

**A Validation Study of the  
AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY  
TEST PREPARATION PROGRAMS**

**Original Study  
By  
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2006**

**Updated  
By  
MARKET DATA RETRIEVAL  
2010**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>About American Book Company</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>About the Research</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2010 Summary of Findings</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Teacher Interviews</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Cloverleaf Elementary School, Georgia</i>	
<i>Community Charter School, North Carolina</i>	
<i>Floyd Middle School, Georgia</i>	
<i>Indian Springs High School, Nevada</i>	
<i>J.A. Phillips Middle School, Louisiana</i>	
<i>Lafayette Middle School, Georgia</i>	
<i>Midway High School, North Carolina</i>	
<i>Ola Middle School, Georgia</i>	
<i>Ridgeland High School, Georgia</i>	
<i>Warrenwood Elementary, North Carolina</i>	

## ABOUT AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

American Book Company was founded in 1996 by a family of educators. Dr. Frank Pintozzi, a special education and English professor at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, and Colleen Pintozzi, a 22-year veteran mathematics teacher and supervisor of GED programs at the county level, had always been deeply committed to their work with underachieving student populations. Devin Pintozzi, joining in 1997, committed to the same vision, teaching Migrant ESL classes, writing book materials, and earning an MBA to propel the vision forward.

As the Pintozzis taught their classes, authored books for other publishers, and participated in professional events and organizations, their desire to be more directly involved in serving underachieving students grew. They wanted to use their vast experience and classroom-tested strategies to help these students move forward and contribute positively to society.

Nearby South Carolina became the test case for their first high school graduation test preparation books. In developing these first books, American Book Company:

- Studied the state standards for the subjects in which students were tested
- Analyzed the textbooks in use in the state
- Involved teachers, supervisors, and assessment specialists in the development process
- Implemented a carefully structured logical sequence to diagnose, teach, and provide reinforcement
- Employed a variety of learning modalities to tap into students' innate instructional preferences
- Provided an abundance of practice tests and exercises to raise students' confidence level and target their challenge areas

The books were a resounding success. They and their subsequent revisions have been used in South Carolina ever since.

Then, refining the development strategies outlined above, American Book Company developed graduation test preparation books and supportive software for an additional 18 states; end-of-course test preparation programs for states who use such tests instead of or in addition to graduation tests; ACT and SAT test preparation guides; and content-specific products for additional review and practice in language arts, math and science, as well as other supplements, such as flash cards and overhead transparencies.

Most recently, the company has published standards-based test preparation books for elementary and middle grades in selected states and committed to expanding into other states, subject areas, and grade levels as the need arises. American Book Company's latest initiative is to provide instructional and test content in electronic format. When educators purchase sets of American Book Company materials, e-versions are available as an optional add-on purchase, to support electronic instruction and student learning with interactive white boards, computers, and other classroom technologies.

During the years that the state-specific test preparation books have been available, American Book Company has received an enormous amount of unsolicited anecdotal feedback on how the books and ancillaries are helping students. Customers' comments on effectiveness, ease-of-use, student appeal, and match with state standards have been used to revise and improve the books and the development process.

### **ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

To move beyond anecdotal feedback, American Book Company began to look for statistical evidence of effectiveness. A structured test preparation program that was to be implemented at La Feria High School in La Feria, Texas offered the opportunity to gather such evidence.

#### **A Case Study: La Feria High School, La Feria, Texas**

In the winter semester of 2005, La Feria High School instituted special mathematics academic enrichment classes for high-risk students who had repeatedly failed the mathematics portion of the TAAS Exit Exam. Passing this exam was then one of the requirements for earning a Texas high school diploma.

Seven classes were organized; a teacher was assigned to each. Sherry Stewart of La Feria High School was responsible for supervising the teachers. The purpose was to ensure acceptable student test performance on the TAKS 11 Mathematics Exam, the new required exit exam. The key challenges were:

- All students had repeatedly failed previous exams.
- The classes consisted of a high risk, primarily Hispanic, student population.
- The TAKS 11 Mathematics test required that students master more advanced mathematics concepts than they had encountered in the earlier TAAS Exit Exam.

Students and teachers used American Book Company's *TAKS 11 Mathematics* books for classroom instruction and the *TAKS 11 Mathematics* software during their computer lab time. The classes were conducted from January 1, 2005 to March 22, 2005.

In early April, after completing these academic enrichment classes, students took the TAKS 11 Mathematics Exam. Of the 90 who took the exam, 36 students, or 40% of those who had participated in the instruction, passed the exam.

