



case study

Raising Student Reading Achievement

The need to improve reading achievement for students is one of the most important challenges facing school districts nationally. In 2003, P.S. 209, a K-2 Public School in the Bronx, New York, faced the challenge of raising student achievement within a school environment where teacher turnover was high and how best to prepare new teachers had long been an issue. This school called upon Editure Professional Development (formerly known as AUSSIE) to help them address several key issues:

- how to raise reading achievement for all students;
- how to provide support for new teachers in delivering quality reading instruction based on data-driven best practices;
- how to build an infrastructure for professional development within the school that, in turn, would build internal capacity.

Addressing these problems was possible due to the dedication of the school leadership and the unified commitment of the staff.

When AUSSIE/Editure partnered with this school, there was no formal guided or shared reading instruction and the school lacked formal reading assessments to benchmark students' reading abilities or measure their growth over time. Teaching was focused on the structure of the program, rather than the needs of the students. Instruction was not focused on developing the strategies needed to produce fluent readers and, as a result,

students did not have the skills necessary for ongoing success in reading.

FINDING A SOLUTION

Together, AUSSIE/Editure consultant Mardi Gorman and P.S. 209 worked to create an environment where reading instruction was planned, outcomes clearly stated and achievement measured. The professional development process was designed to move staff:

- through theory (to learn how it should be done);
- into modeling (to see it in action) and then;
- to practice (bringing the assessment and instructional practices to their own classrooms).

The model used made success possible by providing the staff with exactly what they needed to assess students' learning needs and provide appropriate instruction.

The first step was to focus the professional development on introducing sound assessment practices. AUSSIE/Editure worked with the school to develop both formal and informal assessment and to effectively use the resulting data to inform instruction. Teachers' understanding of monitoring students' literacy development and tracking changes over time was developed through workshops, demonstrations and classroom-based coaching.

Support for teachers was also offered on how to use formal and informal assessment to enhance their ability to



differentiate their teaching, based on students' needs.

Next, the school staff and AUSSIE/Editure worked together to develop a reading curriculum and classroom instructional practices based on a balanced approach to literacy. Professional development sessions now focused on using shared and guided reading best practices effectively and on how to help students develop the reading strategies necessary for reading success.

Finally, after the foundation had been laid, AUSSIE/Editure worked with the school to prepare staff to take responsibility for assessment and instructional practices in their own classrooms. This shift in practice included changes on many levels. For example, the school:

- redesigned classrooms to include shared libraries with multiple copies of a wide range of leveled texts to better support guided reading;
- implemented push-in reading support to allow teachers to conduct small group guided reading instruction using a collaborative teaching approach;
- created a curriculum where all students participate in small group guided instruction every day.

As student achievement in reading increased, the school turned its attention to raising the quality of student writing. The same dedication, energy and focus devoted to reading now centers on writing.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

ANNE KEEGAN, PRINCIPAL OF P.S. 209

Anne Keegan believes that P.S. 209's success is built on the successful partnership with AUSSIE/Editure and a shared vision for the school. With clear objectives and the support of school leadership, AUSSIE/Editure has been able to carry out the professional development needed to help P.S. 209 meet its goals. Administrators and teachers from other schools often visit P.S. 209 to learn how they might emulate what P.S. 209 has done.

According to Ms. Keegan, "they are often looking for the quick fix. I always tell them that NONE of this would have been possible without the AUSSIE/Editure consultant working side by side with us, day after day, to bring our vision to life."



POSITIVE GAINS

In the first year of the school's work with AUSSIE/Editure:

- 85% of students were able to leave Kindergarten reading at Level C, compared to the suggested benchmark of level A;
- there was a significant decrease in the turnover of staff.