



Virtual Charter School Students Achieve Outstanding Reading Growth with MindPlay

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Epic Charter School State Profile: 32,264 Students; Grades
PreK-12
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Teacher Newsletter



Epic Charter Schools is a free PreK-12 public school serving the State of Oklahoma for students and their parents seeking a non-traditional educational setting utilizing virtual, individualized instruction. Within appropriate guidelines,

the curriculum is self-paced and accessible to students at a time that is best suited for their learning style. In addition to each child's core curriculum, MindPlay has proven to be a vital reading program. It allows students to work independently and accomplish outstanding reading gains.

Because Epic is a virtual school, we did not have any huge adjustments to students' schedules during the pandemic school closures: They picked up where they left off after a brief school recess.

Of the seventeen students on my roster, four regular education students began working on MindPlay in September 2019 and will continue through the end of the school year. They are required to work in MindPlay thirty minutes a day, five days a week.

Reading Improvement on NWEA MAP

Our school utilizes the NWEA MAP Assessment to benchmark reading progress. It is essential that third

graders in particular exhibit growth on this benchmark between the fall and winter assessments: Substantial growth could indicate a proficient score on the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test in the spring. Students in Oklahoma need a proficient or advanced score in order to be promoted to fourth grade. Of my two third-grade students using MindPlay, one had a 12% increase on the December MAP Reading Assessment (October to December usage), and the other had a 15% increase (September to December usage).

Outstanding Student Success (from 9/3 to 5/4)

One fourth grade student has exceeded grade level requirements. She has met the 4th grade fluency goal of 140 WPM. She is reading 10th grade level text and working toward the goal of 270 WPM. She started at a 5th grade reading comprehension level, and her current independent reading level is 10th grade—a five level gain with 71 MindPlay usage hours.

One third grade student has met the 3rd grade fluency goal of 115 WPM and is reading 4th grade level text and working toward the goal of 140 WPM. He started at a Kindergarten grade reading comprehension level, and his current independent reading level is 3rd grade—a four level gain with 41 MindPlay usage hours.

Another third grade student has exceeded grade level requirements. She has met the 3rd grade fluency goal of 115 WPM. She is reading 6th grade level text and working toward the goal of 195 WPM. She started at a 2nd grade reading comprehension level, and her current independent reading level is 5th grade—a three level gain with 65 MindPlay usage hours.

An eighth grade student has exceeded grade level requirements. She has met the 8th grade fluency goal of 235 WPM. She is reading 9th grade level text and working toward the goal of 250 WPM. She started at a 7th grade reading comprehension level, and her current independent reading level is 9th grade—a two level gain with 63 MindPlay usage hours.

motivate and challenge them to new levels of learning.

Teaching in a Virtual School

Teaching at Epic Charter Schools affords me the opportunity to personalize each child's education in a way that was impossible in a large classroom setting. It has been a tremendous joy to develop positive, ongoing relationships with each family on my roster! Together, we are able to create individualized, standards-based learning plans for each child that cater to each student's particular learning style and unique interests.

Because the students are learning virtually, they can work on required courses at a pace that fits their family's schedule. I am able to meet with each of my students regularly to offer one-to-one guidance and instruction. Depending on the needs of my students, my individual face time with each student ranges from one hour per week to one hour every other week. I also hold office hours each day and am available via zoom, email, or text whenever students need additional instruction.

As an educator in a virtual charter school, I have an incredible opportunity to watch my students grow academically from year to year. I follow my students through each grade all the way to graduation!

MindPlay is considered an "Epic Essential" and has become an important tool in closing academic gaps for our struggling students as well as enriching reading skills for on-level and advanced students. Each student takes ownership of his/her learning by following an individualized pacing plan, and I hold them accountable to stay on pace each week. The success students experience while using MindPlay



Rural Middle School Students Excel on MindPlay in a Short Period of Time

Terri Hee, Teacher on Special Assignment; Rosemary Clarke
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Teacher Newsletter

RCMS is the only middle school in Pahrump. We have 1030 students and serve all types of students in accelerated to self-contained classrooms. In this rural, economically disadvantaged population, MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*) is improving our students' reading skills quickly and preparing them to succeed in high school.

