

CASE STUDY

Building Independent Readers

Why Readability Is the Best Reading App for Kids: A Special Education Success Story from Horace Mann Elementary

By Tom · Special Education Teacher

Horace Mann Elementary · Title I School



Table of Contents

The Author	1
About Readability	2
Overview	3
The Challenge	4
One Teacher, Ten Different Needs	4
Implementation	5
A Daily Routine That Runs Itself	5
Building Stamina Gradually	5
Personalized Support at Scale	5
Student Spotlight: From Nonverbal to Fluent	6
Student A — Progress Data	6
Classroom-Wide Results	7
Individual Student Fluency Gains	7
IEP Reporting Transformed	7
A Model for Inclusive Literacy	8

THE AUTHOR

Tom is a veteran special education teacher at Horace Mann Elementary, a Title I school serving students with complex learning profiles. With more than a decade of classroom experience, Tom has built a reputation for refusing to lower expectations — and for finding the tools and strategies that allow every student to rise to meet them.

His classroom serves students with active IEPs, speech and language delays, attention and executive functioning challenges, and a wide range of reading levels. Rather than treating these differences as barriers, Tom treats them as design constraints — and builds his instruction accordingly.

Tom's approach to literacy is grounded in a single conviction: every student is a reader. His work with Readability began as an experiment with two students and grew into a classroom-wide daily practice that has produced measurable, meaningful gains across fluency, comprehension, and expressive language. His students' progress has become a model for what is possible when high expectations meet the right instructional support.

This case study documents Tom's experience implementing Readability over the course of a full school year — and the transformative results that followed for his students, his IEP reporting, and his own practice as an educator.

ABOUT READABILITY

EXPERIENCE

Readability has seamlessly blended technological innovation with the expertise of child development professionals, reading specialists, and educators. Founded by technology entrepreneurs with a passion for leveraging tech to advance education, Readability reflects a deep commitment to transforming literacy outcomes through data-driven pedagogical research and a focus on educational equity.

MISSION

Readability is dedicated to providing an unparalleled reading and comprehension tool that supports a diverse range of learners — including students on the Autism spectrum, those with dyslexia, English Language Learners, and children who have yet to develop a love for reading. The platform fosters confidence and joy in reading, helping young learners progress from learning to read to reading to learn while prioritizing equitable access to quality education for all students.

TECHNOLOGY

Continuous innovation is at the core of Readability's approach. Using advanced AI technology, Readability listens to children read aloud, providing real-time feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. It tracks progress through key metrics like reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension while delivering personalized reading materials tailored to each child's level. Speech recognition enables instant corrections, acts as a virtual tutor, and provides detailed progress reports that give parents and educators valuable insights into student development.

CORE FEATURES

- Real-time AI speech recognition and feedback
- Adaptive book library matched to reading level
- Spoken and visual comprehension questions
- Fluency and accuracy tracking dashboards
- Guided Access and distraction-reduction modes
- Progress reports for parents and educators
- IEP-ready data exports

OVERVIEW

What happens when a student who barely speaks begins reading aloud with confidence and comprehension? What changes when an entire special education classroom starts hitting fluency goals once considered out of reach? At Horace Mann Elementary, veteran special education teacher Tom has spent over a decade answering those questions with action.

In a classroom where most students have IEPs and traditional instruction often falls short, Tom faced a challenge familiar to many educators: how do you deliver daily, differentiated reading instruction to students with widely varying needs — especially when speech delays, attention differences, and decoding struggles are all part of the equation?

This case study follows Tom's journey to answer that challenge. The solution: a daily, structured reading routine powered by **Readability**, an AI-driven platform that provides real-time speech feedback, adaptive comprehension support, and data educators can actually use.

The results were striking — not only in student confidence and independence, but in measurable gains across fluency, comprehension, and expressive language. For one student, the impact was transformative: **from nonverbal to reading aloud with fluency and comprehension**.

AT A GLANCE

812

BOOKS READ

~135 per student

5,466

MINUTES READ

~911 per student

+51%

FLUENCY INCREASE

31 → 47 WCPM class avg.

94%

READING ACCURACY

Classroom average

THE CHALLENGE

ONE TEACHER. TEN DIFFERENT NEEDS.

