

Keri Gurganus
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Final Project

The Learning Problem

I currently teach in a 3rd grade classroom in a k-5 building. My building has 15 classrooms with an average of 25 students per class. We are one of five elementary schools in the district and the only elementary that does not receive Title 1 funding. The district that I work for has a strong emphasis on reading and has spent a lot of time and money giving us tools to use within our classrooms to help get students to their appropriate grade level in reading. Even though our district has put in so much to this program over the summer we have seen our students decline in their reading abilities and skills. We give our students the DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) three times a year; start, middle and end of the year. We have seen a common drop in our students from their year-end assessments to the beginning of the year assessment the next year. We see this as a huge problem because we know that when students leave us they must not be reading at home and there is nothing that we can do since we can not enforce this on them. We can ask parents to have their students read every day and send home books and activities for our students but in reality we are not there to make sure that they are doing so. This problem is a huge problem because if we can have our students working on reading in a fun and exciting way over the summer then we as instructors can be one step ahead of the game and will be able to push our students to higher levels and in return create life long learners that will be able to achieve in our society as our mission pushes for.

A Technology Based Solution

When thinking about the problem that we are having with students decline in their reading skills over the summer I feel that the best way to help fix the problem is to give the students a computer program that they can use at home or the library where they are doing reading in a fun and interactive way like we do in our classrooms. A great solution that I feel will be the best is a great computer-reading program called Raz-kids. Raz-kids is a reading program where students go on to their website and do different readings at their reading levels. Their teacher will put in their students information and set of books and passages that they want their students to read. As students read they start to receive points. As they get more and more points they get to purchase items from the Raz-kids store to put in their computer rocket ships. The incentive program on this program is that of the world famous Webkins toys where you buy a stuffed animal and get a code to unlock a room on their site and get to decorate it when you get points from playing their games. Raz-kids is set up just like that but instead of playing games, students get

points from reading. I feel that this program will help support our problem in a great way because students will be able to have books at their finger tips all summer long and also will have an instant gratification as they are awarded on the spot for each thing they do. This makes reading more fun and allows students to have a greater goal then just finishing a book.

To get this program started there will only have to be minimal training for the teachers in the building. Like I stated we already give our students the DRA and each teacher should know what reading level each child in their classroom is at, at the end of the year. The training will be that each teacher will have to know how to add all of his or her students to their Raz-kids page. After that they will have to be trained in how to pick specific plans for each of their students. Finally, they will need to be trained on how to get the information on student progress. As you can see this is very minimal training and can be accomplished in an hour or less and can be done at a staff meeting. This training can be free and be done by the administrator or a staff member who has gone to the Raz-kids site and when through the tutorial. Also, over the summer teachers can also get more help from Raz-kids from free if they click on the communication and help button where they can chat with a customer service representative.

The great thing about Raz-kids is that it is very cost proficient. First, there is no training cost for the program and it is very user friendly and second, the cost of the program per classroom is very inexpensive. To get Raz-kids for each classroom in our building it will be \$1, 124.25 or \$74.95 per class. The cost is for a full year so your students can also use this program during the school year and can also continue their reading growth.

Funding the Solution

Like I stated before our school is the only school in our district that does not receive Title 1 funding. In short that means money is tight for our building so getting the money for this solution from the district is not likely to happen. Since we cannot count on the district for this we are going to have to come up with a way to raise the money our selves. The way that I feel will be the best way to raise the money is to do a fundraiser every year that will be called laps for learning. Our fundraiser is that students will get donation for each lap that they run around our track. If figured it out that if each classroom has an average of 25 students at the cost per class is around 75 dollars then our students would have to average three dollars in donations, which in my mind is very obtainable. Another great thing about this fundraiser is that there is nothing to sell or up front fees that we will have; all we need are pledges.

A Path of Implementation

A student declining in their reading is a huge problem and one that is not to be taken lightly. In order to make sure we fix this problem I feel whole-heartedly that Raz-kids will be a great way to fill in the summer reading gap. This solution is a good one because students are given a fun program where they receive incentives for reading. In order to get all of the other teachers on board with this program I do not think I would have to do a lot of convincing. Teacher in my building want their students to grow and when they see how easy this program is to do and the minimal work that goes into it then I feel that they will buy right into it.

To get this program going my action plan would be that we would start the program in the last month of school (June) so that we can model to our students how to use the program. The training for the teacher would be in May so that each teacher can work with the program and get all of their questions answered and needs met before they start teaching their students how to use it. On the last day of school we would send home a flyer with the student's report card with their log in information and other items that parents will need. Those are the only step in the action plan to get the ball rolling.

When school gets back to session in September that is when we will see if all of the work has paid off. When we give the DRA in September it will show us if our students declined, stayed the same or increased in their reading ability. If our students stayed the same or increased then I feel that our plan has been proven a success. The other part of this data would be if students really finished their programs over the summer. If a student did not do their program then they cannot be counted in the success or failure of the program because their date would not be correct. To find the real data you could only use the students who did the program over the summer and if their reading stayed the same or increased. Another item that we will need to check in our plan is the percentage of students who actually did the program over the summer. If we find out that the majority of our students did not do the program then that will also show us that this plan has failed because we have wasted time and money on a program that was not used. With all that said the way that we will be able to show that the program is successful is:

1. Majority of students worked on the program over the summer
2. Students who worked on the program had a reading level that stayed the same or increased.

If those two criteria were not met then I would say that this program was not successful.

Appendix

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







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Subject New and Amazing Computer Reading Program

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Hello Everyone-

As we talked numerous time in staff meetings this year we have been trying to find some way to get our students to read over the summer so that when they come back in the fall they are not decreasing in their reading ability. I feel I have found a very cost efficient way to do that! There is a great computer website called Raz-kids where students can log on and when they do readings they get points that they can use to buy items for there online spaceship. We all know what Webkins are, this is just like it but instead of games they read books for points. I actually did a trial and I loved it and kept reading because I wanted to make my spaceship cooler and cooler. It was pretty addicting and that is what we want from our students; to get addicted to reading. You can go to the site and look at it here: raz-kids.com

I know what most of you are saying; "Another program to put into practice and How are we going to pay for it" I have those covered!

First to do this program it takes very little time and I can show all of you this in a staff meeting and to get it going you can probably get your class going in around 30 minutes. Second it is very inexpensive and I have a great idea of how to raise the money and I will share that with you at our staff meeting

PS. Here is my spaceship room, its a work in progress

