



Tier IV and Tier II Students' Reading Gains Motivated Teachers to Request MindPlay

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Teacher Newsletter

During the 2018-19 school year, about 600 students were placed on MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*). Most students were in grades three through seven. We identified these students in two ways: 1) They had an accommodation plan with a reading disability; or 2) They were assessed as Tier II students through the SBLC (School Building Level Committee) process. For students with accommodations, we were remediating their deficit; and for Tier II students, we were being proactive in order to prevent them from falling behind in reading. Many students who used the program with fidelity last year improved their reading performance, comprehension, and academic performance.

Reading Gains

We saw the biggest improvement with our third graders. Most of them pretested on *MindPlay* at least two reading levels below their enrolled grade at the beginning of the year. About 70 percent of students reached grade level by the end of year. Their performance on *MindPlay* correlated to their performance on the LEAP state assessment.

For schools that used *MindPlay* with fidelity (approximately 120 minutes per week), we saw great improvement overall. Some students with disabilities may not have advanced a grade level but they did make progress even though they remained in the MindPlay Performance Critical category. Many of our students used *MindPlay* because they lacked foundation skills. Their growth was in their independent reading, comprehension, and phonemic awareness.

2017 *MindPlay* Preview

During this preview, we placed a small number of students in a few schools on *MindPlay*. We saw so much success with those students who tested high for dyslexia that we also included students with reading deficits who needed accommodations. This included students who already had a 504 plan or were receiving specific interventions.

The interventionists in the pilot started seeing outstanding reading growth in as little as one month. The classroom teachers were also seeing differences with these students. They began asking if they could use *MindPlay* with their students in SBLC (School Building Level Committee) or Student Assistance Team. I would say, "*Absolutely! Please, use it for kids that need it.*" It grew from just Tier III to Title III students who needed an intervention to remediate their deficits. We went from me telling teachers about *MindPlay* to teachers coming to me and asking how to get their students on the program.

Teachers Choose *MindPlay*

We are required to provide remediation to our 504 students who can't read. We do not want to graduate twelfth grade students who cannot read and have this affect the rest of their lives. I am able to hold teachers accountable because I can track students' fidelity. I am not signing a plan if we are not administering *MindPlay* effectively.

With new initiatives in our district, buy-in is important. The teachers who are using *MindPlay* will tell the teachers who are not. When I say something in staff development meetings, teachers may not remember what I have said and what tools are available to them. Conversations about *MindPlay* keep it in their minds.

Teachers have several good research-based reading intervention programs from which to choose. They decide what they will use, and they are choosing *MindPlay* for most of their students. They use it because they see the quick results students are getting.

Praise for *MindPlay*

With *MindPlay*, I can give more students reading support than with any other intervention we offer. The program requires less teacher hours. We only need a teacher to facilitate the usage and make sure we are getting things done with fidelity. We monitor and implement, not teach *MindPlay*. That was a big selling point for me.

Teachers like being in control of their own data and seeing the reading growth of their students. Once that happens, they may think of other students who could benefit from *MindPlay*. The excitement is growing. Almost bi-weekly I can predict that someone is going to email me and ask me about getting *MindPlay* for their class. They may also ask to be given an individual teacher account within their school account in order to track their students' progress.

The biggest way to motivate a struggling student is to show them the data--where they started and where they are now. Students are excited to see how *MindPlay* has helped them grow. I encourage them to spend more time on *MindPlay*. I say, "*You are going to get caught up even faster, and you will be ahead of the other students.*" When they can pull their own report and see their gains, it motivates them to want to work on *MindPlay* more.

Spreading the Word about *MindPlay*

When I speak about *MindPlay* to district leaders, I say the same thing that I say to our teachers and students: "*Let me tell you about this awesome program, how easy it is to use and the difference it is making with our students.*" I always lead with the data. People are visual, and the facts speak for

themselves. In our state, teachers are concerned about how students perform on state tests. I might say, "*If you start using the intervention now, your students could be on grade level by the end of the year.*" The light bulb goes on, and they want to know about *MindPlay*.

