



Educational Solutions

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Elementary Students Exceed Reading Expectations in a Three Week Summer School Program

An Interview with Cindy Gay, Program Coordinator; Ocotillo Elementary School; Tucson, Arizona
 School Profile: 400 Students; 86% Hispanic; 44% ELL; 91% Disadvantaged; Title I
 Email: cindyg@susd12.org

Seventy students, grades kindergarten through fourth, participated in a three week summer school program. These students demonstrated a need for intervention and/or continued practice in two or more subjects. Students at each grade level received direct instruction in classes of no more than thirteen students. The reading intervention included *My Reading Coach* and *FLRT – a FLuent Reading Trainer*. The program not only met all the reading objectives proposed, but also far surpassed any projected levels of increase ever achieved.

To develop their reading skills, students worked on *MRC* and *FLRT* for thirty minutes a day, five days a week. *Success For All* was also used to assess the ability to summarize a passage through read-alouds with a verbal and/or written retell.

Reading assessment scores indicate the percentage increase between the pre- and post-test scores.

	Grade Level	Average Pre Test Score	Average Post Test Score	Average Growth + or -
Basis Reading Skills – MRC	K	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1	55%	90%	+ 35%
	2	84%	90%	+ 6%
	3	72%	87%	+ 15%
	4	54%	87%	+ 33%

Fluency – FLRT	K	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1	60 wpm	78 wpm	+ 18 wpm
	2	73 wpm	117 wpm	+ 44 wpm
	3	69 wpm	130 wpm	+ 61 wpm
	4	75 wpm	169 wpm	+ 94 wpm

Summarization of passage – Success For All	K	45%	57.3%	+12.3%
	1	85%	86%	+ 1 %
	2	64%	75%	+ 11%
	3	67%	69%	+ 2%
	4	73%	81%	+ 8 %

The Ocotillo Extended Year Summer School Program showed positive growth in reading in many ways. Through the use of *My Reading Coach*, students increased phonemic awareness of sounds and rules as well as vocabulary. They also increased their word structure, grammar, inflection, and visualization skills. These improved reading skills increased students' fluency and text comprehension by 22%. In terms of fluency, students went from an average of 70 wpm to an average of 123 wpm, demonstrating an average gain of 53 wpm. Lastly, students improved an average of 6.86% in summarizing a passage by identifying the main idea with three to five supporting sentences.

Positive Feedback from Parents and Students

Several parents/guardians showed great enthusiasm for the summer school program. Many families were happy about having a program that included language development and reading. Other families added that their child did not want to leave because it was so much fun. As a whole, the Ocotillo families were happy with the program.

One parent told us, *“Both my children (8 and 6 years old) participated in the summer program. I did see a difference in their reading just after a short time. Having them reading and speaking English really helps at home. They can do their homework better and help me read and understand English. I was very happy with the results.”*

Student feedback was also very positive. Many teachers conducted a mini interview with their students about their experiences with summer school. The comments received were mainly positive with regards to the computer lab and read-aloud summarization activities. Most students really enjoyed receiving printed certificates from the computerized reading programs. Some students took home three or four a day. They were able to track their own success while eager to stay on the program and earn more certificates. Because students were excited and determined to reach the next level of the reading program, we learned that including transition time was important.

FLRT has a ranking list built into the network. The students could see where they ranked in terms of their classmates. This was a great driving force behind their fluency success. The students would compete to see if they could beat the highest score in the midst of raising their fluency score! For a struggling reader, seeing your name at the top of any list is a great self esteem booster.

One second grader recently told me, *“I liked winning the certificates. I still have them from the summer. I have about four of them!”* A third grader who attended the summer program said *“The computers were so fun. I was racing my friends for better scores and won!”*

Students showed significant gains in only three weeks! The students were driven intrinsically to get to the next level of the computerized programs. It was amazing to see struggling readers so successful in a subject about which they are usually apprehensive. They were really excited to work on the programs and experience success! Their self esteem soared. In a very short time, the students gained knowledge and confidence in the reading process and gained gratification from it.

