



HEAVEN SENT—THE STORY OF ONE SCHOOL'S LITERACY ADOPTION

The Problem

“Families throughout our community are reading less. Busy lives and electronic devices take time away from book reading, and it is leading to a decline in reading motivation.” This was the problem Linda Wise, principal of Chapel Hill Christian South Campus in Akron, Ohio wanted to solve as she approached a new literacy adoption. Her charge? To increase a love of reading in her students, while providing rigorous, quality instruction. To Linda, this meant finding a program that centers on Christian values and inspires life-long reading.

Searching for a Solution

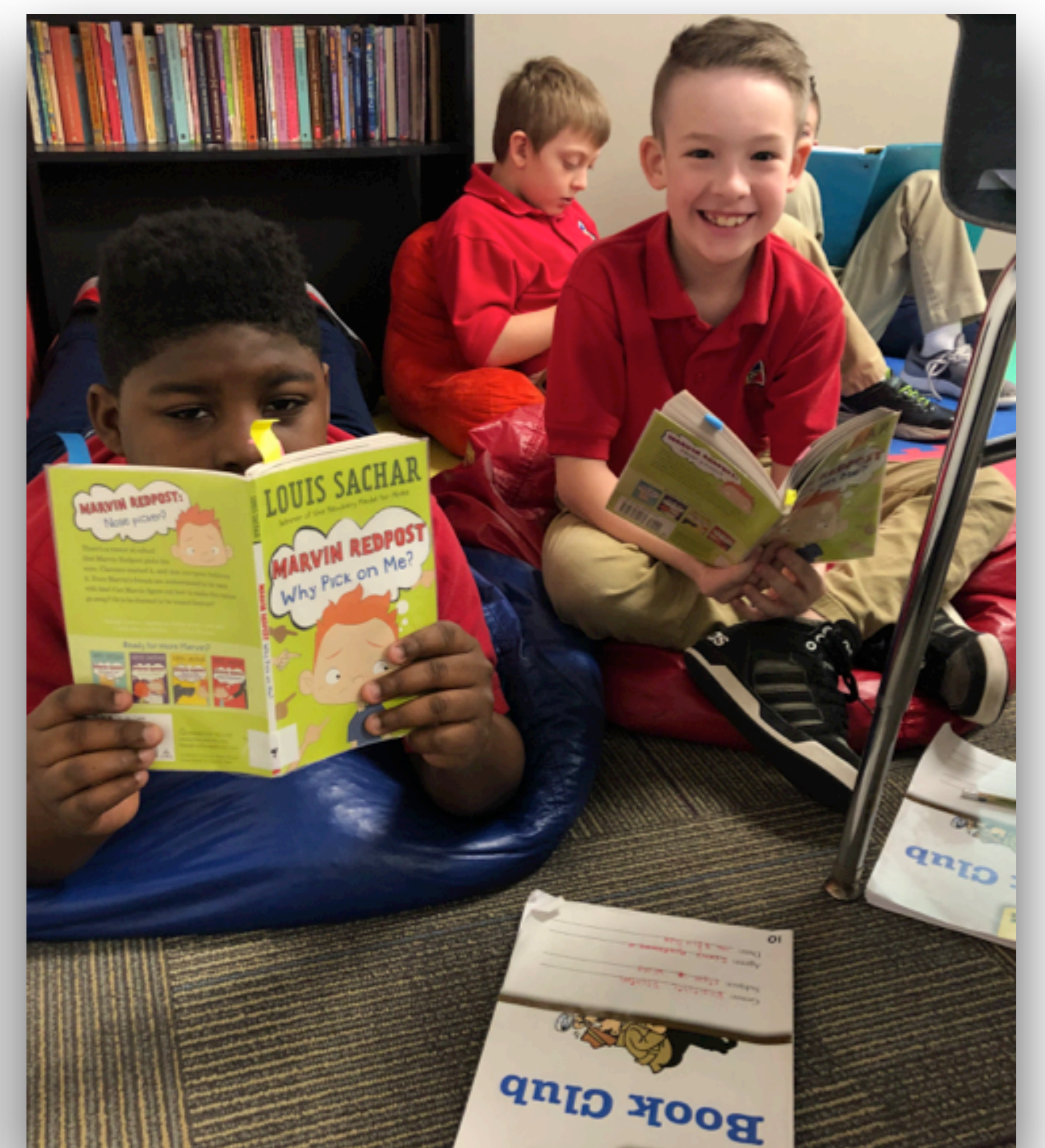
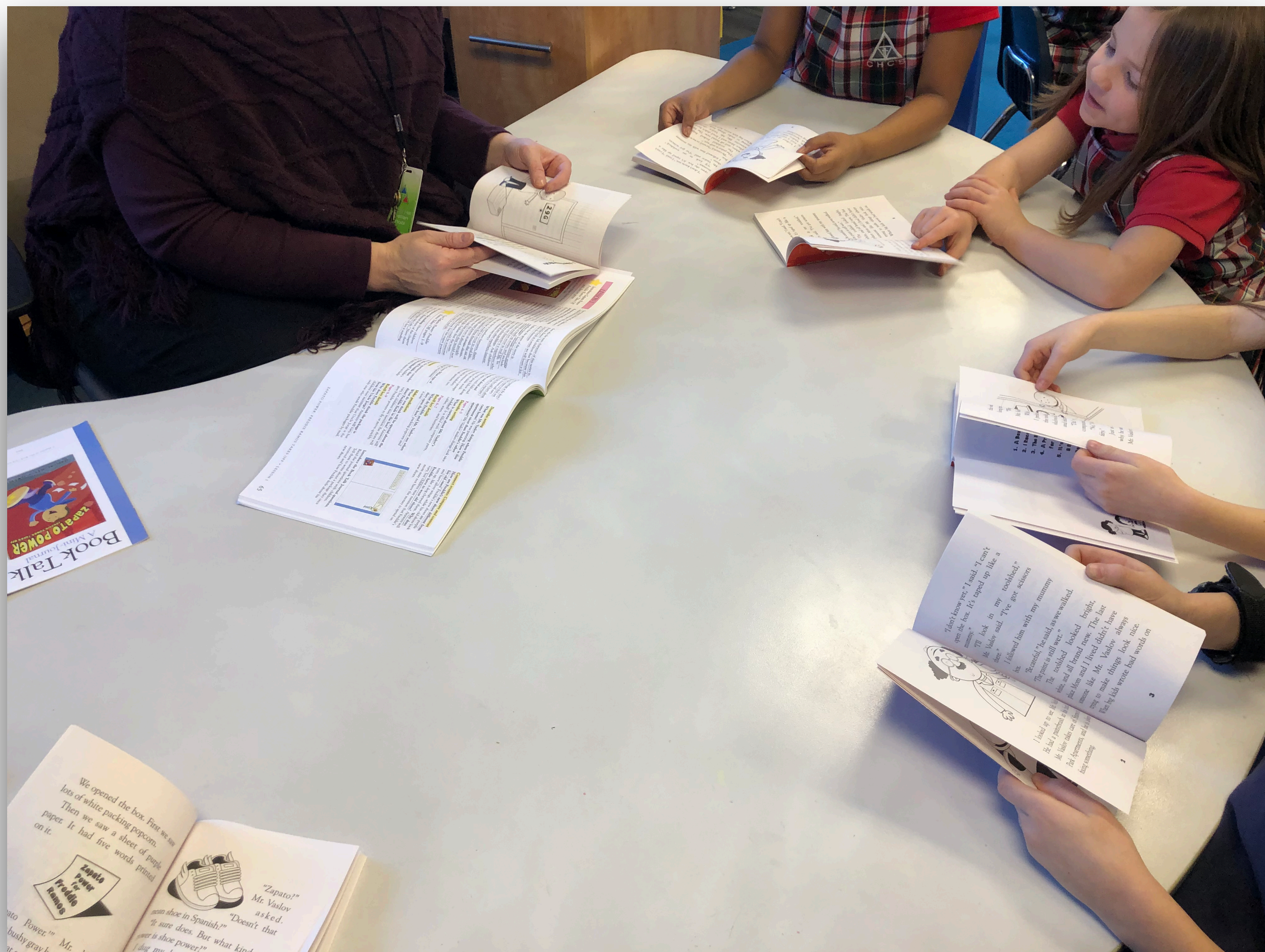
*“We were amazed at how difficult the task was,” explains Linda. “While we had found a program that met the needs of K-2, the **Superkids Reading Program**, we were at a stand-still searching for something for grades 3-6. By referral, we happened upon the **Read Side By Side Reading Program**, and found the answer to our prayers.”*

“We were searching for a program to inspire life-long reading.”

