



April 2005

## Persistence Pays Off

**An Interview with Gale Cunico,  
Special Ed Teacher**

**Robertson High School, Las Vegas, New Mexico**

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Twelve 15 to 17 year old high school students were put in my reading class. They were not succeeding in the regular Special Education resource English class. Their average reading level was 3rd to 4th grade, ranging from K to 7th. Nine of them were also English Language Learners. **After just 15 contact hours on My Reading Coach, they gained an average of one grade level in reading. These results convinced me: All my students could improve on My Reading Coach.**

### Dramatic Improvement in Less than 6 Hours

**One 10th grade student went from a 3rd to 5th grade reading level after being on the program for 5½ hours.** He blew me away because I always had a hard time getting him to work on the program. As he continues on My Reading Coach, he is now asking for help instead of getting mad. His goal is to finish the program by the end of the school year.

### Fluency Improves

One student with a low IQ was reading at the 1st grade level. He is in high school learning functional life skills. **He passed only one lesson on the placement test this past fall. By lowering the passing grade to 80%, he was able to pass the review test for lessons 1 through 20 in February.** He is now able to read a template and type in his information on the PowerPoint presentation we use for setting his yearly goals (self-directed IEP). He is still at the 1st grade reading level, but his fluency is much better. What he once read in five minutes, he can read in two, and he is better able to comprehend what he reads. This is a huge gain for him.

### Repetition is the Key to Improved Reading Skills

**My students are dramatically below grade level in reading, and they are improving one to two reading grade levels within a semester on my Reading Coach.**

They are successful on this program because they have to do it over and over until they get it right. A few complain every day, but I keep pushing them to stay with it. Because they must redo the introduction two or three times, they say, *"The coach talks too much; I already heard this."* I tell

them, *"You obviously didn't get it, so you need to listen again."*

Incentives like the blue dot chart in the November Newsletter, the My Reading Coach Certificates and their own visible progress keep them going. I also give small incentives with their certificates, such as gel pens, highlighters, and mechanical pencils.

### Every Student with a Reading Deficit Can Benefit

Initially I placed four Special Ed students reading 3rd grade or lower on My Reading Coach. After a few weeks of monitoring them and watching their improvement, I began placing all of my students on My Reading Coach.

One student read at the 7th grade level. She passed 28 of the 61 lessons on the placement test. Yet, her fluency was at about a 1st grade level; spelling not great; and comprehension at 7th grade. The rest of the reading skills weren't there. She is now on lesson 47. She has completed all levels for comprehension and almost all levels in grammar. She feels she is doing better and plans to finish the program by the end of the school year. **I want to give my students all the skills it takes to have a solid foundation in reading before they leave school.**

**My Reading Coach is successful with high school students who have not been able to learn to read any other way. Now they are having some success.**

## Getting Teachers to "Buy In"

**Tips from Mary Homfeld, Teaching Assistant  
South Georgia Elementary, Amarillo, Texas**

To get other teachers interested in placing their students on My Reading Coach, I emphasize:

- **The program:** Children understand the phonics rules, break down words, learn different forms of grammar and form pictures in their mind so they can remember what they read.
- **The success of our students:** One fourth grader worked on the program in summer school. He was promoted, and his teachers report that he is now doing very well in his regular 5th grade classes.
- **The benefit to first graders:** The younger students can use the microphone to sound out words they hear the coach say; then listen to themselves.

## My Reading Coach Contributes to 3rd Grader's Promotion

An Interview with Mary Homfeld, Teaching Assistant  
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One third grade student failed the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS™) Test twice in 2003 and again in February 2004. We were concerned. If she did not pass the test by the end of the semester, she would repeat the third grade a second time. **Our principal heard about My Reading Coach, purchased it, and sent me to the training in April. We believed this program would give her a chance to succeed.**

This 3rd grader began working on My Reading Coach Monday through Friday for 45 minutes a day. I sat next to her and listened to her sound out and read each word. Sometime I reminded her of the rule by asking a question: *"When do you add 'C-K' to the end of the word?"* She would sit and think rather than respond with guesses. If she had to repeat a lesson more than twice, I would print the worksheets that accompany the program for her. Together, we would go over everything she turned in. Quickly, her comprehension improved, and she was able to decode the larger words she had not been able to read.

**After five weeks on My Reading Coach, she completed lesson 22 and passed the TAKS™ test in May, 2004, with a satisfactory grade.** When she brought her test results to me, she was ecstatic. We all made a big "to do" about her hard work and success.

She is now in the 4th grade working on lesson 33 of My Reading Coach and reading at the 9.0 story level. Because her comprehension has improved, she is learning to enjoy reading.

### Expanded program

Currently we have 36 children, 2nd to 5th graders, on My Reading Coach, and everyone has shown improvement. This group consists of Special Ed and early intervention students. The students identified by their teachers as needing help with reading are sailing through the program. This gives them a feeling of confidence. **Their success is motivating other teachers to use the program for their students.**

My reading Coach combined with my monitoring helped our 3rd grader learn to read and get promoted. I believe a child will work harder if someone is sitting or watching them work. A lot of them have a hard time staying on task all alone. **I really love watching the children grasp the information. This makes their learning experience at school enjoyable. It is rewarding for everyone.**

## The Power of Monitoring (Part Two)

Tips from Marci Goforth  
Elementary Dyslexia Specialist for Victoria ISD  
Victoria, Texas  
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Intervening with students and reviewing their lesson reports is critical to the success of My Reading Coach.

The following tips came out of our experiences monitoring students:

- **Do "Shared Reading" to be sure the student is reading the comprehension story. This can reduce a student's** fatigue, anxiety, or frustration. The monitor starts out reading; the student follows along and is ready to continue reading when the monitor signals in some way (a touch or point). Avoid interrupting the flow of the story or requiring the student to look away from the reading passage. The student reads and signals the monitor in the same manner. Set a minimum number of sentences or the reading may become choppy. Stories can also be read more than one time. The first reading may be to gain information, the second or third time to practice "Read Like You Talk."
- **Always have the student look at the Coach if he/she cannot understand the word being said.** Watching gives the student the visual cues needed to discriminate between words. Depending on the quality of the computer's sound card, head sets or the student's discrimination skills, some of the words are difficult to hear, especially the fine differences between similar sounds. If it is still hard to determine what word is being said, use the "Word Lists Used in the Program" on page 136 of the Teaching Guide to find the correct word.
- **Use the Class Remediation Report to determine who to group together for a small group or entire class intervention.** The middle and high school students did a great job teaching the Vowel/Sound/Stick method to each other during our summer school!

## 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](mailto:mail@mindplay.com)