

Raising Achievement With a Comprehensive Literacy Improvement Plan

DISTRICT PROFILE:

**Midland Independent School District,
Midland, TX**

Metro Status: Small City

Grades: PreK–12

Total Schools: 34

Total Enrollment: 21,000

Hispanic: 52%

Caucasian: 37%

African American: 10%

Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Programs: 48%

Special Education Services: 13%

Limited English Proficient: 19%

OVERARCHING GOALS

In 2009, MISD administrators decided to focus attention on developing a stronger approach to reading intervention, recognizing that reading is the key to learning in all content areas. Although practices were in place to address the literacy needs of intermediate struggling students, no unified approach existed. MISD partnered with Scholastic Achievement Partners (SAP) to develop a comprehensive literacy improvement plan for all struggling readers. At the core of this plan was a response-to-intervention approach, utilizing Scholastic's *READ 180*® and *System 44*® programs in Grades 4–12.

CUSTOMIZED ACTION PLAN

Scholastic worked with MISD to implement the Managing Achievement Protocol (MAP). MAP

THE CHALLENGE

In 2009, Midland Independent School District (MISD) was rated as “academically unacceptable” for not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), mostly due to the large achievement gaps between general education and limited english proficient (LEP) and Special Education (SPED) students.

is designed to facilitate discussion between SAP and the district leadership team, early in the process, to inform a fully developed literacy implementation plan. It consists of the following five success factors:

- 1) A Commitment. A Strong Team. A Plan.
- 2) Effective Program Launch and Training to Lay a Foundation for Success
- 3) Ongoing, Collaborative Support to Improve Classroom Teaching Practices
- 4) Ongoing Implementation Progress Monitoring, Data Analysis, and Reporting
- 5) Defined Capacity-Building Plan for Long-Term Literacy Improvement

The following provides an overview of how MISD and SAP worked together to implement these five factors.

1. A Commitment. A Strong Team. A Plan.

Both MISD and Scholastic realized that a passionate desire to improve literacy skills would not be enough to secure sustained literacy improvement. Teachers, curricular administrators, technology staff, and school board members alike would need to commit and own the effort. As such, the district assigned staff from the reading, Special Education, and technology divisions to be accountable for fidelity of implementation of the district reading programs.

The district secured the services of a full-time Scholastic program manager to support literacy improvement initiatives. The program manager helped to organize an Implementation Committee with leadership representation from administration, Special Education, reading, and technology that met every six weeks to discuss literacy goals, student selection, training, coaching, schedules, and technology. The primary purpose of the meetings was to ensure that all departments had a clear and thorough understanding of the requirements for full, on-model implementation of *System 44* and *READ 180*. In addition, the district hired a dedicated technology specialist for *READ 180* to help manage technical issues and work collaboratively with Scholastic.

Further, school board members were invited to visit *READ 180* and *System 44* classes. The goal was to provide an opportunity for school board members to understand the impact their decisions were having on *READ 180* and *System 44* students.

2. Effective Program Launch and Training to Lay a Foundation for Success

Scholastic laid the groundwork for the effective rollout of a comprehensive literacy improvement plan by helping MISD target students for literacy programs, ensure district technology infrastructure could support programs that would be implemented, identify educators to teach and implement programs, and set up training and professional development to support student learning.

Implementing a Tiered Literacy Approach

In order to determine which students would benefit the most from intervention, Scholastic conducted a Literacy Gap Analysis to help district leadership optimize their academic investments to reach AYP targets. After analyzing TAKS ELA, district benchmark, school enrollment, and U.S. Census Bureau data, Scholastic found that a quarter of the struggling students lacked foundational word-reading skills. Scholastic suggested that MISD implement a tiered literacy approach that would enable the most challenged readers to receive direct explicit phonics instruction, and those students who needed a higher-level reading intervention to receive direct support in vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency with connected text.

During the 2009–2010 school year, funding was secured to implement *READ 180* and *System 44* classrooms in 34 schools across the district. Priority was given to Limited English Proficient (LEP) and SPED students in Grades 4–12. General education students reading two or more years below grade level were also considered for the program at the discretion of administrators and teachers within each school.

Scholastic helped MISD select 1,298 students to participate in *System 44* and *READ 180*. *System 44* was implemented with 346 students who scored below 400 Lexile[®] on Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI; a measure of reading comprehension) and who exhibited difficulty with word-reading skills on the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI; a computer-based test designed to measure phonological decoding and sight word reading). *System 44* addresses the foundational elements of the English language, providing a strong base in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, morphology, and orthography.

