March MindPlay Teacher Newsletter

MindPlay Teacher Newsletter; March 2019

Lisa's Message:

Hello MindPlay Teachers!

Exciting news: The new Manager for teachers is now fully operational and the Student Achievement Reward Page is in redesign. Program upgrades are subtle, but they contribute to accelerating student achievement and helping struggling readers become fluent readers.

We are also excited to share these two MindPlay Newsletter success stories with you. We hope you think they are as inspirational as we do:

Story 1: Lyle Patty, Third Grade Teacher, Mayfair Elementary School, Fresno, CA

Non-reading students improved to the second-grade level, and a few have already improved to the third-grade level. In prior years, about 65 to 70 percent of my students achieved grade level. With MindPlay, 80 to 85 percent achieved grade level. Of the students who remained at Critical, two of them were later identified for special education. They had improved, but not as significantly, because of cognitive delays. My other Tier I and Tier II students demonstrated outstanding results.

Story 2: Gladys Vazquez, Dyslexia Therapist & Orton Gillingham Teacher, Lincoln School, North Bergen, NJ

Looking at the School Improvement Report, we are already seeing a decrease of five percent in the number of students testing as Critical (students who started the program two or more grade levels below their current grade). Additionally, we now have one student in the Exceeding category (above grade level); previously we had none. Working at fidelity, some of our students have increased their reading by one entire grade level in three months.

Sincerely,

Lisa Garcia| MindPlay
Director of Educational Services

Economically Disadvantaged Students
Achieve Outstanding Reading Improvement with
MindPlay

By Lyle Patty, Third Grade Teacher, Mayfair Elementary School, Fresno, CA
School Profile: 732 students; K-6 Grades; 100% free/reduced lunch
Email: Lyle.Patty@fresnounified.org

During the 2016-2017 school year, I introduced MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*) to my entire first grade class of 24 students. The core curriculum alone was not addressing their instructional needs adequately, and we had limited access to technology. I believed that *MindPlay* could help me improve their skills significantly, and I found a way to buy it for my class. As a result of my students' success with *MindPlay*, our school chose to participate in a *MindPlay* preview for the 2017-2018 spring semester.

First Grade *MindPlay* Results Lead to a School Preview

In February, 2018, I presented the gains of my first grade students from the previous year to our staff. I used the *MindPlay* progress monitoring graph and showed "before" and "after" *MindPlay* scores based on *MindPlay* Performance Categories. When we began *MindPlay*, eighteen students were at Critical, five were at Approaching, and one was at Meeting. After *MindPlay* participation, only four students were at Critical, and the rest were at Meeting or Exceeding.

Non-reading students improved to the second grade level, and a few to the third grade level. In prior years, about 65 to 70 percent of my students achieved grade level. With *MindPlay*, 80 to 85 percent achieved grade level. Of the students who remained at Critical, two of them were later identified for special education class. They had improved, but not significantly, because of cognitive delays. My other Tier I and Tier II students demonstrated outstanding results.

When I presented this data to our staff, most of them were skeptical. Our educators had become accustomed to the status quo in which students entered as low achievers and maintained low achievement. To have 40 to 50 percent of our students attain reading grade level was considered good. I shared my success with *MindPlay* because I hoped teachers would use the program, replicate the results, and succeed in closing foundational reading gaps.

Launching a School Preview (2017-2018 Spring Semester)

All 575 students from first to sixth grade, including five in kindergarten, were placed on *MindPlay*. Teachers committed to using *MindPlay* at least four days a week, 30 minutes a day from the middle of March until May 31—3.5 months in all.

Teachers who used *MindPlay* with fidelity and enthusiasm had the most success. They gave motivational speeches in order to get their students excited about working on the program; some implemented a reward system. They asked me questions about *MindPlay* and wanted to know how to use it more effectively.

Five third-grade teachers worked together as a team. Their students demonstrated the most reading improvement. These teachers scheduled time in their daily schedule to use *MindPlay,* walked around to monitor student participation, tracked their fidelity, and looked at data to identify common errors. They were actively involved and engaged with students using the program.

2017-2018 Spring Preview Success

Third grade students performed the best during the preview. They had an average .63 (two thirds) reading grade level gain. The students who showed the most success started at Critical. They filled in gaps in phonics and fluency. Thirty-three percent of the students at Critical moved to Approaching or Exceeding. Students from one third grade had an average .96 grade level gain; another grade had an average .91 grade level gain.

Fourth grade students also had an average .63 (two thirds) grade level gain. Students began the preview with 45% at Critical and ended with only 19% at Critical (a 26% grade level gain).

Teachers Help Students Succeed on *MindPlay*

Teacher involvement is critical to students' reading gains. I explain to my students that they have an opportunity to become better readers. I want them to feel excited because we have something to help them. Teacher motivation affects student motivation! A teacher needs to trust that the program will do what it was designed to do, and then be patient.

Realistic expectations are important because reading gaps cannot be eliminated overnight. I believe that any classroom in our school can replicate my results because my students come from the same environments, have the same issues, and can achieve the same success as other students.

Praise for MindPlay

MindPlay allows students to work at their own level. They have little frustration with the program because they are working at the "right" level. I like the progress monitoring. Every two weeks the assessment shows the students' growth. The printed certificates are a mini reward, and students can see that they are making progress.

