

Special Education Students Improve Language and Reading Skills, and Achieve Gains on State Test

Hayden Middle School –
Blount County Schools
Hayden, AL

School Statistics

Number of students: 550

Grades: 5-7

District Structure: Rural

Website:

<http://www.blountboe.net>

Student Population:

3% African-American

94% Caucasian

1% Hispanic

2% Multiracial

44% economically disadvantaged

9% students with special needs

Part of Blount County Schools, Hayden Middle School uses the Fast ForWord® online reading intervention to help special education students improve their reading and language skills, and close achievement gaps. Students begin using the program in fifth grade and continue through seventh grade. In that time, individual learners have progressed from being non-verbal to verbal, and from being non-readers to readers. In addition, the percentage of students achieving proficiency in reading on the Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test (ARMT) has increased.

Challenges

“Hayden Middle School has the largest population of students with disabilities in the district,” said Suzette Johnson, instructional/reading coach at Hayden Middle School. “In 2010, even though our special education students had the highest gains in the district, we still didn’t make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for that population. So the district chose our school to pilot the Fast ForWord program to see if that could make a difference for our students.”

Solutions

Hayden Middle School began using Fast ForWord in December 2010 and continues to target the program to special education students. In 2013-14, it plans to implement Reading Assistant to help struggling readers improve their reading skills.


Fast ForWord

The Fast ForWord program uses the principles of neuroplasticity — the ability of the brain to rewire and improve — to treat the underlying cause of language and reading difficulties, once and for all. It was developed by neuroscientists to address reading skills while concurrently developing foundational skills including memory, attention, processing and sequencing.

“Our primary schools and elementary schools do a great job. So when a student gets to us and is struggling as a reader, our first question is, ‘What can we do that hasn’t already been done?’” said Ken Parker, principal. “One of the reasons the Fast ForWord program is so successful with our students is that it’s not a traditional reading intervention program. It addresses much more than reading; it



Scientific
Learning®



addresses cognitive skills as well. We've seen benefits of this because it's helped our students in reading and math as well."

"In our first six months of using Fast ForWord with special education students, we saw tremendous gains," said Johnson.

Students work on the Fast ForWord program 40 minutes a day, five days a week in a classroom. Each class is limited to 10 students and there are six classes per day. If space is available, the online reading intervention is offered to other learners based on their state test scores or teacher recommendations.

"We have several students who have gaps but, at the middle school level, it's difficult to address those gaps in their core instruction," said Johnson. "Using Fast ForWord as a Tier 3 intervention allows us to address huge deficits and bring students up to grade level in a short amount of time."

"One of our students was a fifth grader who had a very difficult time getting a complete sentence out," said Kelly Winnett, the teacher who runs the Fast ForWord program. "By the time he left seventh grade, he could carry on complete conversations. His parents and I attribute that to Fast ForWord."

Winnett closely monitors each student's progress using MySciLEARN™ reports. The online data analysis and reporting tools enable educators to monitor the individual, classroom, school, or district performance of students working with the Fast ForWord and Reading Assistant programs.

"Every day I go into Results page and use the Score Cards to give students instant feedback on their progress. We set goals together, which keeps students motivated," said Winnett. "The Score Cards also drive my instruction. I can see which skills students are mastering and what they need to work on. If a student doesn't go up on an exercise two days in a row, I'll work with them. I'll also email students' teachers and the special education teacher to let them know if I see a problem in a particular area."

"One of the things that's contributed to the success of our program is that we have a classroom teacher dedicated to our Fast ForWord class," said Johnson. "She knows exactly how to monitor each student's progress and how to intervene to help each student achieve success."

Reading Assistant

Reading Assistant is the only online reading tool that uses speech recognition to correct and support students as they read aloud, building fluency and comprehension with the help of a supportive listener. No other program or e-book provides comparable real-time guidance and feedback.

"We plan to target the program to our students with the lowest reading levels," said Johnson. "We're especially excited about the speech recognition technology and the ability to provide students with another intervention to help them strengthen their reading fluency and comprehension."

"In our first six months of using Fast ForWord with special education students, we saw tremendous gains."

Results

“From 2010 to 2011, our special education students went from not making AYP to making AYP, and we attribute a lot of that to what the Fast ForWord program did for our students,” said Parker.

Over the last three years, Johnson has tracked cohorts of students to measure their gains in reading on the ARMT. With each cohort, she records the percentage of students proficient in reading in the fourth grade, before they entered Hayden Middle School and began using the Fast ForWord program. She then records the percentage proficient in reading in the seventh grade, after participating in the program for nearly three years. From grade four to grade seven, the number of students achieving proficiency increased by an average of 11 percentage points.

Hayden Middle School – Special Education Students Alabama Reading and Math Test – Percent Proficient in Reading

Cohort Group	Grade 4 (before Fast ForWord use)	Grade 7 (after Fast ForWord use)
Cohort A	50%	61%
Cohort B	44%	58%
Cohort C	56%	65%

“Fast ForWord has definitely contributed to our success and the data I’ve seen on individual students is incredible,” said Parker. “We’ve had students go from being non-verbal to verbal, and from being non-readers to readers. It makes a tremendous difference for them.”

###



For more info contact:

Phone: 888 810-0250
Email: info@scilearn.com