READ 180 was implemented with 952 struggling readers who were reading more than one year below grade level and demonstrated facility with phonics and decoding. *READ 180* offers guidance in mastering oral reading fluency, academic language, text comprehension, writing, and grammar skills.

Ensuring District Technology Infrastructure

Before the implementation of *System 44* or *READ 180*, Scholastic conducted a Technical Audit that gathered information about the schools' existing hardware, networks, and peripherals and made recommendations on how to build a more stable technology environment. Scholastic engineers installed both programs and provided tips on how to synchronize data to maximize the benefits of *READ 180* and *System 44*. In addition, Scholastic delivered Certified Technical Staff Training to MISD technical administrators to support them in fully implementing the *READ 180* and *System 44* software programs. Once the programs were installed, Scholastic and the technology staff created processes and systems to address teachers' technology concerns.

Identifying Appropriate Educators to Implement Programs

Scholastic and MISD worked together to develop criteria for selecting educators to teach *System 44* or *READ 180*. At the elementary school level, educators were required to be either a reading specialist or Special Education teacher. At the secondary level, educators were expected to be either an English or Special Education teacher. Approximately 30 *READ 180* teachers (15 elementary, 15 secondary), 14 *System 44* teachers (11 elementary, 3 secondary), and 24 *READ 180/ System 44* teachers (19 elementary, 5 secondary) were selected.

Training and Professional Development

Together, Scholastic and MISD agreed that teachers would implement *READ 180* in a 90-minute class period, where students would rotate through *READ 180* software, receive Small-Group Instruction, and participate in independent reading. Educators implementing *System 44* would execute a 45-minute model with 5 minutes of Whole-Group Instruction, and then divide their classes into two Small-Group rotations for 20 minutes. While one group of students used the *System 44* software, another group would receive Small-Group Instruction.

Prior to the start of the 2009–2010 school year, Scholastic conducted three days of Day 1 Training for the 68 teachers using *READ 180* and *System 44*. The training offered a blend of informational and interactive activities designed to provide information on classroom setup,

research-based instructional strategies, hands-on experience, and practical suggestions for implementing *READ 180* and *System 44* with confidence. Three months later, teachers were required to attend a training that focused on how to use data to drive literacy instruction. In addition, *READ 180* and *System 44* teachers were expected to participate in Scholastic Red® Professional Development courses.

3. Ongoing, Collaborative Support to Improve Classroom Teaching Practices

MISD and Scholastic recognized that a long-term plan for incremental in-classroom support in areas such as classroom setup, monitoring fidelity of implementation, improvement of instructional practices, and incorporating data-driven instruction would be critical to help teachers hone their craft.

During the 2009–2010 school year, Scholastic literacy consultants conducted 20 classroom setup visits to help teachers ensure classrooms were properly equipped and resources were in place. During the visits consultants provided individualized feedback, classroom management guidance, and instructional coaching.

In addition, Scholastic conducted 220 coaching visits using the Classroom Implementation and Instructional Review (CIIR), a direct observational tool, to obtain an estimate of program usage and treatment fidelity at both the school and classroom levels. During the coaching visits, Scholastic provided program support to MISD teachers by helping educators set goals and make adjustments in classroom management, rotations, and timing. They also helped teachers reflect upon and incorporate best practices in their classrooms. For example, the literacy consultants assisted *READ 180* and *System 44* teachers in improving their Small-Group Instruction. Monthly reports from these observations were sent to building leaders on the progress teachers were making toward on-model implementation.

Further, Scholastic consultants hosted monthly cadre meetings with all *READ 180* and *System 44* teachers to help set measurable achievement goals, improve writing and reading instruction, review data, address student challenges, and celebrate successes.

4. Ongoing Implementation Progress Monitoring, Data Analysis, and Reporting

Once actionable, meaningful goals for literacy improvement were set, Scholastic helped MISD use reports produced by the Scholastic Achievement Manager (SAM), CIIR information, and SRI data to measure progress.

For example, during classroom setup and coaching visits Scholastic coaches observed and collected key implementation success metrics from every *READ 180* and *System 44* classroom. After the data was collected, all key stakeholders met to analyze and unpack data trends, pinpoint deficits, and uncover the instructional skills and reading strategies needed to help improve knowledge. Further, twice a year, Scholastic statistical analysts conducted student gains analyses to determine reading comprehension growth as measured by the SRI and decoding growth measured by the SPI.

