

# SRA Reading Mastery<sup>®</sup> Signature Edition and Corrective Reading Decoding Delivered Equity and Accelerated Literacy Growth in Rural Vermont

Blue Mountain Union Elementary and Waits River Valley School, both part of the Orange East Supervisory Union, are small, rural schools in Eastern Vermont. With more than 70% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, both schools serve communities deeply impacted by poverty, like many schools in the area.

“A lot of the scholars are affected by poverty here,” said Principal Carlotta Simonds-Perantoni, “but not affected by an inability to read.” These two schools are proving that with the right instruction, circumstances don’t limit potential—and literacy is within reach for every learner.

The transformation wasn’t by chance. It was the result of a deliberate decision to pursue a reading program grounded in research, built for consistency, and driven by results. In 2023, both schools made a system-wide shift by implementing *Reading Mastery Signature Edition* for core instruction, and *Corrective Reading Decoding* to provide targeted intervention for students in grades 3–6. Together, these Direct Instruction programs delivered the structure, intensity, and proven effectiveness needed to help every student succeed.

## DISTRICT INFORMATION



**Name:**

Orange East  
Supervisory Union

**Location:**

Bradford, VT

**Grade:**

Pre-K–12

## The Challenge

Despite dedicated staff and strong instructional intent, both schools had hit a ceiling with traditional methods. Students were progressing, but not fast enough to catch up, especially those entering school without a strong literacy foundation.

Janie Feinberg, an independent consultant who supported the *Reading Mastery* implementation, explains how opportunity, not ability, is often what separates readers. “The two biggest culprits of the achievement gap are vocabulary and background knowledge,” she said. “Kids from higher economic backgrounds have that vocabulary. They have that background knowledge. They travel. They’re spoken to [more]. Our kids of poverty lack that [rich oral exposure to language].”

But with intentional, language-rich instruction, those gaps aren’t permanent. They’re solvable. *Reading Mastery* gives every student access to the language and knowledge they need to thrive, regardless of background.

Kindergarten teacher Abigail Tyson saw how the achievement gap manifested in the classroom, “Making meaning wasn’t the issue—kids couldn’t solve the words. That affected their independence.”

“This is really about equity. We were having kids come to us that immediately struggled to learn to read,” said Blue Mountain Principal Scott Blood. “They hadn’t had all the rich language that we hope all kids are getting from birth. We always did a great job of making progress. But we never saw catch-up growth. We were never able to truly close that gap.”

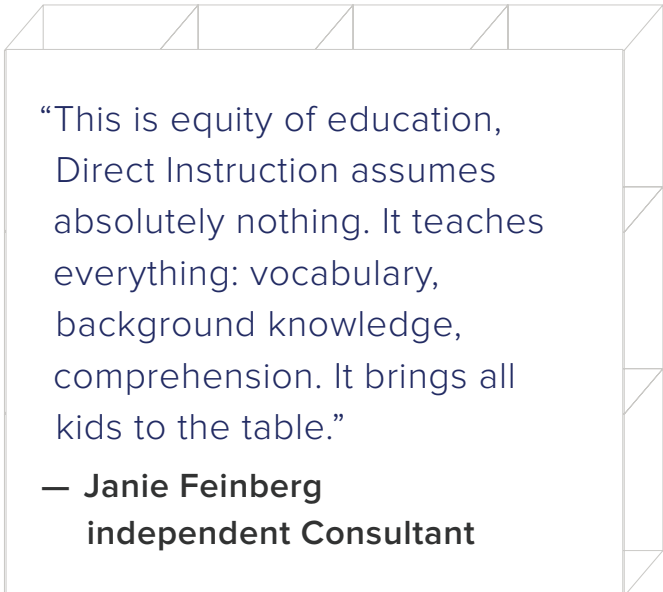
“Now, all of a sudden,” Blood continued, “we’re closing that gap.” By using *Reading Mastery* to build strong literacy foundations and *Corrective Reading* targeting older students who need

support, the schools are delivering the kind of explicit, consistent instruction that accelerates progress...giving every student, regardless of background, the opportunity to succeed.

## The Solution

Blue Mountain Union Elementary and Waits River Valley School implemented *Reading Mastery Signature Edition*, a Direct Instruction program designed to ensure every student receives explicit, systematic instruction with built-in support and assessment. To further accelerate progress, *Corrective Reading* Decoding was implemented in grades 3–6 to close critical gaps in phonics, word recognition, and fluency—laying the groundwork for stronger comprehension.

“This is equity of education,” said Feinberg. “Direct Instruction assumes absolutely nothing. It teaches everything: vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension. It brings all kids to the table.”