### **2006 Research**

The highly regarded educational research firm of Lois Eskin and Associates was then asked to conduct several interviews of other high school teachers using American Book Company products, to determine whether their experiences were similar. The results of those interviews confirmed that American Book Company books were making a large contribution to student success.

### **2010 Update**

In the years since 2006, there has been no lessening of the demand for accountability. In fact, the number of statewide assessments, state exit exams and end-of-course assessments has increased yearly. Although educators today are looking ahead to new standards and possibly new tests, preparing students for a productive future remains the priority, especially as the global economy increases competitive pressures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century marketplace. Solid mastery of rigorous standards prepares students for that future, and the importance of college and career readiness is greater than ever before. And statewide grade-level assessments and end-of-course exams continue to be the way that student mastery is measured.

So as the world of education changes, test score success continues to be an important marker for students, teachers and schools. Educators still need to see solid evidence that the programs being used in their schools will improve test scores.

In 2010, American Book Company decided to update the original validation study, to determine if their materials are still perceived as effective tools for student test preparation. As part of this 2010 research update, Market Data Retrieval conducted interviews with educators from ten schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools. Teachers were asked about the academic challenges their students faced and to describe the features of the American Book Company products they used that contributed to students' success.

District data, obtained from Market Data Retrieval's 2009-10 state school directories, is included for each school to provide a demographic context. These new interviews, included below, confirm that American Book Company products continue to impact student success across a range of subject areas and grade levels.

## 2010 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Among the common themes that emerged from this set of interviews are these benefits of the American Book Company materials:

- **A focus on practice**  
Teachers appreciate the amount and variety of practice items that the books provide, noting that there are a variety of question types and practice sets for all of the state standards. Having such a ready source of practice sets saves time. Teachers can rely on one set of materials that covers their students' needs rather than spending a lot of time gathering materials from numerous sources.
- **Close match to state tests**  
Nearly every teacher interviewed commented on the close match between the American Book Company materials and the specific state assessments that their students take. This close match builds students' confidence, allowing them to gain familiarity with the form and content of the tests and helping them feel more comfortable about what they will face on the test itself.
- **Alignment with state standards**  
While alignment to state standards is an absolute "must have" in any standards-based instruction and test preparation program, at no time is it more important than when standards have changed. Several teachers referenced Georgia's adoption of new performance standards in 2006, after which none of the textbooks in use matched up against the new curriculum very well. American Book Company was able to respond quickly with materials that aligned to the new standards and provided teachers with badly needed instructional resources.
- **Thorough coverage of the material**  
American Book Company books are very thorough, focusing on building the skills that students need to be successful in class as well as on the test. Several teachers report that their American Book Company book has replaced the textbook, offering more concrete explanations, appropriate pacing and extended practice.
- **Concise and time efficient**  
Reflecting the many demands on classroom time, teachers appreciate the organized, concise way that American Book Company products deliver instruction and practice. The pre- and post-tests identify areas where students need to focus, enabling them to maximize their test preparation time.
- **Step-by-step structure**  
Content is delivered in a systematic and meaningful way. The inclusion of diagnostic tests, step-by-step instructions and a structured progression from warm-up to wrap-up activities help keep students engaged and on track.

- Applicability to a range of programs, including after-school tutoring  
Teachers use the American Book Company test preparation books in a variety of ways. The books are used with at-risk and special education students and to supplement ongoing classroom instruction. Some teachers use the content as a major component of their instructional program and other use them for weekly review. Teachers report using American Book Company books for direct instruction, group work and for individual practice.

## **TEACHER INTERVIEWS**

### **Action Research Shows Positive Results Cloverleaf Elementary School, Georgia**

#### **Demographics**

##### Cloverleaf Elementary School, Cartersville, GA

- 737 students
- Title I school

##### Bartow County School District, Cartersville, GA

- 14,950 students
- 9% African American
- 83% Caucasian
- 7% Hispanic
- 1% Asian

Most students at Cloverleaf Elementary come from low-income families where parents work two jobs and have limited time to read with their children.

#### **The Challenge**

According to Assistant Principal Dovie Paulk, a major challenge educators faced at Cloverleaf Elementary was finding materials that were close to the state tests. “We needed something ready to go,” said Ms. Paulk. “We have many young teachers at the school, and I did not want them to get side-tracked. I didn’t want them to re-invent the wheel, but I did want materials that were very focused on practice.”

