

Literacy Instruction Enriched Through Technology
Grant Proposal

by

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Abstract

Literacy skills are a foundation for success. In order for individuals to reach their full potentials, they must be able to read and write. Achievement in all academic areas is affected by the ability to read. This grant proposal requests from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation \$3,759 in order to institute a project aimed at raising literacy scores for students attending Richard Mann Elementary School in Walworth, New York. Students in kindergarten through grade 5 scoring below proficiency levels on reading tests will receive intervention services within the school building. Since research has shown that technology can enhance instruction and increase learning, teachers will incorporate the Apple iPad 2 and its literacy-related applications into Tier 2 Response to Intervention reading instruction. After participating in these

interventions, students will raise their test scores to at least proficiency level. This will allow for future life successes and opportunities.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Literacy is the foundation for success in academics as well as in life for all individuals. The abilities to read and write are essential skills to function in the 21st century. As the world turns digital, it is imperative that individuals are literate in all formats necessary to succeed in this world of technology. We must prepare students for a global world; this involves not only being literate, but being literate in the many formats of text. Building a 21st century learning environment requires a technological infrastructure that includes access to devices such as desktop and laptop computers, tablet computers, electronic readers, and smart phones (Jones, Fox, & Levin, 2011). The Gananda Central School District (GCSD) is committed to the preparation for the 21st century for all of its students, addressing their diverse needs. Since students who struggle with aspects of literacy may benefit from learning through technology, we would like to implement reading instruction that incorporates a tablet computer, the Apple iPad 2, for services provided to students through the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework. The Apple iPad 2 offers numerous free applications for teaching and practicing literacy skills, including electronic reader features. In order for Richard Mann Elementary School (RMES) to utilize this program, we would need access to several of these tablet computers. Students will be exposed to technology and will learn its many uses while also learning to read.

Statement of the Problem

The GCSD has been committed to excellence in education since opening its doors in 1974. The district is dedicated to guiding its students to develop knowledge, character, and unique abilities that will serve as the foundation for life-long success. Part of this foundation for

success is literacy skills—the ability to read and write. Teaching literacy skills is an integral part of instruction throughout the GCSD.

Unfortunately, even with the commitment and dedication of teachers, literacy rates in the United States are not satisfactory. This is a major problem impeding academics as well as life success. The National Center for Education Statistics (2009) reports that thirteen out of thirty-four countries have higher or equal literacy rates in comparison to the United States. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) coordinates the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA). The PISA Reading Scale was last administered to 15-year olds in 2009. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Japan, Republic of Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Switzerland all scored higher on the PISA Reading Scale than the United States while Iceland and Poland scored the same. An even grimmer fact is that the United States' average score fell from 504 in the year 2000 to 500 in 2009. Further reports of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that many elementary, middle, and high school students continue to find reading difficult. According to Bruning, Schraw, & Norby (2011), more than one-fourth of 12th graders, more than one-fourth of 8th graders, and nearly one-third of 4th graders failed to perform at basic levels of reading. The Literacy Volunteers of Wayne County, New York (2011) also calculated some alarming literacy statistics. In the United States, 30 million adults have below basic literacy skills, another 29% only have basic skills. In the state of New York, 19% of adults have below basic skills while two-million students never complete high school. Six-thousand adults (8% of adult residents) in Wayne County lack basic literacy skills; 19,000 more struggle to function effectively in today's society. The Literacy Volunteers of Wayne County (2011) also report that 9,300 adults never finished high school; 3,700 of these people dropped out before completing ninth grade.

According to the New York State Assessment Program (2011), the 2010 English Language Arts (ELA) state testing in grades 3-8 revealed 47.2% of students scored below state-determined proficiency levels. In the GCSD, the percentage of students in grades 3-8 scoring below proficiency ranges from 29.2% (fourth grade) to 47.6% (seventh grade). According to the United States Department of Education (2011), the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 expects all students to achieve at least proficiency levels of literacy on state tests by the year 2014. In order to meet this goal, literacy rates in the GCSD, as well as across the country, must increase. We have a long way to go in a short period of time.

