

# Effectiveness Study Series

## Case Study #11

### Ocean Knoll Elementary Encinitas, California

## California Distinguished School's Intervention Programs Enriched by The Literacy Center

When Caryn Tembreull comes into a classroom at Ocean Knoll Elementary, a bit of a clamor ensues. Certain students know it's time to receive extra help with their reading skills and they're eager to begin. "Partly, it's the special attention," she says, reacting to their warm greeting, "but I also bring the LeapFrog [SchoolHouse] devices, which mean fun to them."

As Title I Intervention Coordinator for the K-6 school, Tembreull supplements and supports the efforts of its regular grade-level teachers. Her sole goal is to boost students' reading skills, to which she applies a wide array of techniques. While The Literacy Center is a relatively new tool on campus – received just last February – it handles certain tasks "extremely well," says Tembreull. And the reading specialist has already found numerous ways to integrate it into her set of instructional strategies.

### Levels the Playing Field

Matching up The Literacy Center with Tembreull's students was definitely deliberate. "We felt its skills focus and hands-on methodology was particularly well-suited for our Title I and ELL (English Language Learners) students," recalls Paula Blocker, Administrator of Special Projects for Encinitas Union School District.

Of this California district's nine elementary schools, three are Title I campuses – Ocean Knoll, Capri and Paul Ecke-Central – Blocker explains, so dedicated funding was available for the LeapFrog SchoolHouse purchase.

Motivation came, in part, from demographics: Nearly 40% of the youngsters at these campuses are Hispanic. Spanish being the dominant language in many of their households, English may not be spoken often or well, leaving youngsters little upon which to model. With good reading skills an "absolute prerequisite" to any academic progress, notes Blocker, the district naturally offers additional help and practice to these and other students struggling with early literacy.

"We want all of our students to achieve, and think The Literacy Centers give us yet another way to level the playing field," says Blocker, observing that "it's important to get kids reading at or near grade level as quickly as possible."

Blocker, along with the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services as well as district teachers who are reading specialists, reviewed The Literacy Center with critical eyes before arriving at their decision. "Our evaluation looked at lots of aspects – from how easy the [Center's] devices are for students and teachers to use and how rugged they are, to the curriculum's standards, and so on," says Blocker. "Overall, we liked what we saw, with the assessment features and reports, in particular, getting high marks."

### Reaches a Range of Learners

Located some 40 miles north of San Diego, Encinitas is an old-time beach community. On its southern edge, a renowned surf break known as Swami's takes its name from the adjacent Self-Realization Fellowship compound. To the north and east lie commercial flower fields, avocado groves, strawberry, tomato and other vegetable crops. It is home to the largest poinsettia grower in the U.S., Ecke Farms, as well as to thousands who work in clusters of high-tech firms located nearby in Sorrento Valley, Carlsbad and other North County cities.

To help address their community's increasingly diverse needs, Encinitas Union School District offers a variety of special programs, many of which are assisted by technology. Caryn Tembreull, for example, is Ocean Knoll Elementary's dedicated reading-support specialist. She uses her LeapDesk™, LeapPads® and LeapMat™ mostly with younger students, but notes that she has utilized LeapPads with some sixth graders to good effect.

"When you're introducing a new skill, for example," explains Tembreull, "the LeapFrog devices make it interesting enough for the older students to pay attention. It's the multi-modality they find compelling."

Tembreull assists about 50 children at Ocean Knoll's 600-strong campus, visiting different classrooms throughout the day. Working with small groups of students at the back of the class, she says The Literacy Center is a "valued component" that helps round out her instructional repertoire. "I use LeapFrog in conjunction with other strategies," she says, "such as guided reading, full balanced literacy, and more. No single approach is going to be effective for all students."

"LeapFrog's (Literacy) Center really stresses phonemic awareness, which is so important," Tembreull continues. "It's very kinetic, very auditory and very visual, so it grabs and holds students' attention. And it provides them with a lot of control, so they feel like they're in charge of their own learning, which is intrinsically motivating."

In fact, the LeapPads, LeapDesk and LeapMat are such an attraction that other kids in the classroom – those who don't need extra help – often mosey on over to Tembreull's group in hopes of using the devices. "My kids really enjoy it," the reading specialist says about The Literacy Center, "so, of course, all the other kids want to try it too."

### Aids Kindergarten Intervention

Tembreull isn't the only educator at Ocean Knoll using LeapFrog SchoolHouse. Three other teachers share a second Center's LeapDesk, LeapMat and set of five LeapPads for the school's Kindergarten Intervention program. Conducted before as well as after school, youngsters work in groups during intervention sessions, rotating through various activities. The Literacy Center is "well suited" for this application, says Tembreull, adding that she has heard "nothing but good things" from the Kindergarten Intervention teachers about their Center.

Ocean Knoll Elementary is helping its students achieve academic equality by deploying two Literacy Centers and specifically targeting those who most need help with their reading skills.

"Ocean Knoll is a California Distinguished School," confirms Paula Blocker, "as are all nine of our elementary schools. We're very proud of that, and work hard to ensure that all of our students excel." Smart technology choices – like The Literacy Center – can help districts greatly with that noble endeavor. "It's certainly proven itself useful," says Tembreull, "and the kids love it."