

Joe Leineweber:

UNLOCKING STUDENTS' WRITING POTENTIAL WITH DRAGON

Joe Leineweber is a Special Education teacher at a middle school in Oregon. During any given academic year, 70-90 of the school's nearly 600 students receive services from the education resource center. Leineweber estimates that 10-20% of those 70-90 students have difficulty with writing, whether it's the physical act of putting words on paper or an inability to articulate the thoughts in their heads.

While searching for a tool that could help those students, Leineweber discovered Dragon NaturallySpeaking. After implementing the software in the classroom, he was amazed with the results. "What Dragon does for them is huge," he says.

Leineweber offers a pair of students as examples of Dragon's power. The first, Noah, was a good football player and shot-put thrower on the track team. He needed to maintain his grades for sports eligibility in high school, but he has vision tracking problems in his eyes and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder that hampers his penmanship. Leineweber had Noah begin using Dragon for his Language Arts assignments and says, "I was blown away with his work quality and his increase in confidence."

"Dragon has helped me build confidence in my writing," Noah says. "It helps me deal with my disorder and lets me

complete my classroom assignments. I can also finish my work faster." Leineweber notes that Noah has moved on to high school and is now using Dragon at home, which will help him manage the heavier workload.

An Amazing Book Report

The second student, Al, was a hard-working basketball player who was great at math but was struggling with incomplete or failing grades in Language Arts because of his inability to transfer his thoughts to paper. His breakthrough happened when he wrote what Leineweber calls an "amazing book report" about Lois Lowry's novel "The Giver."

"Without Al's ability to dictate the report with Dragon, you'd have no idea of the higher level of thinking going on in his head," Leineweber says. "I discovered that he's a very articulate thinker."

Al and Noah are typical of the many students Leineweber has helped with Dragon. "The average student in the education resource center is working at a very basic level," he says. "They struggle to put a basic sentence down, so Dragon is a major confidence builder. What it does for them is huge."

Leineweber would like to see Dragon's use expanded beyond his classroom to the rest of the school. "Where there is a profound challenge and display of difficulty with writing, there are students who could benefit from Dragon," he says.

