



Florida Success Stories in *READ 180* Classrooms

Alachua County , Westwood Middle School	1-2
Charlotte County , LA Ainger Middle School	3-4
Leon County , Swift Creek Middle School.....	5-6
Marion County , West Port Middle School.....	7-8
Monroe County , Key Largo School	9-10
Okaloosa County , Choctawhatchee High School.....	11-12
Orange County , Rock Lake Elementary	13-14
Pasco County , River Ridge Middle School	15-16
Pinellas County , Morgan Fitzgerald Middle	17-18
Santa Rosa County , Chumuckla Elementary	19-20
Seminole County , Lake Mary High School.....	21-22
St. Lucie County , Forest Grove Middle School	23-24
Suwannee County , Suwannee Middle School.....	25-26
Wakulla County , Wakulla High School	27-28

**Alachua County
Gainesville, Florida
Westwood Middle School**

“READ 180 works because it is so structured.... And it works because it’s exciting to the kids.”

Dea Paterson

Profile

Gainesville is home not only to the famed University of Florida Gators, but also the Westwood Middle School Whirlwinds. Serving approximately 1,000 students in grades six through eight, Westwood is a growing school in a diverse socio-economic community. Slightly less than half the students at Westwood qualify for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 56 percent of the students are Caucasian, 30 percent are Black, and eight percent are Hispanic.

Goals

Westwood implemented *READ 180* in the 2001/2002 school year to help the lowest 25 percent of struggling readers at the school, in an effort to improve the school grade and FCAT scores. In particular, the school hopes to see significant gains in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension and FCAT scores of level 3 or higher. Beyond reading skills and test scores, though, the school also wants to see student confidence levels rise, which will translate to improvements in other classes and the cultivation of life-long readers.

Solution

Today, Westwood has five *READ 180* classrooms each hosting three classes per day. Students who score Level 1 or 2 on FCAT, as well as some Exceptional Education students and English-language learners participate in the program. Dea Paterson teaches two sections of sixth grade *READ 180* and one seventh grade section.

“We actually have 50-minute blocks, so we combined two and teach both Language Arts and Reading in that double period,” Paterson explains. Paterson has been teaching *READ 180* for four years now and says she believes the program works for a variety of reasons. “These kids are usually very visual and hands-on,” Paterson explains. “*READ 180* is great for visual learners. Also, the repetition is very good for them.”

Paterson also loves teaching the program. “*READ 180* is awesome,” she says, and then elaborates: “It keeps you very active. You cannot be a lazy person and teach R180. And you have to be organized, but the materials make that easier.” Although she has attended and recommends attending the Scholastic *READ 180* training sessions, Paterson says having other teachers come in to an active *READ 180* classroom is the best way for them to learn the program. “We’ve had a few teachers who had to take over after the year had already started and the best thing we’ve done is have them observe the kids as they are engaged. That’s also great for parents too, so they can understand what this is all about.”

Paterson says that, in addition to reading skills the *READ 180* program teaches students ‘housekeeping’ so they become more organized, which helps them in all their classes. “When they finish on computer they know there is a list of things they have to do before they move to the next station – put the CDs back in the cases, hang up the headsets, push in their chairs. *READ 180* teaches them to be structured. It gives them a format to get in the habit of being organized, and they see the benefit of that as their scores improve.

Compared with teaching other intensive reading programs, Paterson says she prefers *READ 180* largely because of the small group sessions. “The kids showed growth in the other classes, but there were such behavior problems, because we were in whole group the whole time. If you tried to break into small groups, you really couldn’t because you didn’t have the right tools and the materials.” She also notes that the Enterprise Edition is particularly good at reinforcing the correlation between reading and writing skills.

Impact and Results

In the 2005/2006 school year Westwood Middle School had the highest growth in reading scores in Alachua County. Paterson’s *READ 180* students did particularly well – 92 percent showed growth on FCAT. “I had one student show five year’s growth,” Paterson says quietly. “He went from a Level 1 to a Level 3. He did our school PowerPoint presentation when Scholastic invited us to California to present our results.”

Paterson says she remembers vividly the day she started pulling up FCAT scores on the computer. “This student was not a fluent reader and he was always getting in trouble for talking. And he just became a better reader and it’s changed everything for him.”

Paterson says improvements in behavior and test scores go hand-in-hand. “When students feel successful they are going to be a lot less of a behavior problem. I have students who now correct each other’s behavior,” she says. “One student was talking in class recently and another kid said to him, ‘Be respectful! She’s trying to talk.’”

The improvements in *READ 180* also translate into other classes according to Paterson. “Most of these kids are in regular education classes for their other subjects and once they start doing well in here, they start doing well in other classes as well. Not only because reading is the cornerstone of every subject, but also because once they have been successful here, they know they can be successful elsewhere.”

Summary

Paterson says she enjoys “every bit” of *READ 180* both from her perspective as a teacher and because of the results the students achieve. “*READ 180* works because it is so structured,” says Paterson. “All the materials you need are right there, so you don’t need to be running to the store every other day! And it works because it’s exciting to the kids. They don’t get bored or frustrated with it and they feel successful. And it works because of the way the class is set up – it feels like family in here.”

**Charlotte County
LA Ainger Middle School
Englewood, FL**

“When they start reading really thick books; when they start reading on their own; when I see their *Reading Counts* numbers start shooting up. I know they’ve got it. At that point, I just stand back and step out of their way.”

Kelly Byrne

Profile

LA Ainger Middle School is located in Englewood, Florida in the Charlotte County School District. Just about 40 miles south of Sarasota on the west coast of Florida, the community is home to many middle- to lower-middle income families. LA Ainger serves about 1,100 students in grades six through eight. Over 90 percent of the students at the school are Caucasian and about 32 percent of the student body qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Goals

LA Ainger implemented *READ 180* in the 1999/2000 school year to help improve FCAT scores among the school’s lowest-performing readers. Although the primary goal is to improve test scores, for Kelly Byrne who has been teaching *READ 180* at LA Ainger since 2001, the goal is slightly different. “I tell my students that to get through the most basic programs at a technical school they will need to be reading at an eighth grade level,” he says. “And that’s to qualify for a \$9/hour job—and none of these kids want a \$9/hour job. I tell them if they don’t improve their reading skills, their lives are going to stop. It’s that simple. So my long-range goal is to get them literate and keep them literate.”

Solution

LA Ainger currently has three *READ 180* teachers, one for each grade level at the school. Students scoring FCAT level 1 are placed in the program and the classes include both regular and exceptional education students. Byrne teaches three sixth-grade *READ 180* classes.

After teaching pure *READ 180* classes for two years, Byrne then incorporated the program into a special “Drop-Out Prevention” curriculum, which he taught for three years before returning to regular *READ 180* classes for the 2005/2006 school year. He says one of the best things about *READ 180* is how the students react to it.

“Most of the students that fit the *READ 180 Profile* are reluctant readers,” Byrne says. “They don’t like reading and they think they can’t be successful. The reading levels of the *READ 180* materials correspond so well to what my kids can handle. It’s at their instructional level, not their frustration level.”

Byrne says students love taking the Reading Counts quizzes. “I go through reams of paper printing out point sheets for these kids. They are hooked on those numbers. They are so proud of them: they compare with each other, they take them home to show their parents, and they just can’t believe when they see they have read millions of words.”

Because the quizzes are such a hot item with the kids, Byrne does whatever he can to build his collection. “We have the biggest Reading Counts quiz library in the county. I try to buy quizzes every month through Scholastic and I also use Book Club bonus points to build our reading library.”

Byrne boasts about his ten ‘book boxes’ and explains that the students actually refer to the list of available quizzes before selecting a book to read, because they only want to read books they can be measured on, and that will help them add to their point sheets.

“I also use the point sheets to help keep parents involved,” Byrne explains. “Promoting the program with parents is very important. I invite parents in twice during the year and send the point sheets home once a week. I tell the parents our goal is at least 150 points by FCAT, because that’s roughly equal to one year’s annual learning gain.”

In addition to his strategies for building a library and for parent involvement, Byrne has a few other tactics that he has perfected over the seven years he’s been teaching *READ 180*.

