



# MindPlay Usage Contributes to a District's Grade Level Increase

Dayton Public School District, OH  
District Profile: 12,337 Students; Grades pre-K-12: 99% Free/Reduced Lunch

## Teacher Newsletter

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*MindPlay Literacy* was used by over 7,000 Dayton Public School students in grades 2-8 for the 2018-19 school year. The state test results for 2018-19 showed students who used *MindPlay* with fidelity (two hours a week) were 2x more likely to score proficient or higher, 3x more likely to be identified as an advanced reader, and 4x more likely to score proficient or better for students with disabilities.

These results helped the Dayton Public School District move from an "F" to a "D" grade level at the end of the 2018-19 school year. We believe *MindPlay* contributed to that success. The schools in our District that used *MindPlay* with fidelity increased their individual building scores and that helped increase our district grade. For example, Horace Mann Elementary School went from a "C" to a "B" on their report card. And their *MindPlay* data was far above other schools.

As a result of the incremental changes we saw in buildings that used *MindPlay* last year, I am very supportive of people using the program this year. When speaking to our educators, I use Horace Mann as an example. I say, "Look what this can do to help you move your students." The bigger plan moving forward is to increase *MindPlay* usage within the District.

### Challenges to Implementing *MindPlay*

Obstacles to using *MindPlay* still continue. In this school district, some people do not follow the district's prescription, plan and curriculum. I have a few principals who do not see the need for a piece of

software like *MindPlay*. To make sure that they use it, we monitor everyone very closely. For example, I just wrapped up three data meetings this morning in which three principals came in to show me that they could maneuver through the *MindPlay* website, see the data results, and answer questions about their data.

We currently share with everyone the changes that are happening in buildings that use *MindPlay* with fidelity. I remind principals that their teachers need to do this. In buildings where the principals finally understand why we are using this program, they are making sure that their teachers do it with fidelity. We are taking a hard stance on district adopted material. We want teachers to know that they need to use the recommended curriculum in their classrooms in order to change the lives of our students.

### Maximizing the Impact of *MindPlay*

The district runs "data chats" with grade level classroom teachers once each week. Students work on *MindPlay* while their teachers are in the data chats. The music, art, physical education, and computer science teachers go into the grade level classrooms and monitor the extra time on *MindPlay*.

We have started to offer more incentives for teachers and students in the classrooms; for example, a traveling class trophy, jean days for teachers, or donuts for the classroom.

### Future Plans for *MindPlay*

I am hopeful that each building will continue to increase their scores and receive at least a "C" or better. I think that *MindPlay* will help us do that in our reading areas and potentially in some of the content areas like science and social studies. Once students can read

because of the district's focus on literacy and their *MindPlay* intervention, overall student report card scores will improve. Many of our students come to school one to three years behind in reading. If they do not catch up in those first three years of school, they could end up four or five years behind by the time they get to high school. It is important to make sure that their futures are secure, and that begins with being literate!

Dayton Public School District is a school district on the rise. The high-quality interventions and materials that we are using in the classroom, like *MindPlay*, are part of the reason. As a superintendent, I recommend that other superintendents look at the results out of an urban school district like Dayton Public Schools. While we are not totally where we need to be in implementing *MindPlay*, I think there is proof that when *MindPlay* is done with fidelity for students who need it, *MindPlay* makes a difference in students' lives, as well as district grades.

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When we implemented *MindPlay* last year, we primarily focused on fidelity. This year we have clear and consistent expectations about how and when *MindPlay* should be used: We are focusing on growth and using *MindPlay* data to influence small group instruction and identify the best supports for every student. We also offer many training opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn about *MindPlay*. Conversations about *MindPlay* usage and growth are increasing in our district and positively impacting student usage and reading gains.

### Getting Support for *MindPlay*

Weekly *MindPlay* data reports are sent to the Senior Leadership Cabinet. The reports are also sent to principals who can monitor data that is broken down by classroom. The overall increase in data-driven decision making throughout the district supports the increase in *MindPlay* implementation and fidelity that we are seeing.

This year, principals must provide a quarterly data report to the Cabinet. In the meetings, principals are asked to demonstrate their knowledge of navigating *MindPlay* reports and to respond to specific *MindPlay* growth questions from cabinet members. These meetings are increasing accountability and expectations for school leaders to focus on *MindPlay* usage and growth.

Dr. Robert Sommers, our *MindPlay* representative, created a 2018-19 year-end report highlighting *MindPlay* results for the district. The report looks at usage compared to performance and growth, including our state assessment results. We share this report in trainings, and it helps build credibility for *MindPlay*.

