

# Kayle's Story: A Transformation Through Data and Leadership

By Joan McAlpin

## QUOTES

“*Kayle's success with uPAR and Snap&Read has been an inspiration—she started to believe in herself.*”

Shellie Parr,  
Resource Teacher,  
Indian Creek  
Intermediate School  
Nineveh Hensley Jackson  
School District  
Trafalgar, IN



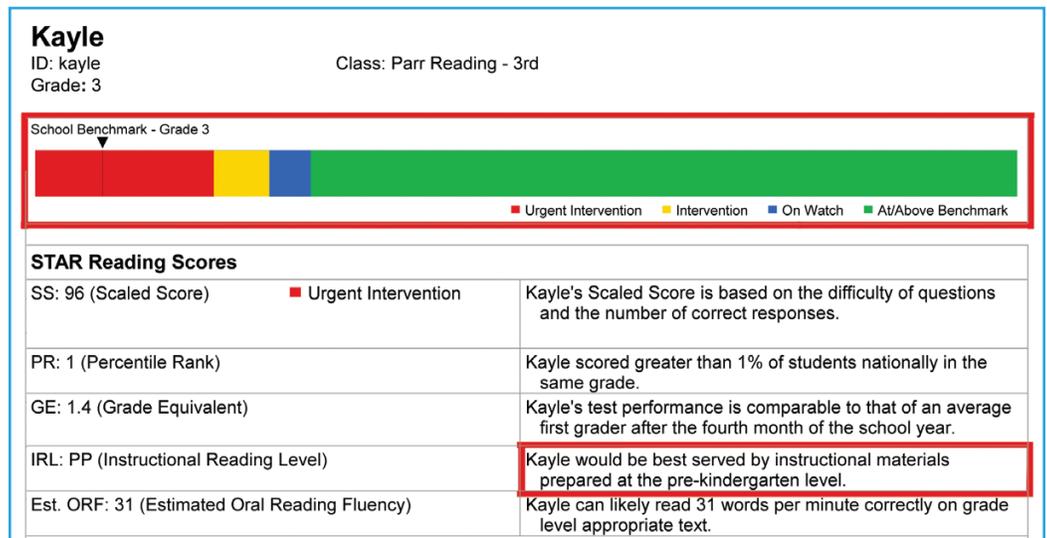
Kayle and Shellie Parr

**There's magic to teaching.** Certain students enter the classroom at the beginning of the year and leave transformed. Their eyes light up, and they start to walk with a newfound confidence. As Buckminster Fuller observed, “There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly.”

This is the story of Shellie Parr and her 3rd grade student Kayle.

Ms. Parr, a special education teacher in her third year, had already served as a para at Indian Creek for four years. She wasn't planning on going back to school to complete

her teaching license until her principal saw something in *her*. “He said that he felt I was someone who needed to be with kids. I prayed a lot about such a decision, and knew I was happiest when helping kids. So, I took the jump and here I am!”



Kayle's STAR Assessment, November 2015

When Kayle first entered Ms. Parr's class, Kayle's reading scores from the STAR assessment recommended books at a pre-kindergarten level. (“Baby books,” Kayle called them.)

“Kayle was so nervous about being called on to read aloud in class that she came home most days with lips bitten.”

Kayle’s Mom,  
Trafalgar, IN

Interventions included special tutoring (a two-hour drive for Kayle’s mom, Mary) and having Kayle read more hoping that more reading would help her outgrow her reading difficulties.

Kayle’s self-perception was that she wasn’t as smart as the other kids—that she couldn’t keep up. Being a triplet, it was especially difficult both emotionally and socially to lag behind her two sisters.

Her mother Mary said, “Kayle was so nervous about being called on to read aloud in class that she came home most days with lips bitten.” Kayle needed something or someone to turn things around for her. She needed a change of perspective.

Fortunately for Kayle, her school, Indian Creek Elementary, was part of the PATINS Project outreach to use uPAR (Universal Protocol for Accommodations in Reading) to find out whether accommodations would benefit students who didn’t respond to intervention. When Ms. Parr administered the uPAR assessment to her students, Kayle’s results shocked and delighted her.

### uPAR: Universal Protocol for Accommodations in Reading

Grade Level	Silent Read	Human Audio	Text Reader
12			
11			
10			
9			
8			
7		58%	
6			
5		88%	
4			
3 		100%	63%
2			100%
1 	75%		

Kayle’s uPAR Results, November 2015

uPAR confirmed the STAR assessment findings that Kayle was reading independently at a 1st grade level. But, uPAR also showed that with a reading accommodation, **Kayle could comprehend beyond grade level.**

Ms. Parr was surprised by the disparity.

The STAR recommended instructional materials at a pre-kindergarten level while uPAR showed that Kayle could comprehend instructional materials *beyond grade level.*

Armed with a new perspective, Ms. Parr shared the results with Kayle. For the first time, Kayle saw proof that she understood materials as well as her peers. A simple read-aloud accommodation could help her keep up.

**It was Kayle’s breakthrough.**

Ms. Parr gave Kayle **Snap&Read**— a text reader accommodation. “I worked with Kayle on the tool for just a few weeks, and she just rode with it!”

The next five months would amaze Ms. Parr, district leaders, Kayle’s parents, and Kayle herself.

