

Red River Parish Public Schools scores improve after using Guidebooks

Executive Summary

Red River Parish Public Schools adapted LDOE’s Guidebooks curriculum with the hope that the comprehensive materials would help their students become proficient readers. And while the curriculum was of high quality, there were still difficulties in helping their students transition to on-level materials. When the district implemented LearnZillion’s iteration of Guidebooks they saw significant growth in their students’ reading scores.

About Red River Parish Public School

Red River Parish Public Schools is one of the smallest school districts in the state of Louisiana, serving five schools and 1,456 students. Eighty-four percent of their students are part of the free and reduced lunch program.

About Karen Squires

Karen Squires is the director of student learning. Squires holds an M.A. in special education and teaching and has spent 30 years working in education.



Red River Parish Public Schools’ Challenges

In 2014, Squires noticed that the students at Red River Parish Public Schools were not scoring proficiently on the reading portions of Louisiana’s state tests.

“It was obvious that the curriculum was our problem at that point in time,” said Squires. “We needed to get the right curriculum in order for our students to become proficient readers.”

The ELA curriculum that the district was using at the time did not include the rigor that the students needed to increase their reading abilities.

“It was more of a remediation program instead of an on-grade-level program,” said Squires.

The district switched to LDOE Guidebooks in 2015, and while the curriculum was comprehensive and of high quality, Red River Parish teachers had trouble on-ramping students to get the most out of the on-level materials.

“When you start with Guidebooks, which is written for on-grade-level students, and 85 percent of your students are not on grade level, it’s a huge struggle,” said Squires. “We needed to prepare Kindergarten, first, and second-grade students to make sure they were on-grade-level readers by third grade in order to be able to use Guidebooks.”

Red River Parish also wanted to make sure their teachers were able to use the curriculum in the way that it was intended and that they would be supported while doing so.

“When a teacher is confident about what they’re actually teaching and the reason why they’re teaching something, then they are able to project that onto what they’re teaching students,” said Squires.

Where LearnZillion came in

Red River Parish switched to LearnZillion’s iteration of the LDOE Guidebooks curriculum in 2016, which included built-in tools to support teachers’ instruction and students supports to help them transition to on-grade level.

This new iteration of the ELA Guidebooks curriculum was rebuilt and retooled on LearnZillion’s platform. The district also received LearnZillion’s professional development.

“The materials are packed into easy-to-use slides, it’s all there in one place,” said Squires. “The support we received from LearnZillion has made using the curriculum much easier to use.”

The results

After a year of using Guidebooks on LearnZillion’s platform, Red River Parish is seeing

significant gains in their elementary school state reading scores.

“Kids have moved from below proficient to proficient. LearnZillion’s supports allow kids who haven’t been exposed to a certain context to get back up to speed with the rest of the students,” said Squires.

The district noticed that the reading gains were also carrying over to higher scores in other areas.

“Our students are more prepared for social studies and science at this point in time,” said Squires. “The Guidebooks curriculum is helping them to become proficient readers because they’re delving so deeply into texts, and that’s helping them read texts in other subjects like social studies. We’re seeing students annotate texts in all areas.”