



## Quotes & Notes

“An increase in one (WorkKeys) level can have a profound effect – it can very quickly move a student’s PSAE score from the *below standard* category to the *meets standard* category” - Chris Mazur, Reading Specialist

**Highly skilled academic students are encouraged to prepare for WorkKeys.** Mazur points out that a student with an ACT score of 25 and a WorkKeys score of 6 in Reading for Information is *meets standards* – but by raising the WorkKeys score to a 7 can achieve a PSAE score that *exceeds standards*.

## **Increasing Scores on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) with KeyTrain Integration**

### **Challenges:**

- Help students raise their Reading for Information scores on the PSAE
- To integrate the teaching of these skills into Downers Grove South (DGS) High School
- To help teachers and administrators understand the value of raising Reading for Information scores

### **Actions:**

- Use KeyTrain as the basis for a larger instructional strategy
- Train all key departments about the impact of WorkKeys scores in the PSAE

### **Results:**

- Increase in PSAE composite scores
- Increase in Reading for Information scores
- Increase in PSAE reading scores
- Increase in ACT reading component scores

The Prairie State Achievement Exam is given to all high school juniors in Illinois. Among other components, it includes WorkKeys<sup>®</sup> Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and the ACT college entrance exam.

Downers Grove South High School, in Downers Grove, Illinois, took a very deliberate approach to using KeyTrain for improving PSAE scores in their school. Obtaining KeyTrain and making it available to all students was just the first step in a program designed to drive PSAE scores up. Their process for an implementation that was focused on producing real results was in three steps:

1. Training
2. Implementation
3. Effectiveness (measurement)

### **Training and the importance of increasing WorkKeys scores**

First, they felt it vital to train all key personnel about the KeyTrain program and the importance of improving PSAE scores. In an all-inclusive approach, the school trained their personnel from English & Communications, Mathematics, Special Services, Applied Arts and Technology, and ACT Preparation departments. While instruction about how to use KeyTrain was provided, a key component of the training was simply about the importance of increasing WorkKeys scores on the PSAE. Chris Mazur, Reading Specialist at Downers Grove South, notes the impact that an increase in WorkKeys score can have. “An increase in one level can have a profound effect – it can very quickly move a student’s PSAE score from the *below standard* category to the *meets standard* category” says Mazur.

For example, according to calculations presented by Mazur and others, a student with a score of 11 on the ACT Reading section and a score of 5 on WorkKeys Reading for Information would move from *below standard* to *meets standard* by increasing the WorkKeys score by one level. In comparison, the same student would have to increase the ACT score by 6 points – to a 17 in order to achieve the same category jump (see table below).

ACT	WorkKeys 5	WorkKeys 6
11	145-151	153-159
12	147-153	155-161
13	149-154	157-162
14	150-156	158-164
15	152-157	160-165
16	153-158	161-166
17	154-159	162-167

