



Educational Solutions

September 2009

## Sixth and Seventh Grade Special Education Students Learn to Read

**An interview with Stacey Adams, Special Education Teacher**

**Memorial Middle School, Rockdale County Schools, Conyers, GA**

**School Profile: 785 Students; Grades 6-8; 55% disadvantaged; 70% African American; Title 1**

**Email: [Sadams3@rockdale.k12.ga.us](mailto:Sadams3@rockdale.k12.ga.us)**

Sixteen struggling readers with a wide variety of reading disabilities worked on My Reading Coach in my reading class last year. These sixth and seventh graders were reading below the second grade level according to their STAR IRL pre-test scores. Most were inclusion students; twelve were diagnosed with learning disabilities and ADHD; and four were in a self-contained classroom.

Fourteen of the sixteen students improved at least one reading grade level according to their STAR IRL post-test scores. Several gained two and three grade levels. Their fluency, confidence and reading enjoyment improved as well. My Reading Coach gave them hope that they could learn to read.

The class was divided into three centers: One group worked on the computers; one group did silent reading and worked with me individually on the expert sheets; and the third group worked with another teacher doing spelling tests and word building activities. We rotated the groups which resulted in students working on the computer three times a week for 20 minutes. The least amount of time spent on My Reading Coach was 10 hours; the longest time was 82 hours. One-third of the students attended the class for only one semester.

### Student Success

Language arts teachers commented on the noticeable improvement in the writing and grammar skills of their students who worked on My Reading Coach. We saw a definite improvement in behavior once they recognized they were able to read and began feeling good about themselves. Often 11, 12, and 13 year old students misbehave to hide from their classmates the fact that they cannot read.

### Four Students' STAR IRL Pre- and Post- Test Scores

**PP to 3.8 - 4.8 increase** (lesson 23; 7 grammar lessons; 10 computer hours) — Pre-primer to a 3.8 reading level is a large jump. Her confidence improved when she realized she could read. I believe she tried harder on the post-test. She now has a desire to do a good job. Her reading improvement gives her hope that she can succeed in school.

**PP to 2.7 - 3.7 increase** (lesson 26; 10 grammar lessons; 22 computer hours) — He came to the reading class from another self-contained classroom and had behavior issues. He mentioned quite often, *"I am too cool for this class; I want out."* Towards the end of the year he was making progress. The teacher's aide told him that he was doing a

great job and would be able to test out of the class. He said, *"I do not want out of this class; I am really learning here."*

**1.9 to 3.8 - 1.9 increase** (lesson 50; 22 grammar lessons; 5.0 comprehension; 58 computer hours) — She began as a struggling reader. By the end of the year she was on the third book in the Twilight Series. She really fell in love with reading. She read the books quickly and scored 90+% on the Accelerated Reader Test. She went from reading five page books to 900 page novels with excellent comprehension in one year. Amazing!

**3.5 to 5.2 - 1.7 increase** (lesson 59; 24 grammar lessons; 4.5 comprehension with range set too low; 81 computer hours) — He was not part of the class and worked on the program during his free time. During one of our My Reading Coach certificate ceremonies, he gave a little speech, *"All through my school years I have earned lots of awards, but most of the time they were just awards so I could receive something. But, this one I know I earned."* The other students applauded. He was scheduled to get a special education diploma. He is now on track to enter a regular classroom and receive a regular education diploma.

### My Reading Coach Makes a Difference

This MindPlay computer program is successful with our students because it teaches them the reading skills that do not come naturally to them because of their disabilities. The expert sheets teach students to picture and see in their mind what they are reading. The encouragement motivates them. Their mistakes are private, yet everybody cheers their accomplishments.

Students would not be this successful if they were not using My Reading Coach. They have tried other programs, and they have not made the improvement we are seeing on the Coach. They have been in school for six and seven years and have not learned to read. Five of the 16 students had pre-primer IRL scores when they started our reading class.

As teachers using My Reading Coach for the first time, we took great pride in our students' success. We saw hope come back into some of their eyes. To help them believe in the program, we told them about the great success other teachers were having: Students who could not read are now reading at grade level. They quickly learned for themselves that they could succeed on My Reading Coach.

## ESL High School Struggling Reader Uses MindPlay Software to Score Above Grade Level

From Nancy Booth, Reading Educator  
Chapin High School, El Paso, Texas  
Email: [nmbooth@episd.org](mailto:nmbooth@episd.org)

When Luis entered the ninth grade reading lab in 2007, he had a 4.5 reading grade level according to the Gates MacGinitie Reading Test (GMGRT). He was an English Language Learner. By the end of his tenth grade reading lab, he was reading at a 12.5 reading level and getting outstanding grades.

