

Individualized instruction makes the difference for a broad spectrum of learners at Cloughton Middle School

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Delic Loyde, Principal, Cloughton Middle School

Although a Title I school, Cloughton Middle School is buoyed by a positive, “can do” attitude. It offers a number of resources and programs throughout the year that are dedicated to increasing student success. These initiatives include annual school-wide assessments, special tutorials, academic friendly interventions and more. All help make the school one of the best in Spring ISD and able to deliver on its bold mission: to promote an academically challenging environment that nurtures the success and personal development of each individual in a culturally diverse society.

A rapidly changing student population

Cloughton’s story is a familiar one. Once nestled in sleepy suburbia, dramatic growth over the past decade from neighboring Houston has engulfed Spring ISD and sent enrollment from various ethnic and cultural groups soaring. Today the school has over 1,400 students: 54% are Hispanic and 45% are African American. An increasing number of these students live in poor socio-economic conditions – if not outright poverty – and do not speak English as their first language. Two years ago, despite many progressive student support initiatives, Cloughton’s TELPAS score – the annual Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System – dipped to a bare pass at 53%.

After researching various alternative intervention methods Delic Loyde, Principal of Cloughton Middle School, quickly settled on AutoSkill’s Academy of READING® and Academy of MATH®. These software-based literacy intervention solutions provided the

Focus on:

Academy of READING®

Academy of MATH®

Fast Facts:

Location:

- Houston, Texas

School:

- Cloughton Middle School

Grades:

- 6 to 8

Student Population:

- 1,467

Student Demographics:

- White: 1.8%
- Hispanic: 34.3%
- Black: 56.7%
- Other: 7.2%

Free and Reduced Lunch:

- 68.3%

Website:

<http://classroom.springisd.org/webs/cms.campus/>

AutoSkill®

A helping hand for literacy ◀



school with a powerful one-two combination for addressing a range of learner needs. “I did a lot of research and was very intrigued by the AutoSkill programs,” comments Loyde. “I really liked that the approach begins with an assessment to determine the skill levels of each student. Instruction is prescriptive based on individual needs.” This is a powerful feature of the AutoSkill programs – and key to their ability to consistently produce rapid and permanent grade level gains. Students also get immediate feedback in real-time and advance progressively once targeted skills have been mastered.

Pilot program involves all grades

In the spring 2007 semester Claughton implemented a pilot program with students from grades 6 to 8. Students ranged from struggling ESL learners, who needed to develop fluency in foundation skills, to gifted grade 6 students. Gifted students were included because although they were studying grade 8 math, they would still be tested on the annual Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) at the grade 6 level. The Academy of MATH was used to review skills and to ensure that these students not only passed the test, but were commended on it. A rotating schedule was implemented with all students taking three 20 minute sessions each week for the second semester.

The broad spectrum of students involved in the pilot highlights a key strength of the AutoSkill approach: each student gets highly individualized one-on-one instruction regardless of their level. In addition, the program assures each student total privacy while they are completing their lessons. For struggling students that are placed at the phonemic awareness and word sounding stage, this can be particularly important. “The

program enables students to avoid the embarrassment that can happen in a regular class setting if they can’t read,” says Sharon Geiger, Assistant Principal for Instruction. “This is another reason the program was embraced by all of our students so quickly,” she adds.

TELPAS results soar

A number of methods were used to assess performance gains in the broad-based pilot program. One method was the Lexile Framework for Reading, a scientific approach to reading and text measurement. “We saw an average gain of two levels of growth in Lexile scores over the course of the semester. Some students achieved considerably more,” says Loyde.

Another impressive measure of success involved the year-end TELPAS. “After using AutoSkill as one of our responses to intervention, we saw our TELPAS score jump from 53% to 81% in a single semester – the highest in the district,” Loyde says with enthusiasm.

While more qualitative, Geiger adds: “One 6th grader who started out at below basic ended up volunteering to read in his classes, something he had never done before. One of his teachers commented on the transformation saying that he turned from a quiet, reclusive child into a boy who was eager to participate.”

When asked about the future, Loyde is quick to trumpet the benefits and value of AutoSkill. “This intervention program has made a real difference for students regardless of whether they are a native English speaker, ESL, special education, or even a gifted student. The program is a great equalizer that is closing the digital divide for lots of students,” says Loyde. “My only regret is that we did not implement it sooner,” she adds.

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About AutoSkill® International

AutoSkill creates award-winning intervention solutions to help close the achievement gap in K-12 schools. For over 17 years, its research-based programs have helped at-risk students to build fluency in the foundation skills of reading and math. The company’s core products, Academy of READING and Academy of MATH, deliver rapid, permanent gains so students progress in their education and administrators meet AYP targets. For more information, visit www.autoskill.com.