Table of Contents

Introduction: Blended Learning for K - 3

Settings for Adobe Flash (Chromebooks/Chrome Browsers)

PreK Literacy/Numeracy Tools

Kindergarten iPad Apps

PreK - 3rd Grade Literacy Webtools (typing, letter identification, letter sounds, spelling, sight words, one and two syllable words)

K-3 Numeracy Webtools

Introduction: Blended Learning for K - 3

I highly recommend reading the blog entry "To Tech or Not to Tech: Reflecting on Blended Learning for Young Students." It includes an interview with Jodie Collins, a kindergarten teacher at Wright Elementary.

Settings for Adobe Flash (Chromebooks/Chrome Browsers)

For many websites that involve interactive elements, educational games, or use of the device's webcam and microphone (such as Schoology!), it requires the use of Adobe Flash. If you are using a device other than an iPad (Chromebook, MacBook Air, etc.) and using your Chrome browser, you therefore need to enable the "plug in" for the site to work correctly.

The following step by step directions enable Flash on a Chrome browser/Chromebook. If done properly once, they should not need to be done again.

1. Go to settings (three dots in right corner of Chrome), then "Settings." (On a Chromebook, click on the profile icon [usually in the bottom right], click on the gear icon [settings], then click on the three lines in the upper left to further open Settings.)

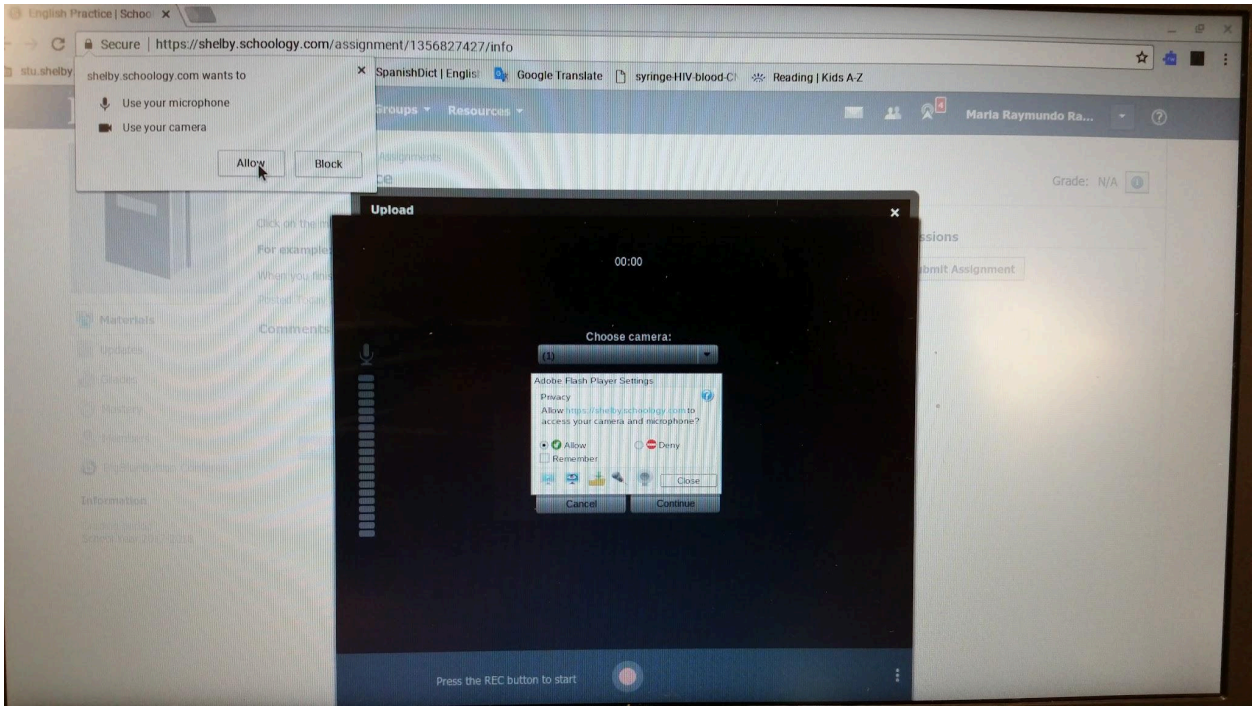
2. Scroll down/look at list and click on Advanced.

