Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of Scholastic’s Reading Counts program that has been recently implemented to all the fifth grade classes at Ridgeway Elementary school. The intent of the program was to improve upon on student’s literacy, student’s attitudes toward reading, look for ways to improve the program, and determine whether it is worthwhile to implement in the other elementary schools in district.

The brief summary below highlights some of the results from the evaluation. More detailed results can be found below in Tables 1-4.

Student Proficiency and Growth:

- Student proficiency and growth were measured by their average increase in lexile scores over three marking periods (average 7 months). All of the students in 5th grade were tested three times since the implementation of the program. Overall each class increased their lexile score by an average of 120 points.

- This second report is the average quiz score for each class over three marking periods. Each class has significantly improved their average quiz grade over the three marking periods with an average increase of 13.75% points.

Student’s Attitude

- The feedback from the questions given in the survey revealed that the majority of students had a positive experience using Scholastic Reading Counts and overall were very pleased with the program. According to the data over 88% of the students survey agreed or strongly agreed that SRC has changed their attitude toward reading and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that SRC has motivated them to read more which was one of the main goals of using the program.

A notable feature of the program is that it did directly change student’s proficiency and growth based on their lexile scores and quizzes in all four classes that participated in the program. The majority of students also have indicated that the program has motivated them to read more and has given them a more positive attitude when it comes to reading.
Introduction

In an effort to improve the quality of literacy instruction, Ridgeway Elementary school has implemented Scholastic’s Reading Counts program as part of their reading curriculum. The computer-based program is intended to encourage independent reading, guide instruction, and demonstrate accountability. The 5th grade students at Ridgeway Elementary school started using the program in September and administration requested a formative evaluation be done of the program to determine if it is having a significant impact on student’s literacy, student’s attitudes toward reading, ways to improve the program, and whether it is worthwhile to implement in the other elementary schools in district.

This document is a final evaluation report of this year’s implementation of the Scholastic’s Reading Counts program. This report contains a description of the program, a description of the evaluation methods and procedures, the evaluation results, and a final recommendation to the administration at Ridgeway Elementary school.

Description of Scholastic’s Reading Counts Program

Scholastic Reading Counts is a computer-based, comprehensive program that motivates students to read and helps teachers manage, observe, and evaluate student performance. The program can help support district goals to meet language arts standards and improve reading achievement. SRC consists of three major components; the first is a library of fiction and nonfiction books which can be used to determine the reading level of students and make recommendations based on student’s distinctive reading level and interest. Students then can take a test to establish their lexile level. A lexile represents both reading ability and text difficulty on the same scale. This very common measure allows students to select books that are within their reading level. SRC will then produce a list of books based on student’s interest that are within their lexile range. Teachers may ask students throughout the year to retake test to determine if student’s lexile level has enhanced and to generate other book lists. The second component of SRC is the quizzes. An assortment of computerized quizzes is available to test student comprehension and that can be personalized to help all children achieve success. The quizzes allow students to select books that are appropriate for their reading level. The quizzes test student’s comprehension of the books they read by asking questions related to the characters, theme, plot, setting, and outcome. Teachers can monitor student’s reading development with reports and use data to differentiate instruction, write reports, and assign grades. The final component is the Scholastic Management Suite. The Scholastic Management Suite empowers teachers with tools to check student progress and manage an independent reading program, as well as data to direct instruction.

The program was made available to all Ridgeway Elementary school 5th grade students. The 5th grade students started using Reading Counts in September.

Ridgeway Elementary school has implemented Scholastic Reading Counts in an effort to meet stated objectives:
- Increase book circulation in classrooms and libraries.
- Increase students time spent on reading tasks.
- Increase student’s attitude toward reading.
- Increase student’s reading proficiency.
Evaluation Method

Scholastic Reading Counts was launched as a pilot program for all 5th grade classes (85 total students) at the Ridgeway Elementary school. A formative evaluation was conducted to determine whether Scholastic Reading Counts is having a significant impact on students reading proficiency, determine ways the program could be improved, and determine if students overall attitude toward reading has increased.