Ms. Paulk first encountered the American Book Company materials when she was tutoring special education students in science and math from the local high schools. “I was working with students who had failed the exam up to five times,” said Ms. Paulk. “After I began using the American Book Company books, the results were great. Every student passed. So I looked into the books that were available for elementary students.”

### **Action Research**

At Cloverleaf Elementary, teachers began using the American Book Company science book in third and fourth grade and the remedial reading, math, and social studies books in the fifth grade. According to Ms. Paulk, “I had a brand new teacher who did a little action research project. She used the American Book Company fourth-grade social studies book with three groups of students, and another book with two other groups of students. Ninety percent of the students who were using the American Book Company book passed—many more than in the other groups.”

Because of the great results in social studies, the school began using American Book Company books in other subject areas also. Teachers have responded positively. “They like that they can use these books as textbooks if they want to, and that the material is covered so thoroughly,” said Ms. Paulk. “We drill down and look closely at our at-risk students. We set up intensive care groups, do interventions, and check on student progress regularly to see which students are ready to move on.”

Teachers are also using American Book Company materials in the after-school tutoring program, which was established to provide the extra support that the school’s working families cannot offer.

### **Student Improvement**

Test scores have improved each year since 2006. In 2009, the school placed first in math and second in reading in AYP out of 12 schools in the county. And Cloverleaf Elementary was the only school of the 12 whose students scored at 90% or better in reading and math.

According to Ms. Paulk, American Book Company books have played a major part in this success, especially in social studies. “Our students didn’t have enough background,” said Ms. Paulk, “and we never had these results before. The American Book Company books are very thorough and offer one-stop shopping where everything is covered.”



## **Charter Students, Helped to Focus, Find Success Community Charter School, North Carolina**

### **Demographics**

#### Community Charter School, Charlotte, NC

- 150 students
- 55% African American
- 40% Caucasian
- 4% Hispanic

Community Charter School serves a diverse K-5 student population whose parents have opted for the school's arts-oriented, project-based approach to learning. The school was first chartered in 1997. It is located in Charlotte, NC.

### **Challenges**

Community Charter School covers the North Carolina Standard Course of Study through interdisciplinary project-based learning, combined with arts integration and hands-on, experiential learning. Parents send their children to the school because they value an education that focuses on developing independent learners and thinkers and allows students to develop at their own pace.

According to Anissa Miller, principal of Community Charter School, it has been a challenge to get students and their parents to take the state's standardized testing seriously. "The biggest challenge has been changing the attitudes of both the students and the parents, who are people who do not value testing as a high priority in terms of their children's education," she reported.

Another challenge the students face is their unfamiliarity with more formal, structured tests, such as North Carolina's End-of-Grade tests. Community Charter School uses open-ended questions when they test and employs alternative methods of assessment. As a result, Miss Miller believes that students find the End-of-Grade test questions difficult even though they may actually know the content being tested.

### **Focusing on Science**

Community Charter School's test scores have been improving over the past several years, with students generally scoring at or near the state average. The school does lag the average performance of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, the public school district that serves the Charlotte area. Miss Miller attributes this to the fact that in the

district schools, test prep is ongoing and constant, while Community Charter opts to focus on a broader curriculum and more flexible approach to learning.

In 2010, Community Charter purchased American Book Company's *Passing the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Science* book for use in fifth grade. Beginning in mid-March, which was about seven weeks before the actual administration of the End-of-Grade exams, the class began to use the books. First the teacher administered the pre-test to get a picture of where everyone was. Then, two or three times a week, the class devoted an hour to working through the materials, chapter by chapter. They discussed the content, studied in small groups, engaged in peer teaching and worked their way through each chapter. Some workbook activities were assigned as homework.

### **Student Improvement**

Miss Miller reports that 100% of Community Charter's fifth graders passed the End-of-Grade science test in 2010, compared to a passing rate of 38% the year earlier. She attributes that success to the use of the American Book Company materials. "As the students were taking the exam," she said, "they commented to the proctor that a number of the questions were very similar to questions they had practiced with using the ABC book." She believes the American Book Company materials more than met the school's goal of helping to make the students familiar with and comfortable handling the End-of-Grade testing format.

"The format and organization of the books make them really easy to use," Ms Miller said. She noted that the chapters were easy for the students to read through, the end of chapter questions helped them focus and judge their effectiveness at learning the material and the strategy of going back to the text to find the answers was very effective.