### Praise for *MindPlay*

*MindPlay* provides detailed information to support students and influence instruction for grades 2-10. The reports make teachers aware of their students' deficits. Students might need remedial or enrichment skills; these are important things for teachers to know in order to support students' specific needs. The parent reports give snapshots of how students are doing and help parents understand how to support their children.

When we use *MindPlay* with fidelity and monitor growth, we can determine how best to support each and every student. Our usage is higher this year, and I think that is the result of clear expectations, regular monitoring, training, and reporting. Increased support and training for teachers and administrators also helps them buy in and use *MindPlay*.



# MindPlay Improves Reading Skills for Homeless Students

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## Teacher Newsletter

The Director of Project ACT, Dr. Marcia Zashin, heard about MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*) from a professional colleague and purchased 16 licenses in 2017. Today Project Act works with 50 *MindPlay* licenses to ensure that homeless children are given the same opportunities to advance their education as all the other students in Cleveland. *MindPlay* teaches them reading skills they can use in school and throughout their lives.

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Project Act provides direct instructional and support services to children and youth residing in temporary emergency shelters, traditional housing and/or doubled-up students staying with other families due to loss of housing. A holistic and comprehensive approach is used to deliver the instructional and support services necessary to ensure a child's success and ongoing participation in the educational system.

Project ACT Life Skills Coaches provide one-on-one emotional and instructional support to homeless students within the school building where they work. The Life Skills Coaches assess each student in the area of literacy, and along with classroom teachers, determine the best way to support students academically and which students will benefit from *MindPlay*. Students, depending on their need and time, work with the Life Skills coach 2-3 times a week for 45 minutes and can use *MindPlay* during these sessions.

Homeless students placed on *MindPlay* are typically a year or more behind their peers academically.

Those who have the most success are the students who come to school each day and use *MindPlay* at least three times a week for 30 minutes. Occasionally a student will login in at the library or from a computer that is accessible to them. Unfortunately, the majority of homeless students do not have access to computers or other internet access devices.

### Homeless Students Succeed on *MindPlay*

Fifty Project ACT homeless students from first through third grades who were at risk and below grade level in reading were placed on *MindPlay*. Homeless students can be enrolled in the Project ACT program at any time of the year. Students who stay at a school building where there is a Life Skills Coach all year have the opportunity to work with *MindPlay* until they reach grade level.

After 20 usage hours on *MindPlay*, some students can gain a reading level. The students who have had higher success rates with *MindPlay* are those who began the school year with the program and continued with it throughout the year. These students were assessed with the MindPlay Universal Screener, state tests, easyCBM (a set of measures for assessing early literacy skills from kindergarten to sixth grade), and classroom work.

Students who work with the program consistently see success in different areas after just a two-week period. Students learn phonemic awareness and phonetic rules that apply to their everyday classroom work. *Mindplay* teaches students to slow down while reading, try to break down words by sounding them out, and use the tools they were taught.

### **Student Encourages Others to Work on *MindPlay***

A new homeless student was enrolled in Project ACT in the middle of her third grade year and began immediately working with me. The student was reading at a K-1 grade level according to the *MindPlay* Universal screener. She hated reading and felt she couldn't do the work. I collaborated with the teacher who allowed her to work on *MindPlay* not only with me, but also in her classroom during free time. She made great strides that year in a short time, but unfortunately, not enough to be promoted to the fourth grade. She worked on *MindPlay* the following year and was caught up by the end of that school year. She now loves reading and writing. She tells other students: *"I worked with MindPlay and it works. You should try to go on it as much as you can to become a better reader."*

their lives, such as lack of food, shelter, and clothing. School needs to be a safe and consistent environment to help these students feel that they can succeed. *MindPlay* can help with that consistency, while also teaching them reading skills that will last a lifetime.

### **Free Time, Snacks and Prizes Motivate Students**

When my students finish their lessons, I typically give them free time on the computer and small snacks. The Universal Screener assesses progress and determines which medal was earned. Students earn prizes such as small toys and candy from a prize box. A student who earns a bronze medal gets one prize; a silver medal earns two prizes; and a gold medal earns three prizes. This seems to motivate students to work hard on their *Mindplay* lessons and/or to complete the *Mindplay* Universal Screener.

### **Praise for *MindPlay***

I like that *MindPlay* is consistent and easy to use. I also like the Universal Screener because it pinpoints weak areas of reading that need to be strengthened, student successes, and grade level goals. The *MindPlay* Manager enables teachers to create reports for an overall class and/or break it down by individual students, and the Universal Screener assesses students every two weeks.

This program is successful with our students. Homeless students have many inconsistent factors in