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“I like to say that *Fast ForWord* isn't for brave hearts, it makes brave hearts. It isn't necessarily for readers, it makes readers.”

Carson Savage

Susan Savage has a lot of energy. A dedicated mother and teacher, her day begins at 6:30 am in an inner city classroom at Matthew Gilbert Middle School in Jacksonville, Florida. Susan was hired in March of 2006 to run a full-time *Fast ForWord* learning lab to serve the needs of the school's reading-challenged students,

and she has embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly. “I hate turning kids away,” she says, “so I work in my lab from 8 o'clock in the morning until 2:15. I don't like to take a break, because an empty lab to me is like a waste.”

An unexpected discovery
After seeing the rapid progress her students had

continued

made during the Spring semester, Susan decided to bring her ten-year old daughter, Carson, along to participate in the summer session. Carson, a gifted fourth grader who had received straight As her whole life, nevertheless had her own set of challenges.

“Carson’s always been a reader,” Susan explains, “but she would start a book and never finish it. So it was very frustrating for me as a parent of a gifted kid, you know, ‘I don’t understand. You’re so smart, why can’t you finish this?’ And she would just shrug her shoulders. She couldn’t put it into words.”

The feedback she received from Carson’s teachers, however, gave her some clues. “I would talk with her teachers and they would say, ‘Oh God, Carson—you need to come and clean out her desk.’ And they would tell me, ‘Carson is doing very well; she’s just very unorganized, very unorganized in her thoughts.’”

A fifth grade teacher from the gifted middle school that Carson was set to enter

in the Fall alerted Susan to a problem that to him was more pressing: her extremely introverted nature, which he felt spelled trouble for Carson’s future. He was genuinely concerned that she wouldn’t fit in socially. “He said to me, ‘Susan I really want you to watch out for her, because I’m really afraid for Carson. She doesn’t speak; she doesn’t talk in class at all.’” Although Susan was already aware of Carson’s profound reluctance to speak—she was a self-selected mute until the age of four—she didn’t know how to help her daughter. So even though she was seeing impressive changes in her remedial students, Susan adopted a curious, wait-and-see approach in regard to Carson, whose problems were quite different. “I didn’t have any preconceived ideas about what *Fast ForWord* would do for her, I really didn’t.” But after only three weeks of summer study, the results to Susan were stunning—and not at all what she expected.

From scattered reader to sequential finisher

The day after the summer session ended, the family

boarded a plane for a vacation in New Hampshire, with five books in tow that Carson had started and never completed. By the time they reached their destination—through airport noise, a three-hour flight delay, and a long car ride—Carson had finished them all. The next day, she checked out three books at her grandmother’s local library—and finished them in three days.

Susan and her mother were baffled at the change. “My Mom asked, ‘What’s different here?’ We were used to Carson reading, and then going to watch t.v., and not finishing. And I said, ‘Mom, the only thing I can tell you is that she completed this program I am doing.’”

Carson talks about her new ability to maintain her focus: “Before *Fast ForWord* I used to have like five books out I was reading at a time. Now, I am reading a book, and at parts it kind of gets boring, but instead of switching to another book I will just keep reading it, and think that afterwards it’s going to get interesting.”

“Carson’s always been a reader,” Susan explains, “but she would start a book and never finish it until *Fast ForWord*.”

Her enthusiasm for reading begins long before the start of her school day. “In the mornings, because we have to leave so early, it’s really dark,” she says. “I have this light that’s like a flashlight, and I will read in the mornings with it. It straps on my head, and so Mom calls me a coal miner.”

Messy desks—a thing of the past

Susan also noticed a big improvement in Carson’s organizational skills. “She was the kind of kid who would tell me she had a

report due, and when I asked her when she would say, ‘This morning.’ You know, a book report. After *Fast ForWord*, I would say, ‘What are you doing?’ and she would say, ‘I’m working on a report.’ And I would say, ‘Oh gosh, when is it due?’ And she would say, ‘Oh, it’s not due until next month, but I wanted to get a head start.’

“Before I would have a really, really messy desk,” Carson says, “but now I have a locker and it’s cleaner than my desk. And I keep it organ-

ized, like where I put the books and notebooks and stuff. And my room was really messy before, and now I’ll sometimes have an urge to clean it.”

For more success stories and further information on reading intervention contact Scientific Learning at 888-452-7323 or www.scientificlearning.com