"We would highly recommend these products to other schools," Ms. Miller stated. Backing up that statement, she notes that Community Charter has expanded its use of American Book Company products for the 2010-11 school year, adding third, fourth and fifth grade math and reading test preparation workbooks, as well as continuing the use of the fifth grade science workbooks.

## **Innovative Test Prep Program Improves Performance in Title I School Floyd Middle School, Georgia**

### **Demographics**

#### Floyd Middle School, Mableton, GA

- 964 students
- Title I school

#### Cobb County School District, Marietta, GA

- 107,200 students
- 30% African American
- 50% Caucasian
- 15% Hispanic
- 4% Asian

According to Parent Liaison Sharon Harvey, Floyd Middle School serves many students from transient families, many who eat breakfast and lunch at school, and many who struggle with the challenges of English language and vocabulary acquisition.

### **Challenges**

Since numerous students at Floyd Middle School have moved repeatedly from school to school, focus and attention issues are common. Thirty percent of students are Spanish-speaking. And although the school has a rich technology program with many student computers and online resources, students typically do not have computers at home. Two years ago, the school was at risk of failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

### **Building a New Program**

According to Ms. Harvey, the school decided to address this situation with a new student support and test preparation program based on after-school tutoring, Saturday school, and take-home packets of print materials that include the American Book Company books. She had previously used American Book Company products in another school where she taught special education students.

“I loved those books, and so did the other special education teachers, and then the regular education teachers got on board,” said Ms. Harvey. “So at Floyd Middle school I started looking through the whole catalog to see what could help our situation here, and we selected the *CRCT Math*, *CRCT English Language Arts* and *CRCT Reading*.”

The American Book Company products are used throughout the program both in the classroom and at home. According to Ms. Harvey, “They are great backup for whatever else we are doing and provide the additional support our students need.”

Low-scoring students have the opportunity for extra instruction in special “connections” classes that take the place of music or PE, and the school has offered math parties in Spanish and English that have attracted up to 400 attendees. Teachers also post a different standard on the board each day and address it in their lesson planning for that day. Several copies of the American Book Company books are available in the parent resource room, and parents have taken advantage of this opportunity, even checking out the books and taking them home.

“We find that parents are very appreciative of the extra support for their students,” said Ms. Harvey. “We provide transportation for our Saturday school and we have a huge turnout. Parents are on board with the take-home packets and the resource room program, and we are able to provide some materials in both Spanish and English.”

### **Student Improvement**

In the last two years, Floyd Middle School has passed AYP, and test scores have improved by 10-20%. Ms. Harvey attributes this progress to the combination of all the factors in the program, including *CRCT Math*, *CRCT English Language Arts* and *CRCT Reading*. “Our students really like the American Book Company books because the problems are so close to what they see on the test,” she said. “This makes them a lot less nervous and a lot more comfortable.”

## **Passing Rate for Special Education Students Increases by Fifty Percent Indian Springs High School, Nevada**

### **Demographics**

#### Indian Springs High School, Indian Springs, Nevada

- 300 students

#### Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

- 311,417 students
- 14% African American
- 37% Caucasian
- 42% Hispanic
- 8% Asian
- 1% Native American

Indian Springs High School serves a rural population where families are employed at a local Air Force base, prison, or nuclear test site. Most students rarely visit Las Vegas, the closest town, 40 miles away.

### **Challenges**

According to Special Education Instructional Facilitator Steve Fershliester, one of the major challenges at Indian Springs High is that teachers are often the only resource available to students. A few students have computers at home, and the school does lend out computers over the summer.

Another major challenge is student engagement. “Getting the students motivated can be tough,” said Mr. Fershliester. “In my role as Special Education Instructional Facilitator, I go out to the high school about once a month, and sometimes I have driven students into town just to show them some opportunities beyond what they see in their community.”

### **Addressing the Need**

Although students generally score at or below the state level, the school has made AYP for the last two years since Mr. Fershliester began using several books from American Book Company, including *Nevada Science*.

According to Mr. Fershliester, “The American Book Company books work because they support the state guidelines. When I arrived at the school, they were using *Math 1*, and I expanded the program to include other books because I had used them in Florida for

many years, where I taught SAT and ACT prep to special education students.” Some special education students at Indian Springs High are in inclusion classes, and others are in pullout programs. Based on Mr. Mr. Fershliester’s recommendation, Indian Springs High began using the American Book Company’s English and writing books with lower-functioning students in the inclusion classrooms.

