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Raymond Reads Right

By Anne Radford - Daily World Writer

Wednesday, April 18, 2007 11:00 AM PDT



DAILY WORLD / [KATHY QUIGG](#) Raymond students listen to audios of the books they are reading as participants in the Read Right program. From left are Nathan Crawford, 13, Kandi Stigall, 11, and Megan Makee, 11.

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RAYMOND — Last fall, 13-year-old Nathan Crawford didn't like to read in front of his class. Now the sixth-grader doesn't hesitate to hop out of his seat.

In her social studies class, 11-year-old Kandi Stigall had a hard time understanding her textbook.

Almost a full year later, the fifth-grader says she is the first person to raise her hand with an answer.

Both Raymond Elementary School students have worked hard to improve their reading skills with the help of a district-wide reading intervention

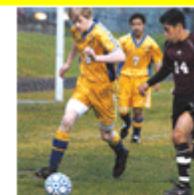
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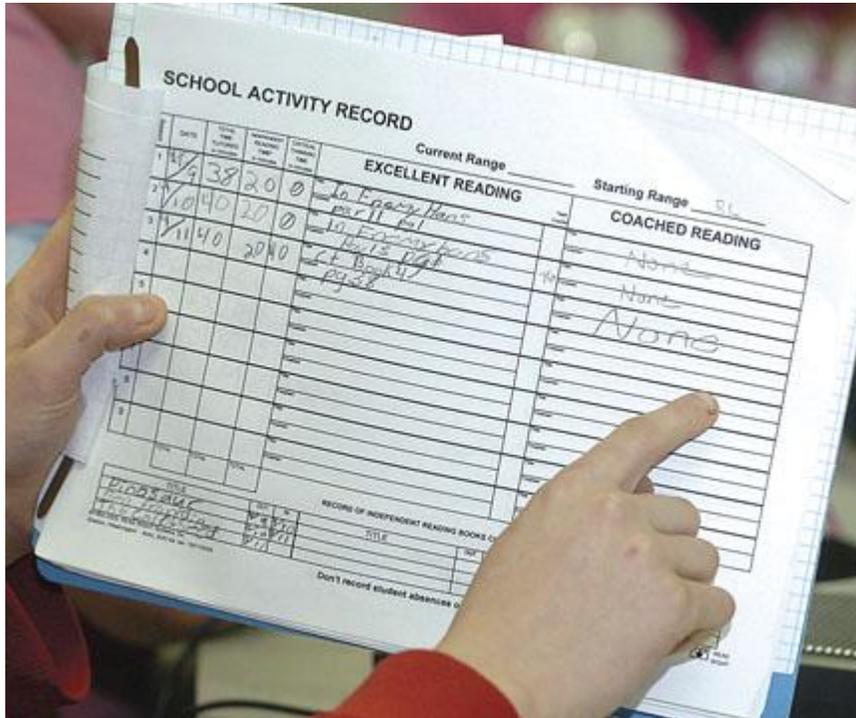
program called Read Right.

"There has been amazing growth in kids we just could not get to read," says Superintendent Steve Holland, noting that at a recent School Board meeting Elementary School Principal Joan Leach brought a tape of a student reading. "It's just incredible. You listen to him and you can't believe it's the same kid."

The School District has been using the Read Right program for two years to great success. Every participating student has improved, sometimes spectacularly. One junior high student advanced from a first-grade reading level all the way to the post-high school level in one year.

While many reading programs focus on teaching children to connect sounds with letters or groups of letters, Read Right focuses on the meaning of a passage and what the author is trying to say, according to Gayle Haerling, the district's Read Right coordinator.

"The theory is that if you can talk, you can read," Haerling said. "It all comes from the same implicit brain training. They are reading for meaning, to know that reading should be something you enjoy."



DAILY WORLD / [KATHY QUIGG](#) A student proudly shows off his reading record.

This approach certainly has worked for Nathan. Since Read Right, he has gone back to the mysteries he skimmed through before the program and has been able to catch small plot points he missed the first time around.

"You find out a lot more," he said.

Students from second grade all the way up to the twelfth grade have been improving their reading skills at the hour-long sessions with program tutors each school day. The district currently has 80 elementary students and 47 junior high and high school students participating in the program. Students are invited to join the program based on test scores and teacher and parent recommendations. They were reading below grade level, and other reading methods just weren't getting them where they needed to be.

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"I wish I had this years ago," Leach said. "The program is totally different than anything on the market. It is based on brain research and how the brain reads."

Raymond is one of 21 Washington school districts using the program.

Dr. Dee Tadlock of Shelton created the program in the wake of her own son's reading problems. After years of brain research and testing, her company, Read Right Systems, was formed in 1991. The program has been implemented in more than 370 sites in the United States, Canada and China.

Four components

The program is carried out using four different components. First, a reader "cycles" through a combination of listening to an audio version of a book or a tutor reading a passage and reading silently. Then, the reader judges the silent read to see if they read the passage "excellently." This means they read the passage without pausing, at a stable speed, with the correct cadence and without changing the author's meaning, said Haerling. If they feel their silent read was "excellent," they read the passage to a tutor, who verifies the performance using tight guidelines.

The six tutors, including Haerling, had seven weeks of intense training for the program.

The second part of Read Right is coached reading, where students "cold read" a book out loud while a tutor coaches them.

Independent reading is another component of Read Right and the district has a variety of books from its personal Read Right Library appropriate to the students' skills.

Finally, the critical thinking portion allows students to draw conclusions and compare and contrast information about passages. Each student has a workbook with exercises and once the students complete the questions, they discuss their answers in a student-led group setting. The students must find the "best answer" for each question, and if there is disagreement, the students must back up their answers with proof from the passage.

"It's awesome to watch the discussions," Haerling said.

At home, students read an additional 20 minutes for practice, although Kandi said she now often reads past the required time.

"Sometimes I'll keep on reading for 45 minutes," the 11-year-old said. "I wouldn't have done that before Read Right. I wouldn't have even done five minutes."

As for what she reads, she likes action books where she gets to try to figure out a problem before the end of a book.

"I like reading hard books, " she said. "I think I read better now. When I first started, I couldn't read very well."

Her grades have improved too. She's now getting A's and B's.

Haerling says Read Right has had a trickle down effect to other areas of students' lives. They have more confidence and can understand class material in other classes better.

Different levels

High school students could be mixed with junior high and elementary students, as the program is not based on grade level.

Ron Bell, principal at Raymond Junior/Senior High, says the program has benefited his students, too, especially since it is hard to find reading specialists for the secondary level.

"This has given them the opportunity to be a student, where before they were lost," Bell said. "It is working for them and the kids are sold on the program. When I've visited classrooms, I've noticed students reading who refused to read in front of a classroom prior to Read Right. They read very well orally, which they couldn't do before. The other thing I've noticed is the behavior of the students has improved. They would get disheartened and would act out in class. Now there is less disciplinary action and they take part in class."

Staff members aren't the only ones praising the program.

Maybe a little hesitant when they first started the program, students also recognize the benefits of improving their reading skills.

"My goal is to have more excellent reads and not cycle as many times," Crawford said. "With the program, you don't have to be 100 percent excellent but you are going to be a really good reader.

"This makes you understand more."

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