DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

How Martin County School District Reimagined Intensive Intervention for Striving Readers

Martin County School District serves more than 18,000 students in Southeast Florida.

Like many districts nationwide, a substantial number of students were reading far below grade level, with some middle school and high school students reading at a first- or second-grade level. It was difficult for these students to access grade-level instruction or participate productively in class, and academic progress and employment opportunities seemed increasingly out of reach. As one district leader shared, "If students don't have foundational skills, it affects everything—across subject areas and throughout their lives."

District leaders understood it was time to try a different approach. Without targeted intervention designed specifically for the needs of these students, progress would remain elusive and students would continue to fall further behind. Demonstrable progress, student success, and engagement all mattered: students needed quick success with foundational skills to rebuild confidence and move into more complex academic work.

Martin County sought a new solution that would honor and enhance educators' expertise, preserve the central role of the teacher, fit the needs and realities of today's classrooms, and accelerate growth in ways that students could feel and teachers could see.

Results at a Glance: Impact of SPIRE Up

Students in all grades made **significant gains from beginning- to mid-year** DIBELS assessment

Among students receiving special education services:

31% of students in grades 3-5 met or exceeded expected growth

41% of students in grades 6-8 met or exceeded expected growth

Teachers reported **increased student engagement** and **stronger instructional consistency**

District leaders are **expanding implementation** to additional grades and schools

Instructional Needs and District Priorities

Leaders and teachers recognized that compressed school schedules made it difficult to deliver intensive support for the students who were furthest behind. This challenge was most acute for older striving readers, who must close foundational gaps quickly to fully engage with increasingly complex grade-level work.

As one district leader explained, "If a student starts an intervention in third grade and it takes many years to complete, that's a lot of time. We want students to build a strong reading foundation so they can move into higher-level skills and strategies."

Martin County established clear priorities for a next-generation solution to accelerate measurable skill growth while fitting within the constraints of classroom schedules and staffing:

- **Teacher-led Instruction:** Structured Literacy rooted in Orton-Gillingham principles, with teachers at the center of instruction
- **Implementation Support:** Flexible scheduling for shorter intervention blocks, clear fidelity expectations, high-quality professional learning, and job-embedded coaching
- **Leadership Engagement:** Practical resources and guidance to help school and district leaders plan implementation, monitor progress, and support teachers
- **Strong Research Foundation:** Evidence-based and ESSA-validated
- **Strategic Alignment:** Scalable across elementary and secondary settings and sustainable within existing staffing and scheduling structures

When Martin County reviewed SPIRE Up, leaders saw both a strong instructional foundation and an opportunity to partner with EPS Learning in shaping how the program would work in their classrooms.

Why SPIRE Up and EPS Learning

Leaders selected SPIRE Up for its Orton-Gillingham-based Structured Literacy approach, efficient instructional progression, and blended learning model that pairs teacher-led instruction and guided practice with independent digital reinforcement. The program also extends instruction into morphology, comprehension, and grammar to support broader literacy development.

SPIRE Up's age-appropriate materials, streamlined usability, and multisensory instructional routines helped ensure that older striving readers remained engaged while building foundational skills.

Integrated data tools supported both teachers and administrators. Automated placement and embedded progress monitoring during independent reading provided insights without adding extra testing. Administrators could also access dashboard views that made it easier to analyze program impact and identify trends across classrooms and schools.

Effective Implementation Practices

SPIRE Up launched in two elementary and two middle schools during the 2025-2026 school year. District leaders approached implementation deliberately, establishing strong conditions for success. Key practices included:

Protected Instructional Time

30-minute daily intervention blocks were carved out of the master schedule so students could receive consistent small-group instruction.

Teacher-Centered Coaching

Coaches conducted supportive, non-evaluative coaching cycles using rubric-based fidelity checks.

Job-Embedded Professional Learning

District instructional coaches trained alongside teachers and developed expertise to support teachers throughout implementation.

Ongoing Data Review

Regular data analysis sessions helped teachers and leaders monitor progress, adjust instruction, and provide additional support as needed.

> “Our kids love it. They’re the toughest critics, and they are enamored with the digital aspect and the comprehension pieces.”

> “I knew exactly what to teach each day.”

> “SPIRE Up helped me stay consistent.”

Outcomes

Implementation began in September 2025. Mid-year assessment data collected in December 2025 showed significant literacy gains, with many students advancing one to two proficiency levels in a single semester on district-administered assessments. Multilingual learners also demonstrated accelerated phonics growth.

Encouraged by these early results, Martin County leaders have begun planning for expanded implementation across additional grades and schools throughout the district.

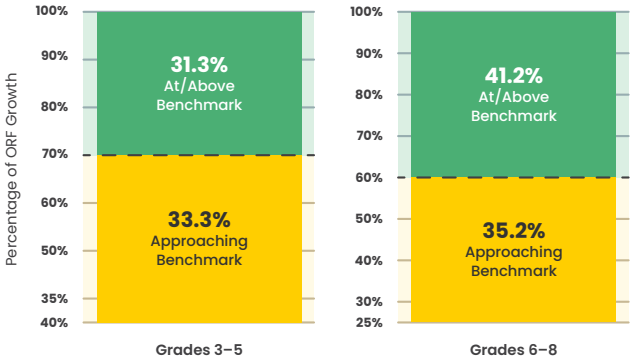
Teachers also reported:

- Increased student engagement and participation
- Greater instructional consistency across classrooms
- More efficient use of student progress data to drive instruction

Students Demonstrate Strong Literacy Growth

From beginning-of-year (BOY) to mid-year (MOY), many students receiving intensive intervention in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) settings demonstrated greater than expected reading growth for students in special education. Growth was measured using DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and Maze assessments and compared with expected growth benchmarks (Christ et al., 2010).

Students' Oral Reading Fluency Growth Benchmarks for SPED



Impact and Looking Ahead

For students, SPIRE Up has created a clear, attainable pathway to foundational reading success and renewed confidence in literacy learning.

For teachers, the program provides structured routines, easy-to-access data for progress monitoring and planning, and coaching support that strengthens daily practice.

Looking ahead, Martin County educators are encouraged by students' progress. By pairing evidence-based instruction with strong implementation practices, leaders and teachers are building a sustainable, scalable approach to intensive intervention and are helping to ensure that more students can develop the strong literacy foundations they deserve.

Visit epslearning.com to view our range of curriculum programs.
Questions? Contact your EPS Learning Account Executive.

epslearning.com | 866.716.2820

All rights reserved. ©2026, EPS Operations, LLC