

Technology-Enhanced Literacy Grant Proposal

by

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A Grant Proposal Project Report
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Requirements for the
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in

Education

Approved: 2 Semester Credits

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jerrilyn A. Brewer, Ed.D." is written over a horizontal line.

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Abstract

Students at Brooklyn Elementary School are in need of increased access to electronic literature in order to improve literacy skills. The purpose of this grant proposal is to gain financial support to improve literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library and the use of portable technology. Students with the greatest need for additional types of literacy access include low-income and special education students. Research suggests instructional technology has the potential to improve student literacy skills. Technology also may offer an additional level of support for students in need of Tier II and Tier III Response to Intervention instruction. The goal of this grant proposal is to improve literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library, the use of portable technology, and parent involvement. The objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: Integrate portable technology into daily classroom activities.

Objective 2: Increase student access to technology.

Objective 3: Increase percentage of students reading at grade level.

Objective 4: Increase parent involvement in student literacy development.

The Project Lead Teacher will organize and plan the evaluation and dissemination of the project in order to meet the overall goal.

**The Graduate School
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Chapter I: Introduction

Literacy is the key to success in all areas of life in our society. The ability to read and comprehend a variety of texts through an assortment of media is crucial to life in the 21st Century. The Oregon School District (OSD) strives to offer a variety of curriculum opportunities to prepare students for the 21st Century while meeting the diverse needs of all students. Technology has a growing prevalence in our society. According to Gambrell, Morrow and Pressley (2001) students today are living in a time when technological innovations are developing at an ever-increasing pace and having knowledge of technology is not a luxury but a requirement; using technology to improve literacy skills has increased in education in order for teachers to prepare students for this reality (p. 23). Struggling readers may benefit from the differentiated support offered by electronic texts. In order to offer students an opportunity to improve their literacy skills through technology, Brooklyn Elementary School (BES) would like to provide student access to an online reading site called Raz-kids.com. Raz-kids.com is a leveled-text reading library that allows students, teachers, and parents the ability to monitor student progress while students work at their developmental level on accuracy, fluency and comprehension of texts in a variety of genres. In order to implement Raz-kids.com school-wide with consistency, BES would need access to several portable computers. A portable computer lab would also offer BES the ability to loan computers to students who do not have home access in order to continue their online literacy practice at home.

Statement of the Problem

Students at Brooklyn Elementary School need to improve literacy skills. At the end of the 2009-2010 school year about 15.4% of students, K-4, at Brooklyn Elementary School (BES) were reading below grade level according to the Rigby PM Benchmark assessment, an

improvement of only .2% from the previous year (Koehler, 2010). The BES Fall 2010 *Measure of Academic Progress* (MAP) assessment data showed about 30% of second through fourth grade students scored below proficiency in the area of reading. Of the about 30% who scored below proficiency on the MAP assessment, about 35% are special education students and about 33% are low income students. According to *Wisconsin Knowledge and Concept Exam* (WKCE) 2009 assessment data, about 15% of students scored below proficiency level in the area of Language Arts. Of the about 15% of students who scored below proficiency on the WKCE 2009 assessment, about 50% were special education students and about 46% were low income. BES winter reading level assessments performed with district-wide common assessments showed about 16% of first through fourth grade students reading below grade level as determined by the OSD. Of the 16% reading below grade level, about 44% are special education students and about 36% are low-income students. BES has a population of about 19% low-income students, of which 33% of first through fourth grade students were not reading at their current grade level according to the winter reading level assessments performed with district wide common assessments (*Oregon School District, 2010-2011*). This demonstrates that the low-income students make up a large percentage of low readers; they are also the students who are less likely to have access to technology.

Research suggests technology can support students' diverse literacy needs (Gambrell, et al., 2007). Raz-kids.com is an interactive, online, leveled library that provides students books at their reading level to improve accuracy, fluency and comprehension. It also allows students, teachers and parents the opportunity to monitor student-reading progress. The library of texts are correlated to grade-level equivalency, Fountas and Pinnell, and Reading Recovery leveling systems, all of which OSD uses to assess and level student reading progress. In order to benefit

from Raz-kids.com, students would need to access computers on a consistent basis. An informal teacher survey showed that students are only able to access the desktop-only computer labs for about 1 hour a week, about 2% of their total time in school. Some teachers find it more difficult to access the computer labs and therefore only spend 1 hour every other week, or 1% of the student's time in school. In addition, informal teacher surveys showed about 12% of students at BES do not have computer access at home. In order to fully utilize an online program such as Raz-kids.com, BES would need access to portable computers for use in the classroom on a daily basis as well as the ability to use the computers at home through a checkout system.