5. Defined Capacity-Building Plan for Long-Term Literacy Improvement

Finally, Scholastic consultants worked to build the capacity of coaches, literacy leaders, and administrators to effectively administer *READ 180* and *System 44*. Principals received professional development through online leadership training courses and SAM Data Analysis Training. In addition, consultants met with administrators to prioritize the resources needed to continue their success. The meetings generated so much positive enthusiasm that the district opted to continue using *READ 180* and *System 44* during the 2010–2011 school year with the district’s most struggling readers.

RESULTS

After one year of district-wide *READ 180* and *System 44* instruction, MISD received an “academically acceptable” rating from the Texas Education Agency. From 2009 to 2010, data indicated that, on average, students enrolled in both *READ 180* and *System 44* made improvements in their reading ability. The percentage of *READ 180* students meeting or exceeding the standard on the TAKS Reading significantly increased from 38% in 2009 to 50% in 2010 (Graph 1). Similarly, *System 44* students made a small gain in their TAKS Reading passing

rate, from 42% meeting or exceeding the standard in 2009 to 44% in 2010 (Graph 2).

When the performance of students receiving Special Education services was examined, these gains remained significant. Both *READ 180* and *System 44* SPED students demonstrated significant gains in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standard on the TAKS Reading from 2009 to 2010. *READ 180* SPED students improved from 34% to 55%, while *System 44* SPED students improved from 44% to 64% (Graphs 1 and 2). These improvements in performance for the SPED group resulted in the reduction of the achievement gap that existed between themselves and their general education peers.

Economically disadvantaged (ED) *READ 180* and *System 44* students also showed great improvement in their 2010 TAKS Reading performance, moving from 36% to 47% meeting or exceeding the standard and 39% to 41% meeting or exceeding the standard, respectively (Graphs 1 and 2).

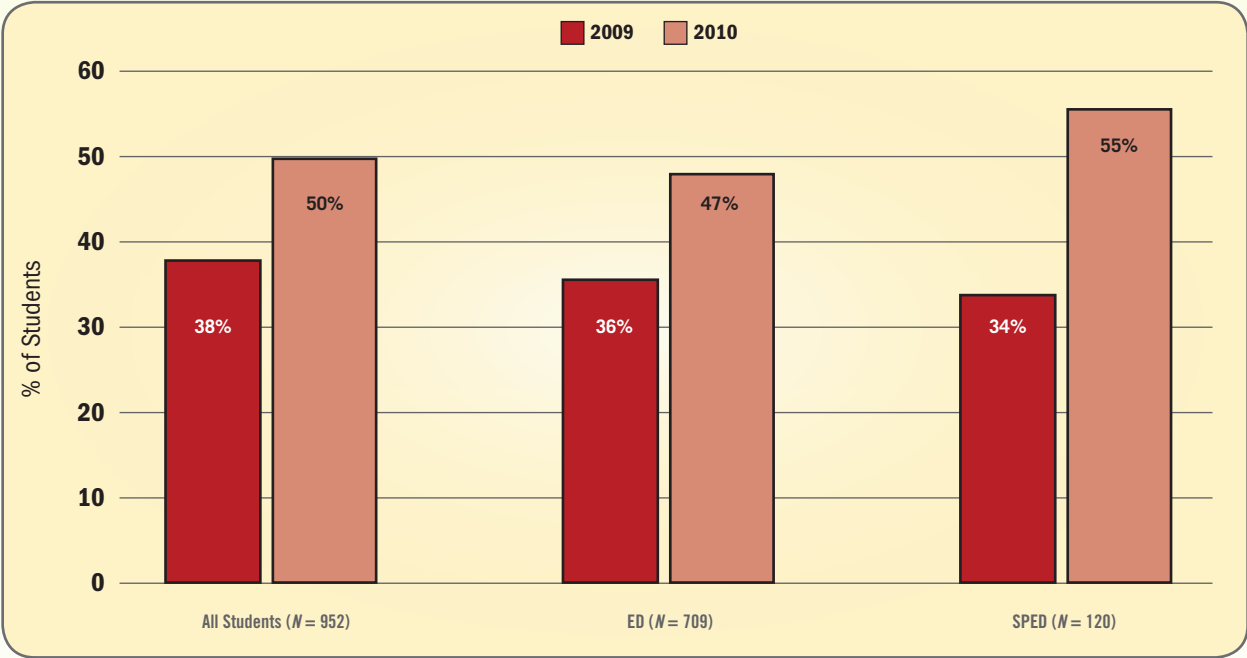
TAKS Reading results for *READ 180* and *System 44* LEP students couldn’t be analyzed because *READ 180* and *System 44* students took the Spanish version of the TAKS Reading in 2009 and the English version of the TAKS Reading in 2010.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the 2009–2010 school year indicated that MISD students enrolled in *READ 180* and *System 44* made significant improvements in their reading skills. Both *READ 180* and *System 44* students evidenced significant increases in their TAKS passing rates. Furthermore, both *READ 180* and *System 44* SPED and ED students showed large and significant increases in reading proficiency, with a majority of students passing the TAKS after participating in *System 44* or *READ 180*. These findings indicate that when MISD partnered with Scholastic to address literacy in a cohesive, comprehensive, and constructive way, including assessment of instructional and technology needs, professional development, data analyses, and capacity building, these efforts produced immediate achievement gains.

