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SUCCESS STORY

Dogan Elementary Sheds IR Status with

Direct Instruction®
and *My iMotions*®

Overview

Dogan Elementary is part of the Houston Independent School District in Texas. Nearly 75 percent of students in the district are considered economically disadvantaged, and 90 percent qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. Thirty-two percent of students in the district have limited English proficiency.¹

In the summer of 2017, Dogan Elementary and nine other schools in the district received an Improvement Required (IR) rating from the state of Texas, which meant they were at risk of being taken over by the state or even closed. Sixty-five percent of students were not ready for grade-level work.

Sandra Menxueiro, Principal of Dogan Elementary, knew that it was time for a drastically new approach. She developed a “whatever it takes” attitude to get the school back on track, and one of her first steps was improving the reading proficiency of her learners using the McGraw Hill Direct Instruction (DI) programs, *My iMotions* and *My iMotions*.

DISTRICT INFORMATION



Name:

Dogan Elementary

Location:

Houston, Texas

Grades:

1-5

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—Sandra Menxueiro

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Implementation

Menxueiro was not new to Direct Instruction when she chose to implement it at Dogan Elementary. She had used *Corrective Reading* in her past roles as a teacher and as a principal at Farias Early Childhood Center preparing children for elementary school. She knew that Direct Instruction curriculum programs can produce powerful results in a short amount of time.

“When we received IR status, I knew we would need a quick fix to get students in the upper grades on track and create a stronger foundation for the lower grades,” said Menxueiro. “We got the best of both worlds by using *Corrective Reading* for the younger children and *Reading Mastery* for our older students.”

Corrective Reading is a comprehensive English language arts program that uses the Direct Instruction method to help students master essential phonics, decoding, and comprehension skills. *Reading Mastery* is designed to strengthen the reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension skills of students in third grade or higher who are reading one to two years below their grade levels.

Errica Dotson-Hooper, reading teacher specialist and grades 3–5 administrator at Dogan, noted that many of their fifth-graders were still reading at the kindergarten level. The *Reading Mastery* test allowed her and the staff to get a true picture of their students’ abilities for the first time. As it turned out, the majority were reading below or even several grades below grade level.

“We committed to doing intervention with *Corrective Reading* and *Reading Mastery* two times a day, but we didn’t have the staff to do it,” said Dotson-Hooper. “Volunteers from the church came and worked side-by-side with us. They even learned to test students and read the data. We were amazed.”

Menxueiro also brought in a new team of teachers and trained them in the Direct Instruction methodology. When those teachers’ instruction was not aligned to the rigor of the Direct Instruction curriculum, their teaching methodology was corrected to ensure everyone was being taught the same way.

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“A lot of teachers struggle with teaching reading past the first grade, and they feel helpless,” said Dotson-Hooper. “With Reading Mastery, every teacher is prepared because they have a concrete, step-by-step plan. They don't have to create a phonics lesson; they just follow the script. It takes the fear away.”

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Menxueiro encountered a bit of resistance when she first introduced Direct Instruction because some teachers felt it was too repetitive and—at times—even boring. Yet, that is exactly what makes it effective for the students.

“Structure is what our scholars needed, and with Reading Mastery and Direct Instruction, there is no room for interpretation,” said Menxueiro. “We monitor how scholars progress over 10 lessons, and they cannot move on until they pass. This gives them—and us—the confidence of knowing they have mastered the content.”

Student Confidence

Dogan Elementary now uses Reading Mastery and Direct Instruction for all content areas. For instance, they might teach comprehension in the morning and then connect what was learned to science or social studies in the afternoon. Or they might tie vocabulary activities, such as Word Attack, back to math lessons.

This approach allows the school to maximize the impact of its Direct Instruction intervention.

William Ealy, math teacher specialist at Dogan Elementary, saw the impact Reading Mastery and Direct Instruction had on his math students right away.

“Before Direct Instruction, my students' scores were low because they couldn't read the math,” said Ealy. “Being able to use these reading programs as an extra resource was tremendous. Kids ‘act out’ when they are struggling, but now that they feel successful, I don't have behavioral issues. They are more confident in general.”

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Dotson-Hooper agreed that her students are more confident and better behaved.

“My biggest discipline issue was with a fifth-grade class of 12 students,” she recalled, “When we introduced *Direct Instruction*, they began to feel successful, and the classroom became a safe space for them because they felt they were on the same level. Even students who struggled the most enjoyed the class, and the disciplinary issues stopped.”

Dotson-Hooper pointed out that highly successful teachers are creative when implementing Direct Instruction. Many provided students with incentives, such as chewing gum, to keep them motivated and make the experience more exciting. The result is students who felt successful and confident.

One example of this new confidence was a fifth-grade special education student who was still not reading. When *Direct Instruction* was put into place, his mother suddenly noticed that he was reading the billboards on the way home from school. She didn't know what the school was doing, but she was so excited, she called to tell them to keep it up. Today, that child is able to read a book by himself, and he has the confidence to keep making gains.

Results

Less than four months after implementing *Direct Instruction* and *Classroom Management*, Dogan Elementary children were reading, and the school was on the path to shedding its Improvement Required status.

TEA (Texas Education Agency) growth measures* for fifth-grade students in 2017–18 illustrated the amazing turnaround.

Early shared the scores of math tests he administered from October and December of 2017, and January of 2018. Though different TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) were being tested, Early noted that the tests were becoming progressively more difficult.

Menxueiro emphasized how the scores demonstrate her school's tremendous gains.

2017–18 Math Tests Grades 3–5			
	October	December	January
3rd Grade Students Passing	19%	19%	56%
4th Grade Students Passing	22%	28%	36%
5th Grade			

5th Grade

5th 76.07 108.4902 cmzede-edrh(th 76.0 ssing)TJ10.066 0.7 Td(19%)Tj5.

5th 76o0 58t44 Sq 1 0 md(19%e1g%)Tj1 589 188.04 550 m7-1501D24 589ne
22%
30%
Students Passing

The Future

"Remember, 65 percent of our fourth- and fifth-grade students weren't reading at grade level," Menxueiro said. "Now, both regular classroom and special education students are showing growth and passing tests."

She credited much of the growth to the performance data in 2013, 2014, and 2015, and the teachers' ability to respond to what the data is telling them.

"All the data in the world won't help you if you don't do anything with it," said Menxueiro.

"Our Direct Instruction programs gave us the tutorials, lesson plans, and other resources we needed to respond to what we were seeing. Our teachers appreciate the importance of sharing data and creating plans from that data because they see that it moves the needle."



About Reading Mastery

Reading Mastery is an evidence-based, comprehensive English language arts program proven to raise reading performance for a wide range of students, including significantly at-risk populations, for over 35 years. More than 10,000 schools across the country use Reading Mastery to explicitly and systematically teach key foundational literacy skills and how to read, comprehend, and write narrative and informational text of increasing complexity while building oral language fluency skills.

About Corrective Reading

Corrective Reading provides intensive Direct Instruction-based reading intervention for students in grades 3–12 who are reading below grade level. This Direct Instruction reading intervention program delivers tightly sequenced, carefully planned lessons that give students who may benefit from additional support the structure and practice necessary to become skilled, fluent readers, and active, engaged learners.

DIRECT
INSTRUCTION