The evaluation used multiple methods to evaluate the impact of Scholastic’s Reading Counts program on student’s literacy. Data was collected using various methods including: (1) reports generated from SRC to measure students proficiency growth and achievement, (2) a survey of the students, (3) a survey with 5th grade classroom teachers, (4) a review of the program by the media specialist.

Student’s proficiency growth and achievement were measure using reports from Reading Counts Scholastic Management Suite. The first report recorded student’s lexile score over three marking periods (7-month period). The second report recorded students quizzes over a 7-month month period.

A survey designed to measure students overall attitude towards reading and Scholastic Reading Counts was given to all students participating in the program. The survey consisted of 4 likert ranked items ranked from 1) Disagree to 4) Strongly Agree. The survey questions focused on students overall impression of the program as a whole and the impact Scholastic Reading Counts has had on their attitude towards reading. One opened ending question was also given asking students about ways they think the program could be improved.

A similar survey was given to all 5th grade teachers participating in the program. The questions asked were administered to determine ways of improving the program, how motivated they feel their students are to use SRC and read, and their impressions about the program as a whole. One opened ending question was also given asking teachers about ways they think the program could be improved.

One personal interview was conducted with the school’s media specialist. The interview primarily focused on how well Scholastic’s Reading Counts is being utilized in the school by students and how motivated the students are to read books. Questions concerning future plans were also addressed looking for recommendations on ways to improve the program as well as increasing the program’s effectiveness.
Results

Below you will find the results from the data collection. The results will be presented in four different categories; student proficiency and growth, student’s attitude, teacher’s attitude, and finally the interview with the media specialist.

Student Proficiency and Growth

Student proficiency and growth were measured by their average increase in lexile scores over three marking periods (average 7 months). All of the students in 5th grade were tested three times since the implementation of the program. Overall each class increased their lexile score by an average of 120 points. The table below shows the average increase broken down by each class over the three marking periods.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1st Test Score (Avg. Lexile)</th>
<th>2nd Test Score (Avg. Lexile)</th>
<th>3rd Test Score (Avg. Lexile)</th>
<th>Overall Average Increase in Lexile Score (3rd-1st)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennings</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisco</td>
<td>758</td>
<td>801</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandeville</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velazquez</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Average Increase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This second report is the average quiz score for each class over three marking periods. Each class has significantly improved their average quiz grade over the three marking periods with an average increase of 13.75% points.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1st Quiz Success Rate (average)</th>
<th>2nd Quiz Success Rate (average)</th>
<th>3rd Quiz Success Rate (average)</th>
<th>Overall Average Increase in Score</th>
<th>Overall Average Increase in Quiz Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennings</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
<td>13.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisco</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>+11%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandeville</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>+14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velazquez</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>+18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Average Increase in Quiz Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13.75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student’s Attitude

The questions below reveal that the majority of students had a positive experience using Scholastic Reading Counts and overall were very pleased with the program. According to the data below over 88% of the students survey agreed or strongly agreed that SRC has changed their attitude toward reading and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that SRC has motivated them to read more which was one of the main goals of using the program.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>(1) Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>(2) Disagree</th>
<th>(3) Agree</th>
<th>(4) Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did you find SRC motivated you to read more?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you find SRC to be accurate in measuring your reading level?</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your attitude changed toward reading since using SRC?</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you say SRC is an overall good program to help motivate students to read?</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you recommend this program to other students?</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 85 students that were survey.

