



Two Personal Histories Equal One Product

Don Johnston: Start-to-Finish is tied to the personal history of Don Johnston, the company's founder. Don did not read until he was in the 9th grade. Don would actually "sandwich" the book that he could read inside his regular schoolbooks so that he would not appear out-of-step with others in his classes. From this personal struggle, Don started looking for tools and supports for students struggling with reading.

Jerry Stemach: Jerry Stemach, a long-time customer and user of Don Johnston products, had already authored many high-interest, low-vocabulary books. After years of creating books that met readability standards, Jerry felt something was lacking in the work and set out to look for another method of creating these books. By the time he talked to Don, he already had several titles he wanted to create in print and make available electronically as well.

And a coffeehouse: One afternoon, the two men sat down at a coffeehouse just to catch up. After a few moments, both realized what the other's ideas meant to their own and began sketching the basis for Start-to-Finish on napkins and scraps of paper. Don talked from personal experience about what multimedia approaches can mean to struggling readers; Jerry talked about publishing methods for creating books that are engaging and that students are proud to read. Both men took away souvenirs of the meeting, and Start-to-Finish was born.

Written for Success

Jerry and his editors have developed a "Written for Success" formula that is core to each Start-to-Finish title. Their method ensures that the text is purposeful and has the appropriate supports and scaffolds for students reading at the different reading levels. Combined, his team of editors has over 100 years of experience working with students who struggle with reading. He also has a team of authors experienced in creating captivating stories to engage students.