Mr. Fershliester uses the American Book Company books for pre-and post-tests to identify areas where students need to focus. He has found that they are very time-efficient. “We don’t waste time—we can get right to the areas where students need help. My Florida students and my Nevada students all needed help with test-taking skills and practice, and the American Book Company books provide that,” said Mr. Fershliester.

### **Student Improvement**

“We have seen fabulous results from using these books,” said Mr. Fershliester. “They help students narrow down to what they need and get the practice they need. On the writing side, students learn to identify the types of questions and understand how they need to answer them.”

In 2007-08 and 2008-09, 100% of special education students at Indian Springs High School passed the state exam in English, writing and math, an improvement of 50%.

## **Middle School Leads the Way on Test Score Improvement**

J.A. Phillips Middle School, Louisiana

### **Demographics**

#### J.A. Phillips Middle School, Minden LA

- 294 students
- Title I school

#### Webster Parish School Board, Minden, LA

- 7,300 students
- 43% African American
- 56% Caucasian
- 1% Hispanic

J.A. Phillips Middle School is located in Minden, a small town 30 miles west of Shreveport, LA. It serves a mixed student population, many of whom come from low-income homes.

### **Challenges**

According to Mr. Morris Busby, the Supervisor for Secondary Schools for Webster Parish School District, J.A Phillips faces a difficult situation. It serves all of Minden's sixth grade students, receiving students from the city's four elementary schools. The school has one year to meld these students into a cohesive student body while meeting their very diverse needs.

The school has worked hard to improve its academic standing. The State Department of Education has awarded the school an "Exemplary Academic Growth" label, indicating that it has shown growth for its economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. But the school still faces the need to accelerate the progress it must make each year in order to remain on target for reaching the state's 2014 goal of a School Performance Score of 120.

### **Student Improvement**

J.A. Phillips Middle School captured the attention of district administrators when test score analysis documented unusual success. After reviewing the year-end test scores for his district, Mr. Morris Busby made an astounding discovery. Of the 53 sixth grade students district wide who received an "Advanced" score on the state's social studies test, 42 came from J.A. Phillips Middle School. Not only is it unusual to see so many

advanced ratings come from one school, but the results were also unusual because not all Phillips advanced scoring social studies students scored highly in other academic subjects, which is typically the case.

Students who achieve the advanced level on the iLEAP have demonstrated superior performance beyond the proficient level of mastery. Mr. Busby indicated that in a good year, a school could hope to have 10% to 12% of its students reach the advanced level. J.A. Phillips' 42 advanced scorers represented 20% of the school's student body.

Mr. Busby contacted J.A. Phillips' principal, Ms. Linda Hudson, to find out what was going on at the middle school, with the hope of reproducing the results across the district, if possible. Ms. Hudson credited her students' success to American Book Company's *Louisiana iLEAP Grade 6 Social Studies Test Prep*. After receiving some samples last summer, Ms. Hudson and her social studies teachers decided to use the workbooks with their students.

The teachers found that American Book Company's diagnostic test and the two practice tests correlated very well with their grade-level expectations (GLEs). Teachers administered these assessments to pinpoint students' strengths and weaknesses. The lessons in the test prep books were used to introduce or review new information. The books were used as a guide to integrate additional resources in order to diversify teaching based on students' needs, abilities and interests. Social studies teachers taught with greater rigor and relevance. Ms Hudson reported that her teachers used the books faithfully throughout the year, making them a constant factor in social studies instruction. After using the workbooks consistently throughout the school year, the results spoke for themselves.

### **Extending the Model**

Given the results seen at J.A. Phillips Middle School, Mr. Busby and the Supervisor for Elementary Schools decided to test American Book Company's workbooks with summer school students. One section each of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math and English was taught using American Book Company's iLEAP Test Prep books. Though the formal results were not yet available, Mr. Busby was fairly confident that they would see positive results. He reported that the teachers who were using the American Book Company books in their classrooms were very impressed with the materials.

Mr. Busby believes that a major factor accounting for the success of American Book Company's test prep materials is their close match to what is on the state test. The workbooks allow teachers to consistently provide extra practice, focusing students on the skills they need to know.

Even before the 2010-2011 school year began, the district's Title I director had agreed to help purchase test prep books for J.A. Phillips Middle School in additional subject areas and to introduce the books in several other district elementary schools.



## Meeting the Challenge of New State Standards Lafayette Middle School, Georgia

### Demographics

#### Lafayette Middle School, Lafayette, GA

- 939 students
- Title I school

#### Walker County School District, Lafayette, GA

- 9,199 students
- 5% African American
- 92% Caucasian
- 2% Hispanic

Located in a rural community mid-way between Atlanta and Chattanooga, Lafayette Middle School serves a mixed population, with a large proportion of Title I students.

