

CASE STUDY

# Closing the Literacy Gap: The Impact of Focused Reading Interventions in Jackson



# Overview



In Jackson, Mississippi, a city characterized by high poverty and a predominantly African American population, a significant initiative was undertaken to improve the reading skills of struggling adolescent readers.

Engaging the Mississippi Reading Clinic (MRC), founded by the Barksdale Reading Institute, this initiative utilized Really Great Reading's (RGR) materials to target seventh graders who were significantly behind in reading proficiency.

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**Background:** At the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, only 20% of the 210 assessed seventh graders were reading at grade level. Many of these students had severe decoding deficits, causing them to skip or misread approximately 15% of words, which impeded their reading comprehension. A cohort of 40 students from the lowest 30th percentile was selected to receive intensive in-person interventions four times a week. Over five weeks, each student received 675 minutes of tutoring, totaling 27,000 minutes of intervention.

**Implementation:** The study included both a control group and a treatment group.

**Results:** In the treatment group, where students received RGR's intervention, initial reading accuracy was at 31%. After five weeks, this figure soared to 92%, marking a remarkable 61% improvement. Conversely, the control group, which did not receive RGR's intervention, saw a decline in reading accuracy from 36% to 33%.

**Conclusion:** The impact extended beyond academic performance to student engagement and attitude. Prior to enrolling, 85% of students were hesitant to participate. However, after completing the intervention, 100% of the students felt it was worth their time and effort, reported positive changes in themselves, and requested to continue with the program. This transformation underscores the program's effectiveness in fostering not only literacy skills but also a positive learning environment.

# Data from Jackson, Mississippi:

This compelling data highlights the profound impact of Really Great Reading's intervention on student literacy, making a strong case for its adoption in similar contexts to address reading challenges and foster a positive learning environment. The results demonstrate that with targeted, evidence-based interventions, it is possible to significantly improve reading outcomes for students in high-poverty areas, thus setting them on a path to academic success.

Students Reading with Accuracy Before and After Intervention