Purpose of the Grant Proposal

The purpose of this grant proposal is to gain financial support to improve literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library and the use of portable technology. The financial resources gained will be used to purchase Apple i-pads, a site license to Raz-kids.com and carrying cases. These materials will benefit the students, families and teachers at Brooklyn Elementary School.

Limitations of the Grant Proposal

This grant proposal is limited in that teachers will not be required to utilize Raz-kids.com or to check out the computers for classroom use. Parents may not utilize the checkout program. This will be for OSD only and for only one elementary school in the district. The OSD technology department has agreed to supply resources and time to get any new technology loaded into the OSD network but they will not replace the technology if it becomes outdated or worn.

Definition of Terms

Literacy. According to Fountas and Pinnell (2006) “Literacy is thinking, talking and writing about reading.” Reading involves actively working to accurately read the words and construct meaning from a variety of texts in multiple genres. Literacy involves reading, listening and responding to texts.

Technology-enhanced learning. According to Gambrell et al., (2007) modern day literacy requires us to be adept users of digital literacies (p. 345). For all levels of readers, technology can support learning needs, increase motivation, engage learners and scaffold their learning. A few examples of technology-enhanced learning include, interactive demonstration through the use of an interactive whiteboard, composing writing assignments with a word processing application, access to electronic interactive texts and phonologic awareness software.

Below proficiency level. Students not performing at current grade benchmark levels as determined by the Oregon School District through the use of Rigby PM Benchmark assessment or the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment. On the Rigby PM Benchmark assessment at the winter assessment window (January 1-31) first graders must score between 10 and 12; Second graders must score between 19 and 20, third graders must score between 23 and 24. Fourth graders are assessed using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment and must score a Q within the winter assessment window. (*Oregon School District 2009-2010 Brooklyn Elementary Assessment Data*).

The WKCE is administered only to third and fourth grade students. According to WKCE below proficiency is a student who has a scale score less than

1. 430 on the reading assessment for third grade.
2. 440 on the reading assessment or 277 on the language arts assessment in fourth grade.

The OSD level of proficiency on the Measure of academic progress assessment is anything above the 25th percentile for that grade level (*Oregon School District, 2010-2011*).

Low income students. Students at BKE who are eligible for Free and Reduced lunch.

“Categorically eligible children are those who are automatically eligible for free benefits because of the status as one of the following:

1. A member of a household, as determined by the administering agency, receiving assistance under the Food Stamp Program, the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Children Program (TANF) [TANF is the Federal designation; each State has its own name and acronym];
2. Enrollment in a Head Start or Even Start program on the basis of meeting that program’s low-income criteria;
3. A homeless child as determined by the school district’s homeless liaison or by the director of a homeless shelter;
4. A migrant child as determined by the State or local Migrant Education Program (MEP) coordinator;
5. A runaway child who is receiving assistance from a program under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and is identified by the local educational liaison” (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2008, p. 11).

Raz-kids.com. “Online leveled book library. Students improve their reading skills by listening for modeled fluency, reading for practice, recording their reading and checking comprehension with quizzes” (Learning A-Z. 2010-2011 Raz-kids.com).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). According to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2011) a school or district must achieve a proficiency index of 80.5% in reading to achieve AYP.

Response to Intervention (RtI). According to Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (2010) RtI is a process of improving academic and behavioral success for all students. “RtI is a way to systematize high quality instruction, balanced assessment systems, and collaboration. It is this systematic process that will ensure that all students have equal access to supports that will ensure their long-term success” (p.7).

Scale Score. “A scale score is a score on a numeric scale with intervals of equal size. For WKCE, the scale is applied to all students taking the WKCE in a particular subject, making it possible to compare, add, subtract, and calculate mean scores for different groups of students or individuals from year to year and grade to grade. Higher scores suggest higher achievement of the knowledge and skills measured by the test... Each subject area is scaled separately; therefore, the scale scores for one subject area cannot be compared to another subject area” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2010).

Methodology

Chapter two will contain a literature review on the importance of literacy and technology. In chapter three, project goals and objectives will be discussed. Chapter four will outline the implementation of the new computers and Raz-Kids within BES. A timeline, budget and dissemination plan will be included in this chapter. Appendixes will include a cover letter.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will review what is known about technology-enhanced literacy with elementary aged students. Response to Intervention (RtI) will be defined, as well as, how technology can be used to support the RtI model. The concept of parent teacher communication and what that looks like in an effective classroom will also be summarized.

