

*Brings the best teachers to every child*

## Struggling Readers Complete My Reading Coach

An Interview with Judy Damron, Reading Specialist  
Dimmitt ISD Middle School, Dimmitt, Texas — Email: [judamron@dimmittisd.net](mailto:judamron@dimmittisd.net)  
School Profile: Grades 5-8; 315 students; 76% Hispanic; Title 1 Funds

Completing My Reading Coach is a big deal for my students. Their future success depends on their ability to read fluently. Our reading program includes struggling readers, Special Ed and ESL students and students who have been retained.

We monitor the kids constantly, and this contributes to their success. For example, a second set of headphones on each computer allows us to listen to what the students are hearing. When a student doesn't understand what the coach is saying, we can hear it and pronounce it for them. This helps them move through lessons quickly.

All of our students, including our 6<sup>th</sup> graders, like the positive feedback from the coach. As they approach the final review, we give them plenty of praise and encouragement to motivate them. We reward their success in many ways: Applaud them in class; notify their regular reading teachers; give them pizza coupons; put signs in the hall; and give them a free day on the computer to play games. They know we want them to succeed, we expect them to succeed, and we care that they learn to read.

**Two of my students, Shekana and Gabby, completed My Reading Coach and are now reading at grade level.** Their reading scores were measured by My Reading Coach, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and the Star Test.

### Shekana Finished My Reading Coach in 5 months

Shekana, an African American 5<sup>th</sup> grader, began the program in September 2005 and completed it in February 2006.

**She was reading at the 4.2 level when she began My Reading Coach.** She had trouble reading big words. She couldn't spell and did not like to read. She did not enjoy reading because she had to spend too much time figuring out the words. She was very hesitant to read aloud. She was embarrassed about her reading and spelling.

Shekana was on the program every day for 30 minutes during school hours and 30 minutes after school two days a week. She reports that the Vowel/Sound/Stick lessons worked the best for her. She used Vowel/Sound/Stick to break down a hard word she did not recognize.

### Shekana's Improvements

**Shekana was reading at the 5.5 level in February. She passed the first administration of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills™ test.** Her spelling and reading fluency improved. Initially she had difficulty with the comprehension stories. Once she reached 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, she got through the stories easily. Based on her regular reading teacher's observations, she comprehends a lot more than she did.

Shekana had to repeat the final review test in My Reading Coach. She told me, "I felt sad when I didn't pass it, but I knew that eventually I was going to because I was getting better in reading and spelling." She was elated when she finished My Reading Coach and would recommend it to other students: "It makes you a better reader; it helps you not be shy." She is feeling better about herself and sees the progress in her life too. Shekana is smiling much more these days.

### Gabby Finished My Reading Coach in 9 months

Gabby, a Hispanic 5<sup>th</sup> grader, began the program in March 2005 and completed it in February 2006

**Gabby was reading at the 3.6 level in 4<sup>th</sup> grade when she began My Reading Coach.** She could read the words, but her comprehension was not good. She also could not figure out words. She would try to sound them out but would just end up raising her hand and asking for help. She panicked when she saw a large word. She was quiet, embarrassed to read aloud in class, and had a hard time with spelling and grammar. While working on My Reading Coach, she had to repeat several of the grammar lessons.

She worked on the program every day during school for 30 minutes. Beginning in September 2005 she worked 30 minutes twice a week after school as well. Every day she would count how many lessons she had to do to finish, and that made her mad. But, she knew she was going to complete the program. There was an end to it, and she wanted to finish. Her drive and our encouragement kept her going.

### Gabby's Improvements

**By February, Gabby was reading at the 5.0 level. She also passed the TAKS test.** The Vowel/Sound/Stick method helped her break down words into little parts in order to read and spell them. Her oral reading and spelling have improved, and her reading comprehension is much better. She has more self confidence, and her grades are better in other subjects.