3. Scroll down to "privacy and security," and find "content settings" in the section. There are two possible versions depending on whether the browser/Chromebook is recently updated.
    a. Find Flash, "ask first," and turn it off. You might also see a "Run Adobe Flash" setting which you can keep on.
    b. You might see a toggle which only allows an option of "Ask First (recommended)" or "Block sites from running Flash." Make sure it is on the "Ask First" setting! If you're on a particular website that is stuck, copy the root URL address (for example, "http://app.educationgalaxy.com"). Scroll down, choose "Add," and paste your URL.

4. *If you are having problems with your webcam and microphone:* Go back to your Content Settings and find "Camera." If you can, add the website as detailed in 3B above (such as "http://shelby.schoology.com") to a list of allowed sites. Go back to Content Settings and do the same for your microphone. (If you are not able or don't need to do this, proceed to step 5.)

5. Shut down Chrome completely. Restart Chrome.

6. Try again. If applicable for the tool or game, you may have to tell it to “allow” and “remember” your choice of mic and webcam when it comes up on Flash. See pic below as an example.



7. If you still have issues, shut down and restart the device to see if that helps. After that, see a building tech or put in a work ticket if you are still stuck.

PreK Literacy/Numeracy Tools

Name: Dolch Sight Words
Platforms: Device Agnostic (works via browser, even on mobile device)
Focus: Literacy
Reports? No
Cost: Free

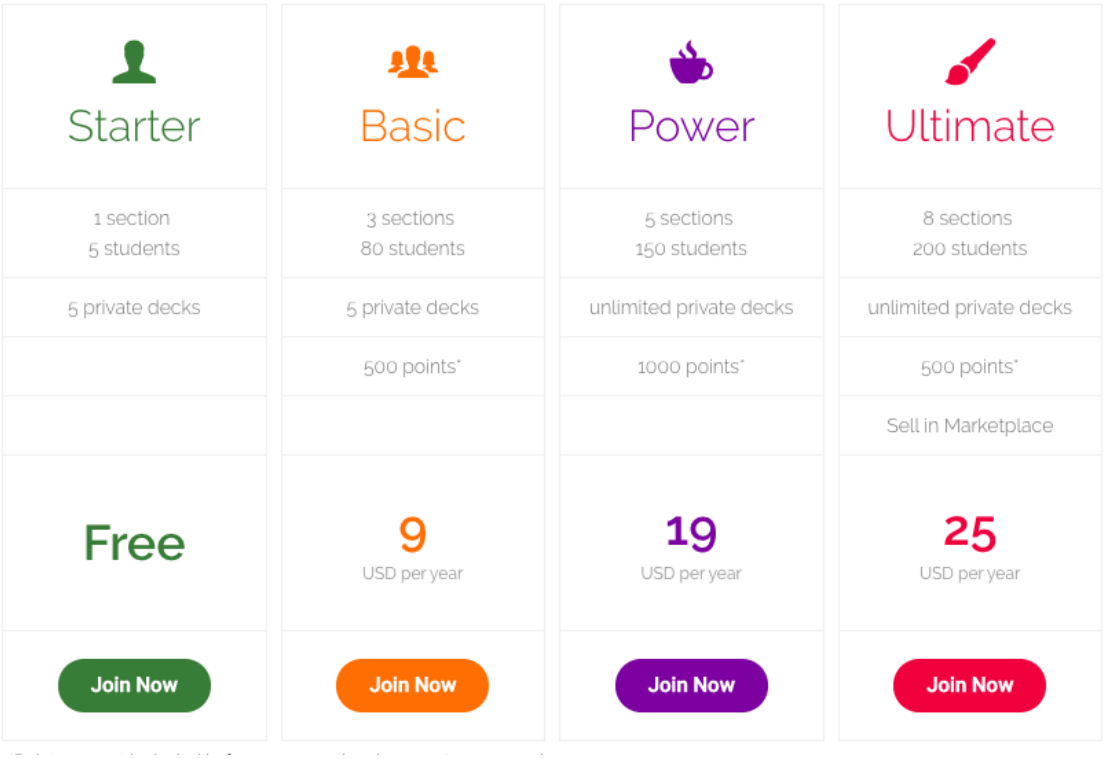
While the site offers no ability to do reporting or track individual proficiency, it is a free tool that works very well both on laptop/desktop browsers as well as mobile devices (if on a phone, I recommend holding it in landscape mode). The site also offers optional audio prompts, which is another plus. Grade levels are PreK through third grade.

