



February 2008

Ninth Graders Have Outstanding Success with My Reading Coach

An Interview with Nancy Booth, Reading Educator — Chapin High School, El Paso, Texas
School Profile: 1833 Students; Grades 9–12; 65% Hispanic; 52% Disadvantaged

Email: nmbooth@episd.org

In 2006-2007, Chapin High School used My Reading Coach for the first time. We have a two year reading program for entering freshman who score below the 7th grade reading level on the Gates MacGinitie Reading Assessment (GMRA). Last year's ninth graders came to our high school with dismal reading abilities. When the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills™ (TAKS) scores for the My Reading Coach Treatment Group arrived at the end of May, I was speechless. Most of our students passed the test, and those who did not pass were very close.

After I received their results, I asked the students whose names I called to stand in the classroom. One young man who had "attitude" written all over him was slouched in his chair. When I read his name he stood up. I looked straight at him when I congratulated those standing for passing the TAKS test. I saw the look of surprise appear on his face; then I saw an expression of hope. It was only there for a moment, but I hold his positive emotion in my heart. It reminds me of the reason I became a teacher.

My Reading Coach 2006-2007 Treatment Group

Every ninth grader was tested on the GMRA the first two days of school. A total of 120 students who scored lower than 7th grade reading level were placed in the reading lab. These students were divided between Treatment and Control Groups. Eighty-five percent were Hispanic. Students worked on My Reading Coach 90 minutes every other day. They used the program five times in a two week learning cycle. At the end of the year, students who finished My Reading Coach and passed the TAKS 9th grade reading test were released from the two year program. If one or the other did not happen, they returned to the reading lab for their sophomore year where they would finish My Reading Coach and then work on other programs.

Outstanding Success for Treatment Group

Last year's ninth graders came to Chapin from two feeder schools with scores of 65% and 66% on their 8th grade TAKS ELA test. At the end of ninth grade, these same students scored 86% on the 9th grade TAKS reading test.

About 50 students out of 102 finished My Reading Coach and passed the TAKS test. When I see them in the hallways this year, they are grinning from ear to ear. They are different students. I stopped one young man and asked him if his grades were better this year. He said, "You have no idea how much better I read and how much faster I can text. I spell so much better. My communication skills are much improved."

Those students who did not pass the TAKS demonstrated 200 to 300 points in "value added" growth. These points are

determined when a student's four previous year's scores are calculated to anticipate the student's next score. We compared a student's actual TAKS score in 2007 to their anticipated score to determine the value added score. One young man had added value of 345 points over his anticipated score.

Seventy-five percent of the students finished the program in one school year. Based on the GMRA post test, one student went from reading at the 6th grade reading level to the 11th grade level.

My Reading Coach affects a student's self image and grades exponentially! The look of hope when they find out they passed the TAKS test—a test they never thought they could pass—is awe-inspiring. They are shocked when they find out that their classes are easier. They are thrilled that their 6-week report cards do not damage their ability to play their sports or instruments.

Students became calmer in the classroom when they recognized they were making progress. This is huge. Many of these ninth graders were just "hanging out" until they were old enough to drop out of school. They did not believe school or life would get better for them.

This year I picked three of last year's most successful students to tell the freshman reading classes about My Reading Coach. They said things like, "Do not give up because my life is different: I do not have to work as hard; I can play all of my sports; and everything in my life is better. If you sit down and do what these ladies tell you to do, your life will get better too."

High School Reading Classes

Since 2000-2001, two high schools in our district offer reading classes for ninth and tenth grade struggling readers. These labs exist because our administrators are committed to having students read at grade level. If students do not have good reading skills, they are unable to do high school work. Our reading program is effective because we have a classroom, computers, great software and teachers who are committed. Each year at Chapin High School, 700 ninth graders are tested. Our assistant principal makes over 120 schedule changes during the first week of school to accommodate those students who are reading below the seventh grade level.

My Reading Coach has enabled our students to achieve outstanding results. As a teacher, I could not tailor a program that would focus on the individual needs of so many students. There is no way I can create the kinds of learning this program offers simultaneously. Most importantly, for those high school students who have given up on themselves because they have difficulty reading, My Reading Coach gives them hope. If they are willing to do the work, the program can change their lives.