One level increase on WorkKeys  
Six point increase on ACT

PSAE Score  
Below Standard

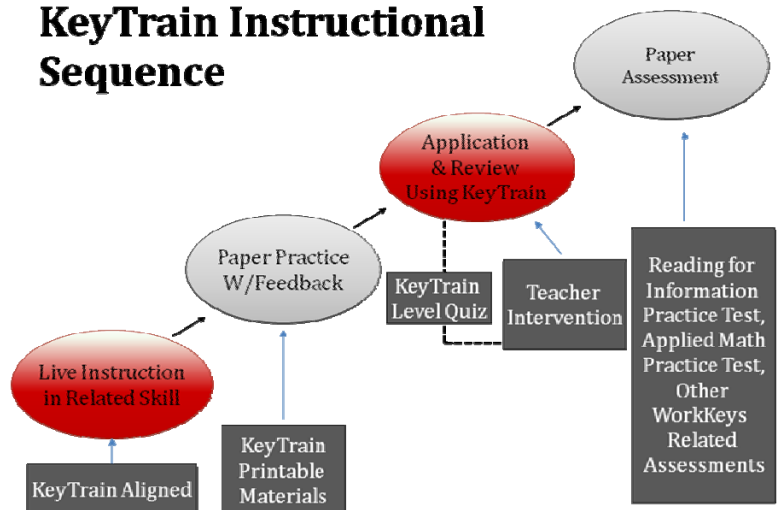
PSAE Score  
Meets Standard

Further, **highly skilled academic students are encouraged to prepare for WorkKeys.** Mazur points out that a student with an ACT score of 25 and a WorkKeys score of 6 in Reading for Information is *meets standards* – but by raising the WorkKeys score to a 7 can achieve a PSAE score that *exceeds standards*.

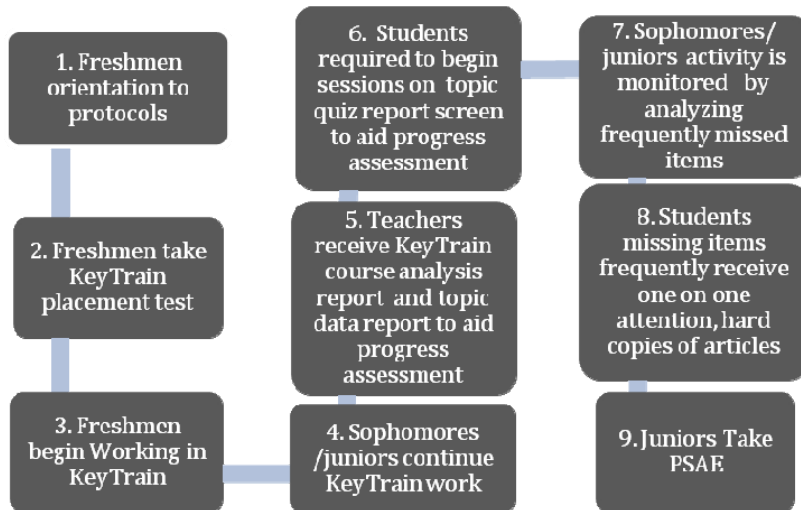
**Implementation**

With a focus on using the system appropriately, KeyTrain was integrated into an instructional sequence designed to drive learning and mastery of the WorkKeys skills. The first skill to be integrated was Reading for Information which is taught in all English courses, all Reading Support courses, Test Preparation, and Applied Arts & Technology. The departments share time in teaching the WorkKeys skill Reading for Information in Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior class periods. According to Mazur, “KeyTrain is a valuable tool, but some people may misuse it by introducing it too soon in an instructional sequence or by not supporting it with other efforts.” He presents the instructional sequence (at right) for teaching Reading for Information in Downers Grove South High School.

**KeyTrain Instructional Sequence**



Within this structure, students are taken through a learning path that begins in their freshman year. For Reading for Information, the flow is as follows:



**Effectiveness**

After the first year of the implementation, DGS has seen positive results. The school saw an increase in:

1. Their composite PSAE score
2. Their average PSAE reading score (other than WorkKeys)
3. Their ACT test reading scores
4. Their WorkKeys Reading for Information scores

<b>SCORE INCREASES</b>	<b><u>2007-2008</u></b>	<b><u>2008-2009</u></b>
<b><u>PSAE</u></b>	<b><u>68.5%</u></b>	<b><u>69.1%</u></b>
<b><u>PSAE Reading</u></b>	<b><u>63.1%</u></b>	<b><u>70.1%</u></b>
<b><u>ACT Reading Scores</u></b>	<b><u>21.49</u></b>	<b><u>22.0</u></b>
<b><u>WorkKeys Reading for Information</u></b>	<b><u>5.08</u></b>	<b><u>(all improvement in sub-groups)</u></b>

In a situation where incremental increases can mean the difference between meeting goals and missing them, such results are significant. The school plans to integrate the teaching of WorkKeys Applied Mathematics in a similar fashion.