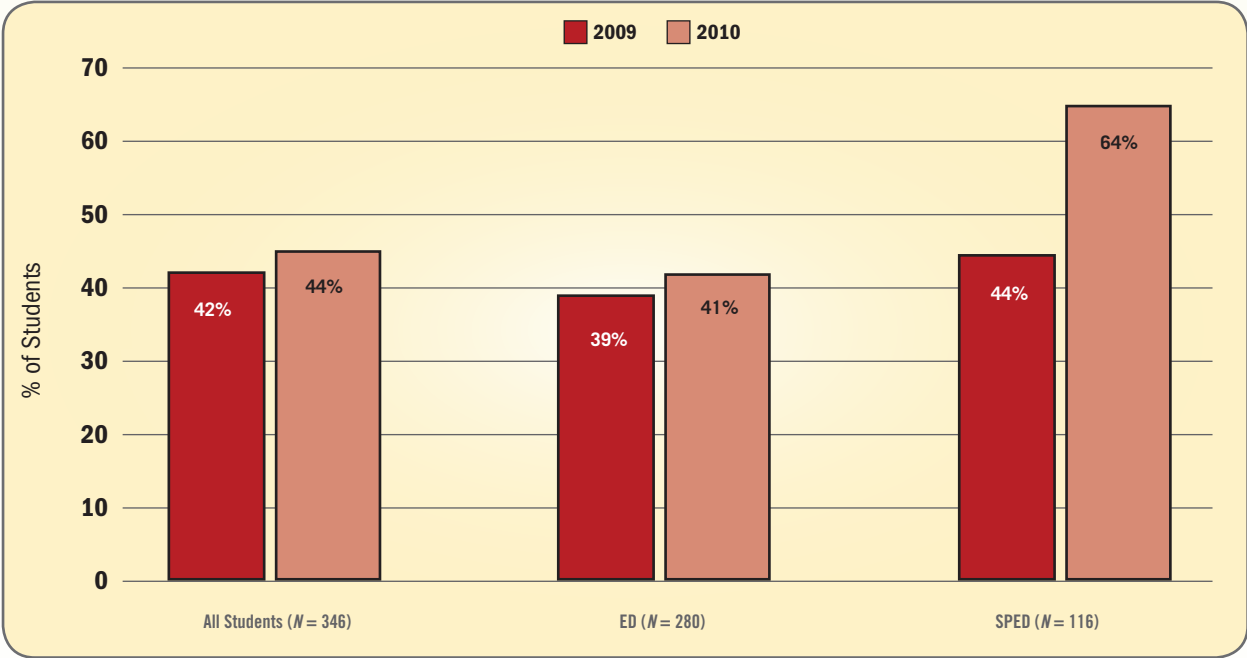
GRAPH 1

MISD READ 180 Students in Grades 4-9 (N = 952)
Percentage of Students Meeting the Standard on the TAKS Reading; by Subgroup, 2009 and 2010



GRAPH 2

MISD System 44 Students in Grades 4-9 (N = 346)
Percentage of Students Meeting the Standard on the TAKS Reading; by Subgroup, 2009 and 2010



NOTE: Students who are economically disadvantaged (ED), may also be designated to receive SPED services.

SCHOLASTIC

ACHIEVEMENT PARTNERS™

Who We Are

Scholastic Achievement Partners brings together the International Center for Leadership in Education, Math Solutions, and Scholastic Implementation Services to offer a full range of solutions for helping district and school leaders raise achievement for all students. With over 700 expert consultants and coaches around the country, we provide unmatched support in human capital development across content areas, comprehensive school improvement, and program implementation.



Scholastic Inc.
557 Broadway
New York, NY 10012
1-800-SCHOLASTIC