Response to Intervention

Teaching students to become literate has become more intense in the early elementary grades; there is a shift from basic literacy skills being taught in first and second grade to kindergarten and pre-kindergarten curriculums emphasizing those basic literacy and academic skills and less emphasis on social skills in order to prepare children for the 21st Century (Stipek, 2006). The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* has teachers and schools scrambling to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) by 2014. In order to make AYP and to improve student literacy skills, schools are improving their curriculum, increasing literacy block minutes and implementing Response to Intervention (RtI). RtI is broken into three tiers: Tier I is the core instruction all students receive; Tier II is small group, supplemental instruction, small group in which more specific skills are being taught; Tier III is intensive instruction, usually one-on-one (Reeves, Bishop, Gabler Filce, 2010, p. 3). Every student receives Tier I in his or her regular education classroom through everyday lessons taught by the teacher. Students who struggle with specific concepts or skills such as reading fluency, decoding unknown words or comprehension, need Tier II instruction. According to Edyburn (2009) instructional technology has the potential to improve student learning in Tier II and Tier III instruction (p. 3). Raz-kids.com is an instructional technology that can supply students with a collection of on-level texts to supplement decoding, fluency or comprehension instruction. Research suggests “today's

technology provides the ability for students with diverse learning styles to engage with ideas in ways not previously possible” (Regan, 2008, p.2). Apple offers many free applications that support students with different learning styles as they work on specific literacy skills such as e-books with audio, word games and puzzles. This use of technology helps keep the children with the most need engaged with activities they find interesting and meaningful (Gambrell, et al., 2007, p. 352).

Most students in need of Tier II instruction generally do not need Tier III but with just a little more emphasis or instruction in a specific area are able to overcome their deficit. Students who need Tier III instruction generally enter into a special education program. Technology plays a vital role to special education students. “An increasing range and efficacy of assistive technologies is also making it possible to address diverse needs of individuals with disabilities” (Jeffs, Behrmann, Bannan-Ritland, 2006. p. 1). Assistive technology can include dictation applications, word processing, drawing programs, listening to modeled reading or interactive phonics games. Fenlon, McNabb and Pidiypchak (2010) claim that children with multiple disabilities benefit from the same literacy experiences as their peers when offered instruction using assistive technology such as web-based libraries or writing sites.

Technology-Enhanced Literacy

Technology has become a staple in education for both teacher and student. According to the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (August, 2010) “technology is an essential component of the active learning process and should be seamlessly integrated into the curriculum.”

Technology is no longer just something teachers use to instruct; it has become a tool used by students to improve their learning. Hansen (2008) claims “Researchers and practitioners have changed the question of *should* technology be integrated in early literacy instruction to *how* can

early literacy instruction be enhanced with technology in the best interests of beginning readers and writers” (p.2). The use of technology to link and expand concepts is one of ten evidence-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction according to Gambrell et al. (2007, p. 19).

Literacy is no longer just learning to read from a book, magazine or textbook. According to the National Endowment for the Arts (2010), about 9% of students in grade school through high school access literature through technology; about 30% of adults age 18-34 access literature through technology. In an age when technology has a tremendous influence on academic achievement and job opportunities, our students need teacher-guided access to technology as often as possible. Literacy encompasses a variety of concepts including digital and visual; it is important that schools prepare students for application in all literacies (Gambrell et al., 2007, p. 345). It is also important to take into account student learning styles: visual, auditory, kinesthetic or tactile. Hoyer (2005) claims that technology can enhance learning and allow teachers to address all student-learning styles (p. 1). Visual learners are able to access videos, photographs, diagrams or drawings to support their learning. Auditory learners can access audio clips, record their voice for playback later or listen to songs about a content area. Tactile learners could use different applications to manipulate markers, pieces, diagrams or photographs to help improve their learning. Kinesthetic learners can use Apple i-pads anywhere on a wireless system, thus giving the learner the ability to walk or move around while learning. Mouza (2005) claims that technology contributes to cognitive development by allowing teachers to create an environment for students to learn by doing, visualize difficult-to-understand concepts and reinforce developmentally appropriate activities (p. 2).

Parent-Teacher Communication

Parents are a child's first teacher; therefore, it is important for parents and teachers to work together to improve student achievement. "When parents and teachers have rich and frequent communication, they can forge the partnerships that produce benefits for children" (Merkley, Schmidt, Dirksen, Fulher, 2006, p.1). According to Darling (2005) "children benefit when teachers and parents reinforce the same concepts and ideas." Technology can be a means to support parent-teacher communication and to improve parent-student literacy experiences to support student achievement. According to a study done by Illinois State University, Center for the Study of Education Policy "the use of technology has the potential to increase the frequency and effectiveness of communication between home and school" (2004, p.13). Teachers have the ability to communicate with parents through the use of electronic mail, blogs, wikis or other district web based student information programs such as PowerSchool. "School and classroom Web sites promote and maintain home-teacher communication by informing parents and community members of school and classroom activities" (Merkley et al., 2006, p.2). Through these different avenues parents can learn about specific skills their student has been learning and ways they can help reinforce concepts at home.