Literacy rates must increase for the students at RMES. Students who score below proficiency levels in state and school testing will need additional instructional support in order to raise these scores. In turn, overall literacy rates for RMES will increase. For this reason, we will concentrate our efforts on these students who initially score below proficiency. These students will receive intervention services through Tier 2 of the RtI model.

The previously mentioned literacy statistics are unacceptable. The United States cannot compete in today's global economy with these current literacy rates. In order for individuals to reach their full potentials, they must be able to read and write. Life success is dependent on these abilities. With this project proposal, we can improve these unsatisfactory statistics at RMES, affecting state and national data as a result.

Purpose of the Grant Proposal

The purpose of this grant proposal is to gain financial support in order to incorporate technology use that will help improve literacy rates. With this financial support, the GCSD will purchase Apple iPad 2s, a protective case for each computer, and a protection plan for each iPad

2. These materials will improve our RtI program. Students and teachers at RMES will benefit from the addition of technology-enhanced reading support.

Definition of Terms

AIMSweb. According to AIMSweb (2010), this is a comprehensive system of benchmark and progress monitoring assessments of student achievement. Results are used to determine response to intervention instruction.

Benchmark Score. Certain standards are set for optimal academic performance. A benchmark score on a standardized test is the minimal score accepted to be considered a grade-level appropriate score.

Common Core State Standards. According to Common Core State Standards Initiative (2011), the Common Core State Standards are goals per grade level that schools must teach in order to prepare students for college and careers.

Computer Application. A computer application is software that performs specific functions and can be downloaded from a website onto your personal piece of technology.

Differentiation. The Office of Educational Technology (2010) defines differentiation as the method, or approach of instruction that is tailored to the learning preferences of different learners.

Letter Naming Fluency. This is a subtest of the AIMSweb standardized test where the student states the names of as many letters as he/she is able to name from a random list of letters (AIMSweb, 2011).

Letter Sound Fluency. This is a subtest of the AIMSweb standardized test where the student states the sounds of as many letters as he/she is able to state from a list of random letters (AIMSweb, 2011).

Literacy. According to the National Institute for Literacy (2010), literacy is the ability to read, write, and spell.

Manipulative. This is an object or material that a student can touch and move, enabling better understanding and memory of subject matter.

Oral Reading Fluency. This is a subtest of the AIMSweb standardized test where the student reads aloud for one minute and a rate is calculated of the number of words read correctly per minute (AIMSweb, 2011).

Phonemic Segmentation Fluency. This is a subtest of the AIMSweb standardized test that measures the ability of a student to break up a word into its individual sounds (AIMSweb, 2011).

Proficiency Level. The level or score at which it is determined that the student has mastered a particular skill.

Progress Monitor. Student progress is monitored by administering AIMSweb subtests and comparing previous scores. If progress is sufficient, instruction continues as is. If the student's progress is not sufficient, changes in instruction, such as smaller group size or method of instruction is considered. This assures the student is receiving appropriate, effective services (AIMSweb, 2011; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008).

Reading Comprehension. Understanding what is read (Lipson & Wixson, 2010).

Reading Fluency. Fluency is the ability to read quickly and accurately with meaningful phrasing (Lipson & Wixson, 2010).

Response to Intervention (RtI). According to Fuchs, et al. (2008), RtI is a multi-tiered system of instruction that delivers early intervention programs to address academic and behavioral problems of students. RtI is a system that ultimately determines eligibility for special

education services. The tiers of service increase in intensity as they progress to higher numbers. Tier 1 focuses on classroom instruction for all students. Students who fail to respond to this instruction receive additional instruction, Tier 2 services, which are delivered to a small group of students (3-5 students) either within or outside the regular classroom. Tier 3 instruction is more intensive, increasing in frequency and/or duration and provided to a smaller group (1-3 students).

Limitations of the Grant Proposal

This grant proposal is limited in that it will only provide materials for students attending the elementary school who are receiving Tier 2 (RtI) services. Teachers will not be required to use the computers. If damage to the equipment occurs after the protection plan period expires, the technology department of the school district will attempt to repair but will not replace the equipment.

