



St. Ferdinand Parish School Discovers the Value of Technology-in-the-Classroom



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Dr. Lucine Mastalerz, Principal

Although convinced that a software intervention solution had a crucial role to play in challenging a broad range of students, Chicago-based school Principal Dr. Lucine Mastalerz knew that her dedicated teaching staff would need to see results first before embracing any technology-based solution. “In order for our teachers to buy into literacy intervention software they would have to see the benefits and results,” she says. “You can’t impose an approach; you have to show them results. It has to be consultative and based on data.”

Challenge Each Student

Dr. Mastalerz had long been familiar with the enabling power of technology in the classroom and its ability to reduce stress for teachers while providing differentiated instruction for a self-paced class. Her strategy was to implement a progressive strategy that eased the Academy of MATH, a research-based software program, into the curriculum starting in the 2004/05 academic year. Her overriding goal was to keep St. Ferdinand’s accelerated students challenged in an inclusive classroom setting while simultaneously addressing the needs of struggling students.

Pilot Program

She began with a pilot program in the 2004/2005 academic year working with a resource teacher and 25 grade 4 math students. The students ranged from high performance problem students, who would finish ahead of other students and then start getting into mischief; to low performing students with severe language challenges. Dr. Mastalerz wanted to see if the Academy of MATH could be a strong solution for meeting the learning needs of such a disparate group of students.

Focus on:

Academy of MATH®

Fast Facts:

Location:

- Chicago, Illinois

School:

- St. Ferdinand Parish

Grades:

- 3-8

Number of Students:

- 325
- 54% of the school is ELL

Website:

www.saintferdinand.org/school

Individualized Instruction

The Academy of MATH proved to be up to the task and is specifically designed to challenge each student at their grade level. It is a browser-based literacy intervention software solution that utilizes a systematic approach to develop mathematical proficiency of students at all levels. The solution has a proven track record for helping students achieve permanent and measurable grade level gains of 2.0 or more in less than 10 hours of time on task in schools across the United States.

“I wanted an intervention solution that would challenge each individual student at their level,” says Dr. Mastalerz. “Each of our students has very different needs. “What I liked immediately about the Academy of MATH is that the program is designed to automatically intervene as required during student training.” It can accelerate when proficiency is demonstrated or remediate when necessary. The built-in motivational elements make a difference too—students get immediate feedback and lots of positive reinforcement.”

Student Confidence Soars

The pilot program attracted the attention of other teachers who saw immediate benefits from students using the Academy of MATH: ranging from accelerated learning to changes in attitude. “Our kids were immediately onboard and stayed onboard. We saw their confidence levels soar and the discipline problems of our high-performing students fade away because they felt challenged,” says Dr. Mastalerz.

Expanded Use, Measurable Gains – Results After Training

“For our 3rd grade, 73% of the students were at or above the national norm which is 11% higher than their 2nd grade math scores when 61.8% of the

students were at or above the national norm. Their obtained score of 63 was 6 points higher than the anticipated score. The results for our 4th grade were even more impressive,” reports Dr. Mastalerz. “88.5% were at or above the national norm which is 8.8% higher than their 3rd grade math scores from the previous year when 80% of the students were at or above the national norm. Their obtained score was 77; significantly higher than the anticipated score of 68.”

Dramatic Success Stories

As is often the case, average statistics can detract from shining individual successes. “The combination of AutoSkill and in-class instruction enabled some of our struggling students to catch-up two years,” reports Dr. Mastalerz. “One student made a three year gain and will be eligible for private high school. That is an amazing accomplishment.”

Growing Excitement from Teachers

There is a continuing groundswell of enthusiastic support from teachers at St. Ferdinand Parish School for the AutoSkill intervention solution. “The number of teachers that have chosen to introduce the Academy of MATH into their curriculum has grown from three to seven,” says Dr. Mastalerz. “And based on the results to date and our future plans, I expect that number to continue to grow because we are expanding the program to include grades 3 to 6 next year.”

Although Dr. Mastalerz never doubted the power of technology in the classroom it is nonetheless rewarding to have those convictions vindicated by tangible, measurable results that get everyone—from teachers to students—completely onboard.

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 ◀

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