“One component I have added is that I converted the initial reading strategies lessons to Power Point presentations,” Byrne explains. “So rather than writing on the board or passing around pictures, I created a slide show and added an extra day to each lesson to activate visual processing and prior knowledge.” By showing seven or eight pictures related to the story in the current lesson, Byrne has found the students then have a solid reference that helps comprehension.

Another *READ 180* tool Byrne has implemented involves the small group rotations. “For the average adolescent, 20 minutes is just about the extent of the attention span. So to get these students up and moving around is great. That change of pace is important. But, because they are adolescents, they are easily distracted during the transition.” Byrne created one-minute long audio files to be played during transitions. “They know that once that music stops they need to be settled into their next rotation and working.”

Impact and Results

According to Byrne, about 95 percent of his students make annual learning gains. “Last year I even had several students get to a level 4 on FCAT,” Byrne says. “This year I’ve got one going to a Level 3 for sure,” he says proudly, looking right at the student he’s talking about. How does he know? “I can quantify it. Because of the Reading Counts tests. I know that if a kid has between 250 and 300 points by FCAT they generally do very, very well. And my buddy over here has 260 points right now.” It’s only December. “He’s a reading machine!”

Summary

Byrne points out that struggling students have become uncomfortable with feedback over the years, but with *READ 180* they get excited about feedback, because they are being successful. When a student hits about 300 points, Byrne says he knows he is going to be OK.

“When they start reading really thick books; when they start reading on their own; when I see their Reading Counts numbers start shooting up. I know they’ve got it. At that point, I just stand back and step out of their way.”

**Leon County
Swift Creek Middle School
Tallahassee, Florida**

“I want them to know reading can be fun. They don’t believe it when they come into *READ 180*, but they do when they leave.”

Kelly Seay

Profile

Swift Creek Middle School is located in an affluent area of Tallahassee. The majority of households in this community fall into the middle- or high-income range, and there are only two neighborhoods with low-income housing. As the capital of the state, and with three universities nearby, government and education jobs are plentiful. The school serves about 1,000 students in grades 6 through 8, with a diverse ethnic background.

Goals

In 2004 Leon County, like many school districts across the state, began exploring options for providing FCAT Level 1 students with an intensive reading program. At that time, *READ 180* was already part of the curriculum at another school in Leon County, and based on successes there, the program was implemented county-wide.

Kelly Seay was teaching elementary school, but decided to make the move to the middle school to teach *READ 180*.

“My goal for these students is to increase their FCAT DSS scores by at least 200 points and their SRI scores by at least 100 points because I know I have to show that progress,” says Seay. “But for me personally, I just want them not to be afraid. For most of these kids, it’s not only that they don’t like reading, they are afraid of it. So my goal is to make *READ 180* the most fun class they have all day.”

Solution

Setting Sights on the Future

Seay says most of her *READ 180* students are African American males who qualify for free and reduced lunch. Many come from single- or no-parent homes, and some are actually at the school because their parents or guardians wanted them in a better performing school. “Most of my students are from rough backgrounds,” Seay says.

Seay teaches three *READ 180* classes each day, and says she tries to ensure the perception is not that this is the “low” or “slow” class. “Because of the type of community we’re in, this program really stands out,” she says. “Some kids come in very excited about it, but others are a little embarrassed or annoyed that they have to be here.” To minimize this, Seay’s *READ 180* classes are “Language Arts” classes, just like all the other students have on their schedules.

“We spend a good deal of time talking about the difference between ‘formal language’ and ‘casual language’ and I try to help them understand the importance of speaking correctly in everyday life – if they want to go to college or get a job.” Seay uses a fast food employee handbook as an example. “I tell them that it’s written at a twelfth-grade reading level. None of them want to work at fast food places, so this gives them an idea of where they need to set their sights.”

Focus and Flexibility

“I think one of the reasons *READ 180* is so successful is the movement,” explains Seay. “At first I thought the kids wouldn’t respond well to the change, but they respond really well to the rotations. They also really love the book center.” Seay says the *READ 180* books are very well matched to student interests and levels.

“Last year I taught two *READ 180* classes and one regular class and I definitely prefer *READ 180*. I actually tried incorporating some of the *READ 180* components into my regular classes.”

Seay says the small group sessions are what she likes best about *READ 180*, because she can get to know the students’ academics intimately, which helps her be a better teacher. Flexibility is another important aspect of *READ 180* for Seay. “It’s a fabulous program,” she says. “You can bring in anything you want, you can set your own pace, you can leave off for a day and do your own thing and then pick up again with no problem. I’ve never taught it the same way twice. There’s just so much there and it’s laid out so well with everything you need incorporated.”

This ability to structure her classes how she wants is also important, Seay says, because being in *READ 180* means students are giving up an elective such as art or PE so she has to make it fun and interesting for them. “I try to mix it up for them and give them an opportunity to make or draw things. Recently I had them make baseball-style cards based on characters in the books they were reading. They will get bored with the same-old thing, so it’s important that I can pull-in elements like this, and yet stay within the program, which I can do with *READ 180*.”

Impact and Results

In the 2005/2006 school year, 41 out of 42 students in Seay’s class made at least one year’s growth. And the student who didn’t, still made significant gains.

“With the one child that didn’t make a year’s gain, his attitude has changed so much. Last year he would talk about ‘how stupid’ he was. This year, you’ll never hear that from him. In fact we did an exercise in which I asked them to use the letters of their names to create lists of adjectives that described them. His name begins with an ‘S’ and for that letter he wrote ‘smart.’ That would not have happened last year.”

Summary

“I didn’t read a book until I was 16,” recalls Seay. “I had the skills, but not the interest. I just didn’t want to read. So to some extent, I know where these kids are coming from.

“One book turned me around. It was a murder mystery and I was just hooked immediately, and it changed my feeling about reading forever. So I read them excerpts from the *READ 180* books and leave them hanging at critical moments to get them into the stories. I want them to know reading can be fun. They don’t believe it when they come into *READ 180*, but they do when they leave.”

**Marion County
West Port Middle School
Ocala, Florida**

“Last year I had a student who ... went from a low-level 1 to a mid-level 3 in one year. He stands out in my mind because he came to me and said, ‘you saved my life in reading.’”

Natasha Murphy

Profile

Horse farms fill the countryside around Ocala in north-central Florida. Just 35 miles southeast of Gainesville, this growing community is home to West Port Middle School with approximately 1,200 students in grades six through eight. West Port is a diverse school with students coming from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic situations. About half the students at the school qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Goals

When Natasha Murphy started teaching *READ 180* in 2002, she was unfamiliar with the program. However, today she’s become an active advocate for it, writing grant applications each year to keep *READ 180* in her school and acting as the “lead” *READ 180* teacher in Marion county. Why? Because she knows it works.

“We’re in Florida and I know the FCAT is important for the students,” says Murphy, “but my number one goal is to help my students find a love of reading. And they do.”

In addition to developing lifelong readers, the school also looks to *READ 180* to deliver measurable results. Specifically, Murphy and the administration aim for FCAT data that shows one or more years of growth (Developmental Scale Score) compared to the prior year, and also watch for improving SRI scores.

Solution

Matching Books with Readers

Murphy teaches three *READ 180* classes each day. Her students are all eighth graders and most are reading between a third- and fifth-grade level when they enter her class. Murphy says many are resigned to their anti-book convictions right from the start. “I have students who come in saying, ‘I hate reading. I’m not going to like your class. I’ve never read a book and I’m not going to.’”

One of the ways she combats this attitude is by placing particular emphasis on independent reading. “If we could put books in their hands that relate to their world, I know they are going to find that love of reading,” Murphy notes.

For the 2006/2007 school year, Murphy prepared a special grant application to bring even more books into her spacious classroom, which used to be the school’s “technology” room. Consistent with her focus on matching readers with their interests, Murphy has transformed a bank of carrels along one wall into “reading nooks.” Each has a different theme like horror, sports, animals, non-fiction and one she calls “lollipop readers” with silly, sweet titles.

Sharing the Joy of Reading

In addition to the independent reading component, Murphy says the small group sessions are another reason *READ 180* works so well. In these teacher-led discussions, which follow students' independent reading time, she can get a very real sense of how well students are progressing in comprehension and help them work through any difficulties they encounter.