Tom's classroom isn't quiet — and that's intentional. His students don't benefit from silent sustained reading; they need to hear themselves speak, decode, reread, and respond out loud. They need feedback. They need structure. They need repetition. And they need it every day.

But with students reading at different levels, working on different IEP goals, and requiring different kinds of support — phonics, fluency, comprehension, expressive language — Tom faced an impossible math problem: **one teacher, ten students, zero capacity** to give each one the consistent, one-on-one reading instruction they needed.

“You can't clone yourself. Even with the best routines, I couldn't sit next to every student and coach them through every sentence.”

— Tom, Special Education Teacher, Horace Mann Elementary

Many of Tom's students also struggle with transitions, attention, or executive functioning. Traditional reading programs often required too many steps, too much supervision, or too much frontloading to sustain daily momentum. What Tom needed was something that could meet each student exactly where they were — and keep them moving forward without losing engagement.

He needed a solution that didn't just assess reading skills, but actively *taught* them — one that could serve as a personal reading coach for every student, without sacrificing instructional time or creating more work for his already full plate. That's when he turned to **Readability**.

STUDENT PROFILE

- Students with active IEPs
- Speech delays and expressive language difficulties
- Attention and executive functioning challenges
- Wide range of reading levels within one classroom
- Decoding and phonics gaps

INSTRUCTIONAL GAPS

- No capacity for daily 1-on-1 reading coaching
- Traditional programs required excessive supervision
- Inconsistent data for IEP reporting
- Difficulty sustaining student engagement
- Limited differentiation at scale

IMPLEMENTATION

A DAILY ROUTINE THAT RUNS ITSELF

Tom didn't need another tool that looked good on paper but collapsed under real classroom conditions. To work, Readability had to do three things: **integrate seamlessly into his routine, support students independently, and generate meaningful data without adding to his workload.** It delivered on all three.

THE DAILY ROUTINE

Each morning, after completing differentiated math tasks, Tom's students transition straight into reading. They grab their iPads, put on headsets equipped with noise-canceling mics, and open Readability.

“It's frictionless. No logging-in headaches. No asking, 'What do I do next?' They open the app, start reading, and the program takes over.”

— Tom

BUILDING STAMINA GRADUALLY

Tom started by asking his students to read for just **one minute**. That small task helped build a sense of "I can do this" — giving them early wins and preventing overwhelm. From there, he gradually increased reading time: five minutes, then ten, fifteen, eventually reaching **twenty-five minutes of sustained, independent reading.**

“It's like building muscle. They start small. But before long, reading for 25 minutes a day is just part of their rhythm.”

— Tom

PERSONALIZED SUPPORT AT SCALE

As students read aloud, Readability listens — offering real-time feedback, correcting mispronunciations, supporting decoding, and reinforcing progress. For students with attention challenges, Tom uses **Guided Access mode** to reduce distractions. For students with expressive language difficulties, the app's spoken comprehension questions and optional visual prompts provide low-pressure, daily opportunities to be heard and understood.

THE RESULT

What began as a test with just two students quickly expanded. Rather than replacing instruction, Readability *amplified* it — while every student received personalized, structured literacy support, every single day.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: FROM NONVERBAL TO FLUENT

THE IMPACT — MEASURABLE GROWTH, MEANINGFUL CHANGE

The most visible transformation in Tom's classroom came from one student: **Student A**. When the school year began, Student A was largely nonverbal. Reading aloud caused distress. Academic demands often triggered shutdowns. But with consistent daily reading on Readability, his confidence grew — first in sounds, then in words, then in full sentences.

Today, Student A is reading aloud with fluency and comprehension. His recent assessments show he is performing at **age-appropriate levels in speech and language**.

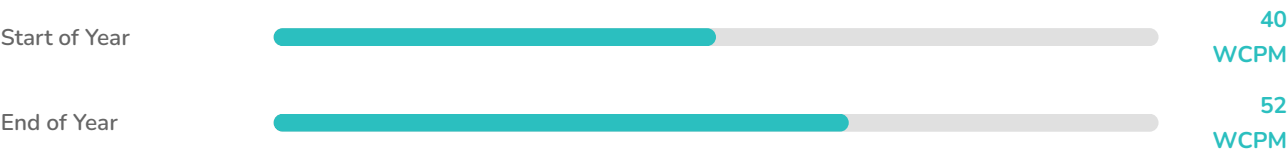
“Readability gave him a safe space to practice, take risks, and hear himself succeed. Confidence unlocked language.”

