

Educators at Richardson Elementary discover how the Redcat system can engage a variety of students and improve their ability to learn

THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING TO STANDARDS IN A TITLE 1 SCHOOL

The 2014–2015 school year brought a lot of changes to the Flowing Wells Unified School District in Tucson. Like other districts in Arizona, Flowing Wells wrestled with the increased academic demands of the Common Core State Standards. At the same time, demographic shifts caused several schools to be newly designated as Title I. One of these new Title I schools is Richardson Elementary.

“Children write as they speak and they speak as they hear, so when students don’t hear clearly, their speech and writing is affected. It’s not just students with severe hearing loss that are impacted. We overlook temporary hearing loss that comes from drainage in the inner ear caused by colds and allergies. Information gets lost for these students, and for English language learners and students with ADHD.”

Meg Visconti,
District Speech Pathologist

“The parents in our district are working hard, but it can be tough to make ends meet. One of the effects of poverty is that parents have less time to help their children with homework or be involved in their day-to-day school activities. They also often don’t have the money needed for co-pays in order to take their children to the doctor when they have a cold or suffer from allergies or asthma. While it may not seem like it, these things dramatically impact students’ abilities to learn.” Meg Visconti, District Speech Pathologist.

FINDING THE RIGHT CLASSROOM AUDIO SYSTEM

In the midst of all the changes and challenges, Visconti discovered a way to help students and teachers excel. In October 2014, she was working with a first-grade student who had hearing aids in both ears. Her classroom was equipped with an amplification system provided by the Southeast Regional Cooperative, facilitated through Arizona State Schools for the Deaf and Blind. Visconti saw immediately how the system was helping this student thrive in the classroom. What surprised her, though, was how much all the other students in the class were benefiting as well.



RICHARDSON ELEMENTARY
TUCSON, AZ

CHALLENGE

Adjusting to the academic rigor of the Common Core State Standards at a Title 1 school where many students struggle with ADHD, hearing loss, and learning and emotional disabilities.

LIGHTSPEED SOLUTION

Redcat Access Tabletop System



RESULTS

- Students with hearing loss thrive in the classroom
- Students with ADHD can’t “tune out” the teacher and stay on task longer
- English language learners hear possessives and verb endings clearly, accelerating their comprehension of the language
- Because all students hear every word teachers say, learning is more efficient and teachers have to deal with fewer interruptions and repetitions

With the increased focus on writing skills mandated by Common Core State Standards, Visconti knew it was more important than ever that all students be able to hear. “It’s hard to teach students to use the final ‘s’ in possessives or plurals properly if they can’t hear the sound. The same is true for ‘ed’ and ‘ing.’ Those endings to words are so important in the English language. If we can improve students’ speech, we’ll improve their writing too.”

“Mrs. Beck is an amazing teacher, but she came to me looking for ideas on how to keep the seven students with ADHD on task without losing the other children’s attention. During my research into amplification systems, I had read about their effectiveness with children with ADHD. All the elements in Mrs. Beck’s class were just right for the Redcat.”

Meg Visconti

perfect classroom to test the impact of the Redcat on learning.”

Beck was teaching 28 high-energy students, including seven diagnosed with ADHD, one with severe learning disabilities, and two with emotional disabilities.

Three weeks after the Redcat was installed in Beck’s classroom, Visconti went for a visit. She asked the students what they thought about the Redcat. After a little bit of nervous silence, one girl said, “I kinda like it, but I kinda don’t because now I can’t tune Mrs. Beck out.”

Visconti and Beck knew immediately that the Redcat was accomplishing exactly what they’d hoped.

The little girl who shared her opinion was one for the students with ADHD that Mrs. Beck had been trying so hard to keep engaged.

MAKING LEARNING MORE EFFICIENT

Based on the success in Beck’s classroom, Visconti wanted every class at Richardson to have an amplification system. Richardson’s principal, Lyle Dunbar, agreed. So Dunbar, Visconti, and parent volunteer Kelli Burgess, wrote a grant to purchase five more Redcats.

Inspired by what she’d seen, Visconti contacted the Southeast Regional Cooperative to learn more about the amplification system. They provided her information about different systems from different vendors. After exploring her options, she decided that the Lightspeed Redcat whole-class amplification system was the best choice for Richardson.

KEEPING STUDENTS WITH ADHD ON TASK

Thanks to funding from the school’s PTO and a donation from a staff member at Richardson, the school was able to purchase a single Redcat in November 2014. “We weren’t sure how to decide which classroom should get the Redcat,” said Visconti. “Then I remembered a conversation I’d had with our fourth-grade teacher, Mrs. Beck, and I knew hers was the



“We can’t increase the number of hours we have to teach students, but we can increase the saliency of the messages we deliver in the time we have. Redcat makes learning much more efficient. Just a slight hearing loss takes away students’ ability to learn as well as they could. While we haven’t seen the DAP scores yet, I’m really confident that Mrs. Beck’s class is going to see a gain thanks to the Redcat. It’s improved students’ ability to learn.”

Meg Visconti