CHAPEL HILL CHRISTIAN SOUTH, AKRON, OH

A Decision Is Made

After a year-long adoption process, both Chapel Hill campuses (north and south) adopted the *Superkids Reading Program*, published by Zaner-Bloser Inc., and the *Read Side By Side Reading Program*, published by Read Side By Side Publications LLC. They are now in the sixth month of using these programs, and the staff couldn't be more excited with the committee's decision.



Students read authentic chapter books with their Book Club in the *Superkids Reading Program* and the *Read Side by Side Reading Program*.

Three levels of text offer differentiated instruction for below, on, and above grade level readers.

The two programs, while written by different authors and published by different curriculum companies, seem to have been made for each other. Both programs increase students' confidence and motivation to read through systematic instruction and high-interest texts. *"At first, teachers were apprehensive because of the scripted lesson plans in both programs. They were used to using their own resources, largely supplementing our previous programs. But the **scripted lessons give teachers a new sense of confidence and lift the burden of lesson planning.** They are finding ways to bring in their own autonomy without sacrificing the structure of the lessons,"* explains Linda.

A School Visit

On a recent visit to the south campus, representatives from both curriculum companies witness the *Superkids Reading Program* in action in Stephanie Marroquin's second grade classroom. Students are engaged in the lesson, following along with the teacher as she reads the next chapter in the *Superkids* story. They are eager to learn what will happen when the main character forgets to do his homework. After reading together, they are each matched to a chapter book—a below level, on level, or above level title. The teacher provides support through book club lessons, but the students are, for the most part, independent.

A School Visit, Cont.

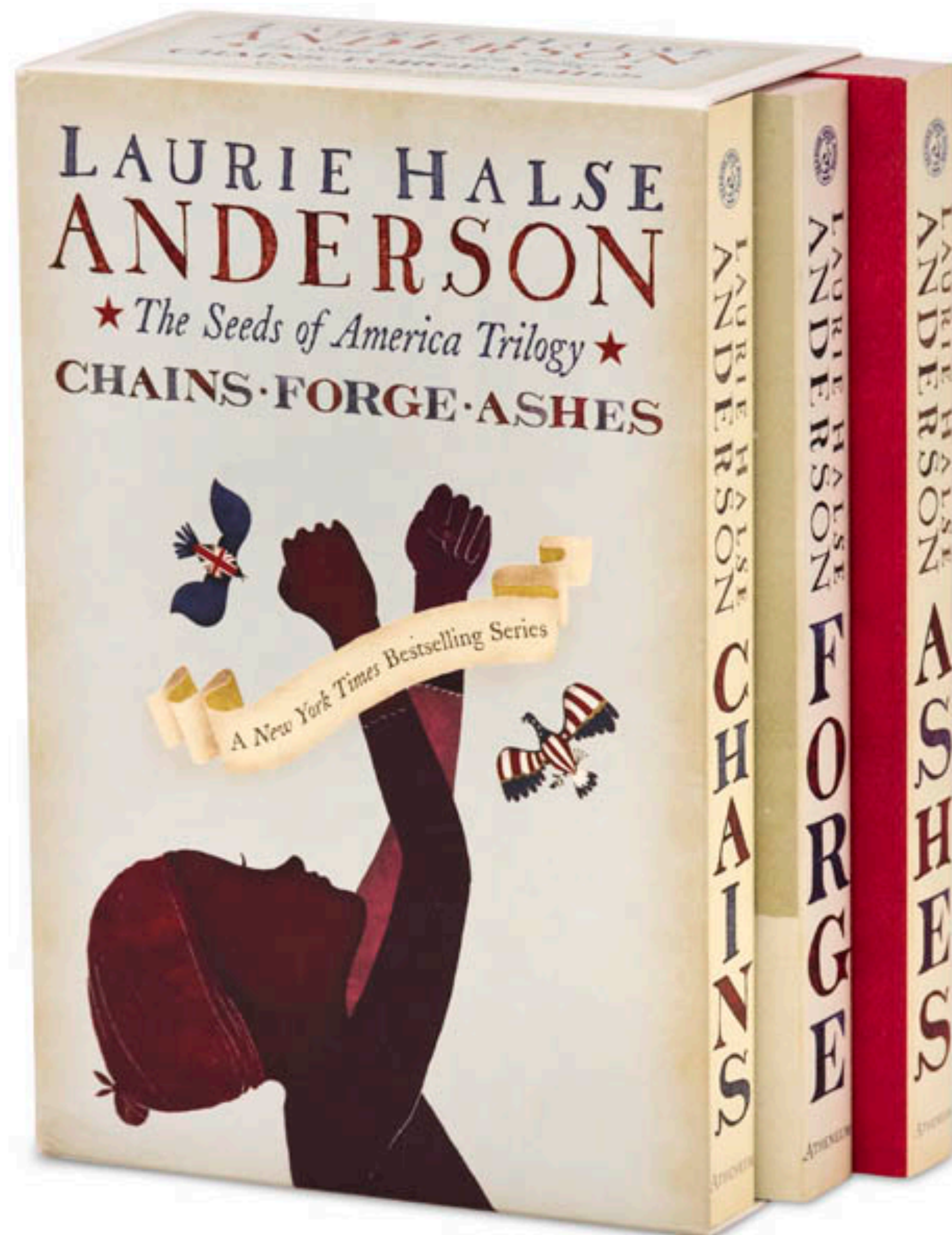
This transfer of training is similar in the *Read Side by Side Reading Program* which uses the same read-aloud/book club approach. Teachers at Chapel Hill express feelings of confidence that their students will be able to make the transition from the K-2 program to the 3-6 program with ease. *“When I observe lessons in the second and third grade classrooms, I hear common language being used despite the fact that they are using different programs. Students are identifying story elements, talking about the author’s message, and referring to evidence from the text in both programs,”* says Lisa Meyer, the reading specialist who works in classrooms K-6.