Most of our students started working on *MindPlay* on 1/16/20. We started with the entire sixth grade and progressed through the other grade levels to include all students. Our sixth-grade students are working toward 20 minutes per day, and seventh and eighth grade students are using it 20 minutes per day, twice a week. We strongly recommend that all students work on *MindPlay* at home using their Chromebooks.

Successful Reading Gains

Our staff was ecstatic at the overall 0.26% increase in reading level from 1/16/20-2/16/20. Based on the MindPlay Performance Categories, we had teachers that saw little improvement while others saw as much as a 1.41-year improvement in one month.

We saw amazing growth between the two Benchmark Assessments from January to March. Overall, students improved during the three months on the program. We find that the rate of improvement is related to student effort and time spent on the program.

One sixth grade teacher's Class Improvement Report as of April 24, 2020, showed that students gained a

.35 average reading level in three months (20 minutes usage per day).

MindPlay and Distance Learning

Using *MindPlay* during school closures and distance learning is working out great for us. Our students have several options to choose from while working from home. They are gravitating to *MindPlay* because they are familiar with it and know that it is helping them improve their reading.

Praise for *MindPlay*

MindPlay is different from other programs that we have used because it interacts with each student. Our younger students love the game-like structure and the ability to create their own characters.

For the most part, *MindPlay* allows teachers to interact with their students in creative and exciting ways. We put a lot of effort into making *MindPlay* a positive experience. We don't want it to be just another required educational assignment.

Students like the certificates and getting praise from their teachers. The students talk about *MindPlay* and their successes among themselves.

Future Plans for *MindPlay*

After the initial *MindPlay* rollout this year, I did not "push" for students to work on it in class. We offered *MindPlay* as part of a distance learning assignment, but few students have taken advantage of it.

As a result of the success we are seeing this year, I plan to offer *MindPlay* as part of the curriculum. I want *MindPlay* to be a daily start up activity for the

first month of school next year. After the 30-minute warmup with *MindPlay*, I will introduce skills, procedures and Kagen classroom management strategies for the remaining 20 minutes.

Students enjoy working on *MindPlay* and teachers are seeing outstanding results. We look forward to seeing greater results next year when we use the program with fidelity.

Elementary School Students in Rural NV Show Amazing Gains on MindPlay

Amber Ryness, K-5 Teacher, Gabbs Elementary,
Gabbs, NV (NYE School District)
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Free/Reduced Lunch
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In our small rural school, I teach 22 students from kindergarten through fifth grade. They are all achieving outstanding reading gains on MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach (*MindPlay*), including our two special education students.

We started using *MindPlay* in September 2019, and the students used it about 35 minutes a day. *MindPlay* was especially helpful with my four kindergarten students. In a classroom with six different grades, I was having difficulty meeting all of their needs. In addition, *MindPlay* gave me an activity that all my students could do at the same time.

The individualized learning within the *MindPlay* program works well for all of my students. They work at their own pace and celebrate each other's successes on *MindPlay*. They love the certificates they receive. Most of these students have grown up together, and many have siblings in the same class. They are a very "tight knit" group.

Amazing Student Successes

To formally measure reading growth for my third, fourth and fifth grade students (five in total), we used the *MindPlay* progress monitoring reports. Our total average reading grade level improvement was 1.93% through April 2020--a total of eight months. I have some students that moved up three grade levels in less than one year! Most students gained at least one grade level reading improvement. Kindergarten and first grade students are tracked by Phonics more than an actual reading level.

Although this amazing growth surprised me, I know that my students work hard and want to learn. My fourth and fifth grade students have found a new love for writing stories. I think this happened because working on *MindPlay* increased their confidence.

Our students continue to improve their reading skills while working on *MindPlay* in their own homes during our school closure. I am able to monitor their usage and progress from my home. We provided computers to all students who did not have access to one at home.

MindPlay is a success with our students. They love it, and so do I! It allows me to reach every student on an individualized basis in a challenging multi-grade classroom setting.