One concern among teachers is that parents may be offering bedtime stories as their only literacy opportunity. According to one study, it is twice as beneficial to have parents teach specific skills to their child rather than just listen to them read (Senechal, 2006). Raz-Kids.com accounts can be accessed anywhere with internet access allowing parents to work with their child using texts pre-selected by a child's teacher in order to address specific skill deficits. It also allows parents to track their child's progress. According to Merkley et al. (2006), Parents want access to more evidence of their child's progress not just a reported grade (p.2). This at-home

intervention can help reinforce the literacy concepts taught at school and provide parents with more detailed information about their child's progress.

The purpose of this grant proposal is to gain financial support to improve literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library and the use of portable technology. The research indicates that technology can be utilized to enhance learning for all students. Students who are in need of specific skill instruction such as Tier II or Tier III interventions would benefit from high-quality instructional technologies such as computer applications and online literacy activities. Research also indicates that parent-teacher communication is essential for improving student literacy skills. Technology can promote parent-teacher communication by providing parents access to specific skills taught by teachers to reinforce at home.

Chapter III: Project Goals and Objectives

This grant is important because it will strengthen Brooklyn Elementary School's literacy curriculum, offer students an alternative learning opportunity, and involve parents in their child's literacy progress. Students are also offered access to online literacy both in the classroom and at home. The overall project goal and specific objectives will be implemented and assessed by the Project Lead Teacher throughout the year. Recommendations on the continuation of the project will be made at that time to the Oregon School District. The OSD may choose to further fund this literacy project based on the findings of the Project Lead Teacher.

Overall Project Goal: Improve literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library, the use of portable technology, and parent involvement.

Objective 1: Integrate portable technology into daily classroom activities. First through fourth grade teachers will be trained on the use of the Apple i-pads and the many ways to integrate this technology into their literacy curriculum. Teachers will also be given a teacher login and training on Raz-kids.com by the Project Lead Teacher. Students will be given daily access to their Raz-kids.com account as a supplemental activity. Parents will be given access to their child's account with information on ways to utilize the website from home. Parents, students and teachers will be instructed on the new checkout procedures for the portable computers. Teachers will also increase their access to all technology whenever possible.

Objective 2: Increase student access to technology. Teachers will be surveyed using a locally developed survey to determine the average access to technology and the website Raz-kids.com. The Project Lead Teacher will compare student participation and progress results throughout the year in order to track improvement. An increase in both participation and access to technology and online literacy will determine effectiveness of project.

Objective 3: Increase percentage of students reading at grade level. Students will continue to be assessed using either the Rigby PM or Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment administered by teachers three times per year: September, January and May. 90% of first through fourth grade students will be reading above grade level, an increase of 16%. Students in grades two through four will be assessed twice per year on the *Measure of Academic Progress*; 85% of those assessed will score at or above proficiency in reading, an increase of 15%. Students in third and fourth grade will be assessed on the *Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Exam*; 90% of those assessed will score at or above proficiency, an increase of 5%. Of the low income students, 85% will be reading at or above grade level, an increase of 18%. Data will also be collected from Raz-kids.com to determine student progression through leveled readers. Student data will also be compared to previous year literacy data.

Objective 4: Increase parent involvement in student literacy development. Parent involvement will be assessed using a locally-developed parent survey. Parents will be surveyed at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the school year. The survey will assess parent involvement in the availability of technology at home, student home access to Raz-kids.com, parent access to student progress on Raz-kids.com and parent communication with teachers.

Chapter IV: Project Methodology

Students in Brooklyn Elementary School are in need of additional literacy instruction and exposure; however, district funding is not available. Access to literacy through technology has been shown to improve student literacy skills. Parents need to support student literacy through reinforcement of previously taught skills. Improving literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library and the use of portable technology is the main goal of this grant proposal. This chapter will include a timeline and evaluation plan. The tools used for evaluation, a plan for dissemination of information, and a budget are also included. Primary responsibility for this project will be Project Lead Teacher.