The *READ 180* students at West Port Middle School also participate in "Read Ins" where they read to kindergarten students from a local feeder elementary school. Three times a year, the kindergartners visit the middle school, and for the fourth and final Read In of the year, the *READ 180* students travel to the elementary school for a read-in picnic celebration.

Murphy says it's amazing to watch the students demonstrate the comprehension skills they are mastering. "The students model pre-reading skills (prior knowledge) without being coached and they stop and check for comprehension as they're reading," Murphy notes. "Everything they do reinforces what we have taught them. Also, these kids are more likely to be in the dean's office than other students, and yet they rise to this occasion and treat the kindergartners with a kindness they often don't receive themselves. It is an experience that leaves me with chills and an experience I am fortunate to have had three years in a row."

Impact and Results

In the 2005/2006 school year, 48 out of 60 of Murphy's *READ 180* students showed one or more years of growth on the Developmental Scale Score of the FCAT test. But her favorite part of teaching *READ 180* is watching student attitudes towards reading change.

"Every year my students find some kind of respect for reading," explains Murphy. "Even though some admit that they do not see themselves becoming the kind of people who come home at night and sit down on the couch to read for fun, they all understand the importance. They know they have to read to get through life."

In addition, she says, many students develop that love of reading for which Murphy aims. "Last year I had a student who came in and had never read a chapter book. He read 14 books last year and went from a low-level one to a mid-level three in one year. He stands out in my mind because he came to me and said, 'you saved my life in reading.'"

Summary

Murphy attends *READ 180* training every year and also trains other teachers in her district. She recently hosted some local college students as they visited West Port Middle School and gave a presentation on the program.

"The college professor who was with these teaching students had also taught *READ 180* and we both told the college students, 'If you ever get a chance to teach *READ 180*, take it.' That's exactly how I feel."

Monroe County Key Largo School Key Largo, Florida

“There was a student who scored a Level 1 with a Developmental Scale Score (DSS) of 1266 on the 2004/2005 FCAT, who – after participating in *READ 180* – made a gain of 385 points, putting him just 64 points from a Level 3.”

Elena Delgado

Profile

Key Largo is a small island community near Florida City, a suburb of Miami. It’s a diverse area with primarily low- to middle-income families. Key Largo School (KLS) serves about 1,000 students in grades K through 8. A little more than half the student body is white, and about one third are Hispanic. Thirty-nine percent qualify for free or reduced lunches at this Title One school. Despite a large number of transient students during the year, KLS enjoys a considerable amount of parental involvement.

Goals

Administrators at KLS were looking for a tool that would help them provide assistance to their lowest achieving students in reading. The students in question score level one or low level two on FCAT, and include ESE and ESL kids.

“The use of the Science of Learning Principles and other research-based strategies that Ted Hasselbring has incorporated into *READ 180* was what interested our school most in the product,” explains Elena Delgado who has been teaching the program for four years. “Our school works diligently to provide students and teachers with up-to-date research and strategies, so that was a very attractive feature of *READ 180*.”

Solution

A Focus on Inclusion

KLS first implemented *READ 180* in 2003. Today, the school has six *READ 180* teachers – two at the elementary school and four at the middle school. The elementary school classes are comprised of mostly fourth-grade students, and the middle school classes include an all-ESE class, plus three other mixed-grade classes. Delgado teaches *READ 180* for ESE and ESL students in grades 6 through 8. She also teaches reading for general education students in seventh grade.

“Our school believes strongly in inclusion, so there’s a pretty big range in my class,” notes Delgado. “They start at a variety of reading levels – ranging in Lexile from the mid 200s to the high 900s.” She says students typically begin the year unhappy to be in her classroom, but quickly change their minds when they begin using *READ 180*.

“They love the videos,” she says. “They love to move around and work on different things during the class period. They also really like the fact that they get to choose their own books during independent reading.”

One-on-One Time

Delgado says both she and the students like the small-group portion of the *READ 180* class. “They like it because they get one-on-one attention,” she explains. “And I like it because I can really work with students on a particular skill they are struggling with. Also, they are more likely to open up in the small group, so things will come up that I might not otherwise have known about.”

Impact and Results

Delgado says she consistently sees skill improvements among her *READ 180* students. She also notes improvements in their writing and comprehension abilities on other class assignments, especially in the regular reading class.

“I see improvement in reading fluency and spelling skills particularly,” Delgado says. “I have seen a student go from barely understandable spelling skills to a much more accurate ability to spell common words correctly.”

She also says that several students have been “greatly affected” by *READ 180*. “Some of these students not only improved their reading skills and performance inside the classroom, but on the FCAT as well. There was a student who scored a Level 1 with a Developmental Scale Score (DSS) of 1266 on the 2004/2005 FCAT, who – after participating in *READ 180* – made a gain of 385 points, putting him just 64 points from a Level 3.

“I was blown away,” recalls Delgado when reflecting on the moment. “I felt extremely proud of him. When I shared the news with him the look on his face made all of our hard work worth while. It reminded me why I became a teacher.”

Summary

Both because of the integrity of the program itself and the results she’s experienced, Delgado is confident in recommending the program to other schools and teachers. “*READ 180* is backed by people who have the utmost knowledge about how students learn to read,” says Delgado. “And I have seen the results of the correct implementation of the program with my own students.”

She cites one student in particular who just this year has made quick and impressive gains in her first year with the program. “In August this sixth-grade student scored a BR (Beginning Reader) on the SRI,” Delgado relates. “She struggles greatly, barely reading at a second-grade reading level, but she enjoys the program. I re-administered the SRI at the end of October, because we switched to the Enterprise Edition, and in just a few weeks with *READ 180*, this student scored a Lexile of 269. The self-esteem boost that she got from this was incredible. Now she’s motivated to continue working hard, because she sees her hard work will pay off. That’s what *READ 180* can do for students.”

Okaloosa County Choctawhatchee High School Fort Walton Beach, Florida

“No one else would ever believe this because I was the only one in the classroom with them, but the boys were literally fighting over who got to read the next paragraph aloud.”

Annette Klabuh

Profile

Choctawhatchee High School is located in the largely middle-class town of Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Tourism and government are the two prominent industries in the area, with two large military bases near the campus. The high school services nearly 2,000 students in grades 9 through 12, over 70 percent of whom are white.

Goals

When the Okaloosa County School District observed that FCAT scores declined between elementary to middle school, and then again between middle and high school, the district decided to increase its focus on secondary literacy beginning with the 2004/2005 school year. Since *READ 180* was already in place, the program was chosen for the students in the school with the lowest FCAT reading scores.

Solution

Single-Gender Classes

Annette Klabuhn is trained as an ESE teacher and had been co-teaching an English class with a general education teacher when she was asked to begin teaching *READ 180*. The 2006/2007 school year marks her third year with the program. Following her first year, Klabuhn became curious about the notion of teaching *READ 180* as a single-gender class.

“I had done some research on Michael Gurian’s work with single-gender classrooms and was curious to see what would happen,” explains Klabuhn. “After implementing the single-gender classes and comparing the results of the single-gender classes with those from my mixed-gender *READ 180* classes, the single-gender classes absolutely made more gains.”

Now in her third year with *READ 180*, Klabuhn teaches two sections each day – one for girls and one for boys – and is fortunate to have only 12 students per class. Her classes include mostly ESE and ESOL students.

“I differentiate my teaching style to meet the specific needs of the different genders,” says Klabuhn. “For example, with the boys we toss a Koosh ball for rapid-fire verbal rehearsal, and I offer activities that provide movement around the room. With the girls I’ve found they like a lot more hands-on creative expression activities.” Klabuhn says the girls also enjoyed participating in literature circles. “I had some of the mothers bring in breakfast and we had cozy, round-table-style discussions.”

Klabuhn’s all-male classes also participated in an online collaborative book discussion with another ninth-grade, single-gender class in another state over 1000 miles away. “We know that boys respond well to technology, and we found that it was a great way for them to get practice expressing themselves in writing, because they were more comfortable online.” For the project, Klabuhn worked with a former co-teaching partner who relocated to Michigan. The two provided structure and guidelines to the online discussions to ensure the boys were using the requisite skills, including forming complete sentences and avoiding instant messaging shorthand. Based on the success of the experience, Klabuhn has added a similar project to the all-female class for 06/07.

