverage student uniquenesses to help every child master the foundational reading skills they need to become strong, confident readers.