### The Challenge

According to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher Jamie Bloodworth, when the Georgia Performance Standards changed a few years ago, the school struggled to assemble the resources it needed. With students now taking most of Algebra I in the eighth grade, teachers had to pull together materials from numerous sources to meet the challenge. Test scores had generally been good in the district, with students keeping up with or just exceeding the state average, but Ms. Bloodworth was concerned that scores might decline as the standards changed. .

### A Variety of Classroom Materials

According to Ms. Bloodworth, teachers assembled a variety of resources because no textbook accurately paralleled the new curriculum. She was using an American Book Company book for Algebra I end-of-course tests and was pleased with the results. “And when I saw *Math I*, I went for it. These products are a great source of nice questions, and they provide more practice and instruction than other books—especially more practice.”

“I use the state frameworks, supplements, online resources, and books from the American Book Company—*Math I EOCT*, *Algebra I EOCT*, and *7<sup>th</sup> Grade GPS*—as well as other support materials,” she said. “Together these resources provide good variety and support the transfer of skills because students see the same material presented in different ways.”

Each student in Math 1 receives a copy of *Math I*. Ms. Bloodworth teaches from it, and students use it for homework. “This book is the closest resource to a textbook for my students,” said Ms. Bloodworth. “We use it weekly or bi-weekly. With my 7th graders, I use a class set of *7<sup>th</sup> Grade GPS*. I especially like that these books present the material in a very concise way. I like the diagnostic tests, and I like that the books show which chapters to go to for which questions. I’ve recommended American Book Company books to high school teachers in our district, and they have begun to use them.”

### **Student Improvement**

As teachers assembled their materials and as teachers and students became familiar with the new standards, test scores improved in the school by 10-20%. “We expected a dip in our scores when we switched to the more stringent tests, but it didn’t happen,” said Ms. Bloodworth. “Generally speaking, I don’t see as many challenges as some of my colleagues because I teach advanced math, but we are all working hard toward student improvement. I am looking to see more of my students move into the ‘exceeding’ category.”

According to Ms. Bloodworth, “*Algebra I EOCT* has made a huge difference in our results. It helps students prepare and it covers everything. I haven’t seen the Math I results yet, but I suspect that they will be good.”

## **A Focus on Critical Reading Skills Improves Math Achievement Midway High School, North Carolina**

### **Demographics**

#### Midway High School, Newton Grove, NC

- 634 students

#### Sampson County School District, Clinton, NC

- 8,162 students
- 29% African American
- 48% Caucasian
- 22% Hispanic
- 1% Native American

Midway High School serves a rural population with a mixture of farming, blue-collar, and white-collar families. The school enjoys outstanding parent involvement and community support.

### **Challenges**

According to Math Department Chair BethAnn McLaurin, many students at Midway High struggled with level 3 math, which is a graduation requirement in North Carolina, because they found the word problems particularly challenging.

“Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry have become as much a test of reading as a test of math,” said Ms. McLaurin. “Many students’ critical reading skills are not adequate to handle the type of expansive questions we see on the test, where problems are embedded within problems.”

### **Addressing the Need**

Ms. McLaurin adopted a strategy of practice, practice, practice. “We have to put every type of application problem in front of our students all the time—in class and every night,” she said. “We have to expose them to what they will get on the test. The students don’t like it initially, but I always explain that I would be failing them if I did not provide the practice they need.”

Several years ago, another math department chair received a sample American Book Company book and asked Ms. McLaurin for input. According to Ms. McLaurin, “I could see that this book was the closest thing to the exam, and I went on to purchase the

*Algebra 1* and *Geometry* books out of my at-risk budget. Since then, the science and social studies departments have also purchased American Book Company books based on my recommendation.”

Ms. McLaurin believes in sticking very close to a standards course of study. “I make sure everything is covered,” she said, “and I also teach beyond the curriculum, because students won’t remember everything.” She uses the American Book Company books in a variety of ways, including direct instruction and groups of three, insisting that students try to work through the problems on their own, or in their group, before asking for help.

“It’s important not to get behind in the pacing,” said Ms. McLaurin. “If I’m home sick, I’m confident that the students will stay on track if I assign work out of the American Book Company books. I cannot be sure that a substitute will help them prepare adequately for the exam.” She also uses the final exam from *Algebra 1* as a diagnostic tool for geometry and algebra 2, so that she can provide remediation if needed.

