

Client: LEARNING FUN

Project: STEMDOODLE Program at Washington Elementary

Objectives: Improve student attendance
Increase student achievement

CUSTOMER

Washington Elementary School; Summit County School District

CHALLENGES

Improve student attendance

Increase student achievement, especially for hard to reach populations



SOLUTION

STEMDOODLE: Hands-on STEM program integrated with literacy and art

RESULTS

Increase in student attendance of 22%

Decrease in staff attendance absences by 32%

Increase in student academic growth of 5-17%, as measured by standardized tests.

How Did a STEM Program Turn a School into a Place Where Kids (and Their Teachers) Want to Be?

Reaching every student is a challenge for schools. Learning Fun, creators of STEMDOODLE, delivered an incredible solution to the students and staff at Washington Elementary School.

Poor attendance was a serious concern for Washington Elementary School

Shayla, a 4th grader at Washington Elementary, had been absent from school for 4 days in a row and it was only the first month of school. She hated going. Reading was torture for her, math not much easier. She felt stupid when the teacher called on her in class, always using her standard fall back answer, "I don't know." She knew the other kids laughed at her and made fun of her behind her back.

But that day was different, and she left her apartment in time to get to class only a few minutes after the tardy bell. Her teacher had promised her a surprise, so Shayla reluctantly agreed to come to find out what it was.

Shayla wasn't alone in her attitude towards school. So many children at this inner-city school struggled to survive each day, focusing more on making it through each day than what teachers wanted them to do. Learning did not come easily for them, they lacked support at home and were likely to drop out as soon as they could.

The young teacher, Channing Higgins, had started the school year full of eager anticipation. Beginning her third year as an elementary teacher, she was determined to find a way to conquer the apathy and despair that held so many children back and prevented them from succeeding in school.

Channing knew that there were enthusiastic learners in every classroom who did well in spite of their circumstances, some who struggled and received extra support through special education, and many who managed to keep up and make adequate progress. But sadly, there were always a few like Shayla in every class who just seemed to fall through the cracks. They were reluctant learners who made slow progress despite the best efforts of dedicated teachers.

The search for solutions

Miss Higgins and several of her colleagues had attended a presentation on STEMDOODLE recently at a teachers' conference and convinced their principal to invest some funds to purchase it for the school.

STEMDOODLE is a program that integrates science, technology, engineering, and math with reading, writing, and art. "I just knew that if we could engage the students' imagination and provide activities that interested them, we could help them learn!" Higgins said. Principal Alice Pritchard, impressed with the idea, had agreed to try it for one year. If the data showed positive results, she would recommend the program to the other elementary schools in the district.

STEMDOODLE successfully captured students' attention at Washington Elementary

After preparing the materials and studying the lesson plans, Channing was ready to try it out with her class. Teachers of low performing students know that many students who struggle with basic academic skills often excel in art and hands on activities, and she believed this program would hook Shayla and other reluctant learners.

Miss Higgins knew if she could capture Shayla 's interest by giving her opportunities to experience success through creative investigation, she could reach her by targeting her interests and keep her coming to school. Using science and art to teach students the skills they needed to be successful in reading and writing was not a new concept, but this program put it all together in one comprehensive package.

Positive results supported by student achievement data

Shayla has not missed a day since she first became immersed in STEMDOODLE. She works productively in small groups and participates in class discussions. Her reading scores have improved, and she loves to write about her experiences and illustrate her projects.

What is it that is so engaging about STEMDOODLE that has not only involved Shayla in learning but has made a significant difference in the overall test scores at Washington Elementary? Creators of the program used research from low to high performing schools across the country to tap into activities that motivated slow-learning students. They developed the program based on what inspired children rather than what adults thought children should be doing in school.

Results show significant improvement in attendance

Principal Alice Pritchard reported a significant improvement in attendance, not only for students but teachers as well. Student attendance increased from 73% to an astonishing 95%, and teacher absences declined by 32%. It turns out that teachers are as enthusiastic about teaching the program as the students are in participating. “The teachers are having fun and getting immersed in the activities themselves. They have even started competitions during their PLC meetings to measure whose class shows the most growth each week!”

Exceeded expectations

Delighted with the significant academic growth demonstrated by Washington Elementary students, the Summit County School District plans to roll out the program in all 33 of its elementary schools next fall.

STEMDOODLE is a program developed and launched by Learning Fun. Modules include 6 key components: Anchor lessons based on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) concepts, scientific process, drawing, building, writing, and marketing. Learning Fun provides ongoing training for all teachers and administrators involved in implementing the program. **For information on how your school or organization can increase attendance, academic growth, and excite your students, go to www.learningfun.com.**