

PowerUP Jax Fall 2016 Grant Winner

9. Heidi Ecklor

John Stockton Elementary School

Subject/Grade: I teach students with special needs in grades KG through 5th grade, because I'm the only ESE teacher at my school.

Project Title: IMPOSSIBLE becomes I'M POSSIBLE in Innovative Inclusive Classrooms Implementing iPads

Summary of Project:

Imagine 18 precious students with special needs learning in inclusive classrooms in grades K through 5. One is a 2nd grade girl with Down Syndrome who's functioning at a KG level. Seven others are fourth graders who need a great deal of support. Four students struggle with severe anxiety and don't like school, any school, which is heartbreaking for me. I'm determined to find a solution and help them overcome their anxiety, engage in learning, and enjoy school! I'm the only special education teacher at our school, making it challenging to meet all of my students' needs. We're not a Title 1 school and don't get extra funding. I would use the PowerUP Jax grant to purchase two iPads, because students LOVE them, but our school doesn't have any. Yet, the FREE highly engaging and effective supplemental apps for our school's i-Ready Reading ("World's Worst Pet" for vocabulary development) and Math ("Door 24") programs that align with Common Core State Standards, only work on Apple products. Access to these highly engaging, free apps would help my students develop skills, close their gaps in learning, and also relax and have fun learning; to enjoy school again. Several years ago, I was the first teacher at Stockton to acquire iPod Touches to use as an effective learning tool. If I win a PowerUP Jax grant, I'll also be the first to acquire iPads for education here too! Thus, enabling my students with special needs to access these two research based apps, while opening the door to many other exciting learning apps available only for Apple!

How many students will be directly involved? Explain any further impact on other students, teachers, the school as a whole, and/or the community.

I currently have 18 students on my caseload, however I provide ESE services through a full inclusion model in my students' general education classrooms. While providing services to students who are identified with exceptional needs, I often work with non-disabled students as well who may need additional support. Therefore my project will likely impact more than just my students. Also, I will continue this project for as long as my iPads last, so it could be several years and hundreds of students. My goal is to put two iPads in each general education Inclusion class for teachers and students to use and continue benefiting from even when I'm not there. Sources that I intend to pursue are: Friends of Stockton, DonorsChoose.org, other grants, and other sources I haven't yet discovered. I'm confident that I will accomplish this goal due to my prior success in acquiring grants and donations. As Good News Ambassador, I'll be sure to share photos and our success story with DCPS and the local newspaper "The Resident". I'm also a member of the Council for Exceptional Children and will notify our local chapter. In these ways, I'll spread news of the innovative work that PowerUP Jax grants are doing in the community!

How will the project specifically increase student learning? Be sure to explain the project's connections to existing learning standards. Be clear about what new skills, knowledge, and/or dispositions the students will acquire.

The beautiful aspect of my project is that I will have the pleasure of witnessing an immediate impact on student engagement and learning. I'm positive that my students will be THRILLED to use the iPads, because we currently don't have any at our school. My project is connected to existing learning standards through i-Ready; an award-winning, blended learning online program that's used by students in all grade levels at Stockton. A research based program published by Curriculum Associates and aligned to the Common Core State Standards, "Door 24" provides targeted practice in the use of basic facts, number sense and algebraic thinking as they help solve the mystery behind "Door 24". Stockton students use i-Ready to gain skills and increase student achievement in both reading and math. In the upper grades, it's used as a Tier 2 intervention. So, students with special needs often use i-Ready to provide remediation at the level they are functioning. "World's Worst Pet" introduces students to Tier Two and domain-specific vocabulary words. They play games and answer questions that require them to use the words in context, identify synonyms and antonyms, and use the words to complete sentences. Most importantly, students will have fun learning while experience feelings of academic success; causing their stress, anxiety, and dislike of school to fade away.

What is your plan for evaluating the success of your project? What artifacts (photographs, samples of student work, testimonials, etc...) would you use to demonstrate the effectiveness of the project?

To successfully evaluate the success of my project, I will compare individual i-Ready Reading and Math student data from the beginning of the year Diagnostic to achievement data gained from January (mid year) Diagnostics and May (end of year) Diagnostics. I'll record the implementation dates that students begin using the new apps on the iPads and analyze progress monitoring data. I should see some growth in January, and the most significant growth in May. I will also use students' IEP goal progress reports and teacher recorded data to analyze effectiveness throughout the year. Further, I

frequently take photographs of my students being successful in their general education classrooms. Just this week, my second grade student with Down Syndrome was doing an excellent job measuring accurately with a centimeter cube, so I photographed that and sent it to her mother via text messaging. The next day I arrived to her class and saw her accurately measuring her partner's foot with a centimeter stick and comparing the lengths of their feet in centimeters. Another photo op! In the same way, I'll be photographing my students using the iPads to increase student learning. I'm also my school's Good News Ambassador, so I share exciting events that happen at our school with both DCPS and our local newspaper The Resident. Since, I'll be sharing along the way with the families of my students, I'm sure there will be some powerful testimonials in the making.