

## SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

# Adaptive Technology Grant Supports Tennessee District's Improvement Efforts

For a number of years, curriculum leaders in Tennessee's Hardeman County Schools discussed the benefits of individualized instruction based on student assessment data.

They had the goal of collecting insightful student data that would help teachers develop better student groupings, provide differentiated instruction, and personalize where required to target individual instructional needs. Though the district had not yet found its ideal solution, Christy Smith, director of schools, knew that adaptive technology tools were the best option to address these objectives through one solution.

Smith is well acquainted with the grant proposal process, as this has long been a key part of her responsibilities, and in 2019, she was presented with an urgent opportunity to put those grant-writing skills to good use to address the district's major needs. Upon learning that one of the district's schools had been added to the Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) list, a federal designation for schools that need particular focus on their student group performance, Smith reviewed a list of funds for which the school was now eligible.

Smith identified the Adaptive Technology Grants (ATGs) as a promising source of funding to access high-quality tools.

Hardeman  
County  
Schools



STUDENTS  
3,503

GRADES  
K-12

TITLE I  
100%

SEE  
MORE



# Finding a Promising Tool and Proposal Support

Smith reached out to her peers in other districts to see how they'd made use of the ATGs to overcome an ATSI designation. She received multiple recommendations for *i-Ready* as a program aligned to the grant specifications with learning pathways and assessment built in. Smith was already familiar with Curriculum Associates through the use of *Ready*® books, and upon investigating *i-Ready*, she saw a potential solution to the district's current challenges. "The adaptive differentiation was something we were having trouble finding all in a big package that would work for our needs, especially our student subgroups," Smith said. The differentiated pathways in *i-Ready* stood out to her, given the importance she places on differentiated instruction.

Smith then connected with Sandra Cagle, a Tennessee sales representative with Curriculum Associates, to get a fuller understanding of *i-Ready* and what would be required to bring the program on board. Smith knew some teachers would be reluctant to adopt a new technology tool, so she wanted to find out how intuitive the program would be and what implementation support the school would receive. She also needed to gather all the necessary information to support a successful grant proposal.

According to Smith, Cagle was quick, responsive, and informative. She was able not only to answer Smith's questions about the product but also was willing to collaborate to ensure the grant process went smoothly. "Sandra made sure that we had all the information and submission documents necessary to secure the grant," Smith said. Smith recalled that the approval process went quickly. "We submitted at the end of July, and by the end of August, we were off and running. The whole experience felt seamless, from the grant proposal to the subsequent school pilot phase."

"Sandra was phenomenal," remembered Smith. "She gave us everything and anything we needed, walking us through the processes to understand the initial part of *i-Ready* moving into professional development." According to Smith, the initial training was the perfect amount—not too much to be overwhelming for teachers who were feeling a lot of pressure to improve student performance along with uncertainty about the new tool. [The professional development was] full of valuable information aligned to educators' concerns (namely, making clear how this would be helpful to students), which gave them the confidence to get started. Smith appreciated that the professional development was purposefully set up to be consistent and spaced out over the year to continue educators' learning without overloading them all at once.

*"We submitted at the end of July, and by the end of August, we were off and running."*

***The whole experience felt seamless, from the grant proposal to the subsequent school pilot phase.***

—Christy Smith

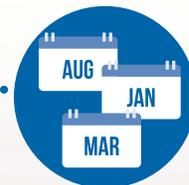
*i-Ready* Professional Development was



**Not too much to be overwhelming**



**Full of valuable information aligned to educators' concerns**



**Consistent and spaced out over the year**

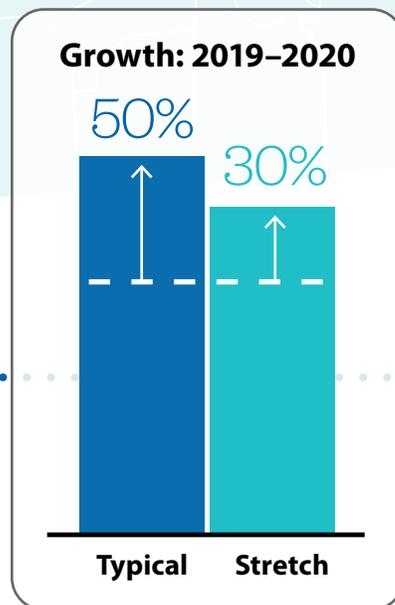
# Acting Fast to Achieve Immediate School Improvement Success

The ATSI-designated school was a Grades K–8 school, and they piloted *i-Ready* across grade levels for the 2019–2020 school year. By the time the grant was approved in August, school was already starting for the year, so timely implementation required leaders to act quickly and receive efficient implementation support.