Name: Boom Learning / Boom Cards
Platforms: Device Agnostic (works via browser even on phone; also app for Google Play/iTunes)
Focus: Literacy, numeracy and more
Reports? Yes, but not able to export
Cost: Free for limited availability; pay for premium account with larger classes; some Boom decks free, others cost

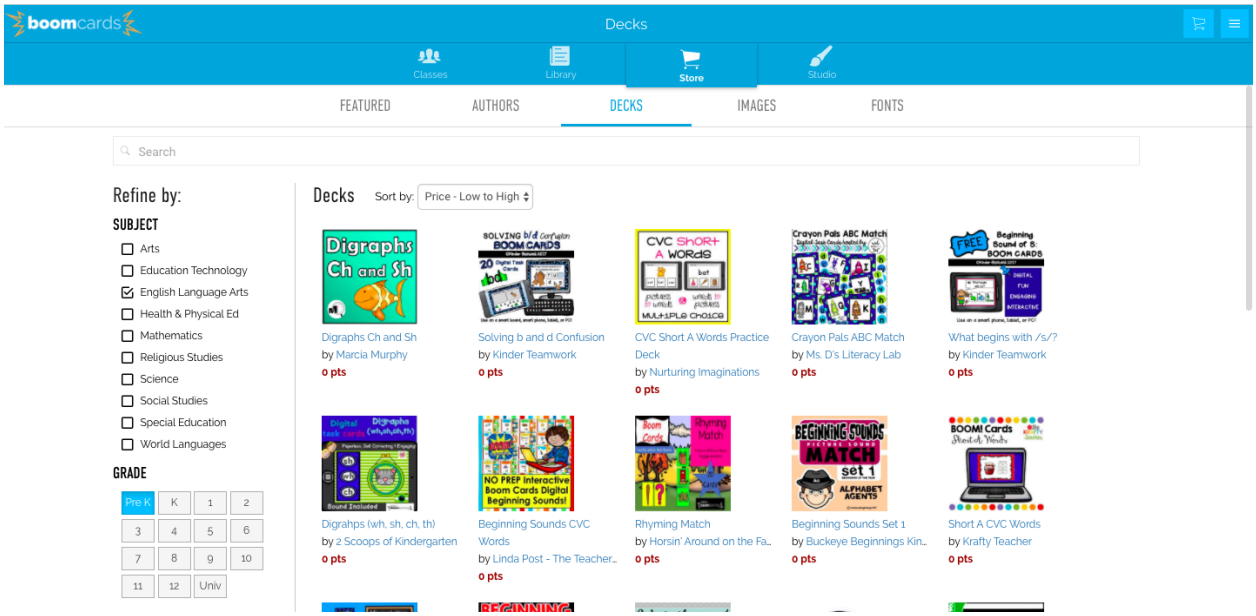
Note: Jodie Collins, a kindergarten teacher at Wright Elementary, did an interview on K-3 tools and highly recommended Boom Learning. Read the blog entry here.

Boom Learning allows a teacher to create classes and student accounts, although you can also offer a “fastplay” option via a URL for students to play without account creation.

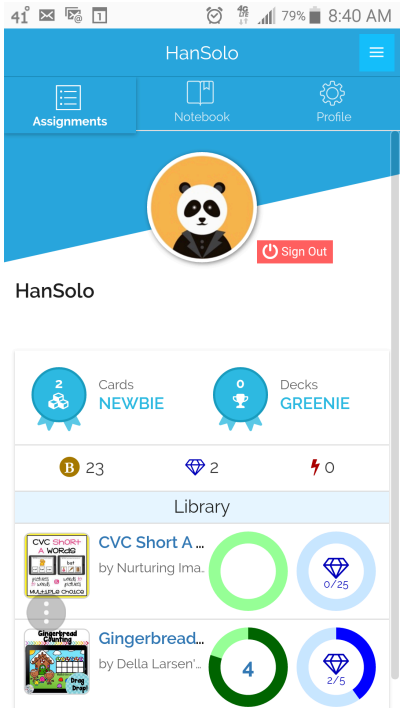
Cost for a teacher account ranges from free to $25 per year (see below).



