

OBTAINING UPDATED AND RELEVANT READING CURRICULUM THROUGH
GRANT FUNDING

by

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Masters of Education in Curriculum and Instruction

Ferris State University
School of Education
College of Education and Human Services

June, 2015

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ABSTRACT

This Capstone Project covered the importance and necessity for the Durand Area School District, located in Durand, Michigan, to obtain updated, core/comprehensive reading curriculum. The primary focus for gaining moneys for the curriculum was through external funding, or grants. The project was geared toward procurement of the curriculum for all grades housed at Robert Kerr Elementary school (2nd through 4th), with possible expansion to grades at the middle school, by showing the importance of having a core/common reading curriculum. Successful efforts have shown approval by administration, board members, and an eventual adoption and purchase of researched reading curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support of many educators at Ferris State University, who gave me the confidence to move forward with what cohorts were telling me was a pipe dream. Dr. Katherine Manley helped me in not only knowing where to focus the first three chapters of my project, but more importantly provided me tools and a knowledge base in grant writing that will benefit the rest of my career. Additional supporting FSU faculty have been Dr. Mike Ennis, who has helped me as my advisor and chair to this project, and Dr. Amy Kavanaugh, who was willing to add to her already busy schedule by being a member of my supervisory committee.

One of my biggest supporters in the charge to gain relevant, core reading curriculum at my district has been Kathleen Foster, our lead Title 1 educator. She sees, more than most, the impact not having these resources has had on our students. As the remaining member of my supervisory committee, she has been with me every step of this crazy process. She, along with our newly-appointed administration, have lead the charge in having this project reach its ultimate goal.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Durand Area Schools (DAS) is a district located 13 miles west of Flint, Michigan, with approximately 1,700 students from Durand and surrounding areas, in Shiawassee County (<http://durand.k12.mi.us/schools/>). DAS currently has two remaining elementary schools. These buildings serve just over 600 students, from Kindergarten through 4th grade. Bertha Neal Elementary (BN) houses the Kindergarten through 1st grade students, as well as several pre-school programs, and is considered the Early Elementary building. Robert Kerr Elementary (RK) contains 2nd through 4th grades students, as well as a childcare, collaborative program, shared with the Shiawassee Family YMCA (<http://durand.k12.mi.us/schools/boxcarkidschildcare/>). The demographics of RK remain consistent to that of the rest of the district, with a 47% girl to 53% boy ratio and a 3% minority population (Thayer, personal communication, April, 2015). RK currently has approximately 50 students, about 15% of the student population, with active individualized educational plans (IEP) receiving special education services (Thayer, personal communication, April, 2015). At 56.6%, RK runs slightly higher for free and reduced lunch recipients than the district percentage of 54.72% (Powell, personal communication, April, 2015). This is scheduled to become even higher as BN currently

sits at 75.11% free and reduced, and the bulk of their student body will transfer to RK, next year.

DAS is a Title 1 school district, and RK provides additional interventions and services for students with learning disabilities, cognitive and emotional impairments, behavioral concerns, and physical handicaps. Students have a primary classroom, where they receive core curriculum instruction, and students with IEP's are pulled for specific academic concerns. These students receive special education reinforcement, in core subject areas, with one of two special education resource teachers. Unlike the middle and high school buildings of DAS, RK's caseload is such that it does not make it possible for the two available resource educators to team-teach with the classroom instructors. RK is an inclusive building, and although co-teaching is not currently an option, there are daily and weekly collaborations and discussions. In addition to special education services, RK provides Title 1 support services in Reading and Math. Students testing below state benchmark requirements receive an additional 30 minutes of focused instruction in either one or both subjects, four times per week. Also provided is a supplementary reading support intervention, also 30 minutes, three times a week, known as Reading Roundup. During these sessions, students are grouped by grades into reading levels and are taught extension and reinforcement strategies, by classroom educators and Title 1 teachers. Emphasis is placed on the area of concern for each group, such as phonemic development, and increased reading fluency and comprehension.

