

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Rigby Launches New Breakthrough Program to Accelerate K-5 English Language Learners to Grade-level Achievement

AUSTIN, Texas, April 30, 2003: Today, Rigby announced the launch of ***On Our Way to English***, a breakthrough program, and the first of its kind, that accelerates English language learners (ELLs) to grade-level achievement. The comprehensive program for ELLs in Kindergarten through fifth grade brings together Rigby's long-time expertise in the reading market and its commitment to publishing quality materials for the ESL/Bilingual market. Steven Korte, president of Harcourt Supplemental Publishers, emphasizes that ***On Our Way to English*** is a "core" program designed to meet all the needs of this growing population in our schools. "It was developed specifically to respond to the crisis in education that has left these children behind, denying them the means to learn English well enough to succeed in their schoolwork and to perform well on today's high-stakes standardized tests," said Korte

Only ***On Our Way to English*** has the first system of leveled readers designed specifically for second language learners. The program includes:

- Thematic units to develop language, literacy, and content-area knowledge.
- Unique Rigby ELL Leveling System that takes into account each child's stage of language acquisition as well as English literacy level.
- Guided Reading Collection providing sufficient reading material *at each child's level* to promote consistent, step-by-step advancement.
- Integrated systemic phonics, including alternate phonics sequences for ten languages.
- Research-based, proven-effective ESL/ELL approaches.
- Superior teacher support for delivering Differentiated Instruction.
- Comprehensive, integrated assessment and classroom management tools, plus standardized test practice.

Developed by a team of noted ELL authorities and respected educators, ***On Our Way to English*** is based on sound research and proven methods that integrate oral language acquisition, literacy development, and content learning. "Other programs have not produced the desired results," says David Rust, VP of Publishing. "In the past, students acquired enough oral language to *sound* as though they spoke English well. However, they rarely gained the reading and writing competency needed to succeed outside the supportive environment of the ESL classroom." Typically, within a few years, the gap is too wide to close, and second language learners fall farther and farther behind their English-speaking peers.

"Teachers tell us that even when these children develop some literacy skills, and even when they are taught specific skills and strategies needed in their core curriculum, it is *not* enough," said Zulma Cifuentes, National Consultant for the series. Lynelle Morgenthaler, the ESL/Bilingual Executive Editor on the project, explains, "Past ESL and bilingual programs have failed to move ELLs to the level of literacy needed to read and understand the content of their science, social studies, math, and mainstream language arts curriculum. Research shows that students may never reach their reading

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goals unless they are provided materials to read *at their level*. Only ***On Our Way to English*** has the first system of leveled readers designed specifically for second language learners.”

The program has been extensively field tested. “My students’ learning came alive with ***On Our Way to English***. These materials were so sensitive to my students’ language needs, it was as if they were studying in their original language. The content challenged them intellectually; so cognitive development wasn’t put on hold. We saw a much greater level of participation when we introduced this program,” reported Mary Simmons, a teacher from Des Moines who field tested the program.

What makes the program different from all other programs is the Rigby ELL leveled reading model, which takes into account the child’s stages of language acquisition and literacy level. No other program does this.

An on-going assessment system is at the heart of ***On Our Way to English***, providing systematic, reliable information about students’ performance in each of the three parts of the program: Thematic Units (including oral language development, and shared reading and writing), Guided Reading, and Phonics. In addition, there are tools for placement and for assessing students’ overall performance for each unit and for the program. Not only will students move faster than ever toward grade-level achievement, but teachers will be able to track their progress throughout the year and from year to year. The assessment program is completed by Standardized Test Practice Masters to help students perform better in formal testing situations.

The *Thematic units*, correlated to national and state science, social studies, and math standards, provide an ideal background for integrated instruction in the language, literacy, and content English language learners need. The Thematic Units include components for developing oral language related to the content area theme. The thematic units are also designed to develop literacy skills through the context of the theme. The Newcomer Book for each theme provides an ideal initial literacy experience for newcomers, which is followed by whole class shared reading and shared writing.

A fully developed *Phonics (Grades K-3) or Word Study (Grades 4-5)* strand has been specifically designed to meet the needs of ELLs of varied language backgrounds. It is integrated with the program that can also be used as a stand-alone Phonics program for second language learners. Instruction is explicit and correlated to the ***On Our Way to English*** shared reading strand so phonics is taught in meaningful contexts. Components include Phonics or Word Study Song Charts, songs, audio CDs, Word Wall Starter Cards and Take-Home Phonics and Decodable Stories, or Word Study Masters, and complete Teacher’s Guide.

The *Guided Reading (grades K-3) or Guided Comprehension (grades 4-5)* is designed to match children to books. Instead of providing only a few selected theme-based titles or an anthology that all children must read regardless of reading level, ***On Our Way to English*** provides 40 titles per grade, carefully leveled according to the Rigby ELL Levels. The four strands of the reading collection (fiction, social studies, math, and science) were designed to teach reading while building content area knowledge, as well as providing a bridge to the often inaccessible textbooks of the mainstream curriculum.

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One teacher who tested the materials said, “This is the breakthrough tool that is going to make faster progress toward grade-level achievement a reality.”

The *On Our Way to English Teacher’s Guides* contain lesson plans to help the teacher move easily through the program and planning charts to pace instruction. Differentiated instruction facilitates tailoring instruction to each child’s needs. The lessons even show the teacher how to provide “comprehensible input” — instruction that is meaningful to language learners — that children need in order to succeed. Because the instruction is carefully scaffolded so that each learning experience supports the next, the classroom becomes an engaging, motivating arena in which ELLs are empowered to contribute and achieve. It’s all detailed in the Teacher’s Guides, so teachers spend less time in class making connections between resources and more time helping students make progress toward grade-level achievement.

### **About Rigby:**

Rigby, a division of Harcourt Supplemental Publishers, was founded in 1986 and popularized balanced literacy practices in the United States. The company is credited with popularizing the guided reading methodology and the integration of carefully leveled student books. Almost half of the nation’s primary school teachers have used Rigby products in their classrooms, and over 70,000 have taken advantage of the company’s professional development resources. Most recently Rigby has introduced *Rigby Literacy*, a core reading program for the K-5 grades; *Pebble Soup Explorations*, an early childhood literacy resource; and will launch online professional development for educators later this year. For more information, visit [www.rigby.com](http://www.rigby.com).

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