Keeping Parents Involved

Recognizing the dramatic shift in format these classes represented, Klabuhn knew that keeping parents informed and involved was critical to success. To that end, she established an individual communication log for each student, in which students documented their 20 minutes at home for 5 days a week with parent signatures.

Klabuhn also created, 'Bring a Parent to *READ 180* Week.' "This reading program is just so different from what everyone is used to," explains Klabuhn. "I want the parents to come in and see what specific skills their children are working on, witness firsthand how the *READ 180* computer program works, and understand the importance of being able to interpret the *READ 180* reports that are periodically sent home. Parents are invited to observe and participate in a *READ 180* class with their child. "It is my experience that students will work harder to achieve lexile growth when their parents are knowledgeable about the importance of that growth."

In addition to giving parents a better idea what *READ 180* is all about, Klabuhn's interaction with parents is also designed to help increase independent reading at home. She makes a point of explaining to parents the importance of matching their children's Lexile levels with the appropriate reading material. All of the students whose parents participated in the visit met the classroom requirement of reading three novels independently over nine weeks, with 70 to 100 percent accuracy, according to Klabuhn.

Impact and Results

All of Klabuhn's classes have experienced notable gains, but her all-male class was a particular standout in the 2005/2006 school year. "We organize all the students at our school who need intensive reading into three groups, A's, B's, and C's, with A's being the lowest and C's the highest. The A's are placed in a *READ 180* block period. Almost all my boys last year did so well on their FCAT that they moved from A's to C's," says Klabuhn proudly. "One even passed high enough to no longer need a reading class."

Klabuhn says *READ 180* offers her the flexibility to individualize instruction based on the particular student's skills as well as gender, and that is why the students are ultimately more successful. She also notes, as do many *READ 180* teachers, a dramatic difference in discipline issues within her classes. "I had only two discipline referrals for these students, while the same students accumulated 43 discipline referrals in their other classes."

Summary

Klabuhn's work with single-gender *READ 180* classes was recognized by Microsoft with an invitation to attend the 2006 Microsoft Innovative Teachers Forum in Seattle, Washington. When an article was written about the class including quotes from the students, it caused a stir among her students.

"No one else would ever believe this because I was the only one in the classroom with them, but the boys were literally fighting over who got to read the next paragraph aloud," Klabuhn recalls. "It was a really cool moment – these boys were reading about themselves and couldn't wait to be next." According to Klabuhn, both single-gender classes have formed a unique sense of team where they are uncharacteristically supportive of each other.

When asked about her hopes for her students, Klabuhn says she wants them to love reading of course, but there's also a larger goal in mind: "My fondest wish is for these kids to feel good about themselves. They sit in other classes, and they tell me that they don't say a word because they don't feel comfortable. I want them to improve their self-esteem and exhibit this by participating in the other classes just as much as they do in our *READ 180* class. I want them to know that this isn't the only place they can succeed."

**Orange County
Rock Lake Elementary School
Orlando, Florida**

“We’ve seen some of our children start in *READ 180* in third grade and leave us in fifth reading at a seventh- or eighth-grade level.”

Brenda Baggott

Profile

Rock Lake Elementary School is located in inner-city Orlando, Florida within the Orange County school district. With a student population of just about 300 children in grades K through 5, Rock Lake is a small school comprised entirely of students coming from low-income situations. The school serves three homeless shelters, the salvation army and many short-term rental facilities. The students are primarily African American, along with a small Hispanic and Haitian population. Due to the challenging situations at home, Rock Lake experiences an exceptionally high mobility rate; 118% in the 2004/2005 school year, according to the Orange County School District.

Goals

Brenda Baggott is a *READ 180* Teacher and Instructional Coach at Rock Lake. She has been at the school for ten years and was involved with bringing *READ 180* to the school five years ago.

“We were an F school for two years,” Baggott recalls. “We received a D for a few years, but then we dropped back down to an F.” That was in 2001, and at that time Baggott and her principal, along with their Literacy Team, decided to visit some other schools in the area to see what those schools were doing to achieve and maintain higher school grades.

Among the programs they reviewed, *READ 180* stood out for a few reasons, “We really liked the one-on-one part of the program,” explains Baggott. “Even though you have five children sitting with you (while another five are working on the computer and another five are in independent reading), they are right in front of you and you can focus the group on the reading strategy for that week or gear the time toward whatever those students need.”

Baggott says another reason they liked *READ 180* was the testing data they reviewed, which showed students making consistent, steady improvements. They applied for a grant to get the program, and began the next school year (2002-2003).

Solution

Boosting from Both Ends

Baggott now teaches three *READ 180* classes during the day and two additional after-school classes. Students are selected for the program based on lexile scores. For fourth and fifth graders, Baggott looks at children who score between 100 and 200 points below grade level, which typically translates to an FCAT level 2 and sometimes level 1. For third graders she selects students who are reading at grade level, or FCAT level 3. “Our goal there is to actually move those students up one grade level and score even better on their state tests. So we’re really boosting from both ends.”

Baggott tests her *READ 180* students three times a year to measure progress, and monitors English-language learners and second-grade retained students in the school so that as soon as they are ready for *READ 180* she can bring them into a class.

Success on the Speedway

Like all successful *READ 180* classrooms, Baggott's space includes computer workstations, an area for small group sessions, and the ever-popular comfy and inviting independent reading area. In addition, Baggott has surrounded her students with "success areas."

"We celebrate a lot in here," she says. One success area includes paper cutouts of cars resembling Volkswagen Beetles. Students move their cars along the "Success Zone Speedway" chart as they advance through CD Topics. "I told them the reason it's a VW is because it's slow, steady and dependable – just like their reading. Progress will be slow, but steady. And if they stick with it, reading will be something they can depend on for the rest of their lives."

In another success area, Baggott has three charts – one each for Reading Counts, Scholastic Reading Skills Kit, Box A, and Success Zone. Students sign their names on the charts to mark their successes in each category. At the end of every year, the charts are taken off the wall and brought to a year-end celebration, where a King and Queen of *READ 180* are crowned. Baggott also has a "Treasure Box" where students can select small prizes for other accomplishments, and she frequently rewards students with books that she collects at the Scholastic Lake Mary, Florida half-price book sale.

Baggott says her students have a bit of a love-hate relationship with their *READ 180* classes. "They see me in the halls and ask, 'do we have *READ 180* today?' and whether the answer is yes or no, they always respond with a disappointed, 'oh man!' They know they have to work in here, but they also know that it's fun and it feels good."

Impact and Results

Since implementing *READ 180* in 2002, Rock Lake Elementary has made consistent and, in some grade, dramatic gains in the percentage of students reading at or above grade level according to FCAT scores. In addition, the school has achieved one A and only three Cs since becoming a *READ 180* school. Rock Lake has not seen a D or an F rating since implementing the program.

Beyond the Numbers

Baggott notes that perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of the *READ 180* program is its emphasis on independent work, which she says serves the students well in other important areas.

"*READ 180* gives my students not only better reading skills, but also the security of knowing they can be successful on their own and a sense of comfort working independently. When they face those FCATs, they will be alone. *READ 180* gives them the skills and practice to work independently and I believe that is part of why they do so well. For many of our students the only encouragement they get is in the classroom."

Summary

Although Rock Lake faces exceptionally tough financial limitations, Baggott is quick to point out that cost should not be a barrier for schools that could benefit from *READ 180*. "To any teachers or administrators who think they can't afford it, I would say, 'we thought that too, but you can do it.'" Baggott says she typically applies for multiple grants – for the instructional program and for the technology – to ensure funds are available. If, for some reason, the grant is not awarded, she simply begins searching for other appropriate grants and tries again.

"We have seen progress and we've seen it maintained from one year to the next. We've seen some of our children start in *READ 180* in third grade and leave us in fifth reading at a seventh- or eighth-grade level," says Baggott. "We know the program works for our population of children. And that's why we strive to find the money to keep it here."

**Pasco County
River Ridge Middle School
New Port Richey, Florida**

“In the 2005/2006 school year, 90% of the *READ 180* students at River Ridge Middle School made one year or more growth based on Developmental Scale Score.”

