

NEWS RELEASE

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Renaissance Learning Releases 2010 Edition of Groundbreaking Reading Habits Report: *What Kids Are Reading: The Book-Reading Habits of Students in American Schools*

October 21, 2009, Wisconsin Rapids, WI – Renaissance Learning today announced the newest release of *What Kids Are Reading: The Book-Reading Habits of Students in American Schools, 2010 edition*, a follow-up to the groundbreaking report released in May 2008. *What Kids Are Reading, 2010* provides detailed information about the books kids are actually reading—from beginning to end—by grade, gender, subject area, and reading achievement level.

While bestsellers' lists, publisher information, and library circulation data report how often books are purchased or circulated, Renaissance Learning has a unique insight into the books kids are actually reading, from cover to cover. This insight comes from Accelerated Reader (AR), the world's most popular reading software and largest single database of student book-reading behavior. For the 2008–09 school year, upon which the report is based, the AR database includes the book-reading records of more than 4.6 million students in grades 1-12 from more than 15,000 schools nationwide.

What Kids Are Reading, 2010 includes lists of the most widely read books for grades 1–12—by all students, by low- and high-achieving students; and in areas such as nonfiction and subjects spanning the curriculum.

“Learning to read is a life-changing experience, and whatever can be done must be done to inspire a love of reading in all children,” said Mark Musick, Renaissance Learning Board Director and James H. Quillen Chair of Excellence at East Tennessee State University. “It is our hope that this report serves as inspiration to teachers and parents to help foster a love of reading in all children.”

Among the report's key findings:

- **Book selection can be heavily influenced by trends.** The influence of pop culture can be seen in the book choices of students in all grades. The *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* titles, by Jeff Kinney, dominate the top positions in grades 3-6, while Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series takes over the top spots in grades 7 and up. In the 2008 report, *Harry Potter* titles were prominent, but they did not dominate the top of the list to the extent that *Twilight* titles have.
- **Contemporary “classics” remain high on the youngest and oldest readers' lists.** Beyond the trendy titles, many of the same popular titles with a lasting presence remain high on the list, including many titles by Dr. Seuss and *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White. In the middle grades, *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton and Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* remain top reads. In spite of the strong showing by the *Twilight* series, high school students continue to read modern classics, such as Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* and John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.
- **Nonfiction is largely missing from the most-read lists.** Except for a strong showing in the books widely read by struggling readers, especially in grades 4 and 5, nonfiction is mostly absent. To shed light on which nonfiction titles appeal to students as well as provide educators with ideas to incorporate reading in other subject areas, this year's report includes lists of the Top 10 most-read nonfiction titles by boys and girls in grades 1–12.
- **Several top titles also appear on ‘most challenged books’ lists.** *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, *Of Mice and Men*, and other top titles appear on the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom's lists of most challenged books.

(more)

Musick, who previously served as chair of the Governing Board for the National Assessment of Educational Progress, wrote the introduction to the *What Kids Are Reading, 2010* report. The report also features contributions from popular children's authors **Gary Paulsen**, **Jeff Kinney**, and **Lois Lowry**, as well as a foreword by cognitive scientist **Daniel T. Willingham** (author of *Why Don't Students Like School?*).

To read the full report, visit www.renlearn.com/whatkidsarereading.

About Accelerated Reader

Renaissance Learning, Inc., developed the Accelerated Reader software to make the job of managing book reading, often called reading practice, easier, less burdensome, and more reliable. Accelerated Reader is a progress-monitoring system. It helps teachers accurately and efficiently monitor student progress in the quantity and quality (comprehension) of their book reading. Introduced in 1986, Accelerated Reader has become one of the most popular educational software programs. While AR has become increasingly sophisticated over the years, its basic three-step approach has not changed: First, a student reads a book either at school or at home. Next, the student takes a computerized quiz of 5, 10, or 20 items depending on the length of the book. Then, the student and teacher receive immediate feedback and reports detailing books read, number of words read, book reading level, and comprehension (percent correct on the quiz). There are currently quizzes on more than 120,000 books, so students can read and quiz on just about any book available in a school or public library. AR also includes quizzes to assess vocabulary and literacy skills, as well as quizzes on leading reading textbooks and content-area leveled readers. With the company's newly released Home Connect feature for use with Accelerated Reader Enterprise Edition, parents can keep track of their children's reading progress, including books read, average percent correct on AR quizzes, and results on the last quiz.

About Renaissance Learning, Inc.

Renaissance Learning, Inc. is the world's leading provider of computer-based assessment technology for pre-K–12 schools. Adopted by more than 74,000 schools, Renaissance Learning's tools provide daily formative assessment and periodic progress-monitoring technology to enhance core curriculum, support differentiated instruction, and personalize practice in reading, writing and math. Renaissance Learning products help educators make the practice component of their existing curriculum more effective by providing tools to personalize practice and easily manage the daily activities for students of all levels. As a result, teachers using Renaissance Learning products accelerate learning, get more satisfaction from teaching, and help students achieve higher test scores on state and national tests. Renaissance Learning has seven U.S. locations and subsidiaries in Canada and the United Kingdom.

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