

# READING INTERVENTION PROGRAM HELPS STRUGGLING READERS SUCCEED

By Paul Pantaleo

When a Grade 5 student successfully reached grade-level reading after participating in my reading intervention program, he said to me, "Thank you for not giving up on me even though I wanted to give up on myself." Another student said "I like coming here because all we do is read!" – a comment that captures the heart of my intervention, as research shows that volume of reading is the single most important predictor of academic success.

Success for every student is possible and my commitment to this goal guided my work when I left a tri-district early literacy position in September 2011 to work at Sir James Douglas Elementary School in Victoria as a Learning Support teacher.

From September 2011 to December 2014, 69 students from Grades 1 to 5 (one-third with a Ministry designation) who were below grade level in reading successfully reached the average band of instruction. Over this period, every Grade 5 student at the school not on a totally modified literacy program ended the year reading at or above grade level.

Using a pull-out Learning Support intervention model, I work with three to six students. The learning for each student is differentiated, and by using a modified guided reading approach, students read hundreds of high-quality leveled books at their independent and instructional (just right) reading levels.

By constantly adapting for variations in reading levels, I ensure that students are progressing comfortably within their zone of proximal development. Instruction of word identification, comprehension and vocabulary strategies is contextualized within authentic text. I use Richard Allington's structure of "side-by-side" teaching extensively and, in each lesson, one or two volunteer students join the group, providing invaluable support to this community of learners.

Students receive a minimum of 30-minute lessons, four to five times a week, for at least 10-12 weeks, although some students require more than one term of support. During the 30-minute lessons,

students read continuous text for approximately 23 minutes and engage in intensive contextualized word work as a group for the remaining time. Classroom teachers use similar word identification and comprehension strategies, making the transferability between Learning Support and the classroom seamless.

After participating in this reading intervention for even a short time, students develop an efficient processing system and effectively use appropriate problem-solving strategies, thus making them more confident and independent readers. This directly contributes to students' self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward reading, which are interrelated with academic achievement.

The systemic support and encouragement I receive from the school district and school are crucial to the ultimate success of the intervention. Most important, however, is communicating to students that we believe they can succeed and developing interventions that ensure they do so. ←

## The Reading Lesson Intervention Framework

My intervention model can be used by Learning Support, ELL or classroom teachers in either a pull-out or in-class model. It includes:

- Reading (independent and instructional level) (23 minutes)
- Contextualized Word Work (7 minutes)
- Home Reading (independent or instructional)

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