Selection of Text in the Programs

The books in both programs are selected for their merit and the values they promote. Students learn the themes of family, friendship, forgiveness, and right and wrong. They feel a connection to the characters in each story, and begin to make connections across texts, a skill the Common Core State Standards require. *“My students love the books in the program. **Everyday they beg to keep reading.** Many students read the next books in the series,”* shares fourth grade teacher, Tina Toedt.



Nonfiction reading is woven into both programs through a magazine for K-2, and online articles and diverse media for grades 3-6. Parents report students coming home with facts to share about everything from beetles, to bullies, to American history. A highlight for sixth grade students is watching the PBS documentary “Surviving the Dust Bowl” during their nonfiction study of *Children of the Dust Bowl* by Jerry Stanley. *“My students had no idea that the dust storms and the Great Depression had happened in our history. They were enthralled by this true-life story. Tears were shed,”* shares sixth grade teacher, Dean Barrett who has taught at Chapel Hill Christian for 41 years.



In her fifth grade classroom, Kristina Robertson guides her students through the book *Chains*, by Laurie Halse Anderson. Students are paying attention to Anderson’s use of metaphor to bring the reader to her message. ***“I think the author is trying to tell us that everyone has scars, but sometimes we just can’t see them,”*** shares one student. ***“I think the author wants us to feel empathy for people who may be going through a difficult time, like the loss of a loved one.”*** Several students in the classroom already have plans to continue reading the other books in the series.

Results

Qualitative data collected during the first year of the literacy adoption points toward growth. Literacy specialist, Lisa Meyer has witnessed a change in student ability. ***“The lowest students are performing much higher than before. They are more confident readers because the skills have been explicitly and systematically taught. They can’t wait for reading time when they get to meet the next Superkid or arrive at the turning point in their novel.”***

Most exciting is the way the staff has embraced the new reading adoption. “Our staff loves each of the reading programs. They love the scripted lessons and the high level of student engagement. They are passionate about teaching, and believe they are doing a good job!” And they are!

Administrator and Pastor, John Wilson comments, ***“Prayer had been a part of the process of the year-long literacy adoption committee and God answered our prayers in an amazing way.”***

Sarah Collinge

For more information on the *Superkids Reading Program K-2*, published by Zaner-Bloser, visit SuperKidsReading.com

For more information on the *Read Side by Side Reading Program 3-6*, visit ReadSideBySide.com