

January MindPlay Teacher Newsletter

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MindPlay Teacher Newsletter; Issue 20 - January 2019

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Lisa's Message:

Hello MindPlay Teachers!

We are honored to share these MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach success stories with you. MindPlay's explicit and systematic reading instruction will help your students experience success, too.

Story 1: Middle School Students Achieve Maximum Grade Level Improvement in Reading using MindPlay. Ralph Ramos, M.A., Principal, Camino Real Middle School, Las Cruces, NM. School Profile: 914 students; Grades 6-8; 51% free/reduced lunch.

"Reading gains reported within the MindPlay program correlate with the gains we are seeing in our students' PARCC reading assessment scores. The findings suggested that there was a statically significant positive correlation of moderate size between performance on the two assessments."

Story 2: Third Grade Struggling Readers Achieve Outstanding Reading Gains in a MindPlay Preview. Jennifer Brown; Teacher Leader; Louise Troy Elementary School, Dayton, Ohio. School Profile: 400 students; Grades Pre-K-6; 100% free/reduced lunch.

“Students in my third-grade class were performing far below grade level. At the beginning of the year, I had four or five students who could not read or write. Even though many of my students were not on grade level when they took the spring state assessment, they were making huge gains in reading and writing. MindPlay contributed to their success.”

Lisa Garcia | MindPlay

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Middle School Students Achieve Maximum Grade Level Improvement in Reading using *MindPlay*

Ralph Ramos, M.A., Principal, Camino Real Middle School, Las Cruces, NM

School Profile: 914 students; Grades 6-8; 51% free/reduced lunch

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The late Allen Crane, originator of the Lions Crane Reading Foundation, introduced me to MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*). While visiting his center, I saw struggling readers through upper quartile readers receive one-on-one instruction that really engaged them. I wanted to find a way to have this program in our school.

Implementing *MindPlay* was exciting. We found that it benefited both the lower and upper quartile of our students in reading, especially in fluency comprehension and vocabulary

The program gives an individualized assessment and provides instruction focused on individual needs. We maximize the program by serving the special education and bilingual population, as well as beginning struggling readers in our after-school program. It even works well for the upper quartile readers who aren't reading fluently.

We target students who are one or two years behind. As they work on MindPlay, they are catching up to their peers, who are proficient readers. The key to success is having fidelity and an instructor who hones in, wants to make a difference, and holds students accountable. We expect students to be on the program a minimum of 45 minutes a day.

Successful Results

For the past six years, we have been using *MindPlay* with our students and have seen huge gains in our students' reading scores. *MindPlay* has played a significant role in developing stronger readers in our school.

For example, during the 2016-2017 school year, 103 students from grades six, seven and eight worked on *MindPlay*. Based on MindPlay Universal Screener year-end scores, these students had an average reading level gain of 1.32 years. At the start of the school year, 63% were reading two or more years **below grade level**; at the end, only 49% were below grade level. We had 20% reading at **grade level** at the beginning of the year; and 35% at the end.

For the 2017-2018 school year, students for all grades had an average reading gain of .83 years, based on MindPlay Universal Screener. (Most 7th and 8th graders were continuing program users, and sixth graders were new to *MindPlay*.) At the start of the school year, 50% were reading two or more years **below grade level**; at the end, 45%. We had 29% reading at **grade level** at the beginning of the year; and 38% at the end.

The reading gains reported within the MindPlay program correlate with the gains we are seeing in our students' PARCC reading assessment scores. At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, a series of analyses were undertaken to determine whether performance on the MindPlay Universal Screener significantly predicted performance on the PARCC English-Language Arts assessment. The findings suggested that there was a statically significant positive correlation of moderate size between performance on the two

assessments. Currently, we are conducting a study with the University of Arizona to verify the correlation between the two assessments.

Outstanding Student

One high school sophomore came to our after-school program reading at the third grade level. For one year, he worked with fidelity on *MindPlay* and gained six grade levels. He was willing to work alongside elementary school students in order to improve his reading ability. He graduated this year!

Praise for *MindPlay*

With the individualized instruction *MindPlay* offers, students work on their own needs at their own pace. We have one teacher who facilitates the *MindPlay* reading intervention during school, and volunteers who monitor students in the after-school program. We have a test every 14 days to look over gains or regressions. The data allows me to have a conversation with a monitor about a specific student. I can ask: “*What is going on with John?*” “*Why is he not achieving the same amount of growth as other students?*” It might be his attendance, the program, or some other distraction. With a quick snapshot of the results, I can hold both the facilitators and students accountable.

