



Struggling North Carolina Learners Dramatically Boost Reading Proficiency

Learning Ally helps students reading below grade level become engaged and confident learners in the classroom and at home

When Kristie Autrey became curriculum director for Mitchell County School District in North Carolina, and learned the state had partnered with Learning Ally, she jumped at the chance to implement it.

Learning Ally is a leading nonprofit edtech organization that transforms the lives of students by providing equitable access to grade-level content through its library of high-quality, human-read audiobooks and suite of teacher and student resources that integrates into the school instruction environment. The extensive audiobook library contains K12 textbooks, literature and popular titles in digital formats with proprietary technology that highlights the text so students can listen and read at the same time. This helps students spend less time struggling to decode words and more time absorbing content. As a result, students are more engaged in learning and less likely to fall behind in class.

As a reading expert teaching students with dyslexia, Autrey says, "Too many students fall behind because they cannot keep pace with assignments." Her district serves students with dyslexia, students who are two years behind reading at grade-level and students with visual impairments.



The Impact

In Mitchell County School District, teachers participating in the program agree:

Learning Ally equips students to better engage in classroom discussions.

Students show improvement in their reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and critical-thinking skills.

Students spend less time struggling to decode words and more time absorbing content.

Students show improvement on graded assignments.

Usage and Implementation

Mitchell County has been using Learning Ally since the 2016-17 school year. Autrey says the program was easy to implement across seven district schools. Elementary school students begin using Learning Ally in third grade, when severe reading disabilities are often identified, according to Autrey. Other teachers were also excited to get access to Learning Ally once they saw how engaged students became while accessing not only required academic content, but also titles that reflected students' personal interests. "We have 301 students using Learning Ally out of 1,800 students in our district," Autrey says. "We make sure that students who require reading support have access. Many students have also been able to move out of remedial classes because they can now read K12 textbooks and literature on their grade level."

Innovative Tool for Engagement

Autrey believes that for students to be more effective learners, their senses need engagement, which is something high-quality, human-read audiobooks do exceptionally well. Learning Ally provides a multisensory experience that helps struggling readers process and engage in content. "Learning Ally is a tool that helps struggling readers access information so that they can stay on par with their classmates and feel confident in their learning process," Autrey says. "Teachers now use Learning Ally to flip the classroom, where more reading time is spent outside of school and more learning and discussion time is happening in class."

Feedback and Results

Autrey says she looks at the Learning Ally dashboard once per week so she can monitor student usage across the district. Teachers can also track students' reading progress, gain insight into students' reading preferences and manage reading goals. Autrey believes human-read audiobooks take learning engagement to a higher level than computer voices can. "Our students have improved their fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and critical-thinking skills. They are able to do book reports at grade level. They read with more independence. Their morale has improved. These are all strong indicators of a beneficial school-reading solution."



The Reaction

"These students are smart and have the desire and aptitude to become high achievers, and Learning Ally helps us to tap into their true potential"

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