

SiLAS

Case Study: Bright Beginnings Learning Center

PROFILE

Since 1998, Bright Beginnings has operated in New Jersey to “provide specialized instruction to students in order to develop functional, independent skills at the student’s potential.” The learning center offers three programs: preschool disabilities (ages 3-5), autism (ages 5-21), and multiple disabilities (ages 5-13). Bright Beginnings started SiLAS in the fall of 2017. This case study dives into their experience with the program over the school year.

THE CHALLENGE

Using a variety of social skills curriculum, Bright Beginnings was anxious to explore yet another way to teach these skills. Staff observed that many of their students loved using iPads and the Hi-Tech classroom interactive boards. This led to the school seeking a new state-of-the-art supplemental curriculum that would use technology to further captivate students while retaining the proven principles of previous curriculum.



IMPLEMENTATION

Initially, Bright Beginnings incorporated SiLAS into Integrated Speech lessons which the class received twice a week for half an hour. The teachers at Bright Beginnings believed this would be the easiest way to implement the software as they pulled one student out at a time to familiarize them with the software. As time went on, the teachers were able to pair students together who were at similar levels and found much success with this format. Additionally, practitioners using SiLAS have found additional uses for the software during individual therapy depending on the goals of the student. Some of these uses include sequencing, WH questions, and recent history recall. Due to ease of roleplaying with SiLAS, the teachers also use SiLAS to practice situations that certain students may have trouble with. Specific skills that Bright Beginnings have address are play, sharing, and being appropriate with friends. For this reason, the playground and cafeteria settings are super popular with the students!

“SiLAS was a really great way to definitely grab their attention more easily than things we used in the past. It is definitely much more motivating.”



Cristina Pallone
Classroom Teacher



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IMPACT

Bright Beginnings found students continue to be excited to go to the computer and get to use SiLAS, even as their school year wrapped up. The teachers have observed that students gained an understanding of the early social skills concepts. Students are now able to accurately answer questions such as, "Are your characters looking at each other or are they making eye contact? Are we having a back and forth? Are we having a hello how are you sort of little conversation going?"

"SiLAS is immediately reinforcing and they [the students] enjoy doing it so it's really easy to piggyback some other skills that I want to get in there with them"



Marisa Martin-Vargo
SLP

"I think the students don't realize that it's work. They see it as a game. And I think that's the greatest trick of all about SiLAS."



Cristina Pallone
Classroom Teacher

With this increased student engagement, the teachers at Bright Beginnings have been able to teach their students skills that transfer to the playground. During playtime, Bright Beginnings' students have been using the words more often. In the beginning of the year, students would choose to grab a toy from a peer or become more physical instead of using the words. Now, students will communicate and say, "Come with me. Let's go down the slide together."

"SiLAS provided our students an innovative way to learn social skills which are challenging for our students to acquire. It provided our students a way to blend technology with real life practice of skills such as facing the speaker during a conversation, increasing conversational exchanges, and lengthen the time students were able to engage in cooperative play."



Cindy Borell
Supervisor

