



n2y Solutions: A Lifeline for a New Special Education Teacher



Introduction

How did a new special education teacher begin to thrive and set her students up to make measurable progress? After moving from general education classrooms to a low-incidence classroom in Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), Jennifer Leiby made a huge difference in her students' learning using n2y solutions in just one school year.

District Background

CMSD is the second-largest school district in Ohio and serves a diverse population of 36,000 students. The district reports that 23.2% of students qualify for special education, 13.1% have limited English proficiency, and 100% are economically disadvantaged. Within CMSD, Luis Muñoz Marín (LMM) is a pre-K–8 dual language school with many Spanish-speaking students and families.

Jennifer Leiby's Background

In 2015, Jennifer began her teaching career in pre-K and first grade general education classrooms. She later earned her master's degree in special education curriculum and instruction and was hired as a Multiple Disabilities and Autism Intervention Specialist at LMM in August 2022. She noted, "When I got this job, this was really my first time working with modified curriculum students who were self-contained and had a completely separate curriculum from [others] in the building."

engagement and participation in learning." She also had SymbolStix PRIME to use as a symbol-based communication tool and News2you to use as a basis for conversations about current events.

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The Challenge

Because LMM had restructured their multiple disabilities with autism units and had limited resources when she started, Jennifer was teaching on her own for her first couple of months. Putting a new special education teacher alone in a self-contained classroom with students who speak several different languages among them made the situation even more challenging. She really wanted to do right by her students, but she was feeling a little lost.

Fortunately, Jennifer had Unique Learning System (ULS) to use as a modified core curriculum for all subjects. She recalled, "I hoped that ULS would help me differentiate learning tasks for students with high needs in communication, fine motor, adaptive behavior, pre-academic, and academic skills in order to increase



Problem-Solving Approaches

Jennifer began exploring how to use ULS to support IEP goal instruction and assessment, instructional routines, and teaching academic standards to students with varying levels of needs across three grade levels. She created a schedule and started filling it in with resources to build a predictable and engaging instructional routine that spanned an entire day.

LEARNING STATIONS

One of Jennifer's daily routines involved participation in learning stations—two adult led and two independent. At a teacher station, she used ULS unit lessons to deliver individual and small-group instruction accessible at different students' levels and connected to Ohio's state standards. She told us, "I enjoy the ability to use resources across multiple delivery methods. Across any particular week, students are given the opportunity to engage with content in whole-group, small-group, and independent time."

VISUAL SUPPORTS

SymbolStix PRIME was Jennifer's go-to resource for visual support. She inserted SymbolStix symbols into a table in a slide to signify which tasks students were to complete at each station. She made visual rules as reminders of expectations for different areas of her classroom. She also used SymbolStix symbols as icons on her lanyard to support students wherever they were and to create reinforcement charts, choice boards, and visual directions.

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In February 2023, Jennifer participated in live professional development conducted by n2y on using n2y solutions with real-life students. She got reinforcement that she was already on the right path, but she was introduced to some eye-opening ways to be even more effective in her teaching. “One of the biggest takeaways from that PD was the demonstration of News2you’s Today’s Weather and using n2y GPS to build student profiles,” she pointed out.

Results

In less than one school year, Jennifer saw wonderful changes in both her teaching and students’ learning with the help of the built-in guidance, resources, and solution-specific professional development she received. She mentioned, “When I started using ULS across the school day, I noticed an increase in student engagement, better teacher organization for lesson planning and daily scheduling, better tracking of students’ skills, and increased attainment of IEP objectives.” She noted that ULS “helped me become a better educator for my students by providing me with the tools to structure a daily instructional routine with content that is accessible for learners of varying abilities and supported by SymbolStix visuals for added communication and comprehension.”

Because Jennifer’s students had predictable routines, differentiated tasks, and visual rules, directions, and choices, they were able to engage safely in classroom routines. What’s more, those same routines and visuals helped other staff who joined the class mid school year to know what was planned each day and how to aid student participation.

Jennifer shared one student’s progress: “He joined me as a kindergartener last fall. Sweetest little boy, but all over the place—we’re constantly climbing on furniture, running around grabbing things, and running out of the classroom and into the school building.” After she incorporated Today’s Weather, “he really tuned into it. Suddenly, we’re sitting at morning meeting, and we’re so excited to come up to the board and participate! He was using the daily life repetitive alphabet and number resources from the [ULS] curriculum. I am just so proud of how far he has come! We looked at his reading and math goals from this past year’s time, and he met both.”

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Conclusions

Teaching and learning would be radically different without n2y solutions, according to Jennifer: “If I did not have [ULS], I would really struggle to plan and implement effective instruction in the academic subjects for my learners.” She especially appreciates the ready-made differentiated lessons and activities that are also standards aligned, saving her the time and trouble of doing all of that herself across a range of levels.

In addition, having supplemental resources and solutions to support organizing her classroom schedule and bring everything together has been a game changer. Regarding SymbolStix PRIME, Jennifer told us, “[It’s been] super helpful and effective with my K–2 group. I really need visuals for everything, and we’re constantly using them.” She also creates social stories and reinforcement charts to manage behavior.

Another key part of Jennifer’s success was the professional development that she completed during her first year of using n2y solutions. She noted, “I had some experience exploring [the solutions] by myself for a few months, but [PD] was still really nice to have since it pertained to exactly what we should be doing every day. I was ready for digging deeper.”

Pleased with what she’s already experienced, Jennifer continues to explore what n2y’s solutions have to offer. She’s now conducting Benchmark assessments using ULS on tablets. She values the Summary produced in the Results section of student accounts after completion, which she uses to inform their present levels across skills. This data can be used for effective progress monitoring, lesson planning, and IEP writing as well. As Jennifer’s career progresses, she’ll find that n2y solutions have more to offer year after year.

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