

MATANZAS HIGH SCHOOL BOOSTS ITS SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS' READING AND WRITING

Case Study

Quick Facts:

Suburban High School

Flagler County FL Public Schools

Student Population: 1,400

27% Free/reduced Lunch

24% Minority

Target population: Special Education

BACKGROUND

In November 2007 Failure Free Reading was implemented in four schools within the fifteen member districts of the North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC). The participating schools included Matanzas High School of Palm Coast, FL. Matanzas implemented Failure Free's Elementary Solution (Red, Green, Orange & Teal core program levels) plus Verbal Master levels 1-4, and is planning on adding the Life Skills Solution beginning fall 2009.

IMPLEMENTATION

Failure Free Reading instruction consists of scripted, teacher-led oral language development small group lessons, followed by talking software and print reinforcement activities. Multiple exposures, specialized story content, and explicit comprehension instruction enable special needs students to immediately begin mastering age- and developmentally appropriate materials with fluency and independent engagement. Matanzas has implemented Failure Free with three groups of special needs students:

“Every student is making progress and it is so engaging that I have a hard time getting them off the program. It is age appropriate, and it is showing improvement in the reading and writing ability of all the students.”

*Carmeline Gross,
Reading/English 9-12
Speech Language
Pathologist.*

Specific Learning Disabled

In November 2007, Carmeline Gross began using Failure Free with her reading class of twelve Exceptional Student Education (ESE) 9th-12th graders. The students are receiving instruction 90 minutes per session, three days a week for one school year. According to Gross, “I see improvement in all levels: reading fluency, vocabulary, phonics and phonemic awareness – and pronouncing multi-syllable words by the time they are through each lesson.”

Low & High Functioning

At the same time, Richard Shelly began using Failure Free in his self-contained classroom of 8-10 low and high functioning learners. His class includes brain-injured, ADHD, and severely emotionally disturbed students. He teaches Failure Free from 60-90 minutes each day (depending on the student). According to Shelly, while it is sometimes difficult with his population to measure growth in reading comprehension, his students are ... “far more comfortable, and more fluent reading today (March) than when we started in September.”

Low incidence students

Janice Albert began using Failure Free at the beginning of the 2008/09 school year with 11 Intellectually Disabled students. During middle school that group had all received Reading Mastery instruction and entered high school reading anywhere from pre-K to 2nd grade level. According to Albert, "in all cases, the people who really weren't reading, are now", and that "the program is working really well". Albert delivers instruction in a daily 90 minute reading block. Remarkably, her low incidence students complete an entire lesson each day. She expects that her group will continue with Failure Free for two years.

"(It's) a helpful program that will help you out with your vocabulary, writing, and your memorization. (It's) teaching you by repeating over and over the words that you are studying. I like the fill in the blank and the page to put the words in the correct order. I also like the word scramble and the word practice stories."

Stacie (a student)

OUTCOMES

- Failure Free Reading is meeting the reading instructional needs of Matanzas' wide range (and three groups) of special needs learners.
- The program is equally effective in pull-out and self contained settings.
- Students are exhibiting evidence of reading growth e.g. one 16 year old started out reading at the pre-K Dolch level; by the end of the year he was reading at the 2nd-3rd grade level, and he wasn't forgetting words.
- Another student was "not reading at all" when he entered school at the beginning of the year. By May, this student was able to read four books in the Orange (3rd grade) level. In six months his reading fluency progressed from 21 to 90 words per minute.

"(It) is a wonderful program. It has helped me in so many ways. I learn new words each lesson. Not only do I learn new words, I also get help spelling them. It has also helped me with my writing."

-Jessica (a student)

*"I enjoy using the program immensely."
Richard Shelly*

*"The students love it."
Janice Albert*

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ABOUT FAILURE FREE READING

Failure Free Reading's unique sight word-based (non-phonetic) approach to reading intervention was developed for the very lowest achieving readers by former special education director Dr. Joseph Lockavitch. In numerous quality

research studies, the programs have produced dramatic gains in reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, attitudes, positive behaviors and esteem for low incidence, LD, at-risk, and ELL/ESL populations.