— Tom

STUDENT A — PROGRESS DATA

221 BOOKS READ 2,108 minutes total	99% READING ACCURACY Exceptional precision
+30% FLUENCY INCREASE 40 → 52 WCPM	4 READING LEVEL-UPS Avg. comprehension: 48%

FLUENCY GROWTH — STUDENT A



Note: Student A began the year largely nonverbal. The fluency gain of +30% represents not just a reading milestone, but a fundamental shift in expressive language and self-confidence.

CLASSROOM-WIDE RESULTS

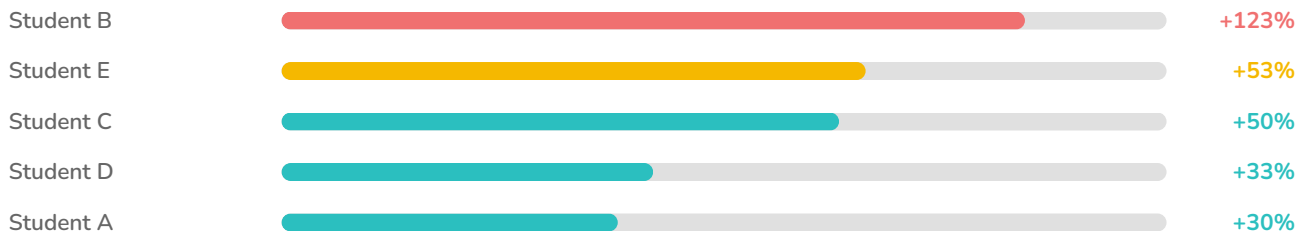
A PATTERN OF PROGRESS ACROSS EVERY STUDENT

Student A isn't an outlier — he's part of a pattern. Across Tom's Readability users, students are building fluency, improving comprehension, and increasing time-on-task. The classroom-wide totals tell a story of sustained, meaningful growth.

CLASSROOM TOTALS

METRIC	TOTAL	PER STUDENT AVG.
Books Read	812	~135
Minutes Read	5,466	~911
Reading Accuracy	—	94%
Fluency (Start → End)	31 → 47 WCPM	+51% increase
Comprehension Score	—	37% avg.
Reading Level-Ups	—	~2.2 per student

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT FLUENCY GAINS



IEP REPORTING TRANSFORMED

For Tom, the real win is how this data translates to IEP reporting. Instead of relying on observation or informal notes, he now brings clear, consistent metrics to meetings with parents and administrators — covering fluency, comprehension, expressive language, and even engagement.

“It's not just about showing progress. It's about proving what's possible.”

— Tom

A MODEL FOR INCLUSIVE LITERACY

What's happening in Tom's classroom isn't accidental. It's the result of a teacher who starts by assuming competence — not limitation. Where others might see a diagnosis and lower expectations, Tom sees potential, and pushes toward it. He doesn't wait for students to "catch up" to be treated like readers. He creates the conditions where reading can emerge.

“I assume every student can do everything. And then I adjust when they can't — not the other way around.”

— Tom

That mindset is at the heart of his classroom's transformation. Readability became the right partner because it aligned with his values: every student deserves daily, individualized support. Every student can grow with the right structure. Every student deserves to be seen — not just for where they are, but for who they can become.

“Readability changed what my students believed about themselves. And when a child starts believing they can read — that changes everything.”

— Tom, Special Education Teacher

THE TRANSFORMATION

Together, Tom and Readability are delivering something rare in education: measurable outcomes and meaningful identity shifts. Students who once struggled to speak are now reading fluently. Families who once felt defeated are celebrating IEP goals met. And a teacher who refuses to settle is proving what's possible when high expectations meet the right support.

WHY READABILITY WORKS

- Real-time AI speech feedback
- Adaptive comprehension questions
- Frictionless daily routine integration
- Guided Access mode for focus
- Meaningful data for IEP reporting

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- +51% class fluency increase
- 94% average reading accuracy
- ~2.2 level-ups per student
- Nonverbal student now reading fluently
- Stronger IEP goal documentation