Due to state budgetary cuts, legislative changes, and district financial problems, two pre-existing elementary buildings were closed, in 2010. These closures caused the re-alignment of early childhood students being assigned to BN, RK housing 2nd through

4th grades, 5th grade being moved to the middle school, resulting in 8th grade being moved to the high school.

In 2007-2008, educator focus groups had been asked to research and choose a consistent and updated reading curriculum, as the district lacked such a program, especially at the elementary level. Without focus group input and against their research-based recommendation, administration purchased a guided, teacher-directed supplementary program. Solid emphasis is placed on vocabulary development and textual elements, but there is no actual student reading practice or comprehension measurement taking place. Socioeconomic challenges and little academic focus/support in home settings continue to prove major obstacles in the battle for reading growth. Much of the student body at RK receive no additional academic focus outside of the school setting. Study upon study have shown the most important factor in making our children successful in reading is reading to them and listening to them read (Colker, 2007). When the only reading exposure a child receives is in the classroom, it is even more important effective curriculum be available.

Upon closure of the elementary buildings and with ongoing budgetary/financial concerns, the inability to procure relevant and current reading curriculum remains. Reading scores continue to lag at the elementary level, increasing in issues as the student body moves to higher grades. These ongoing and growing concerns about reading achievement and lack of funding are making educators and Title support look to alternative funding, by way of educational grants.

Statement of Need

Located approximately 13 miles west of Flint, Michigan, Durand was once a thriving district. Fueled by a community predominately supported by the various General Motors plants, Durand had healthy commerce and a large student population. As the automotive shops began to close, many families left the area. Additionally, as school-of-choice became an option, athletic rivalries caused competitive student losses. DAS has experienced increased decline the past five or six years. The elementary school closures in 2010 resulted in overall decreased student enrollment (Thayer, personal communication, April, 2015). Compounded with continued budgetary cuts and a diminished fund equity, DAS has tried several strategies to balance the budget and keep the doors open. Teacher salary had been frozen for 5 years and 2012-2013 saw a negotiated 5.5% teacher pay cut. Further negotiations included administrative concessions, as well, including the elimination of the position of Curriculum Director. The district pays the previous curriculum director for one day a week of support services. Not only has curriculum funding taken a hit, so has curriculum support. The building closures to balance the budget, along with the above-mentioned concessions, are some of the more notable ways DAS has kicked the financial can. There is no allocated fund for new curriculum, and Title funding is regulated and ear-marked to meet specific requirements. Classroom educators have personally purchased updated reading materials, book sets, and extension activities for small reading groups, sharing materials and strategies to maintain some consistency, within grade levels.

The lack of funding at DAS has encouraged the teachers to consider external sources in order to fill the need for instructional materials for their students. Locating potential grants, writing the grant, and being able to receive the moneys, would provide RK with the necessary funding to update an antiquated and inconsistent core reading curriculum. Not only would they then be able to use a building-wide, consistent program, but they could utilize remaining resources toward student after-school tutoring programs and additional student interventions. A relevant and updated reading curriculum would better meet core curriculum needs and provide a method of study students could expect to see as they increased in each of RK's grade levels, increasing fluency, comprehension, and connectivity.

Budgetary concerns continue to rise in most Michigan school districts, and as they are forced to make more and more cuts, it is also necessary for them to develop alternate ways to fill in the financial gaps. Acquiring a grant focused on one subject area may seem inadequate in comparison to the enormous needs within the DAS district, but it would encourage educators in all grade levels to find similar funding resources to support other deficient areas. Given the success of RK's reading curriculum grant, it can be used as a model for the remaining buildings to utilize, district-wide. Many of the grants we have seen approved in the past six years have been for very large sums, were broader in their application, and were not equally distributed. By making the process more focused, RK can set an example to meet future needs.

