*In her own words: Stacey Breaud, Adolescent Literacy Coach in Washington Parish School System, Franklinton, LA, tells the district story.*

**District Profile:**Washington Parish School System, Franklinton, LA

**Student Population:**

• 5,500 students in grades PreK-12

• 98% free/reduced lunch

• Schools: 10

**District Performance Score:** C
**Graduation Rate:** 81% (2017-2018)

**Reading Challenge**

Our district had a group of middle and high school students with deficits in phonics, fluency, and comprehension. These regular and special education students had not made substantial gains in past intervention programs and were embarrassed by their reading struggles. Middle and high school teachers are not typically trained in how to teach foundational skills, so we needed a program that would help fill those gaps.

Identification of learners who needed intervention was the first step. During the summer of 2018, we studied data to determine which students would be placed on MindPlay. Students with lower Lexile levels than expected were given the district’s computer-based phonics screener at the end of the 2017-18 school year. In addition to those results, we also reviewed DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment scores for students who had been with the district since elementary school.

Learners were placed on MindPlay Virtual Reading Coach for the 2018-19 school year. When students began using the program, most of them could not decode, which affected their fluency and comprehension. Most had reading fluency at K to one grade level, and some at grade two, based on the MindPlay diagnostic assessment. Our goal was to have students improve their decoding skills, and MindPlay seemed to be a perfect solution.

A total of 220 students from five middle and high schools worked on MindPlay for a 45-minute class period five days a week. District-wide, I am very pleased with the fidelity. Both teachers and students worked diligently to take advantage of all that the program offers.

**Outstanding Reading Improvement**

We have seen gains in student performance. Lexile scores have improved. Students are better able to perform in classes across content areas. We also saw significant gains in state testing for some students.

**LEAP Results:**

• We compared 2018 to 2019 Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) scores and were excited about the reading gains our students made in one year: 46% of our MindPlay students made gains on the LEAP assessment, and 25% grew a performance level on LEAP (for example, unsatisfactory to approaching basic or approaching basic to basic).

• Eight high school students grew a performance level on LEAP. These students had previously scored Unsatisfactory for many years–the lowest achievement level on the LEAP. Growing an entire achievement level in one year was quite an accomplishment for them, given the complexity of the LEAP assessment. We speculate that students had previously lacked the decoding skills to perform at grade level. Once MindPlay repaired these phonics deficits, students were able to access the complex, grade-level text on the LEAP assessment and make gains. These students could already think on grade level; they simply needed the skills to decode written words.

**Scholastic Reading Inventory Results:**

• On the Scholastic Reading Inventory, 62% of our MindPlay students made gains.

• Thirty-five percent finished at an Advancing level on the Scholastic Phonics Inventory, and 42% are working at a Developing level, for a total of 77% improvement.

**MindPlay Assessments:**

• On the MindPlay fluency test, 50% of our students grew at least two grade levels.

• Phonics screener results show our students are filling in gaps. Many have completed, or are near completing, their phonics curriculum. Students who did not complete the phonics curriculum are being placed on MindPlay again this year.

**Motivating Students: An Opportunity to be Creative**

Students who have historically struggled with reading tend to avoid the task. One high school teacher did a great job celebrating with the certificates the program provides**.**Every time the teacher posted a certificate on the wall, it was publicly announced, everybody clapped, and the student’s picture was taken in front of it. One teacher taped one-dollar bills to the chalkboard. He picked a couple of kids who worked really hard every day and gave them a dollar bill to buy a snack. One teacher awarded students with free time to do something she approved if they completed their MindPlay time for the day. A sixth-grade teacher had a sticker system that worked well for her class.

**High Praise for MindPlay**

For struggling middle and high school readers who have an unsuccessful history with past interventions, MindPlay has proven a great solution. We think MindPlay is especially effective because it addresses each student’s individual difficulties, with no time wasted on what they already know. The fact that students cannot move on until they have mastered a skill is another plus for them and the program.

Ease of use is one of the things I like best about MindPlay. We like that the program is computer-based. It gives students an important element of privacy, and having the licenses over the summer is another bonus. We send letters home to parents with their child’s login information so students can work on MindPlay throughout the summer.

We are excited that our struggling readers will work with MindPlay again this year. MindPlay is, by far, the most effective phonics program we’ve seen for middle and high school students.