Methodology

Chapter two will include a literature review with a more detailed look at literacy, Response to Intervention, and the importance and benefits of integrating technology into literacy education. Chapter three will outline the project goals and objectives. In chapter four, a breakdown of the project methodology will be discussed. This will include an action plan, timeline, evaluation tools and plan, dissemination plans, and a budget. A cover letter will comprise the appendix.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter will discuss the Common Core State Standards and the national initiative to incorporate technology into education in order to prepare our students for success in a global world. The benefits of technology inclusion to classroom instruction will then be reviewed. A brief explanation of Response to Intervention (RtI) will follow. Benefits of technology as an additional instructional tool for use with struggling learners will be outlined. A focus on Richard Mann Elementary School's literacy program, our implementation of RtI, and the proposed benefits of inclusion of the Apple iPad 2 will conclude the chapter.

Common Core State Standards

Today's schools are charged with the responsibility to prepare our students for an ever-changing, global world. Education has become more rigorous, expecting more from students at younger ages. Objectives are being taught at deeper levels, expecting thorough understanding of each subject from students at every grade level. The Common Core State Standards (2011) have been developed to provide guidelines for school curriculums to address these objectives. New York State has adopted these standards.

We must prepare students for a life of learning in order to function in a changing society. According to Common Core State Standards Initiative (2011), each state is responsible for creating the next generation of kindergarten through 12th grade standards in order to help ensure that all students are college- and career-ready by the end of high school. These standards lay a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century, calling for students to be able to use technology and other digital media strategically and capably. Standards incorporating technology begin at the kindergarten level, requiring students to use a variety of digital tools. Students, throughout their education, will be asked to employ technology thoughtfully to

enhance areas of literacy and their use of language. Educational shifts to incorporate more non-fiction reading as well as text-based writing with citations of evidence will require knowledge of accessing these varied forms of text and information (New York State Education Department, 2011). This will require knowledge of technology and its uses as well as literacy in this form of text. These will be skills required of individuals in their college experiences as well as in their careers.

National Initiative for Technology Inclusion in Education

The nature of literacy is changing rapidly. The literacy of yesterday is not the literacy of today (Kennedy & Deshler, 2010). Today's literacy includes technology. According to the Office of Educational Technology, U. S. Department of Education (2010), technology is at the core of every aspect of our daily lives. We must provide technology to students through engaging, powerful, and meaningful learning experiences. The Office of Educational Technology stresses we must act now as we do not have the luxury of time. The need to prepare for a global world is paramount. We must prepare all students for citizenship, work, and life in our increasingly global world (Jones et al., 2011). This preparation needs to incorporate technology.

Teaching the technology skills needed today is important to our country's economic success (Regan, 2008). Regan further states that by teaching technology skills, we are giving children valuable skills to use now and in the future. When students master these skills, they become better students, more confident, thoughtful, and successful. This, in turn, helps prepare students to become more marketable citizens as they use these skills every day of their lives.

In a conversation with Karen Cator, Director of Office of Educational Technology, Scherer (2011) reports that it is a necessity to make sure a digital learning environment is fully

accessible to all students. This environment can augment teachers' capacities, adding to their effectiveness. Scherer adds that Cator emphasizes the need to add digital literacy to schools' curriculums. There are many ways to integrate technology into already existing programs; teachers should search for every opportunity to infuse technology into existing practices across all instructional planning and design (Kennedy & Deshler, 2010). Technology needs to be an integral part of instruction, not an afterthought.

Benefits of Technology Use in the Classroom

The use of technology in education is beneficial. The Northeast and Islands Regional Technology in Education Consortium (NEIRTC) (2004) reports initial studies of technology use in instruction, showing students were motivated to use and to explore technology during instruction; this enthusiasm for learning persisted even after computers were taken away. This is an encouraging finding. Since struggling readers benefit from motivational activities, technology is a valuable tool that could increase motivation and enthusiasm for learning.

Neuman (2001) reports a review of research findings that students who fail at reading lack self-confidence and motivation to learn. According to Ahmet, Bulent, & Cemalettin (2011), technology has the potential for improving teaching and learning. More effective teaching increases student motivation, enhancing student learning. Ahmet et al. (2011) report that most students feel their learning improves through the use of technology and love to learn by doing, discovering, and interacting. Technology can provide this interaction and discovery as well as motivation to learn.