Karen Allen

Profile

New Port Richey is a rural but rapidly growing town on the central west coast of Florida. A suburb of Tampa, the area has recently seen the addition of three new housing developments and seven new schools. Despite this growth, class sizes in the area have remained manageable thanks to the class size amendment in the state. River Ridge Middle School serves about 1500 students, grades six through eight. The student population is over 90 percent Caucasian, with about 35 percent of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Goals

Pasco County decided to implement *READ 180* in the 2005/2006 school year to help struggling readers. When the administration at River Ridge Middle School asked interested teachers to step forward, Karen Allen was among them.

Although unfamiliar with *READ 180* specifically, Allen taught a summer school reading class that was longer than a regular class period and appreciated the extra time. “I love being with the kids for longer periods,” she says. “You can do a lot more with them. There’s time to really get into books and topics.”

For Allen, this was one of the main attractions of becoming a *READ 180* teacher. “It seemed like something that would make it very easy to motivate students, because of the computers and the movement around the room,” she says. “It just seemed like a well-planned program that could really help raise reading levels among our lowest level students.”

Solution

River Ridge Middle School now has three *READ 180* teachers and the program is implemented for students who score Level 1 on FCAT. Allen teaches three *READ 180* classes each day: two on her own and one paired with another teacher. Her classes include a mix of students in all grade levels, sixth, seventh, and eighth. Like many schools, River Ridge combines two class periods to create a block that will accommodate the 90-minute *READ 180* model.

Reading is Believing

Because of the double-period, students coming into *READ 180* have to give up an elective and are typically not too excited to be there, according to Allen. Students often talk about having their parents intervene to have them taken out of the class. “I tell them I want to tape record them saying these things, because a few weeks later they’re hooked,” says Allen. “They are amazed at how quickly time passes. Once they are settled in and see what we’re doing here, they actually start to love it. I’ll be getting ready to wrap up and they are shocked that class is over already.”

Earlier this year, a former student visited Allen's class to share his success on a recent lexile test. "I've always told my students that they are the most important part of their education," she explains. "I could be the best teacher in the world and you could do poorly, or the worst teacher in the world and you could thrive. You have to want to be a better reader."

Her former student echoed this comment back to Allen's class. "I introduced him by explaining that he sat in the same seat they are sitting in right now," she says. "Then he told them, 'Mrs. Allen told us that if we want to be better readers we have to want to be better. And she's going to give you all these strategies, and if you do the work, you will become a better reader.' I nearly cried, because he rattled off a list of strategies and I knew at that moment that he owned it – that he knew what to do to be an effective reader. It wasn't just words; he knew what he was talking about. And his grades this year, a year later, show it."

In Allen's class, Lexile scores are measured three times each year: once in the beginning of the school year, again in December, and finally at the end of the school year. Allen says students' reactions to the second test in December are particularly fun because of how excited they get when they see their own improvements. "They start asking to go to the library to get books, because they are beginning to realize that they can do this," Allen says.

Impact and Results

Even though she is very modest when talking about her first year as a *READ 180* teacher (which followed 17 years teaching PE and three years teaching Critical Thinking/Reading), 96 percent of her students made above-average developmental gains, and 62 percent gained at least one level on FCAT.

For Allen, though, the best proof of success is the students' satisfaction with their work. She talks about one student who "tends to be a handful," who she saw one day had a number written on his hand – 11,600. "I asked him what he was up to and he looked at his hand and then back at me with a smile and said, 'That's how many words I've read.' So while he may give you the impression that none of this is important to him, if he wrote that number on his hand, you know he's going to tell someone. And he knows that number is his – he read those words, no one else did it for him."

Summary

Allen says many students come into her class trying to be "invisible," but leave wanting to be seen. "The thing that thrills me the most about using *READ 180* is that once we get into this class, these kids aren't trying to hide anymore. They become active, engaged and willing participants. They are raising their hands – where before they didn't want to be noticed. Now they are willing and excited to share an answer. I know I am being successful when invisible kids start answering questions. I love it when they become willing participants, engaged in their learning. *READ 180* promotes that, because it puts the ball in their court."

Pinellas County
Morgan Fitzgerald Middle School
Largo, Florida

“I have other teachers stop me in the hall and tell me about some of my students who have been volunteering to read aloud in their classes and how much they have improved.”

Sara Carroll

Profile

Morgan Fitzgerald is a unique Middle School that provides both mainstream and exceptional student education (ESE) for grades 6 through 8. The school is located in Largo, Florida, just a few miles south east of Clearwater in the Tampa Bay area. The student body of approximately 1,100 students is made up of about 35% minority students, and 60% qualify for free or reduced lunches.

Goals

READ 180 first came to Morgan Fitzgerald school in [year] when Pinellas County introduced the program for all its struggling readers. At that time, Morgan Fitzgerald was consistently receiving C ratings from the state.

Sara Carroll is one of five *READ 180* teachers at Morgan Fitzgerald and while she is sharply focused on improving test scores, she also has another important goal in mind.

“For me personally, I want my students to have the desire to learn to read,” says Carroll. “I want them to want reading skills. Most of my students don’t come in with that intrinsic motivation to read – they don’t see the value. If they can learn in here that it’s important to have this skill, the rest will follow.”

Solution

Morgan Fitzgerald has four *READ 180* labs that serve 165 students in 11 different sections of *READ 180*. Students are selected for the program based on a combination of lexile and FCATs scores; for the ESE students other informal assessments and teacher recommendations are also taken into account.

Carroll teaches two classes of mixed-grade-level ESE students every day, and a “learning lab” where kids can come in for extra help. Her classroom is equipped with five computer work stations, five mini recliners for independent reading, and a kidney-shaped table for small group sessions.

Because Carroll feels independent reading is such a critical component of her students’ success, she asks her students to read one hour each week at home. “A lot of my kids live with difficult conditions at home and they are not very motivated to read outside of school, nor do they get the encouragement to do it,” Carroll explains. “I’d love if they would read more, but sometimes getting even the 15 minutes a day is a struggle. But I know if they can do just a little reading at home, the scores soar.”

The Best of Both Worlds

Carroll says the best thing about *READ 180* is the structured nature of the program. “A lot of my students have emotional and learning problems, and so the consistent structure is very important to them. They know every day what the rotation will be and it gives them a chance to get up and move around and that’s vital for these kids.”

Carroll also says *READ 180* gives her “the best of both worlds” through the teacher-directed intensive sessions, combined with the technology pieces, which the students work on independently and really enjoy. She says the program is great for her many visual learners, because they can literally see their progress on the charts they get as they move through the program.

Impact and Results

Morgan Fitzgerald originally received five *READ 180* labs, but just recently was able to give one unit back to the county because scores have improved so much at the school, there is no need for the extra unit. Carroll also notes that every year, every student in her class improves his or her Lexile score, and nearly all her students improve on FCAT. This year alone, she has a student whose score jumped to an FCAT Level 5 from a Level 2 last year. “The parent asked if this student could stay with the class even though technically, according to the FCAT, he doesn’t need it, because the structure just worked so well for him,” Carroll says. “So I promised one more year.”

Building Confidence in a “Safe” Environment

Carroll also says she sees improvements in student confidence levels. “For many of our ESE students, this is the first time in their lives that they are having successes in reading,” notes Carroll, “and the program is structured with small steps so they experience a lot of those successes. It gives them the confidence to keep going.” Carroll says similar self-esteem boosts occur in all her students: “They are all just more sure of themselves, more outgoing, and they volunteer more. Students who are afraid to make a mistake won’t participate. In this classroom, every hand goes up when I ask someone to read aloud. They feel safe here.”

Carroll begins every school year with a survey asking students about their feelings regarding reading. Common responses include, “I hate it,” and “other kids make fun of me when I am called on to read in other subjects.” She then repeats the survey at the end of the year and not surprisingly, the responses are completely different. “I have other teachers stop me in the hall and tell me about some of my students who have been volunteering to read aloud in their classes and how much they have improved,” Carroll says with pride.

Summary

“*READ 180* has just made my life a lot easier,” says Carroll. “It incorporates all five areas - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension — that’s all there, so I can concentrate on teaching the skills.” Carroll also says she is very excited to get the eBooks that are part of the Enterprise Edition of *READ 180*. “That’s going to be the icing on the cake,” she says.