### **Student Improvement**

At the end of the first semester, in the spring of 2010, test scores at Midway High had improved dramatically. Midway High was the highest performing of four high schools in the county and had made double-digit gains over the previous year.

According to Ms. McLaurin, “The explanations in *Algebra 1* and *Geometry* are so thorough. I find that a lot of students have a breakthrough moment where it just hits them that math is not hard. They are not used to reading to learn, so I use the American Book Company books to practice critical reading skills and help them get used to reading to learn in math.”

## **Special Education Math Scores Improve Despite Funding Pressures Ola Middle School, Georgia**

### **Demographics**

#### Ola Middle School, McDonough, GA

- 1,829 students

#### Henry County Schools, McDonough, GA

- 39,200 students
- 43% African American
- 49% Caucasian
- 5% Hispanic
- 2% Asian

Special education teacher Heather Franks-McCabe, who teaches 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, used American Book Company products during her two years at Ola Middle School and has also used them at a new school that opened in the fall of 2009, Locust Grove Middle School.

### **Challenges**

Eighth-graders in Georgia must pass the math and reading Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) to be promoted to high school. The Georgia Performance Standards, which were adopted in 2006, now require that students take most of Algebra I in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. At Ola Middle School, most students were scoring in the 800-815 range, where 800 is the minimum score to pass the CRCT. At Locust Grove Middle School, students have not yet been assessed by the CRCT, but local benchmark tests show that students have scored significantly below the district average.

According to Mrs. Franks-McCabe, “Math was the most challenging subject for our 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Ola Middle School. Of those who did not pass the 8<sup>th</sup> grade test, most did not pass in math.” In addition, funding issues led to a shortage of resource classrooms, remediation time, and one-to-one instruction. Then, when the funding for summer school was cut, “We were faced with a situation where we had to remediate a year’s worth of math in the last two weeks of the school year.”

### **Teacher-Created Materials and Ongoing Practice**

Mrs. Franks-McCabe had not used the American Book Company’s *7<sup>th</sup> Grade CRCT Practice*, but when the district received a preview copy, she was asked to review it. “I liked it so much, I asked our principal at Ola Middle School to order it for my 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

The American Book Company books allow ample practice, from warm-up to wrap-up activities, and they show students the different ways algebra is used in the real world. I haven't used our textbook since the first grading period—it does not have enough examples and practice problems. I use the American Book Company books for ongoing practice and as a guide for teacher-created materials and extension activities.”

Teacher-made materials are the main form of instruction in Mrs. Franks-McCabe's class, since she believes in using manipulatives and a real-world approach to math. “I find that American Book Company books provide ideas and direction for my teacher-made materials, as well as the practice problems and reinforcement students need,” she said.

### **More Mastery and Student Engagement**

Mrs. Franks-McCabe has found that her students build more mastery because they are less frustrated, can work problems in different ways, and become more engaged in learning. “The 8<sup>th</sup> Grade CRCT Practice problems are not confusing for students, and I like the way they are structured. The step-by-step approach covers the entire process in a systematic and useful way. I'm very pleased with the amount of practice. Although education is moving toward more exploration of concepts, special education students still need direct instruction for the most part, and that's what American Book Company provides.”

### **Student Improvement**

Despite the time pressure and condensed schedule during the two-week remediation period at the end of the school year at Ola Middle School, the special education students, who had been about 15 points below, all passed the state test in math, with test scores improving by 20-30%.

## **Improving Student Performance Despite a High Absentee Rate Ridgeland High School, Georgia**

### **Demographics**

#### Ridgeland High School, Rossville, GA

- 1,304 students
- Title I school

#### Walker County School District, Rossville, GA

- 9,199 students
- 5% African American
- 92% Caucasian
- 2% Hispanic

Located in a suburban community, Ridgeland High School serves a high-poverty population, with a large proportion of Title I students and a high absentee rate.

### **Many Gaps in Learning**

According to math teacher Terri Hixson, because of the high absentee rate at Ridgeland High School, many students have missed large sections of the curriculum and teachers must address ongoing problems of reading comprehension and vocabulary building. “Our students struggle with retention, concept forming, and retrieval in math, and we often need to address the basic manipulation of positive and negative numbers,” she said.

Although the school has not been able to meet AYP because of its graduation rate, test scores are adequate and comparable with other high schools in the district. They have improved in the past year since the school moved to the America’s Choice instructional model. “This prescribes how we teach,” said Ms. Hixson, “and even the vocabulary we use.”

