Where Are They Now?

“Reading Recovery Also Gave Me The Confidence to Try Other Tough Classes”

Kris Piotrowski, Troy District Site, Troy, MI

When Abby Ormsby started first grade at Morse Elementary School in Troy, MI, she was a quiet, enthusiastic learner. Her mother, Stephanie, had just started as the principal, so it was a new school for Abby and her brother, Parker. When Abby qualified for Reading Recovery in January, Stephanie was elated. She shared that Abby was very eager to learn how to read, however, she had faced some challenges during kindergarten that included only attending a half-day program and having a substitute teacher for half of the year.

These factors coupled with Abby’s difficulty with early literacy tasks prompted Stephanie to work with her every evening to help her catch up to her peers. She worked tirelessly by reading to Abby, engaging her in games to learn her letters and trying to teach her how to read some words, but she could see that Abby was still struggling. Abby really wanted to learn but she didn’t know how to use the item knowledge she was learning to initiate the problem solving she needed to do when she was reading and writing.

“When I was learning to read, I knew it was harder for me,” Abby reflected. “I didn’t want to stand out in that way in my classroom. When I had my Reading Recovery lessons with Mrs. Piotrowski it was a safe space so I could focus on learning at my own pace and with all the help I needed.”

When Abby was provided with the expert one-to-one tutoring provided by a trained Reading Recovery professional, she finally became the strategic reader and writer she aspired to be. The accelerated growth that she made in less than 20 weeks was evident outside of the intervention as well. Mrs. McDonald, Abby’s first-grade teacher, remembers the change in Abby’s confidence, not just in literacy but in everything she did.

After Abby exited her Reading Recovery lessons, her progress was monitored closely by the building literacy leadership team. The school was in the process of developing a comprehensive literacy system that provided additional literacy support, as needed, by Reading Recovery trained teachers. Reading Recovery helped Abby develop a strong literacy processing system. This, combined with strong classroom support, ensured her continued progress through elementary school. Not only had Abby become a strategic reader, but equally important, she developed a love for reading.

When middle school began, Stephanie remembers how she continued to excel. The combination of a motivated reader with a strong processing system and a very supportive family provided the framework she needed to take on new challenges. “She had wonderfully engaging middle school ELA teachers that helped her curate what she loved about reading in order to think deeply about the connection between reading and herself,” Stephanie said. “Abby began high school in the fall of 2020 in ninth-grade Honors English.
and despite the challenges of being a virtual learner for the entire school year, she continued to excel.”

Today, Abby is in tenth-grade Honors English at Athens High School. Stephanie says that what she notices more than her classes or than her grades is the energy she has around reading. “I can still see that first grade ‘sparkle’ as she made her Christmas list and looked ahead to the book titles for honors 11,” she said. “I’m so grateful for Reading Recovery for giving my daughter the right start for reading success!”

And what does Abby say about those Reading Recovery lessons?

“I don’t think I’d be the student I am today without Reading Recovery because I’d still be behind. Reading Recovery also gave me the confidence to try other tough classes. I’m thankful for Mrs. Piotrowski’s classroom being a safe space to try and fail, in order to meet my own potential.”

Reading Recovery provided a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Abby to receive the expert, individualized intervention that she needed for long-term success.

Kris Piotrowski has been the Reading Recovery teacher leader for the Troy District Site in Michigan for the last 4 years. She has worked closely with the district literacy leadership team to create a comprehensive literacy plan that ensures all children receive the literacy support they need. Prior to that, Kris was a Reading Recovery teacher for 12 years. Kris lives in Troy with her husband and three teenage daughters.

When Abby entered first grade (left) her mom, Stephanie, read with her every evening to help her catch up to her peers. Abby credits her mom and Reading Recovery for helping her become the avid reader and honors student she is today.