

PRODUCT REVIEWS

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News of the latest technology products for K-12 may be sent directly to Kathie Felix at 5746 Union Mill Road, PMB 605, Clifton, VA 20124 or to kathiefelix@aol.com.

Electronic Resources for Schools

REPORT CARD

- ★★★★★ = Highly Recommended
- ★★★★ = Recommended
- ★★★ = Good
- ★★ = OK in some cases
- ★ = Don't consider

This section provides concise, original reviews of new or important hardware, software, websites, and electronic media that relate to the K-12 curriculum. All reviews are written by practicing educators who, in most cases, have used the software in a school environment. Where grouped into broad, age-appropriate categories, these categories should not be viewed as prescriptive. To facilitate "comparison shopping," these reviews are highly structured. Reviewers prepare a "report card" based on a five-star scale.

MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL SOFTWARE

MIND Research Institute Algebra Readiness

Company: MIND Research Institute, 3631 S. Harbor Blvd., Suite 200, Santa Ana, CA 92704. Phone: (888) 751-5443; Internet: www.mindresearch.net.

Price: Pricing begins at \$92 per student for a bundle that includes a student textbook and a 1-year software subscription. Discounts are available for quantity purchases.

Audience: Students in grades 6-12.

Format: CD-ROM (text, animation, and graphics) and companion textbook.

Minimum System Requirements:
Windows systems: Windows 98/2000/XP/Vista, Pentium class processor, 256 MB RAM, 250 MB hard disk space, CD-ROM drive, and internet access.

Macintosh systems: Mac OSX, Power PC, G3 or Intel processor, 256 MB RAM, 250 MB hard disk space, CD-ROM, and internet access.

★★★★★ REPORT CARD

Installation	A
Content/Features	A
Ease of Use	A
Product Support	A

Description: The MIND Research Institute's Algebra Readiness program uses a visual learning approach to provide a comprehensive math curriculum focused on the essential math concepts and skills from grades 2 through 7 needed for success in Algebra 1. The material can be used to introduce algebra concepts, to provide an intervention for struggling students, or to supplement a math curriculum.

Reviewer Comments:

Installation: I used the software on a Power Mac G4 iBook laptop computer running system 10.3. **Installation Rating:** A

Content/Features: The Algebra Readiness computer software presents the basic

math skills necessary for success in Algebra 1. Using a game format with easy-to-understand visual diagrams, the program is sure to appeal and engage students struggling with basic concepts.

The lessons are divided into modules that allow students to learn and practice major concepts including number lines, variables, place value, ratios, fractions, negative numbers, word problems, the coordinate plane, equations, and exponents—all mapped to national and state standards.

The lessons increase in difficulty, providing students with confidence in their ability to succeed. Students proceed at their own rate, advancing to the next level only after they master each skill.

Teachers can monitor students' work with an online teacher console that generates on-demand teacher reports for monitoring student pace and performance through the software. The reports can be generated by student, class, and school level.

The Algebra Readiness software is divided into sections that correspond to

chapters in the companion student textbook. A total of 89 activities offer on-screen manipulatives illustrating the math concepts. A feedback feature tells students if their solutions to problems are correct or incorrect and provides animated illustrations that clearly show why the solution does or doesn't solve the problem.

The student textbook offers 101 lessons in 18 chapters. Lesson components include objectives, vocabulary, examples, explanations, checks for understanding, problem sets, find the error activities, multiple choice practice, math journal questions, common error explanations, look-back review, and an examination of misconceptions.

A User's Guide in a print edition offers ideas to differentiate instruction with the software. Objectives, math standards, instructions, and tips for each lesson are included.

The teacher's textbook provides lesson plans, information, and resources for differentiated instruction. A Pacing and

Resource Guide helps educators plan and track instruction. Blackline masters, an assessment book, and exams are included. The Warm Ups Book contains 10 exercises to precede each lesson in the textbook.

