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2021-2022 Kindergarten Teacher- Cascade Elementary School

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Reading A-Z

Cascade Elementary School is semi-rural and services many low-income families in the area, including several migrant English Language learning students. With last year being my first year of teaching in Washington, and first year teaching kindergarten, I was surprised at the lacking curriculum. I was not surprised with the lack of previous pre-schooling, due to COVID, but with my twenty years of experience in education, I knew I had to provide more (than what we had for 2020-2021) for my team and my students for this past year. I wrote this grant for that purpose.

Wearing a mask really hindered my students in so many ways, but mostly in hearing and seeing how sounds are produced and being able to sound out words to form sentences. The program I felt was necessary to aide in our grade level’s issue, was Reading A-Z…which, when I last used it at the beginning of my career, had completely changed into tons of avenues from Reading to Writing to Science to Head Sprout (technology portion), etc.

With the Ellison Foundation’s grant, we were able to purchase four licenses for all four of our Kindergarten teachers. We printed off books to use for Guided Reading. These books can be further used in years to come. The ‘books’ we had access to were sight word books (high frequency words) that we could print, as well as access online through the Head Sprout portion of the program. Students could click on books and touch each word to have it read to them, as they read aloud and followed along. Head Sprout was another huge portion of the program that was most useful! It helped students form letters (in writing), provided decodables, and assisted in Phonemic Awareness. Most importantly, our students felt like they were having fun, which in turn was most valuable because they loved learning and they learned so much!

We were also able to use the Science portion of Reading A-Z to access short reads and have an addition to our weather curriculum. It helped students practice tracking with the provided decodable books as well, which was very relatable to our curriculum and served a great purpose.

I would say this program had an extreme effect on our classes, especially my group of students (since this was ‘my baby’)! Out of my class of twenty-two students, seventeen of them scored at or above benchmark on the DIBELS test in letter naming and recognition. The ones who did not score at or above were special education students, and/or EL and worked so hard all year to achieve what they did at grade level.

I believe this program assisted in so many positive ways and I would use it again if I had the funds. Many things we received from it, we were able to keep and will access to it for the coming years. As a team, the kindergarten teachers from Cascade Elementary School, and the families of our students this year, give their amazing appreciation and gratitude to the Ellison Foundation for providing a phenomenal resource in a desperate time of need in education and to our newest learners. Thank you so very much!