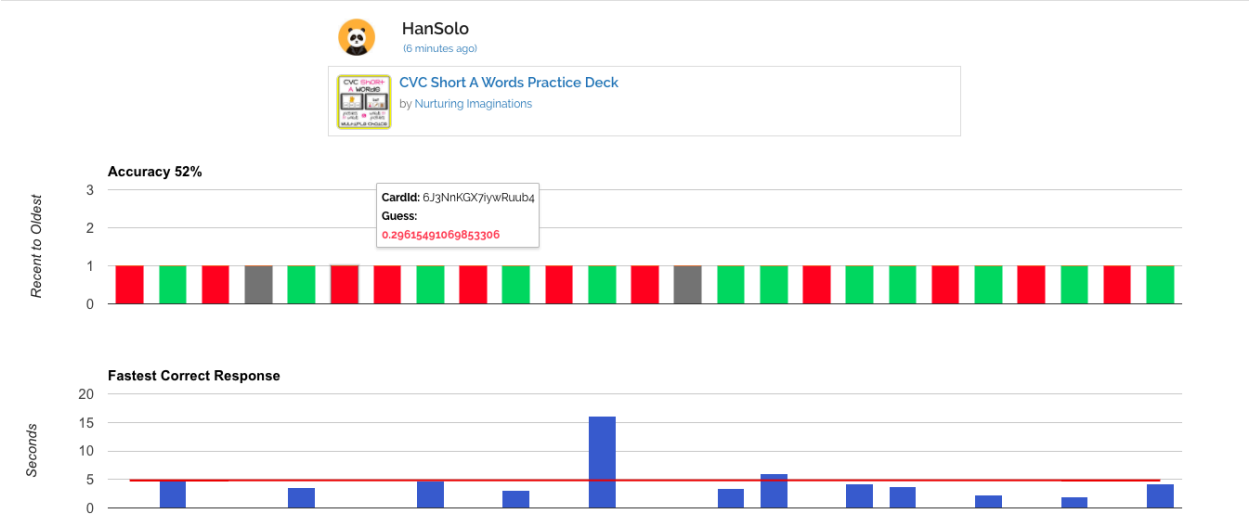
You can search decks by subject and grade level, from Pre-K to graduate! (You can also create your own decks with the “Studio” tool.) While some are free (“zero points”), others cost. The paid account levels come with a bank of points, and you can also purchase more. Decks are added to your library, and then can be assigned to a class. (Note that you could make “classes” consisting of one student each, if you want to personalize.)



The multiplatform approach for students to access their cards is a definite advantage. I noticed no lag or usability difference between an iPad browser (Safari) versus an Android default phone browser (pictured below). You could also access via a laptop/desktop, or play through an Android or iOS app.