Technology is not only motivating, but through its use, literacy learning is enhanced (Hansen, 2008). Students are able to interact with books that include visuals and sounds, creating deeper meaning. Hansen (2008) reports findings by Rochelle, Pea, Hoadley, Gordon,

and Means (2000) where scores in reading comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, and achievement increased after young children interacted with technology. Besides supporting literacy, Mouza (2005) adds that technology supports children's cognitive development in several ways including learning by doing and helping students visualize difficult concepts. Clements and Natasi (1993), as discussed by Mouza (2005) found that third graders who used both manipulatives and computer programs showed more sophistication in classification and logical thinking than children who used only manipulatives. These researchers also found that after computer use, students showed an increase in motivation and persistence in school work (Mouza, 2005). These findings are encouraging and stress the potential advantages of technology use in education.

Professionals in education are not the only individuals supporting inclusion of technology. Speaker (2004) found both undergraduate and graduate college students perceive computers as part of their lives. In Speaker's observations of elementary and middle school students, he found students feel a sense of authority over their learning in classrooms with computers. This feeling of authority could help increase the self-confidence struggling learners often lack. Jeffs, Behrmann, & Bannan-Ritland (2006) found parents also valued the addition of technology to school and were encouraged by seeing their children stay focused and excited about a reading or writing task incorporating computers. With this parental encouragement, an eagerness of parents to remain involved in their children's learning may follow, further increasing student potential for success.

Technology is an essential addition to instruction in response to the universal movement to multimedia. Anderson-Inman & Horney (2007) report that virtually all text material in schools today as well as in the future will be available in electronic form (p. 159). Jeffs et al.

(2006) claim over the past ten years, the presence of electronic text, talking storybooks, trade books, and internet-based textual materials available for literacy instruction has significantly increased. We must prepare our students for literacy in this form of text. Integrating technology into instruction will help prepare students for the future of text diversity.

Technology Use and Response to Intervention (RtI)

The RtI framework for instruction is a model for prevention of student failure in learning. According to Reeves, Bishop, & Filce (2010), RtI incorporates a system where student progress is monitored. Students who do not respond to effective classroom teaching (Tier 1 services) are given additional instruction (Tier 2 services); progress is monitored again. More intensive instruction (Tier 3 services) follows when student progress is still not sufficient. Through this process of remediation, students can receive the additional, differentiated instruction they need before they fall too far behind in their learning.

RtI is a proactive system promoting student success. Academic failure has a lifelong effect in closing doors to learning and opportunity (Edyburn, 2006, p. 20). The RtI framework prevents this failure and promotes success through differentiation. Active instructional planning should take academic diversity into consideration. With differentiated instruction, educators must break out of the “one-size-fits-all mindset” (Edyburn, 2007, p. 149). Regan (2008) emphasizes that today’s technology provides the ability for diverse learning styles of students to engage with ideas in ways not previously possible. Hoyer (2005) also contends that technology enhances learning by addressing all styles of student learning. Pictures, videos, diagrams, and graphic organizers offer support for visual learners. Audio playbacks, text-to-speech software, music, and sound effects aid the auditory learner. Kinesthetic and tactile learners benefit from the physical movement involved in the operation of computers as well as applications that

incorporate manipulation of icons, pictures, and representations. In addition, tablet computers, including the iPad 2, are small in size and allow for student physical movement during their use of the equipment, further incorporating kinesthetic learner needs. The needs of all learners addressed in the differentiation of instruction in RtI are incorporated through technology.

RtI addresses the needs of struggling learners. Since students who struggle to learn often lack motivation, technology can provide that motivation. There are many additional attributes of well-designed technological tools that can support and engage struggling learners, including feedback and immediate correction (Edyburn, 2009, p. 17). Feedback, according to Smith & Okolo (2010), is crucial to effective instruction, especially when it tells students what they did wrong and corrects the errors. Technology provides this feedback, is a motivating tool, and is often seen as an equalizer for struggling learners (Smith & Okolo, 2010).

