



Boulder Valley teachers “come home” with students via iPod

Christina Onpeng | March 7, 2011 | [0 Comments](#)



4



 You like this. [Unlike](#) · [Admin Page](#) · [Insights](#) · [Error](#)

Sixty kindergarteners in Boulder Valley schools are not only getting a dose of literacy at school – but at home, too, thanks to an innovative program that uses iPods to record individualized lessons.



Teachers record specialized lessons for each participating student as part of “Take My Teacher Home” now offered at eight Boulder Valley elementary schools. So far, the program is showing promise in helping struggling readers get up to grade level.

“We like to liken it to a lunch box,” said Jennifer Korb, Boulder Valley’s instructional technology specialist. “As parents and teachers, we would never want to send our kids off with a lunch box full of junky food. So the teachers spend a lot of time ensuring they are creating the highest quality lessons that we can so that when the teachers send home the iPod

Shuffle it has the very best instruction on it that we can give them.”

iPods become learning tools

Under the grant funded program, students take home iPods or iPod Shuffles to listen to the lessons in the comfort of their own homes. The recordings contain learning modules that are each just 3 minutes long. They include what Korb calls the five components of great literacy: vocabulary, letter names and sounds, letter formation, music and rhyming, phoneme segmentation, and families. The teacher also sends home packets that reflect classroom instruction for the children to work on.

“Essentially, the program is to extend the learning day for struggling readers,” Korb said. “It could be any reader in the class. Some of the kids are English as Second Language students. Some just come to kindergarten with a variety of little literacy pieces missing.”

The Take My Teacher Home program is tailored to kindergarteners. However, because the program has been so successful, BVSD has created several spin-off projects, including the Secondary Science Podcasting Program and two pilot first grade reading programs. The district has also collaborated with several other school districts interested in bringing a similar program to their districts, including Aurora, Cherry Creek, Mesa County, Weld County, and a few private schools.

The program in Boulder started four years ago based on a similar initiative in Eugene, Ore. Impact on Education, a nonprofit organization that supports Boulder Valley schools, is the major funder of the project. There is about a \$5,000 cost for each classroom.

2011 program stats

- ▷ 64 participants
- ▷ 32 students are eligible for free and reduced lunch
- ▷ 20 students have been identified as ESL
- ▷ 6 students are bilingual
- ▷ 16 students are at grade level and have graduated from the program

Eligibility requirements

What do you think?

Name (required)

Email (required; will not be published)

Website

If you want a picture to show with your comment, go get a [Gravatar](#).



Related Posts

- [Ask an Expert: Why don't teachers focus on teaching cursive?](#)
- [VIDEO: Boulder students write their own stories](#)
- [Ask an Expert: How best to support a child's learning at home.](#)
- [PTA offers tips for evaluating your child's classroom](#)
- [Ask an Expert: Encouraging teachers to take more risks.](#)

Boulder Valley teachers do reading level tests before the children start kindergarten to determine which students are eligible for the program. Teachers then select six students who are below grade level in reading. Teachers only have enough material to put six students through the project at a time. Those participants take the project materials home Monday through Thursday. The children return with the materials on Fridays and the teacher reloads it with new lesson plans for the next week.

"Depending on how fast a student starts to make gains you might take a student off the project when they are meeting grade level standards for literacy," said Sanchez Elementary teacher Rebecca Yang, who is also a Take Your Teacher Home teacher.

The project runs 26 weeks and each week focuses on a new letter of the alphabet. Yang said a typical lesson includes listening to a book, vocabulary lessons, letter identification, sight word work, letter formation, a song and a poem.

"The repetition helps the student retain the weekly lessons," Yang said. "For every section of the lesson, I record instructions and follow-along activities for the student to complete. Each part of the lesson has support material that the student will use to complete the activities."

The project has been embraced by teachers throughout the district as they have seen the results firsthand, Korb said.

"All of the students that I put on the project at the start of the year were below grade level expectations and standards," Yang said. "Now, all but one of the students is scoring on grade level in literacy."

Role of parents key

While any parent can volunteer to help with the project by helping to reload packets, copy and laminate materials, code and set up bags and iPods, or obtain copyright permissions, the program depends upon the parents of participating students to really succeed.

"We're trying to build that home-school responsibility piece so the parents know that they have a really big responsibility in helping their kids be successful at school," Korb said.

When a child is selected to participate in the program, the teacher holds a conference with the parent to explain the program commitments of participation, Yang said. For instance, the parents have to make sure the bag comes back each day, as well as sign off that the extra work has been completed.

One unexpected benefit is that the learning modules are not only beneficial for the children, but also for family members and parents who may be struggling to learn English themselves.

"The families are also very involved in the program and I have two parents that are learning to speak English that listen to the activities each week after their children do," Yang said.

Parents interested in learning more about the program or watching a video about it, should click on the [website](#).

EdNews Parent intern Alex McNa contributed to this report.



Popularity: 2% [2]

Tags: [elementary school](#), [kindergarten](#), [literacy](#), [teachers](#)

Category: [Teaching & Learning: News](#), [Teaching and Learning](#)

About Christina Onpeng: Christina Onpeng is a senior journalism major at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where she is set to graduate May 2011. She is a spring 2011 intern at EdNews Parent. [View more posts by this author](#).



Email Address *



Links

[DPS touts decline in dropout rate](#) March 9, 2011

[Colorado Action for Healthy Kids](#)