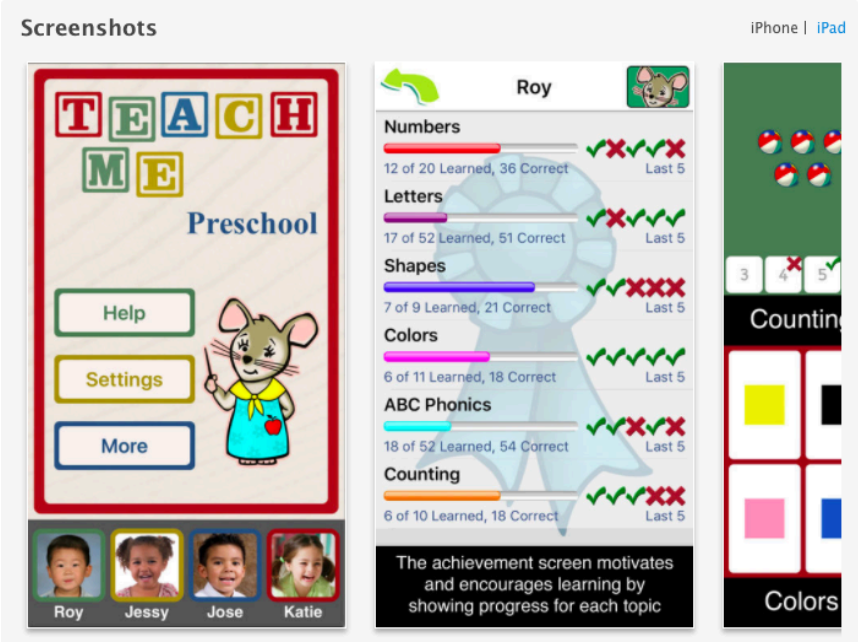


The teacher can access reports of student performance as well as response time, which could be very helpful when determining fluency. The visuals are clear with clickable overlays. However, the reports do not have an export function to PDF or Excel.



Name: TeachMe PreSchool/Toddler
Platforms: App only for Apple/iTunes devices
Focus: Literacy, numeracy
Reports? Yes, but only within the device -- cannot export
Cost: .99 per app download (bundles with other TeachMe apps for a discount)

TeachMe PreSchool/Toddler helps students practice alphabet, ABC phonics, numbers 1-20, shapes, colors, and counting 1-10. It offers the ability to set up lockable, unique student profiles per downloaded app (up to 40 students). This in theory allows one iPad to be shared by an entire class, while all of their data would be kept separate. However, there is no cloud access to these reports; the teacher needs to physically touch the iPad to see the information, and as far as I can tell, the reports cannot be exported or emailed out of the device. (One workaround: take screenshots of the report screen and email them to the teacher.)



The app comes with some highly recommended reviews (like this one), and it was last updated in 2017 (a good sign; apps that haven't been updated in years may be buggy or lack customer support). However, TeachMe would be best for in school situations, or perhaps summer programs. If parents downloaded and used the app, they could possibly be taught and encouraged to email screenshots, but this would likely be unwieldy and inconsistent for progress monitoring. Remember, parents with only Android devices would be out of luck using it at home.

Name: Voyager Sopris Learning (WeCan curriculum program/The Learning Zoo online)
Platforms: Device Agnostic (web based, desktop and tablet compatible)
Focus: Literacy, numeracy
Reports? Yes
Cost: $2999 (first year classroom package up to 20 students)

WeCan is a complete curriculum package -- not only access to The Learning Zoo webtool which allows progress monitoring, but manipulatives, lesson plans, professional development, benchmark assessments, and more. However, while the integration of multiple materials may be welcome, if you are only looking for a web tool and/or need access for more than 20 students, this could be pricey. An overview PDF is available here, which includes research data on the program's effectiveness. The Learning Zoo is available in English and Spanish!


We Can
Early Learning Curriculum
Proven to Increase Achievement
Common Core Aligned:
Addresses Foundational
Skill Standards for Kindergarten
High-Quality, Comprehensive Design:
Integrates Instruction, Assessment,
and Classroom Management
Classroom Management Kit
Evidence-Based, Comprehensive Early Learning Curriculum
Vivamos sanos

Kindergarten iPad Apps

Best Practice for Choosing an iPad App

To help guide your decision making process, here are some suggested questions/guidelines to consider a new app.

1. Have the apps been vetted? Reviews that praise the app are good, personal experience is better, student use and feedback is best.
2. Is there another app already installed that serves the same purpose? Avoid unnecessary duplication.
3. Beware of apps that require a large digital footprint to install.
4. Consider apps that allow students to be creative, or at least think critically while using. While apps such as ShowMe may at first seem difficult for kindergarten students, you might be surprised what they can accomplish with modeling, practice and assistance.
5. Make sure "free" really means free. Look out for:
    A. An app that has in-app purchases.
    B. Trial apps that only work for a limited time before you have to buy it.
    C. Apps that require students to create yet another account and log in (even if accounts are free).

Classroom Management / How to Get an App Installed
Please review the iPad Protocols FAQ.

