

# Personalized learning solutions help students develop math skills—and enjoy it, too

Students in a California classroom see improved problem-solving and self-confidence using Redbird Mathematics

**D**ean Deaver's fourth-grade classroom was struggling with math. His students at Monroe Elementary School in Riverside, California hadn't benefited from the curriculum the school had used for the past few years, showing little improvement in state tests or in their day-to-day assignments.

Many of his 30 students required extra support due to cognitive learning problems or issues at home, and even more were discouraged from consistently testing at a second-grade level. Deaver needed a solution.

## A program for all

In 2015, a math instructional coach told Deaver about Redbird Mathematics, a personalized learning solution for K6 students. Developed by Stanford University researchers, Redbird Mathematics continually assesses a student's understanding and assigns content to individually customize their learning trajectory, whether they're struggling or need to be challenged beyond their grade level.

Encouraged by this personalized curriculum, Deaver's district approved an eight-week pilot program for the 2015-16 school year, and he got to work implementing the program.

Deaver didn't have to wait long to see that Redbird was making a difference in his classroom. The games and videos immediately engaged students, offering a dynamic alternative to simply typing an answer and moving on to the next question. "It was engaging, it was rigorous and the students wanted to do it," says Deaver.

As he implemented the pilot program, Redbird offered Deaver extra support. He had several videoconferences with Redbird representatives to understand how to set up the platform, maximize its benefits in the classroom and interpret student data.

"It was everything that I had initially thought it would be, and even more. Across the board, the students were very



"I've seen a new excitement for math. My students come up and ask, 'Can I do Redbird today?'"

much engaged and excited about it. And they were learning," says Deaver.

## Bringing math to life

It wasn't long ago that Deaver's students couldn't appreciate how the math they were learning in the classroom applied to real life. While using Redbird, students encountered real-world application problems at the end of each unit. They would learn something new and then would be introduced to someone who uses that math in real life, or would be posed with a real-life situation that required problem-solving.

But students didn't just see how their lessons might manifest themselves in different careers and scenarios—they also learned the language to talk about their approach to math. Deaver found that his students approached problems differently than they did before, thinking through a problem as opposed to just solving it.

"My students now have a vocabulary to explain, 'Oh, I did this, and then I

tried this.' They think it through," says Deaver.

He found these conversations to be the most powerful. When faced with a new problem to solve, students could interpret what the question was asking, what they really wanted and how best to solve it.

Multiple district-level administrators witnessed the program's benefits firsthand and were impressed by student work and enthusiasm. Most notably, many of Deaver's students showed greater self-confidence in math and in the classroom. Because Redbird Mathematics allowed them to see the progress they made, many students were more concerned about tracking their improvement than their individual learning level, which, as Deaver found, made all the difference.

**Mc  
Graw  
Hill  
Education**

For more information, visit [www.redbirdlearning.com](http://www.redbirdlearning.com)  
View, comment, share this story online at <http://DAMag.me/rbd>