
Lexia Learning Systems Teaches Intellectually Disabled Students to Read

The Challenge: Teaching Learning Disabled Students to Read

Deanna Bragg is a special education teacher at the Scriven County Middle School in Sylvania, Georgia. Her students are “moderately intellectually disabled”, which means, according to Georgia guidelines, that their IQs range between 40 and 55. In many school districts, it is deemed too challenging to teach students at this level to read.

“Previously, we had a very traditional special education program. We taught our students survival skills,” said Ms. Bragg. “We never tapped into any literacy skills. We just assumed that they couldn’t read.”

The Solution: Lexia Learning Systems

Two years ago, Ms. Bragg started her students on the S.R.A. Reading Mastery Program, which is phonics-based. To support and reinforce S.R.A., she adopted the **Lexia Learning Systems** program. Ms. Bragg’s students have made remarkable progress in the past two years. One child has improved from 2.6 years to 3.9 years on the Star placement test. Four of her five students averaged 95 percent on the SRA Reading Mastery tests. Three students have completed all five levels on Lexia.

“One boy completed the five levels by January and begged to start all over again,” reported Bragg.

The drills and practice provided by Lexia offered Bragg’s students the repetition they need to learn. They responded well to the program, which was simple enough that they could use it on their own. They loved their computer independence, the graphics, and the challenge, and enjoyed the positive motivation of trying to beat their own times.

“Lexia is perfect. The sounds that the kids hear on the software sound the way they do when I say them. On other programs the kids could not understand what the voice on the program was saying. I have several students with articulation problems, so I have to be careful to expose them to the correct sounds. Once they learn a sound, it can be embedded for life. To ‘unlearn’ a skill is difficult.”

Added Bragg, “Lexia acknowledges problems in our language that other programs do not. A variety of exercises are provided to help students learn to distinguish between sounds, not just at the beginning of a word, but in the middle, and end as well.

“For example, my students are very confused by word endings such as the one in the word looked: the ending in looked sounds like a “t”. The kids were saying ‘look-ed.’ The other reading programs I have seen do not break down this confusion like the Lexia program does.”

Additionally, Bragg is able to assign each student to the level-appropriate lesson she is teaching, and the program moves each along at his/her own pace with plenty of reinforcement. Once a student has mastered a concept, he/she is automatically bumped up to the next level. It allows her to work with one student while others are working alone.

The Results

Thanks to the work of Deanna Bragg and Lexia software, reading is opening doors for the intellectually-disabled Scriven County kids that many thought would be shut forever. Now, the students are able to read important information that ultimately helps them to live their daily lives more independently, including newspapers, cooking directions on packages and directions on medicine containers.

Additionally, as a result of the success achieved in the special education class, Lexia is now being used to teach students with reading difficulties throughout the middle school. And thanks to her hard work and success with the special education students in Scriven County, Deanna Bragg was selected as "Scriven County Middle School Teacher of the Year" and "County Teacher of the Year" last year.