



Pearson

Struggling student makes significant reading gains with Leveled Literacy Intervention

Overview

Madison Hughes has a number of learning challenges, including ADHD, making it extremely difficult for her to focus. But with the right reading support this tenacious grade four student from William Bridge Elementary in Richmond, British Columbia has made major strides in reading.

Challenge

When Madison entered grade one in 2012, her reading was significantly behind what was expected for her grade level. "She knew some of her letter names and sounds, recognized very few sight words and was just beginning to 'read' very simple pattern books from memory using mainly picture clues and sometimes the first letter of a word," explains Principal and resource teacher, Wanda Salewski.

But Madison wasn't alone in her struggle with reading. When Salewski joined William Bridge in 2012—after working as a Literacy Mentor for eight years in Vancouver—she quickly recognized that her school had a high level of students needing reading support, specifically in grade one. She appealed to the school's Parent Advisory Council for funds and set out to find a reading program that—when combined with good teaching—would have the greatest positive impact on her students' reading.

"I feel it's particularly important to support struggling readers in grade one because research indicates that if students do not learn to read by the end of grade three, it is much more difficult to have them read at grade level later on. In fact, many of them just never catch up," explains Salewski.



Madison's Story

William Bridge Elementary
By Wendy McMahon

Fountas & Pinnell
LITERACY™

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Solution

Her research into reading programs led her to the Fountas and Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI), a system she says is ideal for teaching young learners to read.

"It's really important that the LLI books are real books, they're not contrived stories based on a phonics pattern," explains Salewski. "The follow-up work that students do in the program is very much in context. They're learning phonics, for example, but they're not learning it in a worksheet out of context from the book. The learning is totally embedded and connected to the meaningful text the children have read. This is what we know to be best practice."

Once the school purchased the LLI system Salewski conducted a school-wide reading assessment, using the Benchmark Assessment System. Madison was among the students chosen to participate in the school's new Green LLI program for grade one.

Results

Salewski says the LLI system's carefully leveled books, humorous stories and charming, well-loved characters immediately engaged Madison. She became a motivated reader who looked forward to reading about her favourite characters.

She particularly enjoyed presenting the plays she and her LLI group performed in classes throughout the school. Salewski explains that the plays were a popular and highly effective strategy where students repeatedly read familiar text, helping them significantly develop fluency.

"The positive effects were immediate," says Salewski, "I noticed that her focus and reading improved because she wanted to read and she read more. For Madison reading was a joy rather than a chore. "

Madison's mom, Amanda Hughes also noticed a change in her daughter when she began the program. "Madison often didn't want to go to school. But on the days she had reading she wanted to go because she looked forward to her reading program," she recalls.

Assessed as reading at Level A in September, Madison quickly moved to Level E by the second school term and was proficient at Level H and beginning Level I (grade level) by the end of the school year.

"She went from not reading to becoming proficient in such a short period of time," says Salewski.

Now in grade four, Madison doesn't require LLI support. She reads confidently at grade level and has moved beyond learning to read as part of her school work, now she simply loves reading.

At a recent assembly where her school launched a read-a-thon, Madison, now a voracious reader, cheered when she heard the goal was to read every night. She is passionate about reading everything from The Dork Diaries and non-fiction books to history books and even the classic tale of Heidi gifted to her by her Papa.

Amanda says she knows that Madison may always struggle in some areas of school but the confidence she has gained because of her reading skills is invaluable both inside and outside the classroom.

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Amanda Hughes, Madison's Mom

Profile

Richmond, British Columbia

School Type - Public School

School Enrollment - 320

Grades - Kindergarten—7