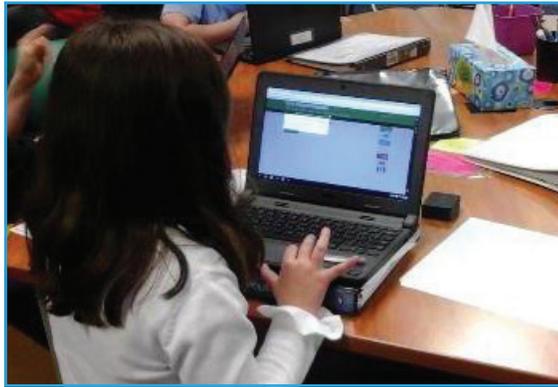
Using Snap&Read, Kayle accessed the general education curriculum *unmodified*. She didn’t need pre-kindergarten instructional materials. Instead of dreading reading, she became excited that technology could help her read like the other kids and even catch up to her sisters.

“The data was critical for Kayle’s self-confidence,” Ms. Parr relayed. As the year progressed and Kayle used Snap&Read at school and home, she smiled more, and raised her hand in class. She asked for more reading material. Kayle’s mom pointed out that “she started reading at home—for fun!”

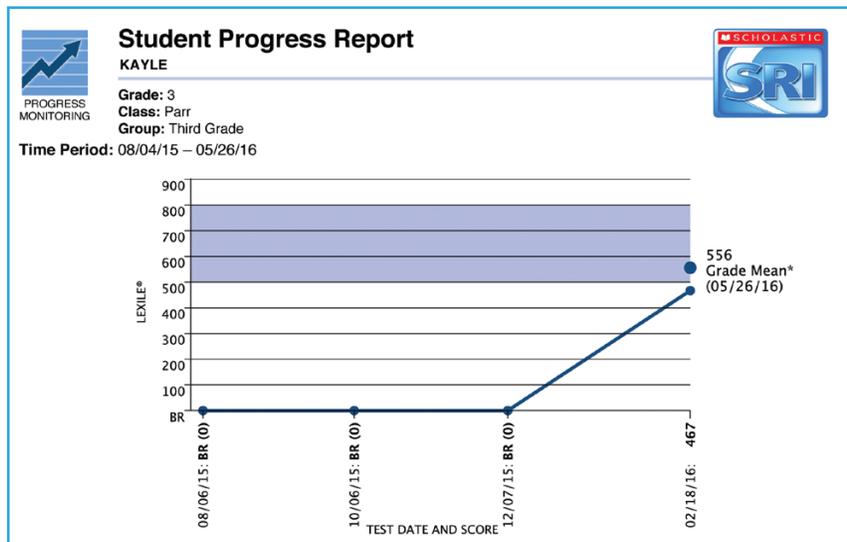
This abrupt turn of events for Kayle was a revelation to her parents. Mary, as her father before her, experienced reading issues in school but never received the kinds of supports now available. Mary is thrilled that her daughter now has access to tools that help her read and learn. She sees a future for her daughter that includes college and a career.

Despite Kayle’s access to grade-level curriculum and confidence about-face, some educators, parents, and general naysayers worry that accommodations are *cheating*. They worry that students will use them as a *crutch* and won’t be able to *pull themselves up by their own bootstraps*.

**Here’s where the story takes an unexpected turn...**



“ Kayle’s Lexile scores jumped from BR (Beginning Reader) to 467! ”



Kayle’s Lexile Progress

After months of using Snap&Read, Kayle started reading. From November 2015 to April 2016, her Lexile scores jumped from BR (Beginning Reader) to 467 with her accommodation! Encouragingly, Kayle’s Lexile level even improved 0 to 271 **without** her accommodation. Using Snap&Read had remedial impact for Kayle!

“ Kayle enjoys reading like never before, and she feels less stressed during reading tests. ”

Kayle's Mom,  
Trafalgar, IN

A message to the naysayer, *the crutch did its job*. The crutch encourages healing by taking the pressure off weak areas. In Kayle's case, it's exactly what she needed to heal her damaged self-confidence and encourage new growth.

Kayle had a more direct explanation when asked about her progress in reading, "Snap&Read read the words so many times that now I can read the words by myself."

Kayle is not alone. Hundreds of thousands of students have been assessed with uPAR, and new students are following the same path as Kayle. Students who thought they *weren't as smart as the other kids* are finding out that they just learn differently, and they *can* keep up with a simple reading accommodation.

Kayle is feeling proud of herself in school now. She made the last two honor rolls. She's glad to show other kids who have a hard time reading that accommodations can help them too.

Kayle's parents say now their daughter has big dreams of being like one of her heroes—her Uncle Justin. He is a college graduate and sells helicopters. She wants to go to college, major in drama, sing and become an actress. She knows reading and memorizing lines will be important.

Her parents say, "We can't thank Ms. Parr enough! Using Snap&Read has changed Kayle in a very positive way—that she enjoys reading like never before, and she feels less stressed during reading tests."

Ms. Parr reflects now about Kayle: "She was defeated a bit when she entered my class. She said several times she wasn't as smart as her sisters or others. When we provided her with tools that leveled the playing field, she realized she was extremely smart and now believes she can pursue whatever she wants in life. We need to bust the old thinking that technology is 'cheating.' Technology allows our students to succeed and push themselves to believe they can succeed in all areas of life."

Kayle's success with uPAR and Snap&Read has been an inspiration. She just needed a great teacher, a caring family, and some simple data from uPAR to help her see herself in a new light.

Far into the future, the 3rd grade may be the time Kayle reflects on most...thinking of the impact Ms. Parr had and how she turned it all around. Sometimes teaching is two parts passion and one part magic.



Observing a caterpillar with her sisters, Kayle (right) wonders, "What will it become?"