

In fall 2003, teachers in the special education department of Iredell Statesville Schools adopted SRA/McGraw-Hill's Direct Instruction programs *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading* for intervention in Grades K–12 because they felt students with disabilities were falling further and further behind their regular education peers. The students responded so well that the programs were implemented with at-risk students in regular education the following school year (2004–2005). They too responded well, and reading scores increased for both groups.

Since implementation, the percentage of special education students attaining adequate yearly progress jumped from 53 percent in 2003–2004 to 66 percent in 2005–2006.

Dr. Elizabeth Phillips, Director of Exceptional Children's Programs, said more and more students are leaving special education and moving into general education classrooms because they have learned the skills necessary with

Exceptional Education Curriculum Specialist Crystal Douglas said *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading* have such a positive effect on students because they are systematic and explicit.

“Educators are teaching to mastery, without gaps,” she explained. “Students do not move from perfecting simple skills to complex skills without attaining mastery first. Their parents are thrilled with their progress. Some of the comments I hear are ‘My daughter would rather read than play computer games. She reads at least 30% of her weekends’ to ‘My son loves school and loves reading. He even gets excited about doing homework!’ to ‘All my daughter wants to do is read.’ ”

During the first year of implementation, Iredell Statesville Schools ranked 56 for reading progress among exceptional students in the 116 districts statewide.

“We ranked 19th in 2005 and 16th in 2006,” Phillips said. “We are focused now on becoming one of the top 10 in 2007.”