**Assessment 2- Technology Use Proposal: Digital Resources and Online Educational Platforms- Improving Third Grade English Language Arts Proficiency Rates**

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**Rationale**

Working in the education field in urban districts for over 13 years, I recognize the diversity of learning styles amongst students. As a leader, my vision is to see students venture forth in life after school with real wisdom and individual purpose for making a positive difference in the world ahead. I also believe that providing a variety of strategies, methods, and models makes learning accessible and exciting for all learning levels. In order to make this vision possible, the quality of education must be improved. This technology use proposal is to improve the quality of third-grade instruction utilizing data grounded on our school’s needs assessments by utilizing digital resources, online educational platforms, and targeted standard/skills-based instruction to drive student achievement.

The Paterson Arts and Science Charter School’s (K-3 Elementary Campus) 2019-2020 needs assessment has demonstrated demand in redefining test-taking strategies and analyzing academic data to increase standardized test scores. One of the best ways to advance a school’s profile is to improve student achievement. The proposal is to improve student achievement through instant formative, and summative assessments on digital platforms (Accelerated Reader, STAR Reader, and Edulastic) with immediate feedback, collaborative and student-led instruction, standard/skill-based centers, and rigorous morning and afterschool tutorials targeting standards from scores on the digital platform assessments. By conducting a needs assessment, evaluating data, and providing standard-based instruction, the action steps, methodology, and strategies required to improve English Language Arts instruction will be understood, which in return, will increase standardized test scores. Thus, analyzing the academic data from the digital standard-based learning platforms and utilizing it will better provide the proper development and implementation plan to increase third grade English Language Arts proficiency rates on standardized tests.

**Background and Research**

Standardized test scores are significant in today's education. They partake in government funding to schools, teacher evaluation, and academic placements of students. While true intelligence and natural ability may limit how well some students perform on standardized tests, strategies, and materials educators utilize indeed help students reach their full potential (Jones & Mueller, 2017). Research confirms that there are two critical methods in raising test scores on standardized tests: building cognitive flexibility with metacognitive strategies and teaching the curriculum, not to the test (Linn, 2000). If students do not have problem-solving strategies for learning content, then learning the content may be impossible. Also, teaching "to the test" actually lowers test scores. Studies show that teaching to the test promotes narrow, rigid thinking (Linn, 2000). Instead, students achieve better results when instruction is focused on the content represented on the test.

Student motivation also plays an essential factor in standardized test scores. The motivational construct with academics, which includes perceptions of belonging and valuing within an academic context, with intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy aids in increased test scores (Popham, 1999). In this effort, it is standards-aligned, engaging, and rigorous instruction and regular practice tests and benchmarks that help students and teachers tackle achievement gaps, develop and practice test-taking strategies, and manage test anxiety/stress (Walker et al. (2006). Therefore, teachers must be intentional when encouraging and motivating students before and after testing. Creating action plans also aid in developing test-taking strategies and focusing on standard-based questioning. The action plans will focus on achievement gaps that will be addressed by implementing literacy approaches learned through professional developments and utilizing STAR, Accelerated Reader, and Edulastic. Nunnery et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of utilizing digital standard-based reading and comprehension platforms across grade levels. Students who utilize School Renaissance programs such as STAR and Accelerated Reader exhibit significantly higher academic growth. Thus, by analyzing data based on the needs assessment from test scores, specific standard-based educational platforms will be utilized to aid in increasing third-grade test scores. The rigorous morning and after-school tutorials will also utilize this digital platform where students will focus on specific differentiated standards-based questions centered on student needs.

**Policy Consideration**

Professional development is an annual requirement in New Jersey, where all educators must complete a minimum of 20 hours of learning each year (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). As a public charter, Paterson Arts and Science Charter School follows New Jersey’s mandate, requiring teachers to attend training sessions selected by school administrators. In recent years with the adoption of the 1:1 Chromebook device program, most of the district’s professional development has focused on technology in the classroom. An effective technology-based professional development supports teachers’ technology integration. The professional development should be content-specific and focus on digital platforms that will be utilized for the fiscal school year (Yurtseven et al., 2020). Most professional development within the district have been formal workshops from trainers or companies. Harris et al. (2009) concluded that these sessions were not as valuable as discussing how technology can help achieve specific learning outcomes and integrate technology with different teaching strategies (p. 395). However, pedagogy-based professional development would be ineffective if the staff does not understand how to “access, operate, and innovate with ever-changing digital tools” (Curwood, 2013, p. 92). Without the background knowledge of different technology tools, a discussion of application strategies cannot occur. Thus, all educators should be properly trained on the digital platforms that will be utilized to aid in increasing student reading, comprehension, and test scores.

**Description and Current State of Field**

Creating action plans based on the digital educational platforms aid in developing test-taking strategies and focusing on standard-based questioning. The third-grade teachers will create action plans for their students utilizing data from the first NJSLA English Language Arts practice test. The action plans will be integrated into specific lessons utilizing digital resources and online educational platforms, centering specific skills/standards. The basic skills instructor will push into the third-grade English Language Arts classrooms once a week to support the struggling students with specific English Language Arts standards. The special education and ESL teacher will pull their students once a day and provide targeted support based on their students’ needs. The English Language Arts coach will also support the third-grade ELA teachers by providing best teaching standard-based practices for digital learning. As the academic leader, I will assist my teachers and students by providing mini-lessons, lesson planning suggestions, and standard-based questioning from Accelerated Reader during morning tutorials for struggling learners (Intervention Focus, Table 1). This specific standards-based one-on-one and small group instruction will be provided through the purchased educational online platforms aiding our struggling students by assisting with specific standards and providing challenging material for our enhanced learners.

Additionally, our achievement gaps will be addressed by implementing literacy approaches learned through professional developments and utilizing STAR and Accelerated Reader. Basic skills instructors for English Language Arts will also support learning development and skill mastery. Lastly, educational programs on technologies such as Edulastic and daily tutorials will display progression and growth in students’ weekly skills check scores (Intervention Plan, Table 2). The data that is collected will be utilized for the 2021-2022 needs assessment in preparation for student success.

**Visual Models of Assessment Plan**

Table 1

Intervention Focus

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assessment** | **Focus Areas** | **Indicators of Effectiveness** |
|
| Proficiency in ELA | School-wide literacy approach through the implementation of digital educational platforms STAR Reader and Accelerated Reader. |
| Utilizing Edulastic for standard-based practices to track growth and progression. |
| Morning and afterschool standard/skill-based tutorials, direct, one-on-one, and small group centers/stations. |
| Budget Needed | Utilizing basic skills instructors for ELA, which supports skill development and online educational platforms for skills mastery. |
| The incorporation of technology (additional Chromebooks and/or iPads) and educational programs to provide support/academic support for students and staff. |

Table 2

Intervention Plan

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Plan** | **Addressing Gaps** | **Resources** |
| * Response to early intervention programs * Formative/summative practice assessments utilizing educational programs on technologies * Professional developments * Morning and afterschool tutorials provide additional support with one-on-one and/or small group instruction for struggling learners | * K-3 ELA coach * ELA basic skills instructor * Educational programs on technologies * Targeted professional development (e.g., data analysis, implementation of digital intervention programs/platforms) |

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