Struggling learners also benefit from instruction through a variety of tools. Reeves et al. (2010) claim a reliance on basal readers for teaching skills and strategies is insufficient. It is necessary to add a variety of supplemental methods of instruction, especially for those students requiring Tier 2 and Tier 3 services. Edyburn (2009) states technology has application in all tiers of RtI. Technology can be considered more intensive instruction required through the tiers of RtI. According to Edyburn (2007), tiered digital learning materials offer ways to introduce flexible text in ways that encourage readers to manipulate the information so it fits their learning needs. Without a doubt, technology-enhanced instruction has its place in the RtI framework.

RtI at Richard Mann Elementary School

RMES believes in early intervention, targeting for additional instructional services students receiving low benchmark test scores. These students receive instruction through the RtI model of tiered, differentiated instruction. Our current methods of reading remediation are

varied. We feel this variety of tools and activities is beneficial for struggling readers. Using a wide range of interventions has a positive impact on learning (Crawley & Merritt, 2000; The National Institute for Literacy, 2010; The National Reading Panel, 2000). Our challenge is to increase confidence and motivation in our struggling readers. Castellani & Jeffs (2001), in their review of research findings, conclude that varied media assists in literacy development by providing activities that are intrinsically motivating. This media includes technology.

The Apple iPad 2

In order to address student needs, a variety of techniques and materials are required to improve results. Our school district lacks enough variety of materials. We feel a motivating, effective additional tool to aid in the teaching of literacy skills is the Apple iPad 2. Not only is this technology easy to use, it is extremely motivating for students who are normally unmotivated and frustrated. The iPad also teaches necessary computer skills. As the world turns to technology, computer skills will be a necessity along with literacy skills.

The Apple iPad 2 is an effective example of educational technology. We have chosen the iPad 2 for its versatility, abilities, and motivational attractions. Teachers who have used iPads with students have reported student enthusiasm and abilities for students to work collaboratively. The volume and vibrancy of available, innovative applications attract users (Foote, 2010; Waters, 2010). Quillen (2011) reports that Thomas Greaves, chairman of The Greaves Group, an educational consultant company, has found that the iPad surpassed every specification schools thought were important. Many of the iPad's features make this tool less intimidating, more accessible, and easier to use for young students. Rather than using a computer mouse, users place their fingertips on the screen and slide fingers in order to manipulate icons. The iPad 2 is lightweight, rigid, durable, and cordless. It has a 10 hour battery life and a fold back cover is

available for protection. These are only some of the invaluable attributes that make the iPad 2 convenient and useful in a school setting. According to Apple (2011), there are over 10,000 educational applications for the iPad, including 111 free teacher applications. Many student applications are free or very low cost; examples include eBooks, Word Games for Kids, Poetry Creator, Vocabolistic, Spelling Bug, Sight Words, Letter Quiz, DJ Preschool, Read & Write, and many more. The iPad 2 has a camera and video feature that has many educational uses, such as recording and playback of students reading orally. These features of the iPad 2 address the needs of differentiated instruction of struggling readers serviced through RtI.

Research supports instruction enhanced by technology. The iPad 2 would be a beneficial addition to our program, adaptable to all age levels. We feel it would be beneficial to purchase iPads for use with the students of the school district, but lack the funds to do so, given today's educational budget cuts. The purpose of this grant proposal is to gain the finances necessary for this addition of iPads. Our focus for these tools would be to supplement the teaching of literacy skills. The iPads would also introduce computer skills while supporting reading and writing. iPads will make a positive difference to our program, resulting in an increase in literacy test scores to a higher percentage of proficiency level or above. They will additionally encourage a pursuit of lifelong learning.

Chapter III: Project Goals and Objectives

The problem of inadequate literacy rates needs to be addressed. Our project aims to correct this problem for students attending RMES. This is our first step in affecting overall literacy rates for the United States. Since reading is a component of literacy, our immediate objectives focus on this area. Reading skills will lay a foundation for our students' effective communications. An increase in the percentage of students scoring at or above proficiency levels on literacy tests will demonstrate an increase in overall literacy rates of students attending RMES, affecting the state of New York's literacy rates, in turn, affecting literacy rates of the United States. Percentages we are striving for are aimed at achievements set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act. The project objectives target components of literacy. Our project will address the problem of unacceptable literacy rates.