Carroll has been teaching for 25 years, the past five teaching *READ 180*. In that time, she’s seen many students work hard and succeed. She says the ideal *READ 180* formula is a motivated student plus support at home, which isn’t always there. She recalls one student in particular who came to her class in sixth grade, reading at a second grade level who came up to grade level in one year. “Her aunt, who is raising her, sent me such a nice note thanking me, and I sent her one back explaining it’s not just me: She’s a great kid, she had great support at home, and it’s also the program. That’s the thing about *READ 180* – it lets teachers look really good.” Carroll says this student is also now reading at home, aloud and to her little sister, which is the best success story she can imagine.

**Santa Rosa County
Chumuckla Elementary School
Chumuckla, Florida**

“My principal and I just think the program is awesome. It shows results, our students are making gains and they enjoy it.”

Jennifer Bailey

Profile

Chumuckla Elementary sits in the northwest corner of the Florida panhandle, just outside Pensacola, in rural Chumuckla, Florida. Mainly a farming community, Jay is home to primarily middle- and lower-income families. Approximately 260 students in grades K through six attend Chumuckla School, and about half qualify for free and reduced lunch. The student body is 94% Caucasian.

Goals

Jennifer Bailey is the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and reading teacher at Chumuckla School, and although she wasn't at the school four years ago when *READ 180* was first implemented, she's thrilled to be teaching it. “My principal and I just think the program is awesome,” Bailey says. “It shows results, our students are making gains and they enjoy it.”

Based on results they have already seen, administrators at Chumuckla keep the *READ 180* program not only for the improvements they see in test scores, skills and strategies, but in behavior. “We believe the *READ 180* program encourages these ladies and gentlemen to translate the positive behaviors they exhibit in this class, into the rest of the school day,” says Bailey.

A further goal for Bailey is to see her students develop an interest in reading the extends beyond the classroom. “Of course I want them to be reading on or above grade level,” she notes. “But my more immediate goal is that they feel successful with reading, because I believe that will lead them to enjoying it. On rainy or stormy days I get so excited because I know I can curl up with a good book and not feel guilty about all the other things I should be doing. I want that feeling for my students.”

Solution

Room for All Who Need It

Bailey teaches two *READ 180* classes each day and uses the program for after-school tutoring. With 60 *READ 180* licenses and such a small student body, Bailey never has to worry about getting children who really need the extra help into the classes.

“First I look at all the students who have an IEP for reading, regardless of what they scored on the FCAT,” Bailey explains. “This way, they get the additional support they need. Then I pull in the students who scored level 1 or 2 on the FCAT.”

In addition to those students, Bailey says she has parents who make special requests to have their children placed in *READ 180* based on the results they have seen with their older children or even friends' and neighbors' children. This year, Bailey even had one parent request that her daughter remain in *READ 180* despite the fact that the child had scored a level 3 on the FCAT. “The mother told me her daughter wasn't doing well until she was in this class and she felt another year of *READ 180* would better prepare her for high school.”

Learning to Love Reading

Bailey employs a clever strategy during read-alouds to keep kids engaged and get them excited about reading. “Sometimes during the read-alouds, if I know there’s something interesting coming along, I’ll stop at a pivotal moment and then say, ‘OK, let’s get our work done and then we’ll finish up with the story.’” She says the kids love it and are always eager to find out what happens next.

When it comes to testing, to keep kids encouraged, Bailey talks to them about a “range” rather than a specific number on which they should focus. “When we take the SRIs, we announce students who have had gains, but we also talk about the fact that if you make a huge gain one time, it’s likely the next time you might not. So as long as they are within the same range, everything is good. What’s really wonderful to see is how they have learned to be excited for each other. We recently had a student go up 234 points and we all celebrated with him.”

Impact and Results

During Bailey’s first year teaching *READ 180*, nearly 50% of the school’s lowest-scoring children, demonstrated gains on their FCATs. By her second year, 72% showed gains and the improvements have been steadily increasing each year.

“Two of my ESE students are now on grade level and doing so well they don’t even come to my class for reading any more,” Bailey notes. “Once a month, I check with their reading teacher to see how they are doing. They have been out of my class for a full year and they are doing fabulously.”

Using SRIs as a gauge, Bailey also see marked improvements. “Every year about 95 percent of my kids show at least a year’s gain,” she notes. “On the SRI scale, 50 to 75 points improvement is equal to a year’s gain. My students typically increase between 100 and 200 points.”

Fostering Confidence

Bailey says the program also helps students build confidence, which leads to successes outside her classroom. She cites students who achieve higher scores and are more comfortable speaking or reading aloud in other classes.

Like many *READ 180* teachers, Bailey also says she does not see behavioral problems in her class that other teachers report elsewhere in the school. “When these kids are here they are on-task and focused, and that’s not what I hear from other teachers. I have kids who demonstrate aggressive behavior outside, that are helpful in this classroom. When I hear other teachers talk I sometimes wonder if we’re talking about the same kids.”

Summary

Even though Bailey has been teaching *READ 180* for a few years, she says she still benefits from the annual and supplemental training sessions. “At every training I go to, I discover something about the program I didn’t know before. The teachers there are all really willing to share what they are doing.”

Bailey says she continues to invest her time and energy into learning more and finding ways to improve the program, because she has seen such impressive results. She talks about one student in particular. “Last year there was a third grade retained student, who should have been in fifth grade and was reading at a first-grade level,” recalls Bailey. “I’d hear him at the computer saying, ‘YES!’ I’d check his test scores periodically and they went from 50s and 60s to a string of 100s. The program gave him incredible motivation and helped him in other subjects. Last year he rarely passed a spelling test, this year he gets 100s on all of them. It has to be *READ 180* – nothing else in his life has changed.”

**Seminole County
Lake Mary High School
Lake Mary, Florida**

“I think *READ 180* is perfect! I am such a big advocate for the program.”

Lory Lyon

Profile

Lake Mary High School is a well-established school in an upper-middle class suburb of Orlando. The school has enjoyed many years of A+ ratings and the curriculum is very college-prep oriented, with a large percentage of graduates continuing on to four-year universities. The student body of approximately 2600 students in grades 9 through 12 is primarily Caucasian, with roughly 20% African American students, 11% Hispanic students and small percentages of Native American, Asian, and multi-racial students.

Goals

Lake Mary High School began using *READ 180* in the 2005/2006 school year as part of the Seminole County project study which is assessing the impact of several reading programs in secondary schools over a two-year period.

When Lory Lyon, a reading teacher at Lake Mary, heard the county was looking for teachers who were interested in teaching *READ 180*, she jumped at the opportunity. “I think *READ 180* is perfect! I am such a big advocate for the program,” says Lyon. “I had seen a presentation about *READ 180* and I knew it had all the components for success.”

Lyon was given what she considers the “privilege” of leading the *READ 180* classes at Lake Mary. In addition to seeing FCAT scores improve long-term, Lyon says in her classroom, the goal is to see students develop a comfort level with reading. “They all come into this class with essentially the same complaint: they hate reading. As a reader, that is so difficult for me to hear. I tell them they just have not found the right books yet, which is also the Scholastic philosophy: find the comfort level, find the topic and you will have a reader.”

She continues: “A lot of these kids come into my class believing that reading is an exclusive club that they can’t get into; they believe the door does not exist for them. But they come in here and they do the work, spending two hours a day doing something they hate, so I believe my job is to help them find that door. That’s the thing about *READ 180* – *READ 180* says there is a door for everybody, you just have to find it.”

Solution

Best Practices in Reading Instruction

Lyon teaches three sections of *READ 180* each day, with mostly ninth grade students and a few tenth and eleventh graders as well. Selection for participation in *READ 180* is dictated by the project study.

Lyon says she is thrilled to be working with the *READ 180* program because it so clearly reflects best practices in reading instruction. “Everything that research tells us about how best to teach older struggling readers is part of *READ 180*,” she says. Beyond formal research, Lyon has her own evidence. “I see that my students respond to this program. They need the video, the technology, the silent sustained reading, and the small and large group time. And all of that is there. You just need to put the pieces together.”

When you do, Lyon says it's a recipe for classroom success. "Everything you need is there. And it's all so well thought out to appeal to older readers. The whole program is perfectly interwoven. Scholastic just has so much to offer. It's beautifully done."

