



## Edgewater High School achieves gains well above the state average for its bottom 25% students



“The Academy of READING gives teachers a tremendous tool to do a great job often under difficult circumstances. That’s why wherever I go the Academy of READING is coming with me!”

*A. Robert Anderson, Principal*

Located in Orlando, Florida, Edgewater High School (EHS) is home to a diverse multicultural and socioeconomic student population: 46% are African American, 12% are Hispanic, and 16% are Special Education. Meeting the learning needs of such a diverse student population can be challenging for any school. This reality hit home in 2004 when EHS failed to make the necessary gains with the lowest 25% of its students—on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)—for the two previous years. Finding a solution to deal with this problem became a high priority for the incoming principal Rob Anderson, who started with EHS in the summer of 2004.

### The face of change

In keeping with the spirit and attitude embodied by the name of the school’s athletic team, the ‘Fighting Eagles’, and school newspaper *The Eagle Eye*, Anderson hit the road running with an intervention solution that had his full confidence. “Before I started I knew all about the FCAT results. And I knew that the Academy of READING was going to be the solution,” says the catalytic Anderson who had successfully used the research-based literacy intervention program at another school. “My most important priority was to take care of the bottom 25% where the school wasn’t seeing any movement.”

### Focus on:

Academy of READING®

### Fast Facts:

Location:

- Orlando, Florida

School:

- Edgewater High School

Grades:

- 9-12

Number of Students:

- 2700

Student Demographics:

- Caucasian 38%
- Hispanic 12%
- African American 46%
- English Language Learner 6%
- Special Education 16%

Website:

<http://www.ehs.ocps.net>

## Individualized instruction

One of the reasons Anderson was sold on the Academy of READING is that it recognizes that all at-risk students are not the same—that a “one-size fits all” intervention solution will not work. In contrast, the Academy of READING provides an individualized training program using a blend of motivation and skill development exercises that change in real-time to meet the needs of each learner. Building the foundation skills of reading is also a key strength. “For many reasons, at-risk students are struggling with phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding. This program achieves fluency in these foundation skills which is the key to comprehension and success beyond high school,” says Anderson.

Ensuring age-appropriate instruction was also a key consideration for Anderson. “There are a lot of reading programs that are unintentionally disrespectful to older students,” he says. “High school students don’t feel good about not being able to read. If they’re using a program that you would see in a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade, they’ll just tune-out. Although their reading level is pegged at a lower grade, they still have the emotional maturity of a teenager.”

## Focus on state test data

Anderson analyzed the FCAT results to identify 380 at-risk students from grades 9 and 10 for the browser-based intervention solution. The EHS implementation also called for a high commitment to fidelity from teachers: each student was to be guaranteed a minimum of one hour time-on-task each week for both semesters.

Overall, 60% of EHS’s bottom 25% students made learning gains—an 11 point increase from the previous

two years which had been stuck at 49% each year. This vaulted EHS into one of the top schools in the state for making gains in the previously immovable bottom 25%. Anderson remarks, “The students didn’t change. The teachers didn’t change. The only thing that changed was the intervention solution. That is what made the difference for this very hard to help group of struggling students! We had some students that doubled and tripled their scores on the FCAT in the span of 36 weeks.”

## Above the state average

On the heels of this successful intervention EHS implemented the Academy of READING in 2005 for 275 grades 9 and 10 students. The aggregate results for the year translated into 52% of the bottom 25% of students making learning gains. EHS had one of the top results in the state for this category, which averaged 46%—down 3% from the previous year. EHS continued to make gains that were well above the state average for the bottom 25% students for the second consecutive year.

“These back-to-back results show that we are addressing this vulnerable, at-risk student population more successfully and more consistently,” concludes Anderson. He also notes that teaching struggling high school students is a difficult job for teachers who may lack the skills, time or experience to help non-readers. “High school reading classes are tough places to help low achieving students realize quick performance gains. The data across the nation tells you that. The Academy of READING gives teachers a tremendous tool to do a great job often under difficult circumstances. That’s why wherever I go the Academy of READING is coming with me!”

## About AutoSkill®

AutoSkill creates award-winning intervention solutions to help close the proficiency gap in K-12 schools. For over 15 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, go to [www.autoskill.com](http://www.autoskill.com).

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A helping hand for literacy ◀

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