Overall Project Goal: Increase Literacy Rates For Students In Grades K-5 Attending Richard Mann Elementary School.

Objective 1: By spring 2014, 90% of students in grades 3-5 attending RMES will score at or above proficiency levels on New York State ELA tests. After training on the Apple iPad 2, reading teachers and teacher assistants will incorporate use of this technology into Tier 2 instruction to eligible students. All other aspects of Tier 2 services will remain consistent with previous procedures. The New York State ELA tests are administered annually to students in grades 3-8. Components of these tests include reading, writing, and listening. This summative evaluation will measure the effectiveness of using the iPad 2 as a Tier 2 instructional intervention tool.

Objective 2: By Spring 2014, 90% of students in kindergarten will score average or above for letter naming fluency and letter sound fluency on AIMSweb Benchmark tests.

After inclusion of the Apple iPad 2, students receiving Tier 2 instruction will be assessed every three weeks using AIMSweb Progress Monitoring probes for specific skills being addressed. These probes will allow periodic checks for progress and will guide further instruction. Full AIMSweb Benchmark assessments in all skill areas will be administered to all students three times per year, allowing for progress checks on all students. Letter naming fluency and letter sound fluency are early literacy components of AIMSweb testing for students in kindergarten.

Objective 3: By spring 2014, 90% of students in kindergarten and grade 1 will score average or above for phonemic segmentation fluency on AIMSweb Benchmark tests.

Phonemic segmentation is another important early literacy skill assessed by AIMSweb tests for students in kindergarten and first grade. Benchmark assessments administered three times per year to all students will determine progress and target students for Tier 2 services. AIMSweb Progress Monitoring tests will be administered every three weeks to those students receiving Tier 2 instruction.

Objective 4: By spring 2014, 90% of students in kindergarten and grade 1 will score average or above for nonsense word fluency on AIMSweb Benchmark tests. The nonsense word fluency test assesses the student's ability to decode and read unfamiliar words. This benchmark test is given three times per year to students in first grade and beginning in May for kindergartners. AIMSweb Progress Monitoring assessments will be administered to first graders every three weeks.

Objective 5: By spring 2014, 90% students in grades 1 and 2 will score average or above for oral reading fluency on AIMSweb Benchmark tests. Oral reading fluency assessments measure the student's ability to read aloud an unfamiliar passage. AIMSweb Benchmark tests are administered to students in first grade beginning in January and again in May. Students in second grade are administered this benchmark three times per year. AIMSweb Progress Monitoring tests will be administered every three weeks to first and second grade students receiving Tier 2 services.

Chapter IV: Project Methodology

The purpose of this project is to increase literacy rates. In order to improve literacy scores of students through this endeavor, pupils will be targeted for Tier 2 services in the Response to Intervention (RtI) model for reading. Students receiving support will be determined by scores from the AIMSweb Benchmark tests for their particular grade level. AIMSweb is a research-based assessment system adopted by the GCSD. New York State ELA exams will also be considered for students in grades three through five. Students scoring below benchmark level in any tested skill will receive Tier 2, pull-out instructional support in small groups for 30 minutes daily. Since research has shown benefits of technology incorporation into instruction, the Apple iPad 2 will be integrated into our Tier 2 educational supports. These services are provided by a teacher or teacher assistant from the Reading Department.

The remainder of this chapter will include an action plan timeline. This will be followed by an evaluation plan as well as the tools to be used for evaluation. A plan for dissemination of project information and a budget will also be included in this chapter. Primary responsibility for this project will be shared with the Project Leader and the Lead Reading Teacher.