Opened-ended question responses- The majority of students who responded mentioned having Reading Counts installed in the computer lab and not just on the classroom computers and media center. This would allow more students to have access to the program throughout the day. Another frequently mentioned response was to have access to reading counts from their homes since as of right now it can only be accessed from with-in district.
Attitude of Teachers

The teachers overall attitude towards the program seems to mirror their students. The table below reveals that overall the teachers are satisfied with the program and believe it does a good job measuring a student comprehension and motivating students to read more.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>(1) Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>(2) Disagree</th>
<th>(3) Agree</th>
<th>(4) Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How satisfied are you with the reports generated from the program?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you observed a noticeable difference in student’s attitude toward reading?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel SRC does a good job of measuring comprehension?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you recommend SRC to other teachers to use?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall how satisfied are you with the program?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Results from four 5th grade teachers surveyed.

Opened-ended question responses-The teacher’s response were very similar to the students. Most teachers thought it would be helpful to install the program on all the computers in the school as well as make it available to students from home. They had mentioned not having enough time to access during the day as a drawback. Another request was to have Reading Counts integrated with the school library circulation program so it could be customized for each individual student.
Interview with Media Specialist

The interview with the Ridgeway Elementary school’s media specialist was optimistic and confirmed a lot of the same observations that were revealed with both surveys that were administered. Summary of the interview:

Since the implementation of Scholastic Reading Counts there has been a significant increase in the number of books checked out of the library on a weekly basis. Students are excited to see how many books they can read and how many quizzes they can pass in order to gain points and awards. A couple things I think that would allow students to utilize the program even more would be having it on more computers in the building along with making it available online so students could access it from home. I would also like to see it integrated with our library circulation program Destiny. Destiny does have a module to do this at a cost of $500. Overall though I would say SRC is an excellent way to get students who lack the motivation to read inspired to pick up a book and start to read. I would highly recommend SRC to other schools that are looking to increase student’s literacy.

Discussion

This evaluation was meant to determine if Scholastic Reading Counts is effective in increasing student achievement and increasing attitudes towards reading as well as establishing ways to improve the program. Based on these results the Manchester Township school district will determine whether it is worth implementing in the other elementary schools in.

Student’s proficiency and growth based on their lexile scores and quizzes improved in all four classes that participated in the program. The majority of students indicated that the programs has motivated them to read more and has given them a more positive attitude when it comes to reading. Most students mentioned limited access to the program as the one major drawback to using it.

Likewise, teachers and the media specialist reported a high level of satisfaction with the program. Of significant mention is the fact that teachers have noted a noticeable difference in student’s attitude toward reading and SRC does a good job of measuring reading comprehension. The media specialist has reported a significant increase in the number of books checked out of the library on a weekly basis indicated students are checking out more books to read then before Scholastic reading Counts was implemented. Limited access and time constraints were mentioned as drawbacks to using the program.

The overall review of all the data collected has lead to the following recommendations:

1) Continue to use the Scholastic’s Reading Counts program as part of the way to improve literacy at the elementary level.
2) Go forward with implementing Scholastic’s Reading Counts program in the other grade levels and at the other elementary schools.
3) Install Scholastic Reading Counts in the computer lab to allow more access to the program.
4) Inquire about the add-on module for the Destiny library circulation program so that Scholastic Reading Counts can be integrated with Destiny.
5) Look into going to Scholastic Reading Counts online version so that students can have access to the program from their homes.

In summary, Scholastic’s Reading Counts program has been a success at meeting the stated objectives. Due to the positive results on student’s attitude towards reading as well as improved student proficiency and growth, the program should be a key ingredient to increasing student literacy. After implementing the suggested changes Scholastic’s Reading Counts can be used as a valuable asset as part of the district-wide elementary reading program.
Evaluation Budget

Personnel

Professional Salaries:
Joe Gioia 5 days x $500/day $2,000
Geri Szoke-Media Specialist 1 day x $500/day $500

Total Personnel Cost: $2,500

Travel and per diem
5 Days travel: Brick, NJ to Manchester, NJ (50 miles total) $50
(Includes per diem and mileage)

Total Travel/Per Diem Cost: $50

Miscellaneous
Supplies and photocopying $50

Total Miscellaneous Fees: $50

Total Cost: $2,600