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State Test Success Stories: Solving the Most Difficult Reading Problems

Students Who Have Never Before Done So Pass the Reading Portion of the Texas State Test

“It's like Mardi Gras around here” reported J.C. Murray, the Read Right consultant who happened to be doing a training visit to Vernon Middle School, Vernon, Texas when the results of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test arrived at the school. “The Read Right tutors were hugging each other and crying in the hallway, the principal and assistant principal have both gone out of their way to express to me their thanks to Read Right, and the teachers are buzzing about it in the teachers' lounge. Everyone is ecstatic!”

What accounts for this scene?

In August 2006, Vernon Middle School brought Read Right into the school as a reading intervention program. During the course of the school year, 62 students were served in the program. All of the Read Right students except one had failed the TAKS the previous year, and the one who passed had just squeaked by. This year, 61 of these students took the TAKS, and 44 passed the reading portion of the test (72%). The student who had previously barely passed obtained a ‘commended’ rating.

Shannon Parum, the lead Read Right tutor has taught reading and Language Arts for 15 years. She taught some of these same students last year. “The difference in their reading between last year and this is just amazing. The gains were unbelievable. Tutoring in the Read Right program has been one of the most rewarding things that I have ever done as a teacher.”

Shannon further reports that “Classroom teachers have noticed improved performance by Read Right students.” They tell her that the students are now participating in class, they are doing better in their paperwork and in critical thinking, their grades have improved, and they’re excited about reading.

Vernon Middle School has 63% free and reduced lunches and serves an ethnically diverse population (11% African American and 38% Hispanic).

Ken Kenner, principal of the Vernon Middle School, said, “We could be recognized in reading next year because of Read Right. We won’t get it in math unless you all come up with a math program.” When asked what he might tell another principal about Read Right, he said, “I would recommend this reading program 100%. It’s another way of teaching them to read. It’s very obvious the other ways aren’t working or they would already be able to read.”

Students Who Have Never Before Done So Pass the TAKS at Sherman, Texas

Clifton Cotton, principal of Dillingham Intermediate School echoes Kenner’s enthusiasm for Read Right. “I expected good things from the program, but it went beyond my expectations. We

started our program in November with 79 kids, including four non-readers, and every kid increased his reading at least three grade levels. It was phenomenal.”

Cotton’s school serves 875 fifth and sixth graders with 52% qualifying for free and reduced lunches. Minorities constitute 35-40% of the population (Hispanic and African American). The 79 students selected to be tutored with Read Right included special education students, dyslexics, autistic students, English language learners, and non-labeled students. Most of the students had not passed the TAKS the previous year. Those who did (about 5) struggled to do so, and, according to Lisa Sterling, Read Right tutor, had made it out of “sheer will.” But this year was a different story: 62 of the 79 passed the reading portion of the TAKS (78%), and many of them also passed science, social studies, and math.

Sterling reports that all the students’ confidence levels have grown and cites an example of the “. . . ESL kids who before Read Right were sitting in the back row of the class not raising their hand, trying not to even be noticed and now they are up on the front row, hand raised all the time wanting to read, wanting to answer the questions. It’s like, wow! these kids are finally feeling a part of the school.”

Sterling has been particularly pleased by the effect of Read Right tutoring on one of her autistic students. “He was pretty much non-verbal. And now you just can hardly get him to be quiet. He used to be restrained quite a bit, but since he started Read Right in November he hasn’t had to be restrained. His mom has said that for the first time she feels he is a part of the school.”

Cotton had been frustrated with reading programs that didn’t work. “We wanted something that is going to work. What motivated us was that we kept getting these kids in fifth grade that were reading on a second grade level, and no matter what we do, bottom line, the kids can’t read. So we kept trying to figure out what we can do. We’ve got to do something to help these kids. That’s when we did a little research and came up with Read Right. Now we have a vehicle that can help us.”

Cotton said the Read Right tutors are feeling proud about helping kids they hadn’t been able to help before. “This is our chance to make a change in these students’ lives. It isn’t just about the TAKS test. This will affect their futures. We are giving them an essential skill they can use for the rest of their lives.”

Mt. Rainier High School Presentation at High Schools That Work Conference, New Orleans, July 11-13.

Sharon Schmitt, Reading Coach at Mt. Rainier High School, Des Moines, Washington will present “Excellent Reading Ability: The Foundation of Success” at the upcoming national High Schools That Work conference in New Orleans. With over 20 years of experience as a reading intervention teacher at the high school level in Washington State, Ms Schmitt was overjoyed to finally find in 1999 a program that works for her most challenged readers. She has experience implementing the innovative Read Right program in two large urban high school settings in the Seattle Area. She will include data showing dramatic gains for many of her most at risk readers on the reading portion of the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. Ms. Schmitt will be

joined by in the presentation by Dr. Dee Tadlock, developer of Read Right who will explain the theory and science underlying the Read Right methodology and **why this program works so well with students who have failed using conventional approaches to solving reading problems.**

Perhaps this is a program worth considering to help your struggling students? If you or some of your staff would like to explore and gather more information about RR, please forward this e-mail to them. Some ideas follow...

Visit www.readright.com to read articles about educators across the country and their experiences with this new tutoring program.

Contact the Read Right office by phone or Email. We will be happy to answer your questions and forward you a school information packet that explains in detail the theory, methodology, implementation and cost. Ask for Kim at 360-427-9440 or Email Kimk@readright.com

Contact administrators and reading teachers across the country that have first hand experience implementing Read Right. A listing of referrals with phone numbers and email addresses is included in the information packet.

Obtain a copy of Dr. Tadlock's book, *Read Right! Coaching Your Child to Excellence in Reading* (McGraw-Hill 2005) available through www.amazon.com. Chapters in this book explain the theoretical constructs underlying Read Right methodology in concise, understandable terms.

Finally, for those that might enjoy reading about the theory, research and science underlying the Read Right methodology, Dr. Tadlock's academic paper, "Interactive Constructivism and Reading: The Nature of Neural networks Challenges the Phonological Processing Hypothesis" may be downloaded free from www.readright.com.