



CASE STUDY

Fort Hall Elementary Rewrites its Story with *Reading Mastery® Signature Edition*

ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Name

Fort Hall Elementary

Location

Blackfoot School
District 55

Pocatello, Idaho

Grades

K–5



At Fort Hall Elementary, a K–5 school on the Fort Hall Reservation in Pocatello, Idaho, 99.9 percent of students are identified as Native American. Although it has historically tested in the bottom five of Idaho’s state elementary schools, Fort Hall recently made dramatic gains over the course of one school year.

“Today, our *AIMSweb*®† data has completely inverted,” says curriculum director Joy Mickelsen, “and other elementary schools are now watching our model of instruction.” That model is *Reading Mastery® Signature Edition*, a research-proven Direct Instruction program that offers intense, explicit, and consistent reading instruction.

† *AIMSweb*® is a universal screening, progress monitoring, and data management system that supports Response to Intervention (RTI) and tiered instruction.

Implementation

It has only been a year since Fort Hall Elementary implemented *Reading Mastery Signature Edition* in its K–5 classrooms, yet most of the school’s newly recruited teachers were quick to get on board. They knew their students needed structure to succeed, and Direct Instruction offered that structure.

The teaching staff had just two professional development sessions with trainer Jill Martin before the school started making gains. Instructional coach Kristy Farley says that it is a testament to the quality of teachers and their fidelity to the program.

“I’m the data collector around here,” says Farley, “so I regularly bring the staff together to talk about data and progress. Right away, we saw a marked difference in the amount of decoding and accuracy. The kids were no longer guessing. They were taking the time to phonetically sound words out.”

Student Engagement

Principal Kathy Malm says that introducing *Reading Mastery* helped emphasize the fact that reading matters in her school.

“We used to hear a lot of ‘I can’t’ and ‘I won’t’. Now I hear ‘I can’ as the kids find out they can be successful in reading.”

Kathy Malm, Principal
Fort Hall Elementary

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Along with *Reading Mastery*, Malm implemented certain hours when students could come and read out loud to her.

“Never before had I heard a student ask, ‘Can I read to you?’ Now I hear it from the whole building. The kids want to read to anyone they can,” Malm says. “You have to see the expression on their faces to understand. It’s like, ‘I just read that, and I did it by myself!’”

“Those behaviors improve during Reading Mastery time because all of the kids are actively participating and learning.”

Toni Heath, School Counselor
Fort Hall Elementary

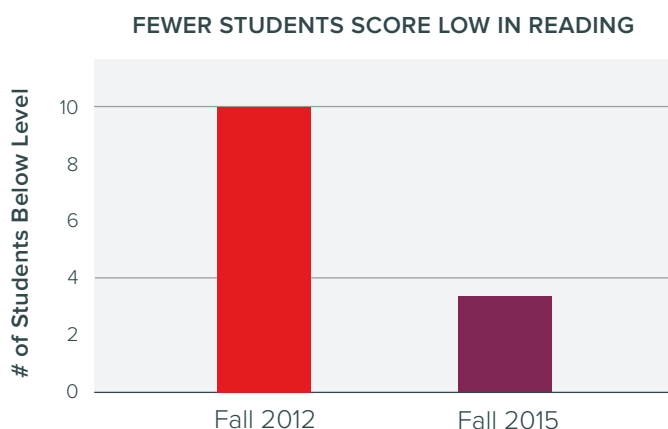
School counselor Toni Heath sees the difference, too. She notes the ability to place students at the appropriate instruction level is a critical component of *Reading Mastery* success. “If kids can’t do the work they find something else to do, and that usually means behavioral issues that disrupt everyone else,” she says. “Those behaviors improve during *Reading Mastery* time because all of the kids are actively participating and learning.”

Malm says that *Reading Mastery* isn’t just for those children who are behind. “Our second-grade gifted and talented teacher was amazed by the depth of questions in *Reading Mastery*. She feels her students are challenged by it, and the program helped to fill in holes she didn’t know they had.”

Results

It was over a year ago that curriculum director Joy Mickelsen promised the tribal council that Fort Hall Elementary could and would make significant gains in reading. At the time, the tribal chief could only say, “The proof is in the pudding.” Today, Mickelsen has that proof in the form of hard data.

In the fall of 2012, Fort Hall’s K–3 students had an average of 10 students in the red. By fall 2015, that number had dropped by two-thirds. By January of 2016, the school saw a marked improvement on the state assessment and Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) tests. They believe that next year they will really start to see the results of their efforts.



Malm has been very impressed. “Some of our kids were one to three years behind, and they have made one- if not two-year gains since we’ve had *Reading Mastery*,” she says.

Farley feels confident setting new, higher benchmarks for her students. “When they come in to set goals, it has to be a high goal they can be excited about. If they are at 58 percent and they say, ‘I can reach 68 percent,’ I say, ‘Go higher.’ I know they can achieve it.”

Now some of the classrooms at Fort Hall Elementary are outperforming schools in town, and teachers from other schools are coming to observe its tight-fidelity model of Direct Instruction. The media has taken notice as well.

“The best part is when the news crews and radio stations come in to our school,” says Mickelsen. “The kids get so excited, it gives them pride. Now everyone can see what they’ve achieved.”

About *Reading Mastery Signature Edition*

Reading Mastery Signature Edition is a research-proven Direct Instruction literacy and language arts program designed to deliver explicit, consistent, systematic instruction. Program materials offer support for modeling new content, providing guided practice, offering individualized practice, and applying skills.