Our State's 504 Coordinators (one per district) have developed close relationships and support one another. When I tell them how *MindPlay* is helping our struggling students become fluent readers, they want to use it too. For me, sharing is caring!

District Profile: 20,034 Students; Grades K-12; 55% Free/Reduced Lunch

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Math Teacher Inspires Sixth Grade Struggling Readers to Achieve Outstanding Reading Gains Using MindPlay

Leigh Ann Norris, Sixth Grade Math Teacher
Hamilton County Teacher of the Year, Florida 2020 Teacher of the Year finalist

Teacher Newsletter

In January 2019, we put all Level I students, based on the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA), and our bottom 25 percent students on MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*). I am a math teacher and do not have the resources to remediate reading for these students. I discovered that *MindPlay* has everything a teacher needs to teach struggling students to read fluently. The program does it all!

We divided these students into two classes. My class had 39 students working on *MindPlay* for 35 to 40 minutes, five days a week. I did it at the same time every day, so the students got into a routine. Every student who came in and started working within five minutes got a reward of five Skittles (candy). As a facilitator and monitor, I walked around the classroom to make sure they were on task and encouraged them to do their best.

Skittles were used as rewards for the students who received certificates of completion. Banners were placed in the hall with the students' names showing 100 percent usage. Sticker charts were also used to show competition. We did all we could do to motivate them. Most of all, I told them that I believed in the program and knew it was going to help them. Motivation is huge with our kids, and we had to be creative. Our students do not have self-motivation. One of the most important things we can do for them is help them take ownership of what they are doing.

May 2019 Successful Results

Fifty-three percent of my students made learning gains on the FSA state test. Many of them were in

the bottom 25 percent. They did it after working on *MindPlay* from January to May. I have never seen a program deliver this much improvement in such a short amount of time.

2019-2020 School Year – August to November Results

This year I have 34 students in my class. In 2½ months, 94 percent have already increased their Lexile scores. Some students have gone from a Lexile score of 880 to 1060; and some from 770, 830, and 890 to 1050.

In August, one of my students came into class and said, “*I do not want to do MindPlay; I did it last year. Why should I do it?*” I asked him if he made reading gains last year. He did not know. I pulled his FSA data. He had increased from a Level I to II on the state assessment. Once he saw his gains, he had faith in *MindPlay*. I told him that this year we would get him up to grade level. I also enjoyed having that conversation with other students who were on the program last year. I already feel excited about the reading gains I will see at the end of this school year.

Individual Student Successes in 2½ months

Two students went from Approaching to Exceeding based on MindPlay Performance Categories.

One student went from a fifth-grade comprehension score to seventh grade.

Several students went from a kindergarten to second grade reading level.

Monitoring and Motivating Pay Off

The key to this program is consistency. It is very easy for these students to get on the program. However, if I am not there to monitor them, they are going to do something else. I am there to remind students that this program will work for them if they do it consistently. Once they see themselves moving through the grade levels, their confidence increases, and they want to do their best.

During the data checks, I show each one of my students where they were previously, where they are on now, and what their Lexile score is. We then set goals for the next time we meet.

Praise for MindPlay

I like that the program covers everything: fluency, comprehension, and phonics. Many of our students need to build basic reading skills. The program covers everything in depth and is not childish for middle school students. They love the avatars, backgrounds and games. I like that students can monitor their time, see their scores, and keep track of their own data. They can click on their data, and we can talk about it in our data chats.

Like anything else, when I first started *MindPlay*, I was very hesitant. I was told that it will work, but I had to buy in. I am one of those people who is “all in” or not. I decided to be “all in” with *MindPlay* and motivate my students to get the most from this program. When the results came out last year, I was ecstatic. This year I believe in the program so much that I have put all of my Level I and II students on it because I know *MindPlay* works.

If you, as a teacher, are using *MindPlay*, you have got to be “all in” because the students will see right through you if you aren’t. If you believe in the program, they will believe in it too. I think *MindPlay* is a program that you can implement with fidelity, no matter what subject you teach, and your students will make outstanding reading gains.

Hamilton County Elementary School, Jasper, FL
School Profile: 975 Students; Grades K-6;
100% Free/Reduced Lunch

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