



Educational Solutions

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Sixth Grader Makes Dramatic Reading Improvement in Eight Weeks

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School Profile: 342 students, 31% disadvantaged

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As the Title 1 Coordinator, I teach direct instruction reading and math programs to 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th graders. My unique schedule the first four weeks of this school year allowed me to work individually with Che, a struggling reader entering the sixth grade.

Che's Reading Plus placement test scores in February, 2005, were 1.5 in reading and 2.0 in vocabulary. Because he was not making progress with Reading Plus, school staff, administration and the reading sales representative decided to place him on My Reading Coach. Che had problems with decoding, fluency and comprehension. **Working on My Reading Coach for eight weeks, Che made a significant improvement in reading.**

Che and My Reading Coach

When I heard about Che's reading improvement working with My Reading Coach, I jumped in. I was excited to work with this new program and help him continue his success.

From June 6 through June 29, Che worked on a laptop computer one hour per day in the multimedia room. He was enthusiastic and motivated to work independently. A teaching assistant, the librarian or computer teacher monitored him. When he began working with me on July 26, he was on lesson 17 and reading at the 4th grade level based on the Flynt Cooter reading, fluency, and comprehension assessment.

For one month we were able to work together for a 90 minute period five days a week. I sat with him and checked in: *"What are you learning?" "How do you feel about this?" "Did you understand that?" "Here is the worksheet; let's do the supplemental activity."* He knew what to expect; I think this consistency contributed to his success.

By the end of the first month of sixth grade, he was reading at the 5th grade level (Flynt Cooter assessment). He gained one grade level in 4 weeks of actual class time. He completed lesson 31. He could answer comprehension questions, and his fluency increased. Che continues to apply the strategies he learned.

During those four weeks I shared how well he was doing and where he was being challenged with his homeroom teacher. The three of us had periodic meetings. I also shared his success with his mom and the principal. This team effort was integral to his motivation and improvement.

My Reading Coach contributed to Che's success because he could see the man on the screen forming the sounds by looking at his mouth. Working independently empowered him. He felt great because he knew his successes were being communicated to other teachers.

His self esteem and confidence soared. His overall performance in school improved as well. Now, he is constantly raising his hand to read aloud in class and participate in class discussions.

The Benefits

The accurate assessments are one of the many strengths of My Reading Coach. With this program I have immediate access to up to date and accurate student performance data. With these assessments I can identify a student's strengths and specific areas of difficulty.

I highly recommend My Reading Coach. I tell educators that it engages students. They work independently and recognize their strengths and achievements. Students feel empowered because they are being successful.

An Interview with Che Sixth Grade Student

Che is a native English speaker who has attended Kilauea Elementary since Kindergarten. He loves to play soccer and football.

I was happy when I was told I was going on My Reading Coach. I wanted to learn how to read and type. My Reading Coach helped me.

I learned the sounds that letters make and new words too. I even learned proper nouns, pronouns and sight words. The second week on the program I could see that I was reading better. My parents told me that too.

I think the man on the screen helped me the most. It was cool because he told me what to do. I want to meet him. He made it easy for me to learn to read. I also liked taking the spelling tests.

I think My Reading Coach is very good for kids like me. I would tell them, *"You should do it. It makes reading fun. It will make you feel good. You will learn new things every day."*

My Reading Coach Builds Fluency

Interview with Rick Cox, Principal
Kelley Dodson Elementary, Denver City, TX
School Profile: 700 students, Title I,
70% disadvantaged, 70% Hispanic
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We purchased My Reading Coach for our 3rd, 4th and 5th grade students who needed accelerated instruction. **We soon learned that it was very strong in building fluency for students who could not read enough words per minute. We began with 1 station in August, 2004, and currently have twenty. We are planning to order more.**

Initially, we had 8 students on My Reading Coach. We selected a cross section of students—bilingual, Special Ed, students who got below 70 on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills™ (TAKS) and those struggling with reading in the classroom. By the end of the 2004-2005 school year, we had 8 stations for 30 students. Currently we have 20 stations, greatly increasing that number.

My Reading Coach is set up in computer labs as well as in reading classrooms. Each student works on the program every day for at least 30 to 45 minutes. Trained teachers and aides monitor them. The Expert Oral Reading Sheets are an integral part of assessing how well they are doing.

My Reading Coach is included in our Jump Start Program, a tutorial during school hours that reduces the student/teacher ratio: Eight students receive additional reading and math help by two trained people.

Measuring progress

We have measured progress by the number of lessons students complete on My Reading Coach and observable improvement in the classroom. **Overall, we found it helps students read 100 words per minute.** We are using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) to assess fluency and other reading skills. It helps us determine where to place our kids, especially in the upper grades. **We decided to place all 1st graders on My Reading Coach in order to build fluency early.**

Some students went right through the program. Some were on it for a year, and others with weak phonemic awareness and language skills could be on it for 2 to 3 years.

One 4th grader scored 57 on the 4th grade TAKS™ test and 2.1 on his first STAR Reading Test. He worked on My Reading Coach 30 to 45 minutes every day for 4 weeks in summer school. **At the end of this time, he scored 3.9, almost a two year improvement in 4 weeks. The student**

Monitoring Students for Success The Error Report

Contributed by Judith Bliss
President & CEO, MindPlay

My Reading Coach will not replace teachers, but it will help them reach all their students. Once you are sure that your students know how to use the program, let them progress on their own. Each day, review the Class Daily Lesson Plan.

When the Class Daily Lesson Plan puts asterisks next to the student's current time, the student is struggling and needs your help. Follow these steps to help them succeed:

- **First**, print the student's **Error Report** for specific lessons and give it to the student. Have the student review the errors that were made. This may give the student enough help for him/her to solve the problem.
- **Second**, if the problems continue, review the Error Report with the student to help him identify errors.
- **Third**, print the appropriate Challenge Sheets for the lesson and assign them as homework.
- **Fourth**, print the appropriate Challenge Sheets for the lesson and work directly with the student.
- **Fifth**, use the Supplemental Lessons in the Teaching Guide.

told the teacher that My Reading Coach helped him learn to read.

Spotlight on Achievement

In addition to My Reading Coach Certificates, students are included in our Caught Doing Good Program. Everyday teachers email me about students that are "caught doing good"—behaviors that build good character. Their name is announced in the morning over the intercom system: "*Sam has really been working hard everyday; he has improved his reading.*" Sam comes down to the office and has his picture taken. It is placed on the group picture board outside the office.

The value in My Reading Coach is the repetition and immediate feedback a student receives. Add having an adult there to help; that is great instruction. My Reading Coach is one piece of the puzzle. We are expanding its use in our school. It builds fluency and teaches struggling students to read.

Happy Holidays from MindPlay

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