Beyond the obvious need of increasing student achievement and success in the area of reading and the monetary concerns and limitations wrapped around that, is the way the lack of a core reading curriculum impacts RK's evaluation scores within their

PET-A (Planning and Evaluation Tool-Administrator/Instructional Leader), as it relates to the Michigan Department of Education's MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports). The PET-A is defined as a "planning and evaluation tool for effective schoolwide reading programs." There are many areas that reference "core/comprehensive reading curriculum" where no score can be given. Section III of the PET-A focuses entirely on Instructional Programs and Materials, where the expectation is that RK should have a core reading program in place and an evaluative score of zero, in every area, has to be given, as RK currently does not have a consistent core reading program: it only has supplemental programs.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project is to seek external funding to purchase additional reading curriculum materials in order to improve the reading scores of the students at RK elementary school. Increased comprehension and oral reading fluency at these grades would set a more solid foundation for future academic growth. Many recent studies have been done connecting early reading scores to future graduation and college enrollment rates. In a 2010 report on policy research, presented at the University of Chicago, the focus was placed on the importance of a child reading at grade level in the third grade, and how that would affect their graduation and college enrollment rates. Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne (2010) stated:

Approximately 45 percent of third-grade, below-grade level students graduated in 5 years, compared to more than 60 percent of students who read at grade level in

third grade and nearly 80 percent of students who read above grade level in third grade. (p. 13)

In concert with these studies, Michigan's governor, Rick Snyder, cited similar key points in his 2015 State of the State address, rolling out legislation in support of Michigan's Third Grade Reading Initiative (Michigan Department of Education).

Statement of Project Phases

This project was conducted in five phases.

- Phase 1: Identification of the weakest areas in the reading scores of the current students
- Phase 2: Identification of reading curriculum and materials that would improve the weakest areas from Phase 1
- Phase 3: Identification of national and state funding sources of such a project and selection of source(s) for which grants will be written
- Phase 4: Preparation of a budget for the solution identified in Phase 2
- Phase 5: Creation of a reading curriculum start-up and implementation plan

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Importance of Reading and its Link to Success in Schools

Throughout the 1970's, it was nearly impossible to view an after-school program, or watch Saturday morning cartoons, without seeing a commercial stating "Reading is Fundamental." Founded in 1966, the Washington D.C.-based RIF is the oldest and largest nonprofit literacy organization in the United States (RIF, 2014). RIF's mission is to make reading a fun part of every day, and makes providing books for socioeconomically disadvantaged children a priority. Their message was simple: Reading IS fundamental. It is necessary.

As stated in the purpose of this project, the past decade has found increased emphasis being placed on analyzing reading data from third grade and its connection to graduation and college enrollment. In a 2010 study conducted by Lesnick, Goerge, Smithgall, and Gwynne, revealed that 75% of students who had reading difficulties in third grade continued to have struggles in the ninth grade (p. 5). The research goes on to show that over 55% of third-graders reading below grade level did not graduate high school, and subsequently fewer than 20% of below-grade level readers enrolled in college (pgs. 15-16).

Not the only research of its kind, the state of Michigan is now taking notice of literature like the afore-mentioned 2010 study. In his 2015 State of the State Address, Governor Rick Snyder rolled out his plans for Michigan's Third Grade Reading Initiative. He introduced a budget proposal that would allocate \$48 million toward early identification, intervention, and training, as it relates to student reading. One common thread the Michigan initiative shares with the other reading studies is that early intervention is key; using targeted reading curriculum, small group instruction, and intervention programs in Kindergarten through 2nd grades.

There is also a direct correlation between early and emergent literacy and academic achievement. Parental involvement in student reading improves their child's success rates (Colker, 2007). Although it helps improve all subject areas, reading is the most sensitive to learning activities in the home. DAS is a Title 1 district, comprised predominately of low-income families. Nearly two-thirds of low-income families own no books (RIF, 2014), limiting the amount of literary exposure to their early-childhood students placing them at a deficit, before they even begin school. As the demographic becomes increasingly disadvantaged and transient, a higher percentage of students are entering school at a deficit. The past two years has found over 50% of students entering RK as second-graders reading well below grade level (Foster, personal communication, April 2015).

