



Educational Solutions

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High School Students Succeed on My Reading Coach

An Interview with Lucy Watts, High School Teacher
Enterprise Attendance Center, Brookhaven, Mississippi

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For the past 16 years I have tried everything to teach students to read. I am seeing results with My Reading Coach.

Nine high school students are learning to read with My Reading Coach. It is simple enough for them to master reading skills without all the childish phonics games and worksheets. **These students are feeling good about themselves as they learn to read.**

My current resource program consists of 13 students, 9th through 12th grades. Four are working on their GEDs and are unable to fit My Reading Coach into their schedules; the other nine are using the program. Before starting My Reading Coach, most of these students were reading at the 3rd to 6th grade level.

Setting the Stage for Success

I gathered my nine students around the computer in our resource classroom and said, *"I want you to listen to something."* I played the CD showing Randy's before and after reading sample. They kept saying, *"There is just no way that happened."* I noticed a spark of hope in them when they realized, *"Maybe this could work for me; I might be able to do this."*

After these students completed the program's placement test, their learning gaps were very obvious. The placement test results revealed the reason for their low performance level. Three students needed to start the program on lesson 1. Our most advanced student began the program on lesson 21.

Instruction Before My Reading Coach

My students' reading skills were very limited. They basically avoided reading as much as possible. I would take passages from their other classes--history, science or health--and have a discussion with them about specific topics. I would draw reading into that--looking at words like pneumonia and breaking them down in order to teach them to read. It was very visual; not much phonics.

Learning to Read with My Reading Coach

My Reading Coach teaches them rules like Policeman E at the end of a word, marking the switch to use the long vowel sound. This is easy for them to remember and correlates to words they encounter outside of My Reading Coach. **The program takes these 9th to 12th graders back to the basics, teaching them the decoding and encoding skills they missed in elementary school.**

Student Improvement

My students have been working on My Reading Coach for less than a year. They each get 30 minutes a day with the coach. We work on the comprehension Expert Oral Sheets at the end of class period, or they return during study hall time to go over them.

Three students have earned certificates for completing lessons 1 through 20.

One very committed and focused student began on lesson 21 in August. He has completed lesson 32.

Another student completed lesson 25; he began in November 2004 on lesson 4. **Before using My Reading Coach, he read at a low 4th grade reading level. In less than one year he is reading at the middle to upper 6th grade reading level.** His spelling is improving as well. This is an example of an intelligent student who possesses a lot of common reasoning and yet has a real weakness in reading. As a senior this year, he can check out of school at 1:00 pm, but he chooses to come back to work another 30 minutes on My Reading Coach.

The biggest success: These students are becoming more independent in their regular classes. Success in reading gives them confidence. Even though there are still lots of words they don't know in a 9th through 12th grade class, they are transferring the reading skills they are learning with the coach to their other classes.

In our Career Exploration Program students read an activity card and tell me what job activity they are going to complete. Now, they are able to read the detailed, specific instructions with less help from me. **They are transferring their knowledge from the computer to the classroom and ultimately to real life. They are experiencing success.**

Competition Motivates Them

Students are proud to receive a certificate with their name printed on it. These older students are very competitive. They talk about who can get where in a certain length of time. I am asked, *"If he can do that, I guess I can too, can't I?"*

They have conversations about the program, *"What lesson did you work through today?" "Well, it is my turn next; and I am going to pass you."* They compete but pat each other on the back too. One person's success motivates the others.

See High School Students, page 2

Student Success Expands Program in School District

Interview with Sylvia Rendon,
Reading Specialist

Bowie Elementary, Harlingen, Texas
School Profile: 348 students, pre-K to 5, Title 1
99% Hispanic, 5% disadvantaged
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In January 2005, six students were selected from 2nd through 5th grade by their teachers for a 3 month pilot program on My Reading Coach. They were reading at the lowest levels in their classes. **At the end of three months on My Reading Coach, these six students dramatically improved their reading skills.**

These students worked on My Reading Coach 45 minutes a day, five days a week. They moved through the lessons quickly. As they did, I observed their reading becoming more fluent; they improved in comprehension, writing and spelling; and they were transferring these skills to the classroom.

As a result of their success, we now have 6 My Reading Coach licenses in each of our 22 campuses in the Harlingen School District. We intend to purchase more.

We currently have 40 Bowie Elementary students on My Reading Coach. They work on the program 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Paraprofessionals, the Special Ed teacher and I monitor the different groups of students. The monitors use the Expert Oral and Challenge sheets to improve oral reading and fluency.

Measuring Success

We evaluate improvement by comparing the results of the placement test with the results of each review test. We monitor whether students are passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills™ (TAKS) benchmarks. Improvement in spelling skills and overall grades are also indicators of success.

Eight of the 40 students on My Reading Coach are Special Ed students. They are improving their reading skills too. It may take them a little longer, but the progress is there.

The dyslexic students are benefiting because of the program's structure. They need to focus on the instructions, the coach and the sequence of letters and production of sounds. My Reading Coach also improves listening skills.

Outstanding Results

One 4th grader started last January in the pilot program. **She was reading at a 2.5 reading level. In less than one year she is reading at level 6.5.** She is working on the final review test. **Her TAKS benchmark scores went from 30 & 40 in 3rd grade to 70 and 80 in the 4th grade.** Her report card grades have also improved.

One 5th grader worked on My Reading Coach one month in summer school. She began again in August and has completed the program in a total of 6 months. She entered school as an English Language Learner in Kindergarten. She was reading at the 3.5 level after the placement test. **She finished the program reading at the 7.5 level—a gain of 4 levels in 6 months.** She had set goals for herself and was very motivated to reach them. Her parents are extremely happy with her progress. She will be entering middle school next year and will be reading on grade level.

My Reading Coach Works

Students are successful because:

- The program gives them immediate feedback and consistently tracks their progress.
- They feel a sense of accomplishment as they master one lesson and move on to the next.
- They are responsible for their learning by setting goals for themselves.
- They receive teacher intervention, instruction and assistance continuously. This monitoring contributes to a student's success. Without it, they are not going to be successful.

We use other programs on our campus; however, we are not seeing the same results as with My Reading Coach. Students are motivated because there is a beginning and end. When they complete all 61 lessons successfully, they will be finished and reading without difficulties at their own grade level.

We chose My Reading Coach because we wanted a program that would help our students pass the TAKS, identify their reading gaps and serve our dyslexic students. Our objectives are being met. Students have demonstrated dramatic success with My Reading Coach and are reading on their own because reading is no longer difficult for them.

High School Students (cont. from page 1)

My Reading Coach Benefits High School Students

My Reading Coach allows my students to work at a rate that is comfortable for them. It keeps their level of frustration to a minimum. These students are accustomed to failure. They have been through tons of reading programs, books and worksheets and always ended up on the short end of the stick. For the first time they can view themselves as successful. They say, *"You know, this really works; I am finished coloring the A for apple and E for egg."*

The Expert Oral Sheets give my students the opportunity to read the words out loud. They can practice in order to achieve the correct pausing, tone and inflection in their voice when they speak. These skills are needed to succeed in work and life. When applying for a job in a professional manner, oral presence counts.

There is no better way to teach students how to encode and decode words than how it is done in My Reading Coach. I wish I had this program 4 or 5 years ago. I wonder where my students would be today if they had access to it. **I want them all to succeed and gain confidence in themselves. My Reading Coach is opening doors for them that would have otherwise been closed.**

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