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— **Janie Feinberg**  
**independent Consultant**

At first, some educators were unsure about the shift in instructional approach. Tyson noted that this method wasn’t something they had encountered during preservice teacher training. “We weren’t taught this,” she said. “No pictures,

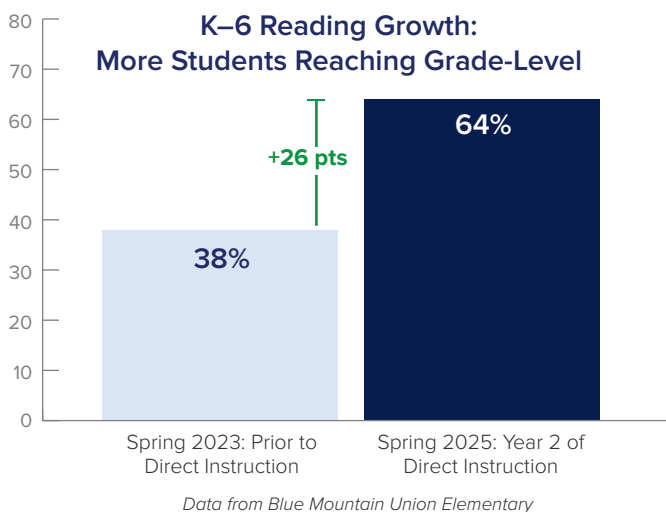
no clues. Just decoding. But it surprised us how quickly the kids adapted and took off.”

First-grade teacher Calen Dexter noticed the stories’ impact, “They’re funny and unpredictable. Kids want to keep reading just to see what happens next. And they love the fluency check-ins...they’re excited to beat their own scores.”

By providing a common instructional framework, *Reading Mastery* helped teachers collaborate more effectively, enabling flexible grouping and teamwork across classrooms and grade levels. Students receive targeted support that accelerates their growth as readers. When paired with *Corrective Reading* as an intervention in grades 3–6, the schools were able to meet a wide range of student needs with precision and consistency, ensuring that every learner, whether building foundational skills or catching up, had a clear path to success.

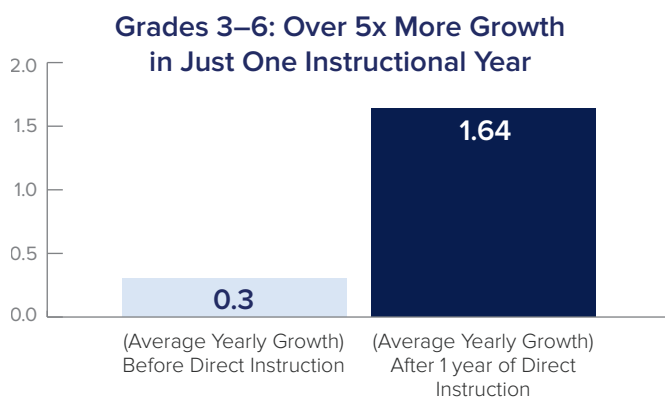
## The Results

With *Reading Mastery* implemented in all K–4 classrooms, supported by *Corrective Reading* for students in grades 3–6, the impact has been undeniable.



**Two years. One teaching methodology.  
Game-changing results.**

In just two years, the percentage of students reading on or above grade level increased from 38% to 64%. That’s a 26-point gain—made possible by explicit, systematic research proven instruction.



Data from Blue Mountain Union Elementary

***Direct Instruction didn’t just support growth—it accelerated growth to close the achievement gap.***

The numbers tell one story. The day-to-day experience of students tells another...one where learners at every level are thriving.

“We have very high-functioning readers and very needy ones. This program is enriching every scholar’s literacy”.

— **Carlotta Simonds-Perantoni**  
**Principal, Waits River**  
**Valley School**

“We have very high-functioning readers and very needy ones,” said Simonds-Perantoni. “This program [*Reading Mastery*] is enriching every scholar’s literacy. It’s not just about gaps—it’s about rigor.”

“Their vocabulary is growing. They’re using words they’re proud of,” added Trista Burns, 4th grade teacher. “There isn’t anything more empowering than being successful.”

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— **Trista Burns**  
**4th Grade Teacher**  
**Blue Mountain**  
**Union Elementary**

## Moving Forward

The schools’ experience with *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading* offers a compelling case study in how explicit, systematic instruction can advance educational equity, especially in high-poverty, rural settings. Together, the two programs provided a cohesive framework that addressed the full spectrum of student needs, from foundational skill-building to intensive intervention.

“This brought our staff together more than I ever expected,” said Principal Blood. “We’re functioning as a truly collaborative community now.”

As achievement gaps close, confidence rises and students begin to thrive. It’s clear: Direct Instruction, through programs like *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading*, isn’t just a literacy solution. It’s a path to equity and a brighter future.

“It will be a distant memory how we used to struggle to help these children,” said Burns.



To learn more about our programs, visit:

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