Project Timeline

| Month | Activities |
|----------------|--|
| Summer 2012 | Purchase seven iPads |
| September 2012 | Install free literacy applications on all iPads |
| September 2012 | Devise sign-out system for teachers/teacher assistants to borrow iPads |

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| October 2012-May 2014 | Conduct AIMSweb Benchmark testing three times per year—fall, winter, spring |
| | Interpret data and identify students needing Tier 2 reading intervention |
| | Form grade- and skill-level small groups |
| October 2012; Ongoing | Provide daily small-group reading interventions for 30 minutes using iPad 2 at least 3 times per week |
| Every three weeks; Ongoing | Administer AIMSweb Progress Monitoring subtests to determine effectiveness of methods/Alter if necessary |
| Ongoing | Monitor Apple.com, iPad 2 for any new, available, appropriate applications; install and train participants |
| April 2013; April 2014 | Administer New York State ELA exams for students in grades 3-5 |
| May 2013; May 2014 | Examine end-of-year test data to determine percentage of students scoring average or above |

Evaluation Plan and Tools

In order to document successful achievement of our overall goal and specific objectives, we have designed a schedule of measurements to evaluate the progress of our project. Both formative and summative evaluations will be conducted. The formative assessments will determine whether or not our methods need to be modified to ensure final success. If progress is not sufficient, alternate procedures will be considered, such as an increase in session time or

reduction of number of students in a group, dependent on individual student need. Our summative evaluation will determine whether our end goal was met.

Formative evaluations will be conducted every three weeks. The GCSD has adopted the AIMSweb system of curriculum-based measurements in order to determine benchmark scores for every student in kindergarten through grade 8. Curriculum-based measures are based on 30 years of scientific research (AIMSweb, 2010). The AIMSweb reading measurements are composed of oral reading fluency (Reading Curriculum-Based Measure), reading comprehension (Maze Curriculum-Based Measure), and tests of early literacy (TEL-Curriculum-Based Measure). The components of the TEL-Curriculum-Based Measure (CBM) are letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, nonsense word fluency, and phoneme segmentation. All of these subtests also have a progress monitoring component. This progress monitoring will serve as our formative assessments, administered to each student project participant every three weeks. The benchmark assessments will be administered to all students every fall (October), winter (February), and spring (May). These benchmark scores will determine whether any new students may be identified for addition to our project, students who may have met proficiency scores previously but are now having difficulty, and students who have achieved proficiency; therefore, Tier 2 services can be reduced or eliminated. AIMSweb was chosen for our evaluative tool as assessment scores correlate to state reading test scores (AIMSweb, 2010).

Our summative evaluation for students in grades 3 through 5 will include the New York State English Language Arts (ELA) test. This exam is administered annually in April. This is the measurement tool the state uses in reporting literacy scores to the United States Department of Education. The test allows for testing accommodations for English language learners and students with disabilities. The University of the State of New York Regents (2011) reports this

test as being composed of three parts that are administered over a three day period. These three components include: (1) listening, students listen to a passage, take notes, and answer questions; (2) reading, students read passages and answer multiple choice questions; and (3) writing, students write answers to four short response questions and one extended response question. For grades in which no state test is administered, namely kindergarten through grade 2, the AIMSweb spring benchmark scores will be used as the sole summative evaluation.

Data collected from all assessments will be compared to previously collected test data. Increases in the number of students scoring at or above proficiency levels on specific subtests will indicate success of the project goal. Based on test results, consideration for project improvements and modifications will be made if necessary. Possible expansion of project will be considered contingent on extent of project success.

Dissemination Plan

School accomplishment of increasing literacy scores is a newsworthy topic. Increases in literacy test scores for our elementary school students will affect literacy data for the school district, the state, and the nation. More importantly, this achievement will affect future life successes for these students. It is essential that the school staff and the community are aware of the success of this project. They will want to hear that literacy scores of our elementary students are increasing as a result of adding the Apple iPad 2 to our intervention programs. The iPad 2 is versatile and has numerous free educational applications available. There are applications intended for every age level and every content area. After demonstrating how the iPad 2 can help increase reading scores and be applied to additional content areas, teachers will see its benefits and will be inspired to incorporate them in all subjects. Parents can purchase their own iPad 2 and use them at home with their children as well as for personal use. The whole

community can impact an increase in literacy scores for all of its members, not just those attending RMES. As a result, literacy scores for the entire community will continue to rise, affecting the lives and futures of all community members.

