



**For Immediate Release**

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**Special Ed School Prepares for Common Core with New Reading Curriculum**  
***Miner School brings Start-to-Finish CORE Curriculum to students with complex support needs, including autism***

**VOLO, Ill., April 11, 2014**—School leaders at Miner School, Northwest Suburban Special Education Organization, a therapeutic day school in Arlington Heights Illinois, implemented a new reading curriculum in two of their high school classrooms ahead of the new 2014-2015 alternate assessment. Their student outcomes are showcased in a [short video](#), released by Don Johnston Incorporated.

The decision to add a new reading curriculum was brought on by the new Common Core State Standards, which increase literacy expectations for all students – including those with significant cognitive disabilities. Of Miner School's student population, 60-70% are on the autism spectrum and 30-40% face other significant learning challenges. The new standards require students to move beyond sight words and into foundational reading skills in order to succeed on the alternate assessment.

To accomplish this shift in expectations, the leaders at Miner School explored the available curriculum options and chose Start-to-Finish® CORE Curriculum from Don Johnston to give teachers the tools they need to build comprehensive reading skills. Start-to-Finish CORE Curriculum gives Miner School students access to the same works of literature as their peers—titles like Frankenstein, Huckleberry Finn, and Anne Frank. “For our students, it's really helpful for them to have access to the kind of materials that other kinds of students have access to and are learning from,” states Miner school principal Dr. Von Schlegell. “That’s definitely a discrepancy they’ve felt in their educational experience. The normalizing experience about literature and the life lessons that are embedded within literature are really powerful for our students.”



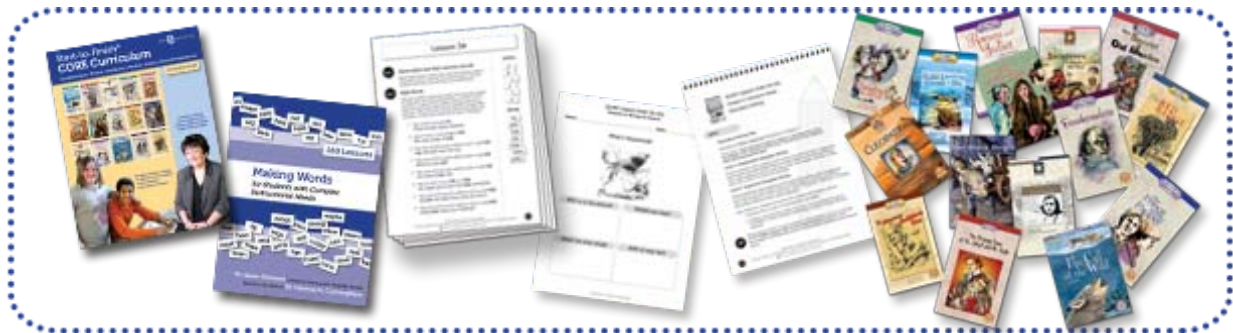
The books included with CORE Curriculum gave many Miner School students their first opportunity to hold a chapter book and read with technology support. This helped improve student confidence levels and behavior. “I just think it's amazing that Start-to-Finish allows us to have our students access the same literature that a typical functioning student might be accessing at their home school,” remarked Lisa Delgiudice, high school teacher at Miner School. “These books have given my students a sense of self-esteem that I probably have never witnessed before.”

The increased expectations that schools are facing require a reading program that builds skills required on the alternate assessment and can be implemented with fidelity immediately. “The curriculum gives teachers the information that they need to present materials to students so they can excel in all of the core reading skills,” states Mary Ann McGinn, Technology Coordinator at Miner School. “The lesson plans are laid out very simply and the teachers can take those lesson plans and get going right off the bat.”

The curriculum includes:

- 15 chapter books and accompanying computer books on CD
- Individual book folders, containing:
  - Daily comprehension lessons
  - Student worksheets and writing lessons
  - End of book tests and practice for alternate assessments
- Making Words – 160 phonics lessons with reproducibles
- Curriculum Guide – to support and guide teachers with implementation

- Teacher Tools and Templates Folder, that contain:
  - Fluency and writing rubrics
  - Fidelity checklists
  - Data collection tools
  - Real Life Experiences – authentic learning activities to celebrate each book
- Teacher Resource CD, containing:
  - Printable PDF of each book
  - Chapter quizzes and teacher answer sheets
  - Vocabulary and idiom lists
- Student and teacher reproducibles



- Backup of all the lessons for each book

Start-to-Finish CORE Curriculum is available for order immediately. K-12 school districts can purchase the complete curriculum program for \$499 per classroom set.

**Resource Links:**

To learn more about Miner School, please visit: <http://www.nsseo.org/programs/miner-school>

To learn more about Start-to-Finish® CORE Curriculum, please visit: <http://donjohnston.com/start-to-finish-core-curriculum>

To watch the video featuring Miner School's perspectives on Start-to-Finish® CORE Curriculum, please visit: <http://vimeo.com/donjohnstoninc/start-to-finish-core-curriculum-miner-school-intro>

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**About Don Johnston Incorporated**

Don Johnston (<http://donjohnston.com>) develops assistive technologies and curriculum to support K-12 and postsecondary students with cognitive, physical, and learning disabilities. Since 1980, the special education company has partnered with literacy experts, AT specialists, SLPs, OTs, special education teachers, and university researchers to improve access to learning and to increase reading and writing outcomes. Tens of thousands of students with dyslexia, autism, dysgraphia, down-syndrome and diverse learning challenges use Don Johnston software and hardware devices to accommodate their learning needs in schools, the workforce and at home.

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