Current Reading Assessments

Both programs place emphasis on oral reading fluency and retell and comprehension capabilities. AIMSweb[®] has the added component of a MAZE

assessment, wherein students have to choose the correct word out of three options, while reading a passage. This adds more data for measuring comprehension and vocabulary development. Students who are assessed at or above benchmark are tested monthly, being given timed tests at an increasing grade-level expectation. Those testing below or well-below grade-level are assessed on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Most students falling below benchmark are enrolled in the Title 1 support interventions, where their assessments take place. Additionally, they may also be assessed using Quick Phonics Screener (QPS), to further ascertain if there is a de-coding issue, or some other area requiring more intensive focus (Foster, personal communication, April, 2015). Those well-below benchmark often have Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)'s, and follow a similar schedule.

The third and fourth graders at RK are also required to take part in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP). As one of 23 states in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, Michigan began field testing Smarter Balanced Assessments, to replace the MEAP, spring of 2014 (MEA.org). Scheduled to launch in April of 2015, it is hoped the 120,000 student trials will help outline deficiencies in the questions or process, prior to implementation. RK is on board to begin their M-STEP testing the end of April through May, 2015.

Interventions and Strategies for Improving Specific Reading Skills

DAS has many interventions they utilize, to raise reading achievement. The 2013-2014 school year found DAS implementing a new phonics program in their K-2 grades. Foundations[®] is a research-based spelling and phonics program, through Wilson Language[®]. Although spring benchmark assessments have not been conducted, initial

piloting of the program has shown a positive data trend. BN has shown growth in both their Kindergarten and first grades, with Kindergarten showing higher improvements. (Foster, personal communication, April, 2015). RK is also showing advancement in their second grade scores. Contingent on the success found in K-2 grades, RK has invested in the third grade component, and began its implementation fall of 2014.

Further strategies for improving reading skills can be found through the use of the Read Naturally® program and is also the same company through which the QPS assessments are derived. Through DIBELS, intervention teams are able to determine a “four-square” mapping; showing the specific areas each student requires additional focus (Foster, personal communication, April, 2015). These maps assist classroom teachers and support teams in targeting individual student needs. Classroom teachers use the maps to set up their small reading groups and ELA learning stations, while Title teachers use them to further refine their intervention pull-out and push-in focus.

In 2012-2013, RK implemented an added “Power Hour”, wherein students within a grade level are divided based on oral reading fluency and reading comprehension (Thayer, personal communication, April 2015). For 30 minutes each day, students go into varying grade-level classrooms and with Title educators, based on ability levels, for focused instruction and extension activities. Each classroom places emphasis on the interventions and strategies in which that particular group needs improvement. Students who are reading at or above grade level receive more advanced extension activities.

Even with all of the interventions and strategies put in place by RK to improve student reading skills, the one component missing is a consistent reading curriculum. They have many assessments and even more interventions, but lack a steady reading

program. Grade-level educators team together in an attempt to streamline the reading curriculum, but continue to fill in the gaps, individually (Thayer, personal communication, April 2015).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PLAN

This project was conducted in five phases.

- Phase 1: Identification of the weakest areas in the reading scores of the current students
- Phase 2: Identification of reading curriculum and materials that would improve the weakest areas from Phase 1
- Phase 3: Identification of national and state funding sources of such a project and selection of source(s) for which grants will be written
- Phase 4: Preparation of a budget for the solution identified in Phase 2
- Phase 5: Creation of a reading curriculum start-up and implementation plan

The methodology for completing each phase will be discussed in the following sections.