Her reading teacher reports that she is willing and eager to read aloud and answer questions. She understands what she is reading. Gabby shared with me that her improvement snuck up on her. All of a sudden she realized she was making better grades in spelling and was reading out loud in class.

Gabby had to repeat the final review twice, and this made her angry. In spite of the difficulties, she knew she would finish it, and she did. She would tell other students to use My Reading Coach: "It might take you awhile and some of it is hard, but it really helps you with your reading."

**Judy Hoffpauir, Dyslexia Specialist/Irlen Screener**  
**North Shore Middle School, Galena Park, Texas**  
**Email: [jhoffpauir@galenaparkisd.com](mailto:jhoffpauir@galenaparkisd.com)**  
**School Profile: Grades 7-8; 1,400 students; 87% Hispanic; Title I Funds**

Students at our school will be taking the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills™ test from April 18-21. The more than 200 students I have worked with this year are not nearly as nervous as they once had been. As a result of working on My Reading Coach, they now have a solid foundation from which to build literacy. They are more confident because they have been passing their District Benchmark Assessments with rising scores

**Eight of my students wrote the following letters to Coach Larrabee and Judith Bliss.** They are 11 to 15 year old boys and girls who discovered that My Reading Coach works. A computer program actually helped them learn to

read, write, spell and achieve as well as, or better than, students in all of their other classes.

These eight students could be described as new arrivals from South/Central America and other parts of the world, low IQ students that are slow learners, identified Dyslexic students, English as a second language just transitioning students, and kids trying to find a place as they surpass the accomplishments of their parents.

**As you read these letters just picture average boys and girls who have discovered a means to success. They wanted to thank Judith Bliss and Coach Larrabee for caring enough to help them learn to read and write.**

## Students Say Thank You

### Dear Coach Larrabee

I learned more about reading. Now I have no problem with reading and I don't stutter as much anymore. I work hard on the program and I try to not make mistakes on the lessons. It's a great thing you made "My Reading Coach." Some people need it in some other classes and I feel sorry that they do not get to come with us to the computer lab. Thank you so very much for all of your help.

Sincerely, Alan

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for what you have made for us "My Reading Coach." I have learned to spell and read. Now that I know how to spell I could write to my girlfriend and teach my little brothers how to read in English.

Sincerely, Pedro

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for talking to me during the program and telling me right from wrong. I really appreciate you helping me and now I do the right things.

Sincerely, Alsira

\*\*\*\*\*

You seem to be a very smart man. Because of the lessons that I have done with you I no longer have to check my spelling as much. I am even writing poems now. I am making much better grades on my spelling tests and even read when I don't really have to. Thank you so much for caring about people that need help in reading and spelling and writing. My Dyslexia even is not as much of a problem.

Jonathan

### Dear Ms. Bliss

Thanks for coming up with the idea to help people to read a lot better. I'm glad that you made "My Reading Coach." If you came to my school I would tell you thank you for making "My Reading Coach" myself. I would really like to meet you and Coach Larrabee, because you made reading much easier for me and a lot of kids like me. I really want to thank you for taking the time.

Sincerely, James

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for the program that helps everyone. It has taught me a lot of ways to help me spell many different words and made my vocabulary better than it was. This program is great for people with Dyslexia or reading and writing disorders. You have done a great job with this program, please keep up the good work.

Sincerely, Cory

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you for all the things that we pass together. It was like a dream. I am very grateful to know somebody would care so much that they would be like my teacher again and again when I use the computer.

Sincerely, Andres

\*\*\*\*\*

Thank you because I don't think somebody else care like you do. Thank you now I know new words and I spell better. Thank you for everything you did to teach us.

Sincerely, Edgar

## Help Us Help You!

**Tip to share in the newsletter? Want to brag about your students?**  
**Have a question about the program? Something you would like us to change or improve?**  
**Get answers to your questions or send your tips to [mail@mindplay.com](mailto:mail@mindplay.com)**