



Educational Solutions

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Teachers and My Reading Coach: A Winning Combination

**An Interview with Dr. Sheryl Asen, Instructional Design & Evaluation Specialist
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District Profile: 18,000 students, Grades preK-12 and adults
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We place second graders through adults who are not making progress in reading in My Reading Coach instruction. For those students who need to develop better strategies for decoding, encoding, and understanding passages, this program provides sound instruction and an opportunity to master what once were mysteries of reading.

We emphasize the teacher/student relationship. **Our teachers are always checking in with students on the computer, not just for expert or challenge sheets. Some teachers wear head-phones around their necks and plug into their students' computers to listen, watch, encourage and reinforce the Coach's strategies.**

After months of instruction, if a student plateaus on the program, we stop My Reading Coach lessons. The student most likely returns to the program at a later time or even the following year. We also offer My Reading Coach in our before and after school tutorials as well as summer school.

Measuring Success

In addition to the My Reading Coach review tests, we give a pre and post test using the Developmental Reading Assessment in elementary school and the Degrees of Reading Power in middle and high school. We also observe student behaviors. We have kids who previously were reluctant now reading for pleasure. One student who was taking the fourth grade Virginia standardized reading test paused and looked puzzled; he brightened up and said, "*The Coach, lesson 44,*" and confidently went back to the test. In one high school class, students who were reading at the third grade level before My Reading Coach finished the semester by reading *Wish You Well*, a novel by David Baldacci (well known for his thrillers). What better measure than seeing kids engaged in reading!

Integrating Technology and Teachers

From my perspective as an educator with a master's degree in Special Education and a doctorate in Instructional Design, this program uses technology capabilities at their best. It supports a pedagogy that successfully addresses specific skill objectives. The software program does the things teachers cannot do as easily or as well and frees teachers to do what they do best.

My Reading Coach takes advantage of computers as a medium for tutorial and practice. It matches a set of learner needs with a methodology that works for those learners. The program is more than an integrated learning system. It provides individualized learning that combines what the teacher and what the technology both do well. Together, the teacher and the program help students master skills by moving

back and forth between teacher-facilitated and technology-facilitated instruction. Teachers bring to the learning table their insight and wide professional knowledge, augmented by the relationship the teacher and student build. The technology provides consistency and expedites tasks, such as data collection. Teacher and technology form a more robust instructional team than either alone.

The technology offers:

- Precision modeling with consistency for all examples and repetitions
- Built in and appropriate diagnostic/prescriptive teaching rules—regularly administered formative assessments that describe the next steps in instruction
- Positive, consistent, encouraging instructive feedback
- Built in daily student self-assessments
- Built in methods to collect and organize data

The teachers are able to:

- Link learning within My Reading Coach to other learning activities and opportunities
- Observe student behaviors and then plan additional intervention and instruction
- Analyze the report data and apply the analyses to instructional next steps
- Have a personal relationship with a student that encourages the student to take risks
- Help the student apply what s/he has learned to other activities and challenges

We decided to use My Reading Coach because some of our students, in spite of excellent instruction and well designed materials, were not grasping or successfully applying the phonemic rules of reading and spelling and their comprehension of passages was poor. These students typically were reading at least two years below grade level.

As a result of the success of several school pilot programs using My Reading Coach, we decided to provide the program to all our sites through a wide area network.

The My Reading Coach strategies for decoding and the direct connection between the grammar lessons and comprehending text are explicit, scaffolded, and sensible. The program provides another sound pedagogical option. It adds Jim Larabee to the professional teaching team, as well as additional coaches to embrace diversity. More students can be reached than one expert teacher can reach alone. My Reading Coach gives many struggling readers the necessary skills to invest in greater learning opportunities.

