



Nash-Rocky Mount School District: Improving Student Scores Across the Curriculum



“Almost 20% of our incoming 9th graders scored below grade level on the state-mandated reading test and over 1/3 of the incoming 9th graders were identified as at-risk readers. The Academy of READING has helped them improve not only their reading skills, but also their performance in many of their other subjects.”

- Sylvia Matthews, Executive Director Middle/Secondary Education,
Nash-Rocky Mount Schools, NC

Helping High School Students Master Basic Reading Skills

Across the United States, an estimated 67% of all students beginning high school are reading below their grade level. To add to this challenge, research has shown that students who are having trouble mastering their fundamental reading skills are also more likely to struggle in their other subjects.

As a result, far too many high school students find themselves falling behind not only in their reading, but in multiple subjects across the curriculum. High school teachers do not have the time, resources or training to help these struggling students acquire the skills they need to succeed in high school and beyond.

North Carolina's Nash-Rocky Mount School District was no exception. In the winter of 2003, an extensive analysis of 8th grade EOG (End-of-Grade) reading test results revealed that almost 20% of their incoming 9th graders were reading below their grade level. According to Sylvia Matthews, Executive Director Middle/Secondary Education for the district, as these students prepared to make the transition from elementary to high school, they were likely to find themselves facing even greater difficulties.

Focus on:

Academy of READING®

Fast Facts:

Location:

- Nashville, NC

District:

- Nash-Rocky Mount, NC

Grades:

- PK-12

Student Population:

- 18,464

Student Demographics:

- White: 39.8%
- Black: 53.5%
- Hispanic: 4.3%
- Other 2.4%

Economically Disadvantaged:

- 54.7%

Website:

www.nrms.k12.nc.us/



A helping hand for literacy



Nash-Rocky Mount
Schools

The Academy of READING literacy intervention solution helps students improve performance in all subjects, by giving them the tools they need to master fundamental reading skills.

Falling Farther Behind

“There’s a huge difference between reading demands from the 8th to the 9th grade,” Ms. Matthews explains. “The text books are written at a higher level, the state tests are more detailed and in-depth and the grading is more stringent. Students having trouble in high school have larger skill gaps than those in elementary and middle school; they feel more self-conscious; and they are more likely to continue to fall even further behind.”

To help improve student performance, Nash-Rocky Mount administrators decided to incorporate the Academy of READING®, a comprehensive reading intervention program, into the regular curriculum for approximately 600 students at four traditional high schools, and 50 students at two alternative high schools.

Individualized Assistance. Comprehensive, Research-based Solution.

Based on extensive research and customer feedback, the Academy of READING is a complete, browser-based literacy intervention solution, designed to help struggling students realize fast, permanent gains in foundation reading skills.

Combining structured and sequential skill development, high time on task, individualized learning plans and positive feedback, the Academy of READING extends the effectiveness of a reading specialist to every student, allowing them to work independently on those areas where they need help the most.

Promoting Student Achievement Across the Curriculum

“Students who have difficulty reading often struggle in many of their other subjects,” Ms. Matthews says. “Implementing the Academy of READING has been one of our smartest choices for promoting student achievement across the curriculum.”

Students participating in the program worked on the Academy of READING as part of their English classes for an average of 20 minutes a day, 3-4 times per week. In addition, the district used the Academy of READING with other subjects where students were struggling because of reading difficulties.

For example, the district found a disproportionate number of students performing poorly in biology. Administrators analyzed the test data and found that the reason for the poor performance was because the students were unable to read the material and understand the vocabulary. After creating a pre-requisite life science course that paired the Academy of READING with lessons on the subject’s vocabulary, the students’ overall proficiency scores increased dramatically, with one school increasing from a proficiency level in biology of 35.5 to 55.7 in just one year.

Similarly, many students who tested poorly in mathematics were having trouble reading and understanding math word problems on state-wide tests. By helping these students improve their reading and comprehension, the Academy of READING enabled them to focus on solving the word problems, rather than struggling to read them.

After just a few hours on the Academy of READING, students dramatically improved their reading skills, as well as their self-confidence and class participation.

Using Mobile Labs to Reach More Students in Less Time

Across the district, students who were working on the Academy of READING began showing an almost immediate improvement in their reading ability. But with hundreds of students across six high schools using the program, the sheer logistics of coordinating so many students around a limited amount of lab space remained a challenge.

To reach more students in less time, district administrators authorized the creation of mobile computer labs which could literally be rolled from one class to another, allowing for up to three classes during a single period to have access to laptop computers equipped with the Academy of READING.

“All high schools struggle with having enough computers and lab time to support student activities,” Ms. Matthews says.

“By going to a laptop model, we were able to reach far more students more efficiently, and with a minimum of time, effort and resources. The result has been faster, more significant gains among individual students, and across the district.”

Significant Improvement Across the Board

Another important factor in Nash-Rocky Mount's decision to use the Academy of READING was the fact that high school students who have trouble reading often feel embarrassed or self-conscious. They are less willing to participate in class, and many are reluctant even to ask for assistance, often choosing to drop out rather than admit they have a problem.

After just a few short hours of working on the Academy of READING, teachers found a significant improvement not only in their students' reading skills, but also in their self-confidence, class participation and self-esteem.

“The Academy of READING makes it possible for students to master their reading skills without anyone else knowing on which level they are working,” explains Jane Gravely, a Media Specialist with Northern Nash High School.

“The impact it has had on our students' reading abilities and in all their subjects has been nothing short of phenomenal,” Ms. Matthews observes. “They're excited about it, and they actually like talking about it, instead of feeling embarrassed.”

“Although my class has only just started the program, I see a definite improvement,” adds Jennifer Baker-Smith, Rocky Mount High School English teacher. “Students who have never volunteered before now want to read.”

Exceptional Resource for Teachers and Administrators

According to Ms. Matthews, the program is an excellent resource for high school teachers and administrators. It gives them the tools to teach their students, and the data to show that it is working.

“The training we received was the best we've had for any product we've ever purchased. I'd recommend the Academy of READING without reservation to any district or school looking for a fast, proven and cost-effective way to improve their students' fundamental literacy skills.”

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.

AutoSkill®

A helping hand for literacy ◀

AutoSkill International Inc.

555 Legget Dr., Tower B, Suite 600

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2K 2X3

Tel: 800 288-6754 Fax: 613 287-0990

Email: info@autoskill.com www.autoskill.com