



Dr. Janet Allen's Plugged ▶ in to Reading®

BOOSTING CONFIDENCE
AND TEST SCORES IN
INDIANA SCHOOLS

Dickinson Fine Arts Academy Curriculum Leader Amy Beyer will never forget the first day she introduced Plugged-in to Reading to her classroom.

"I hate to read!" a student shouted as he threw the book across the room, visibly terrified at the thought of opening a book during the school year. Just eight weeks later, this same student asked Beyer if he could use the computer to conduct background research for the new book they were reading as a class.

"It was a true testament to the potential Plugged-in to Reading has to change any student's attitude about reading," said Beyer. "I've seen the program do wonders for boosting a student's confidence and interest in reading. By closing the gap between students reading below grade level and their peers, Plugged-in to Reading has fostered increased test scores and turned reluctant readers into highly engaged readers."

THE CHALLENGE HELPING STRUGGLING READERS

South Bend, Indiana's Jackson Intermediate Center and Dickinson Fine Arts Academy were seeking a way

to improve reading skills amongst students placed in their Explorers program. Students reading several grades below level were assigned to these Explorers classrooms, which contained no more than 20 students per room to allow each student to have the proper amount of time and attention.

"These kids have always been told they weren't smart enough," said Brent Yoder, an eighth-grade English and language arts teacher at Jackson Intermediate Center. "We needed something that would inspire them to believe in themselves and their ability to read at a higher level. Not to mention, the books had to be appealing enough to pique and retain the interest of reluctant readers."

THE SOLUTION PLUGGED-IN TO READING

After attending a workshop for Plugged-in to Reading, Beyer instantly knew it would be a great fit for their Explorers program. Each Plugged-in to Reading installment includes 48 engaging texts for students, accompanying audiobooks, detailed lesson guides, and multiple teacher resources to facilitate

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classroom discussion, assessment and peer-supported learning.

“It really helps teachers focus on student performance, rather than fretting over book selection or curriculum,” explained Beyer. “The way the program facilitates classroom discussion around meaningful social issues that are relevant to students’ lives is just incredible. It creates a close-knit community of kids as the program moves from teacher instruction and peer supported learning to self-directed learning.”

“As a new teacher at the time, I loved having everything at my fingertips,” added Yoder. “The materials for educator and student success are all in that box.”

News spread of the types of books the students in the Explorers program were reading and discussing with the Plugged-in to Reading program, like Rick Riordan’s *The Lightning Thief* from Plugged-in to Reading’s Myths & Legends, and they soon became the envy of the entire school.

“The students in the classroom next door to ours would say, ‘We’re not reading cool books like that,’” said Yoder. “It’s a great credit to the book selection in the Plugged-in to Reading program. The books are so relevant to them it’s nearly impossible for a reluctant reader not to get hooked on these books.”

THE RESULTS

After students began using Plugged-in to Reading, attitudes changed, confidence grew and test scores increased significantly. “The transformation happened so quickly. Within the first six weeks of class, I saw a significant change in students’ attitudes and their excitement to work independently, participate in small

group discussion and contribute to classroom discussions,” said Yoder.

Beyer echoes his statement and has seen similar transformations in her classes.

“I’ve seen my kids literally run into the library when they were assigned a research project. They were so excited at the prospect to pick their own books, and I credit that enthusiasm to Plugged-in to Reading’s book selection and the interesting discussions and projects we have as a result of the program.”

But attitudes and confidence were not the only things changing and going sky high. Test scores have also gone through the roof since implementing Plugged-in to Reading.

In the first year of Plugged-in to Reading’s implementation for the Explorers program, the students were outscoring their peers who were already reading at or above grade level when the school year began. Confidence in their reading abilities was at an all-time high, with students telling Beyer they were actually looking forward to taking the year-end test.

Last year, most of Yoder’s students posted scores that placed them in the 90th percentile of growth for the entire state. As a point of comparison, an average growth rate falls in the 50th percentile. Many classes at his school that weren’t using Plugged-in to Reading only saw growth rates slightly above that in the 60th to 70th percentile.

PLUGGED-IN TO READING LEAVES A LASTING IMPRESSION

Although Beyer and Yoder are no longer teaching in the Explorers program, they have continued to use Plugged-in to Reading with their classes and have found the program

works wonders even with students who are already reading at or above grade level.

“One of the other things that continues to delight me about using Plugged-in to Reading is how much purposeful professional development is continually offered to our faculty,” said Beyer. “The Plugged-in to Reading employees are my heroes! They will conduct on-site workshops with all of the teachers, and their impact is felt around the entire school even after they leave. After a summertime workshop this year, it was such a great surprise to see a popular teaching tool we use in our Plugged-in to Reading classrooms called a ‘word wall’ go up in every single classroom—spanning subjects from history to science. Everyone knows the program works.”

Yoder also appreciates the program’s ability to transcend their own classrooms and help students with their reading assignments for other subjects.

“Plugged-in to Reading is confidence in a box,” said Yoder. “The students prove to themselves just how capable they are to improve their reading skills, and the high test scores speak for themselves. I couldn’t be more pleased with how this program has performed and helped our students achieve more than they ever thought possible.”

Yoder is continuing to use Plugged-in to Reading with his regular classes, and the program is reaping dividends for all students regardless of their reading abilities.

“I would not have been introduced to Plugged-in to Reading without my struggling readers, and now I can’t imagine not using the strategies I’ve learned with everyone, struggling or not. They’re phenomenal!”