Initially, Luis was a very quiet and reticent ESL student. He only communicated with other ESL students. He avoided eye contact; I never saw him smile or find anything particularly amusing or interesting. He worked on My Reading Coach for 90 minutes every class period during ninth grade. Because he did not finish the program or pass the ninth grade TAKS test, he re-entered the reading lab in the tenth grade.

Second year lab students worked on My Reading Coach and FLRT – a fluent reading trainer for 45 minutes each day as well as reading activities which included novels, etymology, and SAT vocabulary for 45 minutes. By November, 2008, I began noticing changes in Luis. He was smiling and joking with the entire class, not just his ESL cronies. His grades improved: He was scoring much higher on all his vocabulary quizzes and novel tests. When soccer season started, he would enter the room absolutely jubilant. He would describe the specifics of the game and how he contributed to the winning score.

His GMGRT scores skyrocketed from his initial scores: 5.3 vocabulary grade equivalent and 4.0 in comprehension—a total of 4.5. After only one year, his grade equivalent reached 7.9 in vocabulary and 6.8 in comprehension—a total of 7.1 (2 grade level improvement). After his second year, Luis took his final post-test. He scored POST HIGH SCHOOL in vocabulary and 11.0 in comprehension—a total of 12.5. (6 grade level improvement in only 2 years.)

When I sat down with him and showed him his scores, I could feel his pride. Luis will never be the same. He is no longer a dropout risk. He may even receive a soccer scholarship. His coach told me that he is an awesome player. And, his grades are now great.

### The High School Reading Lab

Next year we will be requiring a semester reading class for ALL freshmen students. Students reading on grade level or above will use FLRT and study etymology/SAT vocabulary. Struggling readers, those who test below the seventh grade reading level, will continue to use both My Reading Coach and FLRT. Luis and other students remind us of the tremendous gains possible with My Reading Coach and FLRT. In only two years, it is possible to go from a struggling reader to an outstanding reader.

## Tenth Grade Special Education Student Excels on My Reading Coach

From Alison Scholl, Corrective Reading Teacher  
Huntington High School, Huntington, West Virginia  
Email: [ascholl@access.k12.wv.us](mailto:ascholl@access.k12.wv.us)

Justin is a tenth grade special education student in my reading computer lab, who has been diagnosed with learning disabilities. Several series of corrective reading programs did very little to teach him to read. However, once he was placed on My Reading Coach in August, 2008, he began making progress. By the end of the school year, Justin improved by five reading comprehension grade levels!

In August, 2008, he scored 3rd grade 4th month in reading comprehension on the Woodcock Johnson Achievement Test (WJAT). He scored 30% on the My Reading Coach Placement Test, 3rd grade reading level.

When Justin began working on My Reading Coach, his sight words were limited; his vocabulary and spelling were weak; and his comprehension was very low. He started the program on lesson 1. He worked on the program every day for about 20 minutes a day.

In December, 2008, I retested Justin on the WJAT. All of his reading scores increased. He was reading at the 5.8 grade level. His knowledge of phonics increased from a 2.7 to an 8.8 grade level. His word attack skills increased from a 2.4 to a 10.2 reading level. Once he realized he was reading, he would tell teachers, "*I can read this.*"

At the end of the school year, he was retested again on the WJAT. His scores improved even more. He scored at the 8.5 grade reading level. Justin's knowledge of phonics increased to a reading level of 18. His word attack skills increased to a 12.9 reading level. His sight word base is much larger; his vocabulary is much broader; and his comprehension has improved immensely. He is on lesson 51 of My Reading Coach, and he is reading stories at the 7th grade level and doing grammar at the 12th grade level.

According to his teachers, his grades have improved as well as his reading aloud in class. He was quiet in the lab, but now he is talking more to me and others. This year he is the wrestling state champion in his weight category—another huge win for him. His confidence has skyrocketed.

My Reading Coach worked for Justin. I think the visual aids were helpful. He liked the people on the computer screen talking to him. The worksheets were also very helpful. At the start of the program, he had to repeat several lessons about three times each. Once he progressed, he was not repeating as much. The positive feedback he received motivated him to keep going and contributed to his tremendous success.

My Reading Coach is appropriate for anyone at any age. We are excited by how much My Reading Coach helped Justin this year. MindPlay did what no other reading program could do for him.

## Help Us Help You!

Tip to share in the newsletter? Want to brag about your students? Have a question about the program?  
Send your comments and questions to [mail@mindplay.com](mailto:mail@mindplay.com)