Classroom Applications:

The software can be used in conjunction with the companion textbook to provide practice and reinforcement of the essential math skills needed for success in Algebra 1.

As a stand-alone product, the software can be used to reinforce skills currently under study in a math classroom and could serve as an intervention for students who are not ready for Algebra 1.

The software would be a useful tool for English language learners, English as a second language students, and others dealing with language issues since it relies entirely on visual demonstrations.

Content/Features Rating: A

Ease of Use: The Algebra Readiness software is straightforward, with sim-

ple and well-designed animated diagrams explaining each mathematical concept. **Ease of Use Rating: A**

Product Support: Product support is available at a toll-free telephone number, Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. PST. Support is also offered by email (help@mindresearch.net).

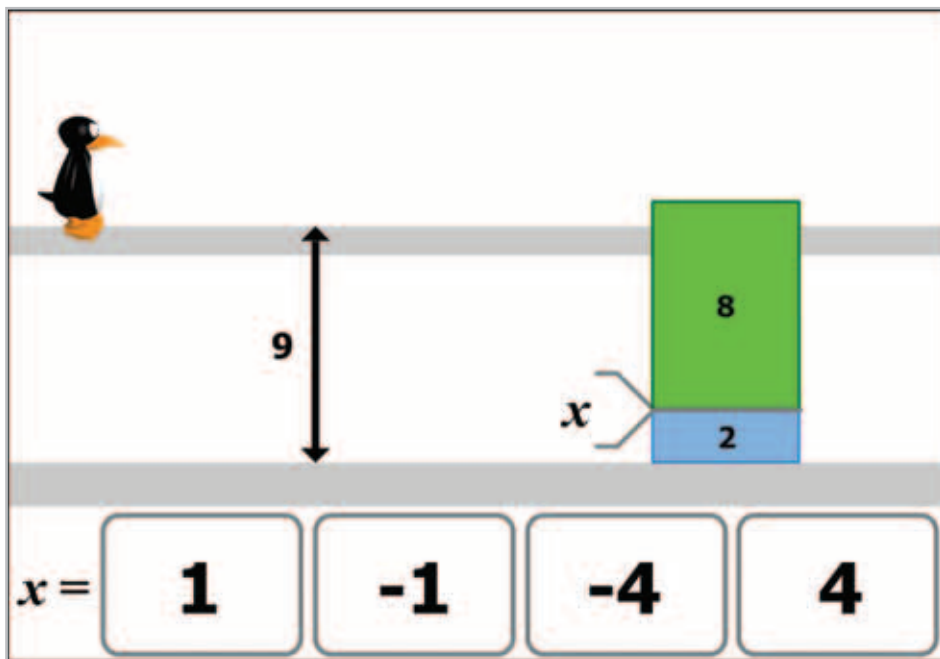
Startup training begins with the courseware installation and set up of student accounts. Training is provided for using teacher reports. Professional development in using the textbook, supplemental materials, and courseware are available. **Product Support Rating: A**

Recommendation: This complete 1-year program of textbook, software, and teacher's guide and resources is impressive. The material was developed for students in grades 8 and above to take between Pre-Algebra and Algebra 1 or for students who failed Algebra 1 before retaking the class.

I especially liked the software's feedback feature that provided an animated explanation of student responses, whether the solutions were correct or incorrect. I found this feature to be unique and extremely useful.

This is an excellent program to make sure your students are ready to succeed in Algebra 1. It will definitely help to close the achievement gap for our struggling math learners. If budgetary concerns prohibit the purchase of a new math text, educators should still consider an investment in the Math Readiness software since it could easily be adapted to another textbook.

Reviewer: **Sally Finley**, Teacher of the Gifted, Country Hills Elementary School, 10550 Westview Drive, Coral Springs, FL 33076; (754) 322-5950; sallyfinley1@yahoo.com.



MIND Institute Algebra Readiness

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