Significant Reading Improvement for Two Special Education Students in a Self-Contained Classroom

An Interview with Kathy Paulo-Hirai, Special Education Teacher for the Fully Self Contained Kapolei Elementary School, Kapolei, Hawaii

School Profile: 1,200 students; preschool through 5th grade

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Two students in my self-contained Special Education classroom made significant progress in their communication and reading skills as a result of working on My Reading Coach. One was a second grader and the other a fourth grader. The second grader was placed in his regular classroom at the end of the third quarter of his second grade year. The fourth grader continues to receive language arts instruction in Special Education class for reading comprehension and writing. Both began My Reading Coach as non-readers.

Second Grader Returns to Regular Classroom

This second grader has qualified for Special Education services since preschool. He was diagnosed with an XYY chromosome disorder and showed symptoms of Asperger's syndrome. At the time of his assessment, he forgot what he learned, failed to pay attention to details, and had poor organizational and social skills. He was highly distractible, hyper and fidgety. He had poor motor coordination and poor abstract reasoning skills. His cognitive ability as well as speech and language were in the low average range.

I worked with him while he received instruction in the regular education curriculum through the first half of kindergarten. Because he was not making progress, we placed him in a special individualized program in reading, writing, and math. He continued to demonstrate difficulties in areas of speech and language, motor skills, social skills, writing, and reading.

Measures of Accomplishment

By March of 2005, he was still unable to focus and respond to the task and, therefore, was not able to take the My Reading Coach Placement Test. He knew only a few sounds at the time and was very frustrated as he attempted the test. He worked on My Reading Coach from March, 2005, to March, 2007, the middle of Kindergarten to the middle of second grade. He was on the program a total of 70 hours for approximately 18 months.

In December, 2005, he scored 95% on the Review for Lessons 1–21; in March, 2006, he scored 99% on lessons 23 to 25; and in September, 2006, he scored 97% on lessons 25 to 29. He made steady progress learning on the program and started reading.

In March, 2005, his standardized reading skills test score in sounds and letters was 463, Grade Equivalent (GE) was k.2. By March, 2007, in decoding and comprehension his score was 602, GE 2.0. He gained 112 points in his scaled reading skills score. He was also performing in the average to above average range for all academic areas on the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement. He scored 2.1 for reading composite average; 2.2 for decoding; 2.3 for comprehension; and 2.9 for spelling.

After mastering his reading goals and objectives, he is now reading on grade level, and he no longer needs Speech and Language Therapy. Even though he scored at grade level in Kindergarten, he could not read and was very frustrated. He did not like to read because it was a struggle for him. After his success on My Reading Coach, he was excited to be able to return to his regular class.

Fourth Grader's Reading Improves

This fourth grader was labeled IDEA since preschool. At the time of assessment, he was described as at-risk for attention problems, hyperactivity and social stress. He had a significant deficit in functional communication and scored extremely low in reading.

In February, 2005, he scored 36% on the My Reading Coach Placement Test. In April, 2006, he scored 69% on the Review for Lessons 1–21. He was on the program 30 hours. After working on My Reading Coach, he no longer had a problem with decoding. He was also able to speak with articulation; his language became clearer. He was taken off the program to work on silent reading fluency and eye tracking.

Both of these students appear more settled and less distracted and hyperactive. They became very confident, more independent with reading and more fluent in decoding skills; and their communication skills improved significantly.

Students Like to Work on My Reading Coach – The Teacher's Role

My classroom students are on My Reading Coach approximately two hours per week. They look forward to working independently with the Coach. **For students who need one-on-one support and have difficulty controlling the mouse and keyboard, I monitor and repeat what they hear while supervising their responses.** Many students have problems staying focused and attending to the task. One-on-one instruction helps a student continue to move along. A student's need for individualized attention depends on their disability and learning needs.

My students are successful as a result of building phonemic awareness and the progression of learning that helps build each reading skill. The skill activities within the program are comprehensive (decoding, writing, spelling, auditory skills). The immediate corrective feedback is also very helpful and productive. For students with speech and language deficits, My Reading Coach is very helpful; it models articulation and gives auditory feedback. **The students really enjoy recording and listening to their voices.** Mastering each lesson gives students a sense of accomplishment. This is very important for students who have special learning needs.

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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?

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