### **New State Standards**

According to Ms. Hixson, no textbook was able to meet the school’s needs after the Georgia State Standards changed a few years ago. “However, the American Book Company books give us the resources we need to address the standards,” she said. “They have taken the place of a textbook for my math students.”

Ms. Hixson has found that the multiple-choice tests, skill-and-drill questions, and open-ended test questions have been very helpful in giving her students the practice they need. “With very few exceptions, the American Book Company books provide an exercise set

for every Georgia standard and multiple skill-and-drill practice sets. I would like to see even more application problems for each standard—it’s hard to get enough!” she said. “I use the problems as a major component of my instructional program, and once a week I take the time to review previous concepts using the *Math I* and *Math II* books.”

### **Student Improvement**

Ms. Hixson uses the books for class work as well as homework, and students at Ridgeland High have responded well. According to Ms. Hixson, “These books really help. I have used *Algebra I*, *Math I*, and *Math II*, and I find that they are really useful for me and our other teachers. They focus in on the problems around each standard, and the variety is great.”

Test results have improved by 20-30% since the school began integrating American Book Company books into the instructional program.



## Passing Rate for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Test Soars Warrenwood Elementary, North Carolina

### Demographics

#### Warrenwood Elementary, Fayetteville, NC

- 423 students
- Title I school

#### Cumberland County Schools, Fayetteville, NC

- 52,187 students
- 47% African American
- 36% Caucasian
- 7% Hispanic

Warrenwood Elementary serves a predominantly minority, low-income population.

### The Challenge

According to Sheila Howell, Math/Science Resource Teacher at Warrenwood Elementary School, students' lack of background poses a significant challenge for learning science. "Our students don't have a lot of real-world experiences to pull from when we're trying to teach concepts," she explained. Many parents themselves are not high school graduates and can't help much in terms of school work or ongoing support.

Given students' needs, teachers struggled to find the resources needed to prepare them properly for the states' high stakes testing.

### Filling in the Gaps

Ms. Howell first encountered the American Book Company materials at a state science conference, where she obtained a sample copy of American Book Company's end-of-grade test preparation workbook for fifth grade science. She began using the book and found it wonderful. Knowing that students at Warrenwood had real difficulty grasping many of the science concepts covered in the state curriculum because of their lack of background experience, she decided to use the program more widely, purchasing a classroom set of *Passing the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Science* for use with the school's fifth grade students.

Ms. Howell and the classroom teachers worked cooperatively to implement the program. Teachers used the American Book Company books for vocabulary development and

content coverage, reading and discussing the content with students. Ms. Howell worked with the students in the science lab, for one 90-minute period a week, where she used the activities from the American Book Company materials to engage the students in hands-on learning.

Ms. Howell had begun pulling all students into the science lab for hands-on activities and in-depth instruction the year earlier. At the time, she gathered all her activities and supporting materials from the Internet, which was difficult and time consuming. “I didn’t have the resources readily available to back up the hands-on activities. This has pulled it all together for me in one convenient place,” Ms. Howell said.

Ms. Howell noted that the American Book Company books are aligned with the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, making them very easy to use. “It’s phenomenal,” she reported. She especially appreciated having appropriate resources ready to hand to support her hands on instructional approach. “I started using a lot of the workbook activities and questions – referring back to the book a lot,” Ms. Howell explained. “Just getting to see the wording of the questions, which closely match the state test, has made a really big difference for students.”

Ms. Howell pointed out that the graphics used in the workbooks are a real strength. “It’s difficult,” she said, “to find good graphics to illustrate concepts like land forms, for example.” In the American Book Company workbook, graphics are integrated into the practice questions, allowing students to become familiar with that question format and be better prepared to deal with it on the actual test.

### **Student Gains**

Ms. Howell reported that 75% of Warrenwood’s fifth graders passed the End-of-Grade science test in 2010, compared to a passing rate of 29% the year earlier. She attributes this success to the support found in the American Book Company’s materials. “This is the best thing I’ve found,” she stated.

Ms. Howell said that since that remarkable success, the district has begun sending people to her classroom to observe what she does with students.

Based on the successful use of the science workbooks, Ms. Howell is working on getting classroom sets of American Book Company’s workbooks for use in reading and math instruction.

Ms. Howell freely recommends *Passing the North Carolina End-of-Grade Test of Science*. “I’ve told everybody I talk to who teaches fifth grade science about the book, she says. “It’s such a good package.”