Phase 1: Identification of the weakest areas in the reading scores of the current students

In order to complete this phase of the project, I downloaded and reviewed the data from the school's database relative to the reading scores. The data was reviewed by faculty in the school in order to interpret the results and discuss the weakest areas that need improvement. Upon initial review of data from 2010 to present, consistent and increasing areas of concern in reading scores have fallen in de-coding/phonemic awareness, oral reading fluency and retell/comprehension capabilities. Through the beginning of the 20145-2015 school year, MAZE scores showed word analysis to be at a consistent 30-40% deficit, at third grade, with improvements in fourth grade. With the

recent implementation of a consistent phonics and spelling program, comparative data analyzed, from the end of the 2014-2015 school year, determined some phonemic improvement at the Kindergarten level, at BN, as well as increases at RK. There was an overall improvement in word analysis at all grades from RK.

Phase 2: Identification of reading curriculum and materials that would improve the weakest areas from Phase 1

In order to complete this phase of the project, I worked with teachers in the building to identify teaching strategies and curriculum materials that will help improve the deficiencies. Given that student growth in oral reading fluency and comprehension are of primary concern, curriculum where the students had access to consistent materials, with emphasis on common core state standards (CCSS) and including many strategies and methods to meet a highly differentiated student body, will be necessary. As outlined in the introduction, a reading focus group had been asked to research curriculum or a program that could be utilized consistently throughout all elementary grade levels, with the possible extension through middle school. Several of RK's current staff were on this reading curriculum focus group. They have comprehensive research and copious notes. One such program meeting the necessary criteria is Reading Street™, through Pearson Instructional Resources™ (Newman, personal communication, March, 2015). Now tied in to CCSS, Reading Street™ also connects with much of the existing curriculum in the district, and provides connection and extension activities, for the students. However, to purchase the program, in its entirety, for all three grade levels, would prove costly.

Additional possibilities for the allocation of funding would fall in varying reading workshop programs, currently under educator review. As the approach is different to that

of a traditional Basel-style program, and resources are potentially more cost-effective, there is consideration of this style of reading program over one such as Reading Street™.

Phase 3: Identification of national and state funding sources of such a project and selection of source(s) for which grants will be written

In order to complete this phase of the project, I worked with my local administrators to help identify previous funding sources used by the school and district. Currently the strongest option was to compose a proposal to submit to our administrative team to use part of our 31a Title grants. This would be used in the consolidated application, through the DAS district. The administrative team had to decide how they wished to allocate the funding and whether they would approve the funding for a reading program. The hurdle was if the suggested program is what the district wanted to invest the funding on, or if they deem other needs more pressing than using Title funds for the purchase of (reading) curriculum. This is part of the reasoning in seeking additional funding options.

There are many sources of grants and websites that provide lists of grants such as Grants.gov, which offers grant listings from 26 federal agencies and the Foundation Center, which helps philanthropic foundations connect with grant seekers. Another good source is the Grant Advisor Plus, which is a weekly publication that highlights upcoming grant opportunities. The National Education Association (NEA) has several grant opportunities, at both state and federal levels; many tied to reading and their Read Across America initiative. Grant deadlines are at varying times throughout the year, with most of their deadlines falling between February and April. Given the submission and review of this project, most of those dates will be missed for 2015, but can be applied for the

spring of the 2015-2016 academic year. I also researched the uncountable resources provided in my recent grant-writing class.

Phase 4: Preparation of a budget for the solution identified in Phase 2

For this phase of the project, I compiled a list of the curriculum resources we identified in Phase 2 of the project and estimated the cost of the materials. The district-hired consultants had several communications with Pearson, where purchasing terms were discussed. Original talks were for a four-year payment plan to cover the purchase of comprehensive curriculum sets for grades 4 through 6. As administration, district, and board meetings quickly accelerated, so the purchasing terms were modified. Pearson was willing to extend the payment terms to six years, allowing for an expansion to the number of grades included. The final budget encompassed curriculum sets for grades 2 through 6, and two-days of publisher-provided professional development, on a six-year payment plan. The initial down-payment is to be approximately \$8,500, with yearly payments of \$18,700.