Project Timeline

Month	Activities
September 2011	Train teachers on the use of portable computers Provide teacher access to Raz-kids.com and create class lists Assess students using either Rigby PM or Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessments
October 2011	Train parents on use of Raz-kids.com at home Provide information to students and parents on checkout procedure for portable computers Administer MAP assessment to second through fourth grade students Administer WKCE to third and fourth grade students Monitor student progress and changes made to account as needed
November 2011	Monitor student progress and changes made to account as needed

December 2011	Monitor student progress and changes made to account as needed
January 2012	Assess students using either Rigby PM or Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessments Compare data with beginning of the year data and previous year's data to monitor progress of project
February 2012	Monitor student progress and changes made to account as needed
March 2012	Monitor student progress and changes made to account as needed
April 2012	Monitor student progress and changes made to account as needed
May 2012	Assess students using either Rigby PM or Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessments Administer MAP assessment to second through fourth grade students Compare data with beginning of the year data and previous year's data to monitor progress of project Administer locally developed survey to parents and teachers to determine student access to Raz-kids.com account at home and in school Share project evaluation with Oregon School District for approval of continuation

Evaluation Plan and Tools

The evaluation plan and tools will be for all first through fourth graders and their parents at Brooklyn Elementary School during the 2011-1012 school year. During the three assessment windows, determined by the Oregon School District to be in September, January and May

student academic achievement will be assessed using a combination of research-based formative and summative assessment tools including the Rigby PM or Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, WKCE, and MAP. Student progress will also be determined by their progression through levels within their account on Raz-kids.com. A locally developed survey for parents and teachers will be utilized to determine student account access at home and at school.

Data collected from student assessments and the locally developed survey will be compared to previous year data. Improved student reading levels and an increase in percentage of students reading at or above grade level will indicate success of the project. Considerations on how to improve the project and modifications to accommodate teachers, students and parents will be discussed before the project continues.

Dissemination Plan

Information regarding the project will be shared with teachers at one of the first staff meetings of the year. An informational letter will be sent to parents of first through fourth grade students with information on the new technology and resources available as well as information on checkout procedures. Contact information will be provided for the Project Lead Teacher. At parent information nights, held by all first through fourth grade teachers, information will also be given about the new technology and checkout procedures. A brief explanation of the project will be shared with the Oregon School District Board of Education at the regular board meeting in October. A link on the Brooklyn Elementary School website will be available for parents and teachers to monitor the progress of the project. All planning, training and presenting will be done by the Project Lead Teacher.

Budget Narrative

This proposal requests an investment of \$14,124.25, 100% of the total project product costs. The OSD Technology department will cover the cost of integrating the new Apple i-pads into the OSD network and installing the appropriate software. The OSD will provide the general office supplies needed for newsletters and parent information.

The following comments further clarify the basis for calculation of budget items. There are generally 20-25 students in any given first through fourth grade classroom at BES; therefore, 25 Apple i-pads will supply one computer per student in a classroom for use during whole class activities. The new Apple i-pads will be available to students to check out and to use at home; therefore, they will need appropriate carrying cases to keep them in quality condition. A specialized laptop storage cabinet is needed for the computers that are left at school and need to be charged when not in use while being stored securely. There will be 15 classrooms (first through fourth grade) that will need a membership to www.Raz-kids.com for student access to literacy.

Table 1***Budget***

Description	Cost	Amount	Total
Apple i-pads	\$499	25	\$12,475
12 month Raz- kids.com classroom membership	\$59.95	15	\$899.25
Apple i-pad carrying case	\$25	10	\$250
Laptop Storage Cabinet	\$500	1	\$500
Total cost			\$14,124.25

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Appendix A: Cover Letter

July 28, 2011

Mr. Jackson Routh
Dollar General Corporation
Attn: Community Initiatives Department
100 Mission Ridge
Goodlettsville, TN 37072

RE: Letter of Intent
Youth Literacy
Brooklyn Elementary School
Oregon School District

Dear Mr. Jackson Routh,

My name is Dawn Clemment. I am a first grade teacher at Brooklyn Elementary School in the Oregon School District in Oregon, Wisconsin. We are a progressive K-12 school district that strives to offer students an educational experience that will prepare students for life in the 21st century.

As a teacher I am dedicated to helping improve student achievement especially in the area of literacy. Unfortunately, many students at Brooklyn Elementary School are reading below grade level. Technology offers an alternative to traditional texts for low achieving students; however many teachers do not have enough available technology in the classroom and students do not have access at home to technology or high quality literature.

It is my goal to improve literacy and student achievement through access to an online leveled library and portable technology for use both at school and at home. You will receive a detailed proposal with convincing research that clearly demonstrates a need.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the project proposal in more detail with you. Please feel free to contact me for further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dawn Clemment
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