



Shilohview Elementary Expands a Proven Intervention Solution for At-Risk Students



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Jim Mills, District Curriculum Technology Integration Specialist

Shilohview Elementary was in dire need of a reading intervention solution that would produce immediate and measurable academic gains for a large population of at-risk students. Despite tireless efforts by a team of dedicated educators, the school’s grades were declining.

The overall profile of Shilohview’s students paints a grim picture and sets the context for the school’s considerable literacy challenges. More than three quarters of the students are underprivileged African Americans living in poverty. Perhaps the most telling statistic is the fact that 17.5% of the students who start with Shilohview will leave school at some point in the nine-month academic year.

“People move in and out of our region at a very high rate,” says Jim Mills, a former Language Arts/Reading teacher at the district’s middle school for 30 years and now the district’s Curriculum Technology Integration Specialist. “We needed to support in-class instruction with an innovative literacy intervention solution that would meet the varied needs of a large population of at-risk students—and do so very rapidly.”

Focus on:

Academy of READING®

Fast Facts:

Location:

- Trotwood, Ohio

School:

- Shilohview Elementary

Grades:

- K-6

Number of Students:

- 381

Student Demographics:

- White: 5.1%
- Black: 91.1%
- Other: 3.8%

Free and reduced lunch:

- 77.5%

Website:

www.trotwood.k12.oh.us/shilohview



A helping hand for literacy

Third Party Testing: DIBELS

The DIBELS measure of fluency was the primary method for identifying K-6 students to participate in an intervention program: specifically students who were two or more years behind. A total of 109 students from grades 3 to 6 were identified with the intervention program slated to begin in the January 2006 semester. Although Mills had extensive experience with a number of reading software programs he selected the Academy of READING as the intervention solution of choice; in part because of its focus on research and recognized strengths in phonics and decoding.

“Although our situation was particularly challenging, I thought the program would be a perfect fit for the students at Shilohview,” says Mills. “Several students had special needs and we had a large group of transient students who moved around so much that they never received a complete program of phonics or reading instruction. As such, many were unable to connect sounds with visual images.”

Each student started an intensive and highly individualized program consisting of 90 minutes of time-on-task in the computer lab per week. This reading intervention schedule would not have been possible using tutors or in-class instruction.

Measurable Gains... in Five Months

Documenting results was a critical requirement to properly assess the Shilohview intervention strategy. DIBELS was again used to benchmark students' progress, beginning with a test in January followed by three additional tests in the course of the semester.

“We saw that some of our students, who normally don't progress at benchmark rates for DIBELS testing, were performing as much as 30% beyond our expectations,” says Mills. The school moved 12% of the students out of Below Basic from the January test to the May test date, with 27% of the students showing a growth of one grade level or better—with only 5 hours and 29 minutes on task.

“I haven't found another program that so meticulously teaches the phonics skills to students who struggle with large group instruction—because they are either so far behind or they have enormous gaps in reading skills,” explains Mills. The Academy of READING enables students to progress at their own pace and to build fluency in the foundation skills of reading including phonemic awareness, sound symbol association, phonics and decoding.

For quality control at the district level, Mills always selects a few students to monitor closely on any new intervention program. He notes that one young lady was ‘aggressively uncooperative’ at the beginning. “She said that she didn't like computers and was not the least bit interested in learning a new program,” says Mills. “Once she experienced the motivational elements in the Academy of READING, her attitude completely turned around. She was one of our students who made at least a 30% gain.”

Looking to the immediate future, Shilohview will be mapping out an ambitious schedule to ensure that every student will have at least 40 minutes in the computer lab each day in the next school year. This strategy will result in a dramatic expansion of the use of the Academy of READING, due to the strengths of proven, if not remarkable gains.

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.

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