Doing Things by the Numbers

One thing Lyon especially likes is the detailed reporting and tracking capabilities of the *READ 180* Enterprise Edition. "My students are amazed when I can tell them, 'I see you spent 56 percent of your time on spelling.' The technology impresses them and gets their attention, and it also gives them a sense of security and a little positive pressure, because they know I'm paying attention."

She says students also like the immediate feedback they get on how they did on a daily basis. "That's very encouraging for them. When the students finish working and they see their own statistics – how could you not be encouraged when you see you've read 34,000 words in nine weeks!"

Lyon says the reports are also great for working with her colleagues in guidance and ESE "When they ask for reports what I give them is not subjective or anecdotal – it's hard numbers that can help them make evaluations along with the other informal data they have; measuring success is much more objective with a program like *READ 180*."

Impact and Results

In her first year teaching *READ 180*, Lyon had an average gain of 248 lexile points. More than half her students became Proficient or Advanced readers during the year, with the number of Advanced readers nearly doubling in just one year. Fifty-three percent of the students in Lyon's *READ 180* classes passed the FCAT test in the 2005-2006 school year.

In addition to this concrete evidence of progress, Lyon claims a particular moment of great triumph when one of her students explained that she had bought a book to read, just for the fun of it. "For a teenager to spend money on a book – I thought that was a major success."

Lyon also has written "testimonials" from a few students that illustrate their personal sense of achievement. One boy talks about how *READ 180* helped him realize that reading could change his future, opening up career possibilities that he'd previously never considered. He also talks about changes at home: "Life is easier than it used to be," he writes, "I can ... finally read a book to my nine year old sister." In his essay, this boy also says that he can help his mother who only speaks Spanish. He eloquently closed his essay with, "And this is my reading life."

Summary

Having previously taught English, Lyon says that *READ 180* requires an entirely different style of classroom management. "It's differentiated teaching at its best," she says. "You are really running a three-ring circus, with different groups working toward different objectives at the same time, so you have to plan for it differently. But it gives you individual time with students."

For these reasons, Lyon says the program requires a particularly high level of commitment. "You cannot expect any program to run itself," notes Lyon, "Any program left on its own will shrivel and die. But *READ 180* provides so much for you that if you are committed and you use the resources it provides, this is going to work."

**St. Lucie County
Forest Grove Middle School
Fort Pierce, Florida**

“This is why I believe *READ 180* is such an integral part of my success as a teacher With *READ 180* on any given day I can pull a report on a student and see he needs help with inflectual endings or vocabulary or whatever. I can get a snapshot every day and know how to help him the next day so he can be even more successful.”

Kerri Walukiewicz

Profile

Fort Pierce is about an hour north of West Palm Beach on the east coast of Florida. It’s the County seat of St. Lucie and home to Forest Grove Middle School. Serving approximately 1,080 students in grades six through eight, Forest Grove has one of the highest poverty rates among schools in the district and nearly 80 percent of students receive free or reduced lunch. Recent re-zoning within the district is likely to drive even more students from low-income backgrounds to the school in coming years. The student body population is comprised of approximately 42 percent African Americans, 30 percent Caucasians, and 28 percent Hispanic students.

Goals

Forest Grove was among the first schools in St. Lucie County to implement *READ 180* in 1999. The program was first introduced to sixth-grade students, with a seventh grade class added the following year. According to Kerri Walukiewicz, who taught that seventh-grade *READ 180* class, the primary goal in bringing *READ 180* to the school was to help close the achievement gap among the school’s at-risk population.

“There wasn’t a curriculum or even guidelines for teaching those children,” recalls Walukiewicz. “So really, anything that would help was great. Also, at the time, FCAT didn’t show learning gains within levels. So for students who were making improvements, but not moving out of a Level 1, there was nothing to give them the sense of growth or accomplishment that inspires continued effort. Then, when learning gains were first introduced and the lowest 25 percent of scores were counted twice when calculating a school grade, it became imperative that we find something for these kids. And *READ 180* fit all those needs. And in my experience it has been life changing for many students.”

Solution

Today, Forest Grove has adopted a “culture of literacy” according to Walukiewicz, focusing on reading in all content areas, with students at all skill levels. *READ 180* has been widely embraced throughout the St. Lucie district and at Forest Grove the program has been implemented for FCAT Level 1 students in all three grades, and some ESE students.

In 2004, Walukiewicz was named Florida State’s teacher of the year. At the time, she was teaching three sections of seventh-grade *READ 180* each day. She had initially taught only two, but when she saw the impact the *READ 180* program was having on students, she felt compelled to add another class to her day. “It was so difficult for me to see that we had this program that really could make a difference, but weren’t servicing 30 more students, because we didn’t have the schedule to do it,” Walukiewicz explains. “So the other seventh grade teacher and I elected to add the extra class.”

Walukiewicz feels the foundation *READ 180* gives students is critical to longer-term reading success. “Before I started teaching three sections of *READ 180*, I had one group of students who had been with me for *READ 180* in seventh grade, and then again in eighth grade where we were using Read XL,” explains Walukiewicz. “Ninety percent of the students in that class made gains, and that is significant because Read XL is much more like a regular classroom. These kids had the tools and knew how to apply them in a more mainstream setting, because of *READ 180*.”

It was when she was teaching these students that Walukiewicz was named Teacher of the Year. “This is why I believe *READ 180* is such an integral part of my success as a teacher: Prior to *READ 180*, I had to make up my own tools and assessments. I know teachers use informal assessment all the time, but with *READ 180* on any given day I can pull a report on a student and see he needs help with inflectual endings or vocabulary or whatever. I can get a snapshot every day and know how to help him the next day so he can be even more successful.”

Walukiewicz says any teacher who wants to move students to the next level, has to keep an eye on the data and *READ 180* makes that very easy. “For a teacher to pull a student aside, collect data, analyze it, and then figure out what tools you’re going to use to address whatever the issue is – that’s a week-long process. I can do this daily, at the snap of a finger. Think about the growth you can get from a child if you can do this on a daily basis. And the impact is critical, because these kids don’t have time; they are in eighth grade and they are Level 1 – they don’t have time for me to take a week to figure out what they are going to do next.”

Impact and Results

Forest Grove went from a C to a B in the 2005/2006 last school year. Walukiewicz firmly believes that improvement is a culmination of the last several years’ effort and focus on literacy and reading at the school. “The reality is that with reading you can really slip through the cracks at any time,” she says. “No matter what grade you’re in, when you get to physics, if you don’t have the strategies to read that physics book, or you go to college and can’t read that law book, you’re going to sink. As a school we understood that social studies needs to be teaching reading, science needs to be teaching reading, everybody needs to be teaching reading. And that’s what’s made the difference for our school. ”

Summary

When asked about former students, Walukiewicz quickly starts to rattle off a list of individuals who have literally “done a 180” and turned not only their reading skills, but their lives around. One student began opening up to Walukiewicz through journal entries and shared some very difficult stories about her life. The more she shared, the higher her scores. Others have become leaders in the school, acting as mentors and tutors. Walukiewicz says recently ran into one former student at the airport as Walukiewicz was on her way to a *READ 180* conference in Denver.

“I asked her where she was headed and she told me she was going to college in Kentucky,” Walukiewicz says with pride. “The greatest thing *READ 180* gives students is self esteem. At-risk students don’t get to be leaders in other classes, so they think they can’t be leaders. In *READ 180* they get to try on new roles and they succeed. If you believe you can do something, nine times out of ten, you will do it. *READ 180* gives them that.”

**Suwannee County
Suwannee Middle School
Live Oak, Florida**

“At the end of [our first] year 11% of my *READ 180* students were reading at or above grade level. And this was just our first year doing this — imagine where we can go next.”

Marcia Norris

Profile

Just 30 miles from the Georgia border along with winding Suwannee River, sits Suwannee Middle School. Serving grades 6 through 8, the school’s student body is comprised of approximately 1,100 predominantly Caucasian students, more than half of whom qualify for free and reduced lunches. This community of about 10,000 people consists of a large population of migrant workers, and so mobility is an issue at the school.