At the beginning of the project, the principal will inform parents of RMES students of this project through her Principal's Newsletter. The Principal's Newsletter is a monthly paper sent home to parents of RMES students, containing newsworthy information of school activities. This will excite parents of this new approach and will allow for anticipation of results. Upon completion of the project, the Principal's Newsletter will inform parents of the results of the project as well as inform them of the school board meeting where an iPad 2 demonstration will take place.

The school district's website is accessed easily by all community members. At the end of the project, our school district's public relations expert, the website designer, will include an article with a brief explanation of the project as well as the project results and publication of the date of the future school board meeting which will include the iPad 2 demonstration. The public relations expert will also prepare a news release reporting project procedures and results. This news release will be sent to area newspapers and television stations as well as to the New York State Education Department in Albany, New York.

There will be a faculty meeting for all staff members of the RMES during the beginning stages of this project in order to present the upcoming project plans. A district-wide faculty meeting will be held at the completion of the project for all district teaching staff, explaining the project and the results. A demonstration of the iPad 2 and its educational uses in all content areas will also be given by the Project Leader. An overview of the logistics of incorporating the iPad 2 into any content area will be explained by the Lead Reading Teacher.

The culminating dissemination will be a demonstration at a monthly school board meeting in the fall of 2014. The community will be made aware of this meeting through the school district's website as well as the Principal's Newsletters. At this meeting, the Project Leader will present a brief explanation of the project and its results. The Lead Reading Teacher will demonstrate educational uses of the iPad 2 including home activities for children as well as adults.

Budget Narrative

This proposal requests a Dollar General Literacy Foundation investment of \$3,759. The GCSD will provide in-kind contributions of the costs associated with the implementation of the technology and downloading applications. Related expenses of staff training, supplies needed for evaluations and newsletters, and all dissemination procedures will also be covered by the school district.

This budget includes the request of seven 16 GB Apple iPad 2s. Each teacher utilizing the iPad 2 with small groups of students will have easy access to the technology through a check-out system. Seven iPad 2s will allow each of seven teachers to use this technology daily with groups of project participating students. Apple offers education pricing for school districts purchasing iPads for educational use. Under this pricing plan, each iPad 2 costs \$399. Apple also offers a protection plan, AppleCare +, covering two years of technical support, software support, and incidents of accidental damage to hardware at a cost of \$99 per iPad. Purchasing this plan for each iPad 2 will ensure knowledgeable technical support as the staff project participants become accustomed to the new technology, as well as replace any possible damages to the hardware. As a precaution, protective covers for each piece of equipment will be purchased to safeguard the iPad 2s from the wear and tear of use, maintaining quality condition.

The cost of these iPad Smart Covers is \$39 each. The Apple Store offers free shipping and free engraving of the iPad 2.

Table 1

Budget

| Description | Cost | Amount | Total |
|------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Apple iPad 2 | \$399 | 7 | \$2793 |
| AppleCare + | \$99 | 7 | \$693 |
| iPad Smart Cover | \$39 | 7 | \$273 |
| Total Cost | | | \$3759 |

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Appendix A: Cover Letter

May 2, 2012

Ms. Melissa Buffington
Co-Chairperson
Dollar General Literacy Foundation
100 Mission Ridge
Goodlettsville, TN 37072

RE: Letter of Intent
Youth Literacy and Technology
Richard Mann Elementary School
Gananda Central School District

Dear Ms. Buffington:

My name is Susan Pickett and I am a reading teacher assistant at Richard Mann Elementary School in the Gananda Central School District in Walworth, New York. This letter is to inform you of my intent on behalf of this school district to submit a formal proposal in response to your mission to improve literacy in children across the United States.

Since our school district opened its doors in 1974, we have been committed to excellence in education, guiding our students to develop knowledge, character, and unique abilities that will serve the foundation for life-long success. We strive to prepare our students for the 21st century. Our elementary school administration and reading teachers will collaborate in this project proposed to teach literacy to our struggling readers using motivating technology. You will receive the required proposal with convincing research detailing the need to improve literacy as well as the benefits of enhancing instruction with technology. In the meantime, feel free to contact me for further information.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Pickett
Teacher Assistant
Richard Mann Elementary School
Gananda Central School District
1366 Waterford Road
Walworth, NY 14568