Exceptional Student Education Students Learn to Read

An Interview with Pattie Petrie, Literacy Coach — Hobbs Middle School, Milton, Florida
School Profile: 725 students; Grades 6–8; 45% Disadvantaged; Title 1

Email: PetrieP@mail.snatarosa.k12.fl.us

When we saw the results of a 90-day pilot program last year, we decided to keep our students on My Reading Coach all year. Several Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students with learning disabilities were not showing growth on any program we offered before My Reading Coach. Our goal was to find a way to improve their reading to the point where they could benefit from the Read 180 model we were using. To our surprise, every ESE student enrolled in My Reading Coach had learning gains on the FCAT, the Florida standardized reading test. One sixth grader's life was changed because he learned to read.

Fourteen Year Old Sixth Grader

This ESE student had been in the sixth grade for three years. He is classified as severely emotionally handicapped, is language impaired and has specific learning disabilities in reading and math. All testing verified that he was a non-reader. He was also a behavior problem. The school faculty did not know what to do to help him and worried about how he was going to make it in society. The staff liked him and wanted something to break through his tough shell.

We decided to place him in the My Reading Coach 90-day pilot program in the ESE class. He learned to use the computer and received individual instruction. In nine weeks he learned to read, his behavior changed, and his confidence soared. Before My Reading Coach, he would not speak to anyone who greeted him. One day he looked up and said, "I am reading." Another day he spoke to me about working on prepositions. Unbelievable!

In August, 2006, his STAR test score was at the 1.3 reading level; his Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) was Beginning Reader. He started My Reading Coach in October, 2006, and was retested in December, 2006. In less than 90 days he scored 2.7 on the STAR test. He was reading.

On the My Reading Coach Placement Test he scored 48% on sounds and 31% on words. He worked on My Reading Coach 30 minutes a day, five days a week. By the end of February, 2007, he completed 20 lessons with 77% on sounds and 55% on words. His Individual Education Plan required that he take the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills, not the FCAT. In February he scored at the upper third grade level!

While he was succeeding on My Reading Coach, we saw growth and gains academically and socially: His classroom behavior and self-confidence improved. He completed classroom assignments and got better grades. His gains are much more than numbers on a test. He will not receive a regular diploma, but he was promoted to high school. Upon his graduation the staff, including his past teachers, gave him a party. We gave him gifts and had a cake. We asked him why we were having the party, he said, "Because I can read."

Students Benefit from My Reading Coach

We saw every child we put on the program make extraordinary gains in a short period of time. Their personality, determination and pride as well as their reading scores demonstrated their success. The STAR and SRI assessments verified their gains. Their improvement on the FCAT is our bottom line—they are learning to read.

As a result of last year's success, we wanted to expand the program. Enough students tested in the low levels on Read 180 to justify having a class on My Reading Coach. Tina Webb, Reading Teacher, and our principal established the first My Reading Coach class this year. Thirteen students are working on the program for 45 minutes, five times a week. The class includes ESE and regular education students who scored below 300 on the SRI. These students were struggling with phonics and phonemic awareness. If a student was on Read 180 for more than three years, they were also included in this class. Students are learning rules and accomplishing goals for the first time. An example of goal setting might be the number of lessons they complete. One sixth grade student decided her goal was to read a book to her mom by Christmas.

Interested Educators Learn and Observe

We give presentations on My Reading Coach to personnel within our school district as well as from other districts. **When teachers come to observe students working on the program, they say, "Oh, no games and flashing lights, the students will not use it." Students use it because they know they are learning to read; their success motivates them.**

Tina Webb and I point out that the program gives teachers guidelines for instruction, identifies specific problems and indicates what to do to correct the problems. We emphasize reading the program's reports because all of the pieces mean something for the student's achievement. We are still learning how everything contributes to the amazing results we are getting with our students.

My Reading Coach identifies a student's problems and gives the teacher the specific tools to address them. For example, if a student is struggling with "f" sounds, the program offers appropriate resources for remediation. The program gives students control and power in their learning, something struggling readers never had. Students can track their success and are rewarded with praise and certificates.

This computer program is easy for students and teachers to use. It has fewer technical difficulties than other computer programs we offer. We encourage teachers to try putting their students on My Reading Coach. **It is not about what we, as educators, like or think is best, it is about what works and makes a difference to our students.** Any educator who watches the change in a student's attitude and confidence and listens to a student reading will recognize that this program works.

Help Us Help You!

Tip to share in the newsletter? Want to brag about your students? Have a question about the program?
Something you would like us to change or improve?

Get answers to your questions or send your tips to mail@mindplay.com