





Helping Special Education Students to Develop Higher Order Thinking Skills



Kelly Stehlik

 St. Pius X Catholic School / Grade Level: K-8

 Catholic Schools Archdiocese of Indianapolis / Indianapolis, IN

 User since 2018



The Challenge



Kelly Stehlik started as the 7th and 8th-grade Language Arts resource teacher. Now she is the director of K-8 and a push-in resource and remediation teacher for several grade levels, including younger students.

Her students have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) due to disabilities such as dyslexia and auditory processing disorders. They each have reading goals geared toward improving comprehension.

Kelly had been noticing that her students needed help with more than just the “look and find” answers. They needed help with higher-order questions—inferences, the main idea, making predictions, and more.

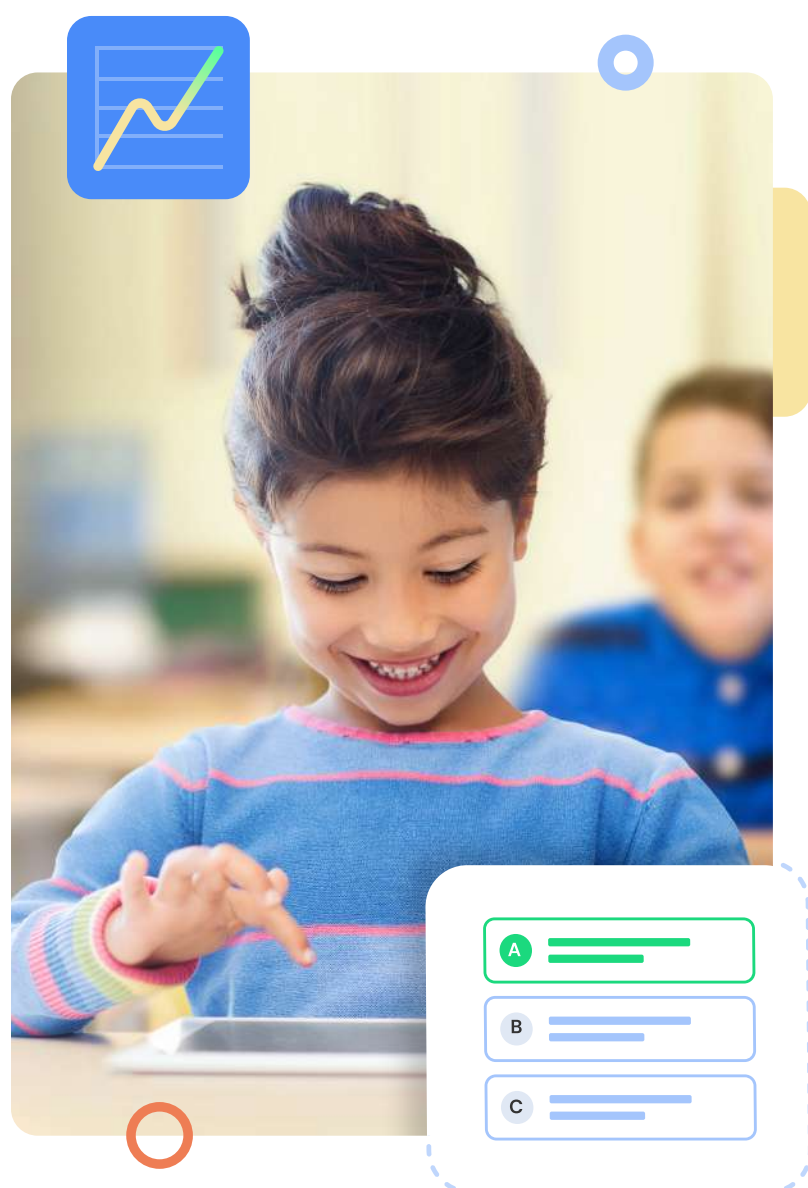
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For the most part, ReadTheory passages are short. These small chunks of practice with finding the main idea and inferencing, for example, are not overwhelming to my special education students. They’ve learned how to use higher level thinking for answering questions.



The Solution

Kelly learned about ReadTheory through a break-out session at a Special Education conference she attended. She liked what she saw and she started using it at her school. Now, it’s become a substantial part of her Special Education support plan, and she has gotten other teachers in her school on board with it.



Kelly says, “ReadTheory is an excellent tool in developing skills for answering high-order thinking questions. It has the kind of questions the students see on standardized tests.” It has given her students the practice they need with non-fiction texts and small passages and promotes critical thinking skills that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The teachers at her school use it to prepare for iRead-3, which is the standardized test that third graders must pass in Indiana. Two students did not pass the exam this year, and the teachers have been using ReadTheory with these students to pinpoint their weaknesses in order to prepare them for a retest.



The Impact

Kelly has found that assigning ReadTheory passages and requiring students to pass three quizzes a week works well for her students. They work independently at home or during study hall on their iPads at school. If they complete the assignment, they get nine out of nine points as a homework grade for their Literature class. She has seen students go up two or three grade levels in a year when they work effectively and try their best.

ReadTheory passages are not intimidating for Kelly's special education students with disabilities, because they are short and easy to understand. She uses the reporting feature during parent meetings and can align reading goals to ReadTheory, since the standards, Lexile levels, and grade-level equivalents are built into the program. It's helpful for her to determine the next steps when she works with students one-on-one or in small groups. For example, if she sees that they're all struggling with inference, she can pull that skill and do a lesson on it.



She loves the new Premium feature that allows her to set limits on how low or how high student reading levels are. This ensures that no student is straying too far from the grade level due to factors such as blind guessing. She gives both general and special education students the pre-test, and then as the year goes on, their goal is to reach the appropriate grade level. She also highly recommends the Premium feature where she can pull and assign passages based on classroom needs.

Kelly says, "ReadTheory keeps getting better and better so I'm for sure subscribing next year to the Premium version. Even the little things make a big difference and ReadTheory is constantly improving and adding helpful features which are invaluable to me."

Student motivation has increased with ReadTheory competitions. One student earned 3,000 knowledge points in one week! The student even wrote Kelly a thank you note about how much she enjoys ReadTheory. Kelly is excited about getting the whole second grade on board with the competitions next year. She says "What really matters is that they're learning and that they're progressing," and she credits ReadTheory with a high level of success.

She adds that ReadTheory customer support has been incredibly helpful, saying "Thank you to everyone at ReadTheory for working so hard to bring students an effective program and for your comprehensive support all year long. I always know that I will receive a quick and helpful response to my questions and concerns from your support staff."



Help us write the next chapter!

If you've been using ReadTheory in your class and have a story to tell, we want to hear it!

Share your story! 