



SUCCESS STORY

KEY FINDINGS

- *NGSP Professional Development* builds capacity to differentiate instruction and target reading skills
- *NGSP Professional Development* ensures teachers implement *Inside* and *Edge* with fidelity
- Adolescent special education students' reading levels improve

National Geographic School Publishing Professional Development Builds Teacher Capacity



Challenge

Humble Independent School District (Humble ISD) wanted adolescents receiving special services to improve their reading and language arts skills. “Many of our older students with disabilities continued to read far below grade level throughout middle and high school,” stated Ms. Ullrich, Educational Support Services Coordinator. “We wanted to provide these students with more targeted opportunities to build important skills.”

Leaders in this large Texas district wanted a comprehensive reading/language arts program that could be used for both special education and intervention classes. “We knew how beneficial it would be to have consistent instructional materials and resources,” explained Ms. Fitzgerald, Secondary English Language Arts Coordinator. “We could share professional development, create common curricular guidelines, and begin to have conversations

about instruction that were aligned both vertically (across grade levels) and horizontally (across subject areas).”

Building instructional capacity was equally important to the district. “Most secondary special education teachers did not have an in-depth background in reading and often relied upon whole group instruction with supplemental workbooks or materials adapted from mainstream textbooks,” noted Ms. Ullrich. “We sought a strategic professional learning approach to build upon teachers’ existing instructional skills so they could use the new programs effectively—and students could make measurable progress.”

Solution

During the 2009–2010 school year, Humble ISD adopted *Inside Language, Literacy, and Content (Inside)* for middle school and *Hampton-Brown Edge™ (Edge)* for high school special education and intervention classes. Teachers were excited to have comprehensive reading/language arts programs and eager to draw upon the rich instructional materials and resources of *Inside* and *Edge*.

To build teacher capacity and impact students’ reading growth, Humble ISD also selected *National Geographic School Publishing Professional Development (NGSP PD)*. Ms. Ullrich noted, “Their collaborative approach helped us clarify goals and devise a strategic, yet flexible, professional learning plan that took us from where we were and helped us move forward.”

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—Ms. Ullrich
Educational Support Services Coordinator

The *NGSP PD* team worked with Ms. Ullrich and her team to assess needs and prioritize specific areas of focus: differentiated instruction, data-driven instruction, foundations of adolescent literacy, and traits-based writing. “To implement *Inside* and *Edge*

with fidelity, teachers needed to use ongoing assessment to target students’ specific needs and differentiate instruction so everyone could learn and succeed,” explained Ms. Ullrich. “*NGSP PD* provided courses, professional sharing sessions, and follow-up coaching in classrooms to support teachers as they put new skills into practice (Figure1).”

District Statistics

District	Humble Independent School District, Humble, Texas
Schools	40 schools, including 8 middle schools, 6 high schools
Total Enrollment	34,650 students
Special Needs Students	3000 (9% of total school population)
Student Diversity	51% White, non-Hispanic; 26% Hispanic; 18% African-American; 4% Asian/Pacific Islander; 1% Other

2009–2010 School Year	
AUGUST	Getting Started with <i>Inside and Edge</i>
SEPTEMBER	Effective Assessment with <i>Inside and Edge</i>
OCTOBER	Professional Development Needs Assessment
NOVEMBER	Differentiating Instruction
JANUARY	Data-driven Instruction
2010–2011 School Year	
JULY	Foundations of Adolescent Literacy
OCTOBER	Traits-Based Writing
OCTOBER	Follow-up Onsite Coaching
JANUARY	Sharing Classroom Experiences, Follow-up Onsite Coaching

Figure 1. NGSP Professional Development Timeline for Humble ISD

“Each **NGSP PD** learning opportunity was customized to our district’s needs and built continuity for implementing new practices over time—not every company will do that,” remarked Ms. Roden, Educational Support Services Facilitator. “The **NGSP PD** consultant even worked with our administrative team to assist them in supporting reading instruction.”

Ms. Rodriguez, Educational Support Services Facilitator, noted, “Developing highly effective reading teachers presented a learning curve for our district; **NGSP PD** took us from being overwhelmed to diving in with both feet so more students could acquire key reading skills.”

Results

Since the **NGSP PD** courses began in fall 2009, the district has noted substantial improvement in teachers’ capacity to differentiate instruction and tap multiple resources that support each student’s learning. “Now, while working on comprehension strategies with one group, teachers might have other students select from the *Inside/Edge* Leveled Libraries for independent reading,” stated Ms. Ullrich.

“As teachers implement instructional techniques learned in **NGSP PD** courses, more students are able to access and comprehend content in all of their classes,” explained Ms. Brod, Reading Teacher/Coach at Riverwood Middle School.

Humble ISD’s teachers are also more knowledgeable in using data to fine-tune their instructional approach to help more students meet the state’s English/language arts standards. Ms. Fitzgerald

explained, “We now have deeper collaborative dialogue and core planning among content area, intervention, and special education teachers—and our students ultimately benefit.”

Humble ISD has seen steady—and sometimes remarkable—growth in special education students’ reading as measured by Lexile® levels (Figure 2). “As teachers are better prepared to move from splintered skills instruction to a more comprehensive and targeted approach, many students who had made minimal progress over multiple years were able to jump several levels in one school year,” explained Ms. Roden. One fourteen year old special education student entered high school at a pre-primer level, after one school year tested at a high first-grade level, and this year is reading at a high second-grade level. Noted Ms. Ullrich, “This student feels so much better about herself as a reader as she continues to build skills.”

“Our special education teachers now see themselves as reading teachers, and students are gaining confidence as readers.” Ms. Ullrich summarized, “It is so exciting to see adolescent special education students who want to read and share with their peers.”

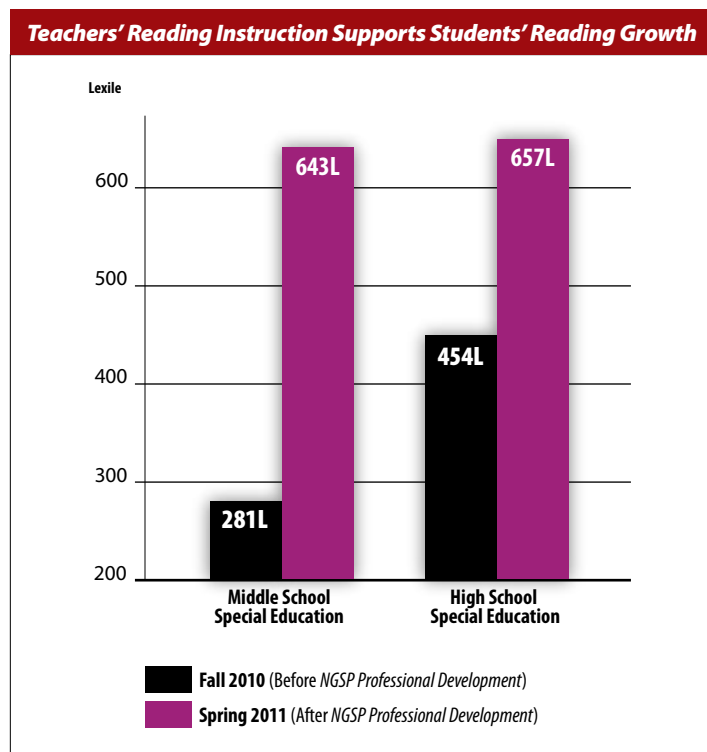


Figure 2. Reading growth (Lexile® level) for sample of middle and high school special education students, fall 2010 (before NGSP PD) and spring 2011 (after NGSP PD)

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