Because of the granular ability to install an app down to a specific iPad, I strongly suggest you do the following to help with classroom management of the devices:

- Create an internal spreadsheet for yourself with the asset tag number, iPad number for students (1-30), and the student assigned to each iPad.
- Make sure the same iPad goes to the same student on a daily basis. This teaches personal ownership and accountability.
- Teach how to care for the iPad. Use both hands for carrying; never run with the device; "laps not floors" (on the floor, it can be stepped on); be careful when inserting/removing headphones. The two most common damage issues are cracked screens and headphone plugs broken off in the headphone jack.
- Create a "iPads down, eyeballs up" procedure to get student attention.
- Remember to balance iPad use with analog activities, especially at the beginning of the school year.

Recommended iPad Apps

I surveyed kindergarten teachers in our district about apps they often used and found effective in impacting learning. The top apps in no particular order were:

- Bookflix (through browser)
- Starfall ABC
- Starfall Learning to Read
- Work Wizard
- Bubbling Math
- Rainbow Draw
- Sand Draw
- Glo Draw
- Splash Math
- Brainpop Jr
- Epic
- Boom Cards (Boom Learning)
- ABCya!
- Sticky

For more iPad app ideas, browse these sites:

"Jump Start" list of suggested apps

15 Entertaining Math Apps for Struggling Students

Apps for Making Ten

"Five Best Apps" Archive (Technology in Early Education blog)

PreK - 3rd Grade Literacy Webtools

Remember when using any of these tools, you may need to fix your device's Adobe Flash settings.

When looking for resources and tools for elementary students to acquire content and practice skills, I highly recommend PBS LearningMedia. You can create a free account as a teacher (or student), but accounts are not required to play or interact with much of the media on the site. Accounts do enable some creation tools as well as the ability to save "favorites."

When KDE ended its contract with Discovery Education in the summer of 2017, PBS LearningMedia created a crosswalk between Discovery and PBS's resources. A copy of the PDF is here.

Another resource for younger students is PBS Kids, although it has less teacher resources (standards, etc.).

A blog/website I found particularly helpful was Technology in Early Childhood. Although the last entry is a few years old, it has a wealth of resources, particularly in iPad apps.

One last note. As said before, these tools might be more engaging ways to acquire content and practice skills, but make sure students also have active, creative ways (both digital and analog!) of "showing what they know."

Typing
TypeTastic is free, gamified, and works on tablets or Chromebooks.

Letter Identification
"Super DJ" game (PreK-2): Student link for game Teacher resources, standards

Sight Words
One of my favorite sites for sight words has optional audio prompts and is useful for PreK through 3rd grade. It also works very well on a mobile phone's browser (I recommend holding it in landscape mode).
Dolch Sight Words

A Google Drawing template for a "drag and drop" sight words activity is here. (See also "Google Drawings and Slides Interactives" below.)

One and Two Syllable Words
"Truman's Word Play" game (one syllable words):
Student link for game Teacher resources

"Fridge Magnet Game" (one syllable words and sentence constructions; has audio prompts):
Student link for game

"In the Park with Skits" game (two syllable words):
Student link for game Teacher resources

Spelling and Listening
"Interactive Spelling Bee" (Grades 1-12, requires audio)

Google Drawing and Slides Interactives

You can create your own Google Drawings to make "interactive" elements you can share with students….or have students make their own! Here are some essentials to remember:

- Creating shapes in a Drawing is the key (**Insert>Shape>Shapes**). Once the shape is inserted, you can double click it to add text. Now you have a drag and drop "tile" you can manipulate.
- Once created in your own Drive, you need to do the "Copy trick" when sharing the URL in Schoology, Google Classroom, an email, etc. This will force the student to make and interact with their own personal copy and not affect your original.

For an example, here is a "Halloween Poetry" Google Drawing activity. (Note the link forces you to make a copy.) Feel free to edit and change the background or other elements to whatever you like.

For some thorough step by step directions on how to make your own "drag and drop" Drawings, watch this video (9:11).

You can create the same "manipulatives" idea in Google Slides as well. Again, you want to use the "copy trick" once the original is made. Read Alice Keeler's "draggable stack" directions.

K-3 Numeracy Tools

Teacher Advisor with Watson is an easy way to access Open Education Resources (OER) on numeracy lessons, videos, activities and strategies for K-5. Requires a free registration. This would be helpful to enhance curriculum or develop personalized learning materials for students. (A blog entry on Teacher Advisor and other OER is here.)