Our students come from areas with high poverty, high crime, and low parental involvement. However, with the right tools, technology, and motivation, they can learn as well as other students in our district. I want to shatter the bias that students on our side of town can't learn. It is just that they need the right tools, resources and programs to help them fill the learning gaps they face. *MindPlay* gives these students the same opportunities to learn to read as other students. Teachers are a significant part of that process too!

Elementary School Struggling Readers Achieve Outstanding Reading Gains Using MindPlay

By Gladys Vazquez, Dyslexia Therapist & Orton Gillingham Teacher,
Lincoln School, North Bergen, NJ
School Profile: 670 Students; Grades 1-8; 87% Hispanic/Latino;
79% Free or Reduced Lunch
Email: gvazquez@northbergen.k12.nj.us

Our school district decided to implement Orton-Gillingham reading methodology in the 2018-2019 school year. After reviewing DIBELS scores and other student test data, the district pursued MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*). It appeared to be a more cost-efficient and effective way to implement research-based instruction for struggling readers at Lincoln School. Preliminary reading gains for these students have given us confidence that we will see significant improvement in their reading levels by the end of the school year.

Each grade level was gradually introduced to *MindPlay* to ensure that our resource teachers and students understood the importance of the program. Most students started using the program in November, 2018. I am responsible for managing the main account and generating weekly reports that are provided to our administration to ensure program fidelity.

Presently, we have 39 students in inclusion settings (resource students) from first through fourth grade. They are using *MindPlay* for 30 minutes a day, five days a week, for their Tier II/Tier III intervention.

Successful Results as of 2/19/2019

We began using *MindPlay* at Lincoln School this past November, and we have already

seen significant gains in student reading achievement.

The School Achievement Report identifies the amount of curriculum completed by students in each component of the program as compared to grade level expectations. After analyzing the most recent report, grade one students have achieved a 16% gain, grade two students achieved a 41% gain, grade three students achieved a 29% gain, and grade 4 students achieved a 36% gain. We consider that these gains reflect significant progress compared to baseline results reported at the beginning of the program.

The School Improvement Report already shows a decrease of five percent in the number of students testing as Critical (students who started the program two or more grade levels below their current grade). Additionally, we now have one student in the Exceeding category (above grade level); previously we had none. Working at fidelity, some of our students have increased their reading by one entire grade level in three months.

Outstanding Student Accomplishment

On October 25, 2018, I assigned a *MindPlay* license to a second-grader who was recently diagnosed with dyslexia. He has been using the program both at home and at school. He has mastered 34 lessons in approximately 16 hours. His teacher and parents report that he has made significant progress in fluency and phonics. The student looks forwards to seeing all his awards on the "Wall of Fame" outside our classroom.

The parent of this student, who is also a teacher in our district, wrote the following:
"Mindplay has been an amazing resource for us to use with our son. It is amazing what 30 minutes a day has done to improve his spelling and decoding so far. It is helping him fill in his gaps in reading, grammar, and phonics. I like that the program won't move on unless he has mastered a skill and that it continually assesses to monitor improvement and skills learned."

"Wall of Fame" is a Great Motivator

In our school, we created a "Wall of Fame" for all students using *MindPlay*. Each time a student receives a certificate, we display it on the wall outside the classroom. A copy is also sent home to parents. Our students look forward to earning certificates, which not only motivates them, but also enhances their self-esteem and confidence level.

We also conducted a Parent Training session last January to introduce *MindPlay* to parents and instruct them on how to use the program at home. Mr. Michael Ritchie from

MindPlay did a live webinar for parents that night which focused on the MindPlay Parent Report. Parents as well as our administrators are excited about the program. We believe that a strong home-school commitment will further enhance each child's success with the program.

Praise for MindPlay

MindPlay benefits struggling readers:

From what we have experienced thus far, we consider *MindPlay* to be an amazing intervention product for our Tier II and Tier III struggling readers. First and foremost, it is affordable, costing only pennies per-student, per-day, and easy to use. The program contains attractive high interest graphics, multiple approaches to support student understanding and learning, and multiple progress monitoring and usage reports. These make *MindPlay* a premier program initiative for us. The Director of Special Services, Robert Kornberg, is already discussing the possibility of expanding *MindPlay* to special needs students in other schools within our district.

MindPlay offers four major benefits for teachers:

First, *MindPlay* is entirely web-based and individualized. This allows teachers to have time to accommodate or modify assignments and lessons for other students.

Second, as individual student test scores increase, teacher evaluations along with school, principal, and district ratings will also increase.

Third, teacher's SGO (Student Growth Objectives) results are beginning to show an increase which will be reflected in their overall annual rating, and

Fourth, Professional Development hours are awarded for attending the training.

A special thank you to Lynda Dixon who arranged the *MindPlay* presentation and provided a complimentary breakfast to our teachers and administrators. We also appreciate that Michael Ritchie gave us an extremely valuable introductory training session. This session included a demonstration with actual Lincoln School student data along with an interpretation of the numerous reports produced through *MindPlay*. Being able to see growth when the program is used with fidelity helped our staff gain a better appreciation of the value of this product for administrators, teachers and students.