Kindergarteners Improve Their Reading Skills in a Four Week Summer Tutorial

An Interview with Jackie Rosario, Special Education Teacher
Walnut Street Elementary, Woodbury, New Jersey

School Profile: 320 students; Grades Pre-K – 5; 42% African American; 40% disadvantaged; Title 1

Email: jrosario@woodburysch.com

Twelve children participated in a four week 2008 summer reading tutorial. After completing kindergarten they were recommended for this intervention by their teachers. Their test scores according to the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) put them at-risk with below average reading skills. These students are now in the first grade.

Although My Reading Coach is not targeted for kindergarteners and first graders, they enjoyed working on the program, and it contributed to building their reading readiness skills. The program also increased their confidence and enjoyment of reading activities.

Students scored between 28% to 40% on the placement test. They worked on My Reading Coach 20 to 30 minutes five days a week. In four weeks (approximately 10 hours) the average number of lessons completed was 5, the range was from 3 to 11. Their lesson test scores ranged from 80% to 100%. The three students who pre-tested at the DIBELS benchmark completed 11 lessons.

Change in Reading Scores Based on the DIBELS for 10 of the 12 Intervention Students

DIBELS was administered the end of kindergarten and again the beginning of first grade (September 2008):

- 5 students went from Intensive Intervention to Strategic Intervention
- 3 students were at Benchmark prior to MRC and remained there
- 1 student went from Strategic to Benchmark
- 1 student stayed at Intensive

Post intervention scores indicate that these 10 students averaged a 7.6 percentile point gain in Letter Naming Fluency; 22 percentile points in Phoneme Fluency; and 5.9 percentile points in Nonsense Word Fluency.

At the start of the summer tutorial, several students did not fully recognize the sounds that are associated with the letters. With the practice and completion of the Listen and Find as well as Word Building activities of My Reading Coach, they made significant progress. These activities gave the students better background knowledge. The teachers encouraged the students to communicate the sounds and syllables. As the students did, the practice became a "habit."

The praise that My Reading Coach provides caused students to react with a smile or bring the instructor's attention to their success. The comments and phrases encouraged and prompted certain children to continue with the lesson in an effort to hear more positive phrases.

One little girl's face would brighten up when the coach would say "Great Job, You did it! Has to be!" She would get excited

when the Spelling activity would arrive and say, "Look Ms. Rosario, I got a Spelling Test." Whenever a new lesson or sound was added, she would smile. Her confidence improved, and she demonstrated her reading abilities by reading a book after her time on My Reading Coach.

I think My Reading Coach is successful with young children because of the consistent positive reinforcement that it provides. The progression of the activities such as going from Word Building, to Listen and Find, to Writing, to the Reading activity gradually allows students to familiarize themselves with the sounds in a step by step process (each step increases in difficulty). The learners also appreciated the green task bar at the bottom of the pages. The bar enables students to become aware of their status before completing a section. It also provides a guide and encouragement for those students who are struggling; at one point they can say, "Only 3 words left – I can do it."

The program provides young students with a computerized program that contributes to their academic success. They enjoy being on the computer and typing. The program allows them to take their learning beyond paper and pencil.

The workbook included in the program is essential to a student's reinforcement of the lessons and on-going success. It supplies the student with a list of the words and practice sheets that stress the written aspects of the lesson. I appreciated the teacher-student interaction when completing the workbook pages. I found it useful to check the Daily Lesson Plan and Student Intervention Report. The report indicated the errors that the students made; I could then provide accurate assistance to improve specific skills. When working with these children, I created flash cards with the sounds from each lesson. Students could practice building the words while completing the computerized lesson.

Comments by Dr. Jeff Adams, Principal

We chose My Reading Coach for the summer intervention program because we were getting positive results with our special needs students in junior high school. Our district uses My Reading Coach in the special education self-contained programs and in our afterschool NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) Test PREP Academies.

We find that the kindergarten students who worked on My Reading Coach this past summer seem to be more familiar with basic letters, phonemes, blends..... Many of these students still struggle compared to their peers. However, the rate of regression is less for the students who attended the summer program when compared to other at-risk students who did not. We are pleased with the results we achieved in four weeks. The program was successful for these kindergarten students.

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Something you would like us to change or improve?

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