“It was a team effort from day one,” said Smith. In collaboration with district leaders, the Curriculum Associates team outlined timelines and schedules for implementation and professional development, which illustrated to teachers that there was an intentional plan in place and made the plan easy to follow.

With implementation off the ground and professional development scheduled for intervals throughout the year, teachers noticed the positive effects of sticking to *i-Ready*'s designated weekly instruction. Students did their 45 minutes of Reading and 45 minutes of Mathematics lessons each week, and the school designated one specialist from outside the classroom to come in, support students, and make sure the instruction was completed. Smith pointed out that, without establishing that consistency through monitoring and scheduling, the work often does not get done and adversely affects learning in the next year.

In the pilot year, the implementation proved a success, ending the ATSI designation at the Grades K–8 school. Students achieved 50 percent growth according to typical benchmarks and 30 percent growth according to stretch goals, an eye-opening result that motivated Smith and other district leaders to implement *i-Ready* districtwide the following year.



## Expanding Districtwide to Support Growth for All Students

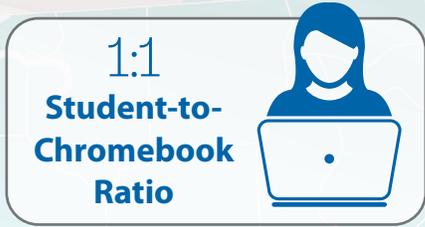
In 2020–2021, Hardeman County implemented *i-Ready* in the district's six remaining elementary and middle schools. From August through February, the district was engaged in hybrid learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, but they found implementation to be smooth despite this challenge. “Our students only came in person two days a week,” said Smith. “But we opened it up during the day for students to use *i-Ready* anytime throughout the rest of the week. Using *i-Ready* both in the classroom and at home was beneficial to students.”

The district observed success across many schools during the 2020–2021 year. One school, which was already high performing, saw its students improve 147 percent according to their Typical Growth expectations. “That was really outstanding,” said Smith. “The school saw growth after just one year with *i-Ready*.”

**One school . . . saw its students improve 147% according to their Typical Growth expectations. “That was really outstanding. The school saw growth after just one year with *i-Ready*.”**

—Christy Smith

The dedicated monitor approach employed at the pilot school proved even more effective during hybrid learning. The district adopted a 1:1 Chromebook™ initiative during this school year, which made it easier for students in any setting to complete their *i-Ready* assignments and other work. Dedicated monitors provided support and ensured completion of assignments so students could advance their learning.



*The district's quick and decisive action to make effective use of the ATGs has led to a solution that is now supporting educators and students across the district.*



## Building on Success to Ensure Continued Growth

Now that all of Hardeman County's elementary and middle schools are using the same program, the district has its sights set on Response to Intervention. "The last two years focused mostly on Tier 1, but this year, we are bringing *i-Ready* into Tier 2 and the screener process," said Smith.

Using *i-Ready* as a universal screener is part of the district's strategy to quickly identify any COVID-related unfinished learning and provide teachers with the information needed to deliver targeted instruction to all students.

With in-person learning back in place across the district for the 2021–2022 school year, Smith and other Hardeman County leaders are feeling confident in their routines and looking forward to continued student growth. The district's quick and decisive action to make effective use of the ATGs has led to a solution that is now supporting educators and students across the district. Ultimately, Hardeman County educators have executed a plan that is already improving student outcomes with the potential for much more success.

### *Are you working on a grant to support the purchase of a Curriculum Associates program?*

The Grants team is here to assist you and can supply product narratives, customized grant toolkits, and grant reviews. Contact us at [grants@cainc.com](mailto:grants@cainc.com).