

# Driving Literacy Gains in Special Education Classrooms



Hannah Gurmankin



Canfield Avenue School



Mine Hill Township, NJ



User since 2020



## The Challenge



When Hannah Gurmankin began teaching in a resource room for students with IEPs, she needed more than just traditional tools. Her students, many reading far below grade level, required a resource that would support fluency, comprehension, and independent thinking—all while being accessible to students with learning disabilities.

She initially used ReadTheory to assist classroom aides in guided reading sessions. "I would have the aide sit and read with the kids, but I wanted more than that because I wanted the aide to be able to ask questions of the kids to check for understanding and comprehension," Hannah explained. What began as a support strategy quickly revealed its deeper value: ReadTheory sparked discussion, developed reasoning skills, and encouraged students to explain their thinking. It became a foundation for growth.



## The Solution

ReadTheory became a daily staple in Hannah's classroom. Students now begin each ELA block with ReadTheory, working toward an average score of 80% or higher. Hannah uses [monthly trackers](#) to help students monitor their own progress—a system that builds accountability and intrinsic motivation.

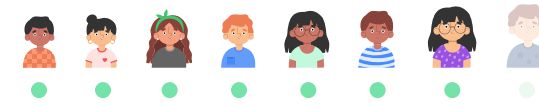
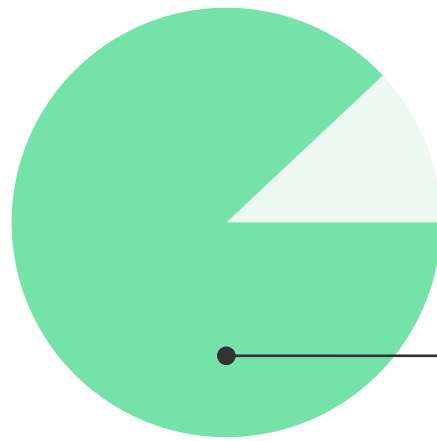
Most of Hannah's students are now reaching their monthly goals—seven out of eight recently hit the target average of 80%. But the real growth goes beyond scores. Her students have developed the ability to explain their reasoning, often walking through their logic aloud: "It can't be this because..." or "That doesn't make sense because..." Hannah watches their critical thinking skills evolve in real time, transforming how they approach reading tasks.

As students become more confident, they also become more independent. While Hannah and her aides still provide support, most students have started to work autonomously, practicing higher-order thinking with less direct guidance.

The turning point? Seeing test data and IEP progress skyrocket. Many students who began the year multiple grade levels behind are now reading above grade level.



### Student Progress Toward Monthly Reading Goals



7 out of 8 students meeting  
a target average of 80% or above.

## The Impact

Hannah's leadership has inspired other teachers at her school to try ReadTheory. She began mentoring 4th and 5th grade teachers, sharing strategies like student trackers and goal setting. They've seen huge gains in student motivation and achievement.

She now maintains a shared Google Drive folder of ReadTheory best practices and resources for staff. As her school prepares to roll out ReadTheory in grades 3–6, Hannah will lead training sessions on how to implement the program effectively.

She also involves parents by using ReadTheory reports during conferences to show clear data-driven progress, building family support for at-home reading.

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**“More than half of my class is reading above grade level, and these are resource room kids. When I got them, they were reading a few levels below grade level, and now they're above grade level thanks to ReadTheory.”**

Today, ReadTheory is fully embedded into Hannah's classroom routine—used for test prep, progress monitoring, skill building, and [student celebration](#). Students are empowered, self-driven, and supported by data that proves just how far they've come.

One sixth-grade student, often overlooked and socially isolated, set a personal goal to pass 20 ReadTheory quizzes by the end of the school year. Hannah made a unique and fun deal: If he met his goal, he could pour a bucket of water over her head in front of the class.

He met the challenge! That moment became unforgettable—his classmates chanted his name, celebrating his win. Hannah said he felt like the most important kid in school that day, and ReadTheory helped get him there and feel seen.

