



Rock Talk

News you can use from the Glen Rock Board of Education

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There's more to reading than meets the eye

Listening to stories plays important role for early readers

When Byrd School first grade teachers Andrea Mayernik and Ofeer Kearns heard about the Glen Rock Education Foundation's (GREF) grant program, they immediately jumped on the opportunity to gain funding for an important tool for their young students. When they learned their wish had been 'granted,' they were ecstatic.

"One of my goals as a teacher in first grade is to get my students to love reading. I think this will go a long way to accomplishing this," says Mayernik.

Kearns adds, "It prepares them for using technology in the future." This 'win-win' for the students comes in the form of two Dell tablets through which the classrooms can access a multitude of online reading materials.

As advocates of the Daily 5™ — a structure that helps students develop the daily habits of reading, writing, and working independently — the teachers know the value of providing as many options as possible for students to listen to reading.

During independent reading time in their classrooms, the teachers work with a small group of four to six students while the rest of the class is reading independently.

Students are practicing reading to self — reading a book on their level, alone, in a quiet area of the room; reading to someone else — where they read to a partner and either echo read, where one reads one page and one mimics, or they take turns reading page by page; or they are listening to reading.

The first grade classrooms have large, bulky listening centers for the 'listening to reading' component. They are equipped with a jack box that is plugged into a boom box and three students can listen simultaneously to a book on tape. Students may also follow along in the old basal readers.

Most classrooms have very few selections on tape. The first grades at Byrd, for example, only have about 12 tapes per classroom, with two or three stories on each tape. Those are the only resources they have at this point for the 'listen to read' component of the Daily 5™.

According to Kearns, "They are so young in first grade; they are learning how to read and putting words together and *hearing* it come together is really a strong tool for helping them learn to read."



Proudly displaying their grant check, teachers Andrea Mayernik and Ofeer Kearns are congratulated by GREF and Glen Rock officials (from left) Karyn Stephenson, Andrea Egan, Dr. Linda Weber, Bob Burslem, Mona Milbrodt, Dr. Paula Valenti, Dr. Kathleen Regan, Sheldon Hirschberg. Lisa Schor Babin and Angela Vila.

Mayernik agrees. "Listening to reading — whether from their peers, their teachers or their parents — gives students an opportunity to build their fluency, which in turn builds their comprehension skills."

Currently their tape resource is extremely limited. Having access to all the web has to offer will increase those opportunities tremendously. The grant process itself was relatively quick and easy. Byrd School Principal Dr. Linda Weber sent out an email to the entire staff, letting them know about it and including a link to the foundation website. Kearns and Mayernik immediately saw this as an opportunity to provide their students with as many options as possible to listen to reading. "The grant and having the foundation spearhead this was ideal," says Mayernik.

"We ask our HSA for so much and they give us so much. They are constantly giving us extra resources when they can.



So having the foundation to turn to as another resource was excellent. "Recognizing that updated technology would allow them to expand their students' horizons, Mayernik reached out to Director of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kathleen Regan for her input and guidance. In consultation with Network Administrator Rich Santos, the decision was ultimately made to pursue the purchase of a Dell tablet for each classroom.

The district's wireless network will support the tablets, and multiple students can listen at the same time, since the existing jack box can be plugged into them. In addition, the tablet's flash player works well with the free apps the teachers have researched. A wide variety of websites exist for access to free books, and many are leveled selections, so the new resources can be geared towards the independent level of the student or moved forward to the next level where students can listen to more complex texts.

This initiative also accommodates the emphasis in the curriculum on nonfiction reading, since access to those selections will be far greater than what is currently available on the classroom tapes.

Beyond the classroom, both teachers plan to provide parents with information on how to access these same sites from home. Parents are already encouraged to read to their children as frequently as possible, since students at this age can learn just as much from watching and listening to someone else read as they can from reading themselves. Supplementing this activity by visiting the same websites at home will be a good way to reinforce what the children are doing in class.

An added bonus is the tablet's size, which can be stored in a drawer, freeing up much needed classroom space for other endeavors. Having this technology in the classroom will serve as a pilot program, where student progress in comprehension, vocabulary and reading stamina will be monitored. The ultimate goal is an increase in the fluency of the students, as well as an increase in their efficiency with the technology of using the tablets. If the initiative proves worthwhile, the district will pursue the resources to budget for tablets for other classrooms in the future.

For now, the teachers are very excited to get started. The tablets have been ordered and should be in the classrooms shortly. Mayernik and Kearns are really looking forward to integrating the technology into their listening centers and to see it all come together for the benefit of their students.



The grant through GREF is providing two Dell Venue II Pro tablets for Byrd 1st Grade listening centers.