

**RIGHT AT SCHOOL & SOUTH RIVER SCHOOL
DISTRICT • SOUTH RIVER, NJ**

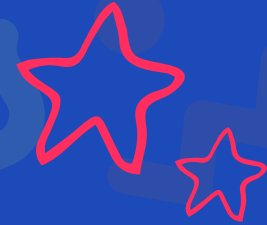


**RIGHT AT
SCHOOL**



CASE STUDY

Before and After School Program Feels Like a “Second Home” to Students





When Dr. Sylvia Zircher joined South River School District as superintendent in 2017, she began evaluating programs and services district-wide. Her review included the district's before and after school care program, which was run by an outside provider.

"The program was born out of a community need, but I noticed it wasn't necessarily a structured program, and there were some staffing concerns," said Zircher. "I knew I needed to do some research and find a program that would be an enhancement to the school day."

When another district recommended Right At School, Zircher looked into the before and after school enrichment program.

"I wanted to make sure we had a program that would be engaging to students and enrich their academic day," she said.

"I liked that Right At School is a structured program with components we could expect to see on a daily basis, such as activities, homework support, active play, and a snack. I liked their curriculum calendar and the thematic approach. I also liked that they were willing to hire district employees and give them an opportunity to make a shift and be trained and supported properly."



"I saw the success of Right At School in other districts, and it came with a solid reputation."

— Dr. Sylvia Zircher, Superintendent



Gaining parents' trust.

South River School District launched Right At School in the fall of 2017 in its primary school, elementary school, and middle school. Initially, parents were apprehensive about the change but soon saw the benefits of the program.

"Change is often hard for people," said Zircher. "The same child care program had been offered for quite some time. So when Right At School came in, they had upgraded and updated systems, such as online registration, that our families weren't used to. But they were on site for our Back to School Nights and PTA events so they could have personal conversations with families. That helped people better understand the program and what we were trying to accomplish."



“ There were questions at first, but once we worked through those, it was a pretty easy transition. They were also very good at working with families to make the program affordable for them. Now it's all very seamless. **”**

Providing engaging, meaningful enrichment.

Right At School serves South River students in prekindergarten through grade 8. Its Disguised Learning™ preK-8 curriculum supports learning standards in English language arts, literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts, physical fitness, and service learning.

"Right At School engages our students," said Zircher. "The kids who participate spend a lot of time at school, and they enjoy that time. Overall, they feel more positive about school because it becomes like their second home. They feel supported by the Right At School staff and their peers, and that contributes to their positive attitude."

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is carefully woven into the Disguised Learning curriculum and is aligned with standards from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). In addition, all Right At School educators are trained in SEL and trauma-informed care.

"The Right At School program provides an excellent opportunity for our students to not only learn social-emotional skills, but to apply and implement them," she said. "It has built-in activities that are collaborative and that require students to problem solve and interact with one another in supportive ways. Those social-emotional skills translate to the classroom, so that has been positive as well."



Providing homework support.

Homework help is another benefit for South River students and families. Every afternoon, Right At School educators group kids into age-appropriate homework pods and help everyone complete assignments on time.

“If you’re a working parent and you pick your child up from school at 5:30 p.m., the idea of sitting down for homework after dinner is daunting,” said Zircher. “Knowing that it’s already been addressed is a relief to parents. It lets them have that time for family or other activities.”

Supporting summer school.

In addition to before and after school enrichment, Right At School provides summer support for the district.

“We wanted to provide a camp environment over the summer but with an academic component. So, we partnered with Right At School to provide the camp-type activities — ‘the fun stuff’ as our kids call it — while our staff took on the academic remediation component,” said Zircher. “It was a good marriage of what we wanted to provide for our students, and we had some grant opportunities so we could offer free tuition, which is beneficial for a community like ours.”



Increasing program enrollment.

Since launching Right At School, enrollment in the district's before school, after school, and summer programs has increased 24%.

Access has also expanded for low-income families. In 2023, more than 25% of participating families utilized government subsidies to assist with registration costs, up from just 4% the year before.

"The enrollment increases are indicators of the success of Right At School," said Zircher.

"The data also shows that Right At School continues to retain the children they have, which speaks to the fact that families are happy with the program."

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"Right At School is a convenient before and after school program with caring adults. We feel very comfortable leaving our child in their care. Our daughter has positive experiences and enjoys the friendships she has made and the connections she has with the staff. The staff are thoughtful, attentive, and fun!"

— Genesi M. Parent from South River Primary

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Giving parents confidence.

"Parents like Right At School," said Zircher. "Every time a survey is done, parents are always very positive. They appreciate the program and the activities and the homework time."

Working parents, in particular, also appreciate the peace of mind they get from knowing their children are safe before and after school, according to Zircher.

"Over 50% of our kids qualify for free and reduced lunch. Providing safe, affordable child care is a support for families," she said. "Working parents know that their children are being taken care of and having fun, and not feeling overextended even though they're at school for a longer period of time."



RIGHT AT
SCHOOL



Creating a unique program to **support** district goals and priorities.

District Data

4 schools
Grades preK-12
2,300 students
<https://www.sravernj.org>

Student Demographics

- 52% Free/reduced lunch
- 0.1% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 2.3% Asian
- 6.5% Black
- 41.2% Hispanic/Latino
- 0.1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- 46.9% White
- 2.9% Two or more races

“We’ve had a good partnership with Right At School from the start.”

— Dr. Sylvia Zircher, Superintendent

“Their staff are dependable and reliable. They understand the needs and priorities of our community. Having a partner who understands what you want for your kids and what is important to you as a school district sets you up for success. A program can be more than just an hour of supervision in the morning and a few hours after school. It’s really what you make it.”

