

FAST FACTS

Northwood Elementary
School

Baltimore, Maryland

GRADES: 3-5

NO. OF STUDENTS: 14

CHALLENGE

Students were lacking basic
phonics and decoding skills

SOLUTION

S.P.I.R.E. intensive reading
intervention was used for
two years with focus
students

RESULT

Students made great
progress on DIBELS reading
assessments

epsbooks.com

800.255.5750

Northwood Elementary Students Make Great Strides in Reading

Background

Special education teacher Carolyn Razon-Fernandez was looking for an intensive intervention program for some of her lowest performing readers in her elementary classes. Some of her grade 3 students were reading at a kindergarten level. The reading gap was significant and posed a particularly great challenge in terms of closing this reading gap. For the past two years, Mrs. Razon-Fernandez used the intensive reading program, *S.P.I.R.E.*, to build the groundwork for success in reading in her self-contained classroom to develop early literacy concepts to build the foundation for reading effectively.

Results

Student progress was measured using a few different assessments including the Woodcock Johnson IV and DIBELS assessments. Students made very good progress on each testing measure used with these students.

For example, several of her students began in grade three with an average of 32 Words Per Minute on grade three level text. These students later scored an average of 57 WCPM on the DIBELS assessment using grade four level text.

Another three of her students began in grade four with an average of 12 Words Per Minute on grade four level text and later scored an average of 60 WCPM DIBELS assessment using grade five level text.

Mrs. Razon-Fernandez shared that she was “extremely impressed with the improvement of accuracy rates. As we know, if the children are not reading the text accurately, then they will not be able to comprehend the text.” Further, she stated, “One of the students listed in the data was administered the Woodcock Johnson IV in March. She came to my class as a 3rd grader reading at a 1.5 grade level. She is now a 5th grader and based on her WJIV score in letter-word identification, she is now reading at a 4th grade level. She has made close to 3 years of progress in just over a year a half timeframe!”

CASE STUDY: BALTIMORE CITY SCHOOLS

The S.P.I.R.E. Difference

S.P.I.R.E. training provided Carolyn Razon-Fernandez a unique perspective on reading instruction and prompted her to look at reading differently. “I realized if I was this excited about learning the *S.P.I.R.E.* program, I could only imagine the excitement that this program, when implemented correctly, could provide my students. The *S.P.I.R.E.* program provides multiple opportunities for students to interact with words and text, and it is comprehensive as it incorporates phonics, vocabulary, fiction and non-fiction comprehension, and writing.”

Classroom Implementation Model

Mrs. Razon-Fernandez teaches three *S.P.I.R.E.* groups with approximately 5 students in each group. The students meet on a rotating basis and implement steps 1-5 on day one of the lesson, and 6-10 on day two. She states, “I appreciate that *S.P.I.R.E.* has added the progress checks as it allows me to more accurately determine if I need to continue with reinforcement lessons. The students especially like working with the magnet boards, and the color coded magnets have supported the students in applying the learned spelling strategies in other areas of writing. Sometimes we meet at the Promethean board. The students enjoy doing the word search on the board and with the incredible vocabulary offered in the *S.P.I.R.E.* texts as it allows us to look up words that even I had never heard before, such as *whelk* and *whippet*.”

Student Successes

In her words, “Perhaps my favorite part of *S.P.I.R.E.* is how easily the strategies and skills taught can be applied in other areas. Often, when students are reading a different text, such as *Time For Kids*, and they are having difficulty decoding a word, all I have to say is *S.P.I.R.E.* and they immediately break the word down and mark it as they are taught to in *S.P.I.R.E.* This is what I find so empowering about *S.P.I.R.E.* It provides each student with the tools necessary to read multi-syllable words that they may not be able to immediately decode by sight. This in turns builds their confidence and reading is not so scary to them anymore. I now have students that are buying books at the school book fair, and not just the cool pencils and erasers. I now have students coming in on Monday sharing books they checked out of the local library over the weekend. This year I had a student on the first day of school who asked to speak with me in the hallway, and she looked so upset and said, “I can’t read.” I told her not to worry, that she would be reading by the end of the year. In a matter of 5 months, she achieved her IEP decoding goal, and progressed two guided reading levels. She shared with me that she was reading at home to her mom and her mom cried because she never used to do that before. Recently, I also had a student reach *S.P.I.R.E.* Level 5. When she was reading the second story about heat and molecules, many of the other students stopped what they were doing to listen to her read the story and were asking questions that I did not need to answer because she answered based on her reading of the text. These anecdotes encourage me as a teacher and provide many of those “light bulb” moments that teachers seek. I have had many students make 1.5- 2 years of growth within one school year. Most importantly, the students are reading AND enjoying it!”

“I think the data is impressive and I couldn’t be more pleased with the results! *S.P.I.R.E.* has definitely impacted my classroom in such a positive way and has piqued the reading interests of my students. This is no small feat for this group, considering most have more often than not experienced failure in reading and were hesitant to attempt reading when they first came to my class.”

Mrs. Carolyn Razon-Fernandez is a Special Educator at Northwood Elementary, #242, Baltimore City Schools, MD