Goals

A little more than two years ago, administrators at teachers at Suwannee Middle School were considering their options for complying with a pending piece of legislation called The Middle School Reform Act that had grown from No Child Left Behind. The law would require every middle school student who did not score level 3 or higher on the reading portion of the FCAT to participate in an intensive 90-minute reading class every day.

“That’s what got our curriculum coordinators looking at different programs, because we knew we were going to have a huge population of kids that didn’t meet that standard,” says Marcia Norris, who now teaches *READ 180* at Suwannee Middle School. *READ 180* seemed to be a perfect fit because of the content, the results, and the 90-minute model.

Solution

Considering Both the Scores and the Child

Through grant funding, Suwannee District was able to purchase *READ 180* for Suwannee Middle School, some other seventh and eighth graders at another school in the county, and the High School ninth graders. The program began during the 2005/2006 school year. Norris now teaches three classes of sixth graders and one class of seventh graders for a total of 60 *READ 180* students each day. With nearly 200 children who Norris feels could benefit from the program, students are selected for the 60 spots based on a combination of criteria include FCAT and SRI scores and personality.

Norris says after narrowing down her list of potential students using a cross reference of Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) lexiles and FCAT reading test results, she then seeks input from fifth grade teachers looking at factors such as attendance, discipline, ability to work independently and parental support. “If we are going to make this kind of investment in a child, we need to know that they have the willingness and the support they need to succeed.”

After implementing these changes in criteria, Norris says she has the “best kids in the whole school.” Following the *READ 180* model, Norris has established three distinct areas for the instructional software, modeled and independent reading, and small-group instruction. From a vantage point anywhere in the room she can see the students working and gets particular pleasure from seeing a child at one of the computer stations plunge a fist in the air, exclaiming, “YES!” — a frequent sight. “You just cannot put a price on those moments,” says Norris.

Impact and Results

Norris's formula seems to be working. Following the first year of *READ 180* at Suwannee Middle School, 68 percent of Norris's sixth grade students showed gains on their FCAT scores over the prior year.

"When we started, all my students were reading below grade level," says Norris. "At the end of that year 11% of my *READ 180* students were reading at or above grade level. And this was just our first year doing this — imagine where we can go next."

Norris also says there is something about a *READ 180* class that draws out the best in students. "When other teachers talk about having discipline issues with certain students and then ask me if I see the same behavior, I usually have to say, 'no.' I don't see the same things happening in my classroom that other teachers see. I have very, very few behavior problems. Almost none. "

Norris says discipline is an area where inquiring about the parental support in advance has really paid off. "On the rare occasions when I do have a problem, all I have to do is call home and it is taken care of right away."

Summary

Norris feels a bit of a personal mission to make sure other teachers really understand how *READ 180* works. "I think there is a huge misconception out there among some teachers that *READ 180* is very scripted and prescriptive" says Norris. "I want those teachers to know that I have complete freedom. I can actually be a teacher and do my own thing, because the program runs itself."

This freedom combined with the results Norris sees with her students is probably why she refers to herself as a "card-carrying member of the *READ 180* cult."

"These kids are so excited and willing to be in this program, and so hopeful that this will make such a difference in their reading skills that this will be their last year in *READ 180*, they are willing to do what it takes. Their attitudes are good and positive and hopeful. And that makes me happy."

**Wakulla County
Wakulla High School
Crawfordville, Florida**

“[A parent] told me that she had been worried about her son entering ninth grade ... it turned out to be his very best year yet, and she attributed it to the *READ 180* program.”

Karrie Musgrove

Profile

Wakulla High School is located in the small, but growing town of Crawfordville, near Tallahassee, Florida. Known for its natural beauty Wakulla County is home to Wakulla Spring one of the world’s largest and deepest freshwater springs. The High School serves just under 1300 students in grades 9 through 12.

Goals

When Wakulla High implemented an intensive reading program for the 2001/2002 school year, teachers involved found few materials available. Two school years later, the reading teacher did some research and found *READ 180*. The county liked what they saw and decided to purchase the program. According to Karrie Musgrove who now teaches *READ 180* at Wakulla High, the county is “very serious about reading” and has been very generous about investing in programs that will help improve reading skills, such as *READ 180*.

“We’re a D school and we know that is due largely to our lowest quartile students,” says Musgrove. “So our primary goal with *READ 180* is to show annual growth among our lowest quartile of freshman.”

Solution

Spinning Plates

Musgrove was an ESE teacher when *READ 180* was first implemented at Wakulla High during the 2005/2006 school year. She was pursuing her reading endorsement when she was asked to teach *READ 180*. She currently teaches three *READ 180* classes each day, all Freshman who scored Level 1 or Level 2 on FCAT, including both regular and exceptional students (ESE).

“It’s a lot like spinning plates,” says Musgrove about running a *READ 180* classroom. “The kids that are typically in this program will engage in any behavior to avoid reading. So you are running a small group, but at the same time keeping an eye on the computers and the kids in independent reading. If you’re not comfortable spinning plates, this probably isn’t the best program for you.”

But for Musgrove, it is. “I love everything about *READ 180*,” she says. “It has everything. Everything you need to meet the national reading requirement—to teach how they want you to teach with the research-based methods. They’re all in *READ 180*.”

She continues: “I don’t have to reinvent the wheel every day. I have all kinds of plans to choose from. I can go to my computer and get a report that tells me how students are doing so I know what areas need work. And the books are fabulous. I read them all over the summer and they are intelligent books written about kids my students’ ages in situations that are interesting to them.”

Flexibility is another aspect of the program that Musgrove appreciates. “The neat thing about *READ 180* is that there is enough wiggle room in it, that you don’t have to do use only certain materials. I can bring in, very easily, a regular high school vocabulary book for my Level 2 students, and work that into the program during small group or whole group.”

“*Moo-Yeah!*”

Because she knows that many of the students who come to *READ 180* simply don’t want to be there, Musgrove tries to inject some fun wherever she can. “A lot of them just hate reading,” she says. “I want them to love reading, so I do silly stuff.”

Her cow-inspired theme, “Read until the cows come home!” is obvious from the bovine-patterned fabric of the curtains, to the cow-bell hanging near the white board, which Musgrove “borrowed” from her husband’s band. When students reach a particular milestone or achievement, they are invited to get up and ring the bell which is met by the entire class shouting “Moo-Yeah!”

“One of my kids who really doesn’t want to be in here, was up at the front of the room one day, presenting word maps with his group and the second they finished he grabbed that drum stick and looked over at me as if to say, ‘can I hit it now?’ We gave him a big ‘Moo-Yeah!’”

Impact and Results

More than half of Musgrove’s students from 2005/2006 made gains on the FCAT, with most moving from Level 1 to Level 2, or at least scoring quite a bit higher within the Level 1 range. Some, she says, showed huge gains.

“I had one student who went up 689 points,” she notes. “If you consider that the state says 78 points is annual yearly growth, that’s an amazing gain for one academic year. He’s still a Level 1, but that’s a big gain.”

The successes were so great in fact, that the high school added an additional *READ 180* classroom in the 2006/1007 school year. “Last year we only offered the program to Level 1 students, but there was so much growth that the administration decided to add another *READ 180* lab, and so now we have Level 1 and Level 2 Freshman in the program.”

In the summer after her first year teaching *READ 180*, Musgrove received a particularly memorable call from a parent. “She told me that she had been worried about her son entering ninth grade,” recalls Musgrove. “He is a very quite, shy boy and he had struggled all through middle school and she really thought he was going to have a difficult time his freshman year. She said it turned out to be his very best year yet, and she attributed it to the *READ 180* program.”

Musgrove feels that the confidence boost the students get with *READ 180* is a critical component of their success, since they experience such tremendous growth academically. “These students have felt bad about themselves for a long time. For a lot of them, this is the first place they have experienced academic success. And this class has given them confidence. They may not be passing FCAT, but I know they feel better about themselves.”

Summary

Musgrove was named Teacher of the Year in her county for the 2005/2006 school year and when the reporters arrived in the school, her students were eager to get in front of the camera to give their testimonials.

“They were all rushing up to the reporter saying things like, ‘My Lexile went up 200 points this year, because I had the teacher of the year!’ As if the reporter knew what that meant. But it didn’t matter, because they knew what it meant. And they were so proud of their accomplishments.”