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Port Chester's Neediest Students Benefit from Collaborative Partnership

Struggling with homework and keeping up in class is a problem that children of non-English speaking immigrants are faced with on a daily basis.

In Port Chester, a community with one of the highest concentrations of non-English speaking immigrants, the challenge has been diminished thanks to a successful after school program in the Port Chester School District that incorporates SuccessMaker.

SuccessMaker is a reading and math intervention program that is made possible through the collaborative efforts of the District, the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center, and The Carver Center.



*Students in the Carver Center After School
Program use SuccessMaker*

The adaptive K-8 digital initiative has been a mainstay in classrooms throughout the Port Chester School District for some time; however, since 2013 the initiative has been offered to participating students as part of The Carver Center's After School Program.

The Carver Center is authorized to use the [SuccessMaker](#) licenses that the district has purchased from its developer, Pearson Education.

The intent of the program is to extend the conventional 6.5-hour day by about three hours to allow students additional learning time and various other opportunities, while matching the working hours of local parents.

For the duration of the school year, the initiative serves children in grades K-8, attending the John F. Kennedy Early Learning Center, the JFK Magnet Elementary School, Thomas A. Edison Elementary School and Port Chester Middle School.

Crucial learning after school

Because today's learning standards and testing requirements often don't allow teachers the luxury of providing their students with all of the instruction needed in a regular school day, the After School Program has been a win-win for everyone involved.

Each of the students enrolled in the program participate in at least one 45-minute SuccessMaker session per week, with the goal of increasing reading, language and vocabulary development.

Dr. Madalyn Romano, Manager of Customer Relations for RIC One services and formerly coordinator of Instructional Technology, said, that implementing SuccessMaker as an instructional tool during the school day, has helped to seamlessly transition it to the after school initiative.

She explained that, "The students who are continuing to use SuccessMaker in the Carver Center program are getting more time on task, but more importantly, the research is telling us that the strategy has led to greater academic growth and gains."

Significant Gains Made

While results for reading and math proficiency vary from grade to grade, Raheela Baig, Senior Facilitator for [Instructional Technology](#) at the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center, compiled data during the 2014-15 school year suggesting that students who attended the Carver Center program during that time period displayed twice the gains in math and English Language Arts over those using SuccessMaker during the school day.

Ms. Baig has been instrumental in providing on-the-ground support to teachers in the District and to the Carver Center.

Ariana Aguilar, the Carver Center's Chief Development Officer, said the After School Program caters to the "whole child," referring to the four curricular areas that it concentrates on. These areas include: academic support, enrichment, socio-development, and health and wellness.

Mayra, a fifth-grader, said the After School Program has helped her improve in both math and ELA. "I like that we get rewarded when we get 100 percent after doing two levels," she added. "The reward is a little time on Cool Math," she noted, referring to the website, coolmath4kids.

The site offers fun and engaging math games and is a resource that teachers give students access to if they've successfully completed their SuccessMaker assignments.

Tara, a single parent to third-grade student Taryn, is thrilled that her daughter is receiving regular homework help and that what she learns in the After School Program also helps her complete her assignments.

"It's not test-like at all," said Tara. "It's fun and it keeps her interested, and it's like a game. Since it's electronic, it's what the kids are used to anyway."

Data Key to Program's Success

Aguilar said the instruction that students are getting from SuccessMaker has been particularly invaluable to their success in school as well as in other aspects of their lives. She states that their success could not have been accurately measured, if not for the "valuable analysis" and analytical data that the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center has provided.

"The professional development that the RIC has given our teaching staff in terms of how to understand not just the implementation of the SuccessMaker program but also the assessment data that the reports have generated has been key to driving the instructional model that we know will benefit our kids," said Assistant Superintendent Joe Durney.

Having such an initiative is "critically important" to the district's success, he added. "The support we are getting speaks to the value of the partnership."