Motivating Students

We have a goal: to read 300 words per minute (wpm) in middle school. Any student who reaches 300 wpm gets a t-shirt to showcase their success. We had to buy 400 wpm t-shirts because the overachievers earned them. Students feel happy when they get their t-shirts because they know that they are becoming proficient readers like their classmates.

I am hooked on *MindPlay* and strongly recommend it. Every school focuses on different areas to improve literacy. *MindPlay* addresses this diversity and will meet the unique needs of every student. We endorse *MindPlay* at Camino because we believe in it. We try to do what is best for our students. This individualized reading intervention program is outstanding not only for me, the principal, but also for my students who are working toward maximum grade level reading improvement.

To see the video we produced to spotlight *MindPlay* at Camino Real Middle

School, please click **here**. <https://vimeo.com/121154432>

Third Grade Struggling Readers Achieve Outstanding Reading Gains in a *MindPlay* Preview

By Jennifer Brown, Teacher Leader, Louise Troy Elementary School, Dayton, Ohio

School Profile: 400 students; Grades Pre-K-6, 100% free/reduced lunch

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During the second semester of the 2017-2018 school year, our district previewed MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*) in grades three and seven. As a third grade teacher at that time, I was asked to use *MindPlay* in my classroom from January through the end of the school year. Even though it felt disruptive to introduce *MindPlay* in the middle of the year, the students and I persevered. The results of that preview turned me into an advocate for *MindPlay*.

My third grade inclusion class included five identified IEP and 19 regular education students, a total of 24. Students worked on *MindPlay* 30 minutes a day, five days a week for about four months.

Outstanding Reading Gains

Students in my third grade class were performing far below grade level. At the beginning of the year, I had four or five students who could not read or write. Even though many of my students were not on grade level when they took the spring state assessment, they were making huge gains in reading and writing. *MindPlay* contributed to their success.

In my new position this year, I monitor *MindPlay* usage and growth for the entire school. Reviewing all of our classes, I see that the students who use *MindPlay* with fidelity have the most reading gains. It proves that if teachers use the program with fidelity, they will see positive outcomes. I see little or no growth from the classrooms that do not give students time on *MindPlay*.

From preview to the end of November, 2018, these are the greatest gains I have seen for students using *MindPlay*:

- Two third grade students have gone from a first grade reading level to a third grade level in three months.
- One sixth grade student went from kindergarten to a third grade reading level in three months.
- One fourth grade student started with the preview in third grade reading at the third grade level. As of November, 2018, he is now at the eighth grade level.
- One sixth grade student started at a seventh grade reading level in August, 2018; and as of November 2018, he is at a ninth grade level.

Incentives to Work on MindPlay

MindPlay was a big change and challenge for my students. I had them work on *MindPlay* for 30 minutes before they went to lunch. I told them that if they got in their 30 minutes, they were allowed to get on a website of their choice for the extra five minutes before lunch. The incentive worked!

Students liked the leader board. I would recognize the top five students every day and gave out rewards based on their activity, not level of performance. They received a gummy bear or some little treat for how much work they accomplished on a specific day.

Praise for MindPlay

As a third grade teacher, I was not a believer in nonsense words. I learned that the nonsense words in *MindPlay* helped my students who did not know how to decode words. They knew words, but their spelling was awful because they were missing foundational phonics skills. These students could get by reading in third grade, but it was hindering their overall learning skills. Students got very frustrated working on *MindPlay*; they did not like “the lady” in the program making up words they could not read. Once I got them to stop and listen, they learned how to spell the words they were hearing, and those sounds transferred to their writing.

MindPlay covers the foundational skills that many of our students in grades 3-6 may have missed in the primary grades.

The program is designed to meet an individual student’s needs. The reports make it easy for me to see if they are mastering the skills they need or not.

With the error reports, I can see how students are responding to the different activities on the computer. The reports enable me to see if they are just playing around, like hitting “xxx, jjj, or ppp” for an answer instead of working and learning. Realistically, a teacher cannot see what every student is doing.

Overcoming Challenges

MindPlay was introduced to us in the middle of the year. I had to implement something that was different from what I was using and had to find more time in my schedule. It was difficult for me and the students, but once I bought into it, things moved along better.

A lot of my students were missing key foundation skills so working on *MindPlay* was frustrating for them. They were missing phonemic awareness and not hearing the sounds, and that made it even more difficult. I had to put some rules in place: 1) It was not OK to yell at “the lady” who was saying the different words; and 2) they had to be on the program for 30 minutes.

Even though I wasn’t a big fan of *MindPlay* in the beginning, I encouraged my students to work on the program. In the end, we saw a lot of reading growth. When teachers try *MindPlay* for the first time, I suggest that they stick with it, especially the time recommendations. If they set a time every day to use the program, they will see positive results.

