



LeapTrack™

Assessment & Instruction System



Case Study #2

Hickory Tree Elementary School
St. Cloud, Florida

The LeapTrack™ Assessment & Instruction System Builds Skill Mastery

Chris Nichols was interested in a program that her students could use as a meaningful independent study tool and that would help ease them into the standards-based testing process in an effective way. After learning of the LeapTrack Assessment & Instruction System through her computer technician and hearing that it included specific FCAT materials, she knew she had found a program that would help prepare her students for their introduction to the state's high-stakes assessment the following year.

Hickory Tree Elementary is a rural school in St. Cloud, Florida, with a student population that fluctuates between 800-900 each year. The school lost ground last year in test scores and Ms. Nichols is determined to do her part to regain their standing. "This is a good school with high standards," she said, "That is one of the reasons I chose to teach here, and the LeapTrack system will help my students prepare for the FCATs next year."

Ms. Nichols particularly valued the LeapTrack system's ability to keep running records of her students' progress. She felt the LeapTrack system contributed to academic growth as the students used the program throughout the second semester. Mrs. Nichols anticipates that with a full year's use of the program this school year, she will be able to assist students with critical skill development and raise their levels of performance.

An Individualized Learning Path

The LeapTrack™ Assessment & Instruction System uses a three-step instructional process of assess-report-prescribe and provides teachers with an easy-to-use system that collects and reports student performance on assessments. “The LeapTrack system provides reports relative to state standards and customizes an individual Learning Path for each student,” said Ms. Nichols. “This provides a running record for the teacher and lots of independent practice to ensure the students are working with appropriate skills.” She also noted that the LeapTrack system is able to pinpoint areas where her students were having difficulty and to prescribe particular skill-building assignments through the customized Learning Paths.

Whether the students were using the LeapPad® classroom learning system to complete an assessment or to work on books or skill cards, they were always eager to practice. They worked on LeapTrack assignments two days per week throughout the semester. Each student had a personalized LeapTrack cartridge with programmed activities to help build their weakest skill areas.

Ms. Nichols is planning to teach her students this year how to upload the results of their current activities and download the next prescribed activities by themselves without needing her direct supervision. She feels that this will help them take greater ownership of their learning achievements.

Easy Installation

Because the LeapTrack software installation takes only a matter of minutes, Ms. Nichols was ready to start assessing her students immediately. Ms. Nichols and her students found the LeapTrack system very easy to use.

The LeapTrack system efficiently manages multiple student assessments and prescriptions and provides interactive instruction for all of Ms. Nichols’ 26 students.

Assessment and Supplemental Learning Tool

“The LeapTrack system’s strength is as an engaging supplemental learning tool,” said Ms. Nichols. “It is also an easy way to diagnose students’ skill levels and provide activities that will increase their skill development.” She found that the LeapTrack program and the school’s new reading program worked well together. “The two programs complemented each other. The students used the LeapTrack skill cards to fine tune long and short vowels and other decoding skills,” she said.

Ms. Nichols is a former Teacher of the Year and has a reputation for excellent classroom management. As a result, behavior-challenged students are often assigned to her classroom. The value of the LeapTrack™ system for these children is that it helps them to preserve their independence, which is important to them, while giving them challenging work. “Every single one of my students was eager to work on their LeapTrack books” she said, “and there was a specific benefit for each type of student. At the same time, it was something that they all had in common.” Ms. Nichols plans to introduce her new second graders to the LeapTrack system on the second day of school. “I am very interested in reviewing their skill levels at the beginning of the school year and charting their progress after using this program for the full year,” she said. “My goal is to have these students ready to do their best on the FCATs in the third grade, and with the LeapTrack system to help me, I am sure they will be more prepared.”

Reports Drive Instruction

Having the ability to know at any given moment how a student is progressing in certain skill areas is one of the most notable benefits of the LeapTrack system. The reporting functionality provides assessment survey results relative to state content standards—noting which standards the student has and has not met. Other reports include summary information that aggregates survey and state standard results by class.

Objective documentation of student progress is as important for students as it is for parents. Ms. Nichols noted that the reports had an unexpected benefit when talking about student progress with parents. “Because the LeapTrack system does assessment in reading, language arts and math, it provides ‘independent’ evidence of a student’s grasp of the curriculum,” she said. By assessing weakness in certain areas and prescribing activities for improvement according to a child’s individual Learning Path, both the student and the parent can be involved in the student’s learning success.

Total Engagement

The success of an instructional program is largely dependent upon the student’s ability to stick with it. “The students never got tired of the LeapTrack system,” said Ms. Nichols. “Whether they were working on skill surveys, books, or skill cards, they were totally engaged and always begged for more time because the LeapPad® platform made learning so much fun for them.”

Ms. Nichols noted that one of the reasons the children stay engaged in the LeapTrack books and skill cards is that it fosters independence. “The headphones make them feel special and on their own.” She found that the LeapTrack system was as important to the more challenged children as it was to her high achievers. For low-achieving students, one benefit is that the

learning activities and the results are private. “Children can repeat the material over and over until they fully grasp it, and the other children can’t really tell what they’re doing. It allows children of all levels to work together at a table, yet be independent of each other with the headphones,” she said. “The students enjoy the process so much that they think they are playing,” said Ms. Nichols, “but the truth is that they are learning, and the LeapTrack™ system is helping them to master the skills they need to be successful on the FCAT tests next year.”

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