

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

Adaptive Learning Technology Grant Launches Tennessee District's Performance Climb

When Christy Smith, director of schools at Hardeman County Schools, learned that one of her district's Grades K–8 schools had been added to the Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) list, a federal designation that identifies schools that need particular focus on their student group performance, she decided to pursue the Tennessee Adaptive Learning Technology Grant (ALTG).

She wanted to use the grant money to pilot a research-based program that would help Hardeman County educators deliver personalized instruction.

When Smith asked her peers at similar districts for program recommendations, she received multiple suggestions to try *i-Ready Assessment* and Personalized Instruction. *i-Ready* was one of the three approved grant programs and the only program that had been evaluated by and received high rankings from the National Center on Intensive Intervention and the Buros Center for Testing.

Hardeman
County
Schools



STUDENTS
3,503

GRADES
Pre-K–12

TITLE I
100%

“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.

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Smith reached out to Sandra Cagle, a Curriculum Associates Tennessee sales representative, who quickly connected her with the Grants team. Together, this group ensured Smith had all the information and documentation she needed to complete her ALTG application. “We submitted at the end of July, and by the end of August, we were off and running,” said Smith. “The whole experience felt seamless, from the grant proposal to the subsequent school pilot phase.”

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—Christy Smith,
Director of Schools

What They Did

By the time the grant was approved in August 2019, 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.

To ensure a successful first year, the implementation team—which included Smith, school educators, and the school’s designated Curriculum Associates team—focused on the following:



Making realistic plans

In collaboration with district leaders, the Curriculum Associates team outlined timelines and schedules for implementation and training. This planning was designed to reassure teachers who initially expressed concerns about time management and balancing the adoption of *i-Ready* with the many other demands on their time.



Delivering professional development (PD)

PD was consistently spaced over the year, so educators could continue learning the data-driven best practices that had first made them interested in *i-Ready* without overwhelming them. Early training sessions were structured to ensure teachers understood how *i-Ready* would help them and their students and gave them the confidence to get started.



Launching instruction

With implementation off the ground and PD scheduled for intervals throughout the year, teachers felt equipped to introduce Personalized Instruction and soon noticed the positive effects of sticking to *i-Ready*'s designated weekly instruction.



Monitoring instruction

The ATSI-designated school asked a specialist to come into classrooms to support students and ensure they completed their Personalized Instruction sessions fully. Having a monitor was so helpful that Smith and other educators decided to keep the practice.

What They Accomplished

At the end of the ATSI-designated school's pilot of *i-Ready*, students and educators were able to see clear evidence of all their hard work. *i-Ready Diagnostic* data showed that students met 50 percent growth according to typical benchmarks and 30 percent growth according to stretch goals.

Furthermore, students demonstrated enough growth, according to the Tennessee Department of Education, that the school was able to graduate from the ATSI designation.

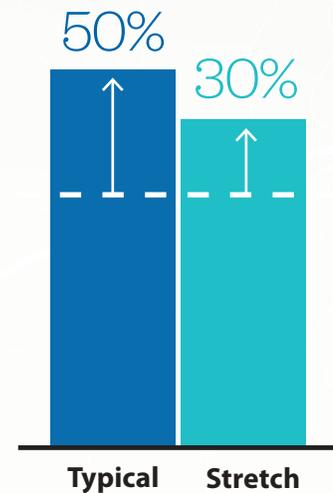
In 2020–2021, Hardeman County implemented *i-Ready* in the district's six remaining elementary and middle schools. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic forced the district to adopt a hybrid learning model from August through February, educators still felt implementation went smoothly.

"Using *i-Ready* both in the classroom and at home was beneficial to students," Smith said. 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.

Now that all of Hardeman County's elementary and middle schools are using the same program, the district is looking forward to using *i-Ready* as a Response to Intervention tool. "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 identify COVID-related unfinished learning and give teachers the information they need to deliver targeted instruction to all students.

Growth: 2019–2020



"That was really outstanding. The school saw growth after just one year with i-Ready."

—Christy Smith



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