Phase 5: Create a reading curriculum start-up and implementation plan

Given the Board of Education vote and resolution to purchase the proposed reading curriculum for the 2015-2016, a start-up and implementation plan is needed. Before the end of the 2014-2015 school year, preceding the June 8th Board meeting, I brought home a sample set of the 2nd grade reading curriculum, provided by the publishing company. I have assembled a preliminary implementation plan, to be discussed with colleagues before the school year begins. At that time, refinements to the curriculum map referenced in the plan can be made, as well.

2015-2016 Reading Curriculum Start-Up and Implementation Plan												
Activity	Month											Key Person/Group Responsible
	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	
Initial roll-out/introduction meeting and professional development plan for teachers and staff.	X											Administration (Principal, Curriculum Staff, Title 1 Director)
Professional Development over new Reading curriculum: start-up, expectations, goals	X											Teachers Title 1 Teachers Resource Room Teachers Administration to Review and Oversee
Grade Level Meetings: Reading Curriculum Mapping and timeline of Academic Goals/Growth Implementation	X											Grade Level Teachers
Bi-Weekly Grade Level Meeting(s)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		Grade Level Teachers
Monthly Grade Level Reviews (Reading Curriculum Updates to be added to Agenda) to be aligned with assessment reviews.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Administration Teachers Title 1 Resource Room Social Work Staff
Process and Program Review Next Steps and Modifications (if needed)						X						Grade Level Teachers Title 1 Teachers
Additional Interventions Review/Implementation						X	X	X				Title 1 Teachers Grade Level Teachers
Summer Extension Programs Review									X	X		Title 1 Teachers Administration
Year-end-Review Next Steps Draft of Next Academic Year Plan											X	Administration and all Teachers

CHAPTER 4

CURRENT STATUS/DELIVERABLES/UPDATES

As of April 2015, an increased level of interest by administration in obtaining reading curriculum was expressed at two separate meetings. An additional administration meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, April 28, to discuss the allocation of Title 31a funds for the purchase of the focus group-recommended Reading Street™ program. Varying from the studies, Michigan state initiatives, and legislation from Governor Snyder referenced in this report, each stating the importance of early interventions in reading through 2nd grade, the focus during this administrative meeting was apparently to obtain the curriculum for 4th grade/and possibly 3rd grade, extending through 6th grade. Still, it remained a more positive movement forward in recognizing the importance of obtaining a comprehensive reading program, rather than the piece-mealing of prior years.

The importance of this proposed allocation can be tied directly to student achievement. Since the 2007-2008 school year, Michigan overall has experienced a drop in student academic growth, in both of the areas of math and reading. With emphasis being placed on the importance of student growth in reading and comprehension by the end of 3rd grade, Robert Kerr's student achievement has decreased by an average of almost 10 percent since 2007 (MI School Data, Dashboard, Student Testing). The table shown below provides detail from 2009 to present, with the school year directly

following the elementary school closures reflecting the largest deficit. A consistent, current, and relevant reading curriculum would provide students with the necessary tools and strategies to experience growth. Expanding on emergent reading skills, a reliable curriculum would afford students a steady foundation in which they could build and improve their academic success.

3rd Grade Reading Scores of Students at Robert Kerr Elementary

Year	MEAP Reading % Proficient	MEAP Reading % Not Proficient	MEAP Reading % Advanced	Statewide Reading % Proficient	District Difference to State Average
2009	65.2	<10	<10	61.3	3.9%
2010	63.9	11.5	13.1	63.2	.7
2011	60.0	<10	<10	62.0	[2.0]
2012	65.9	11.0	<10	66.5	.6
2013	66.1	<10	<10	61.3	4.8

Given this new attention and sensibility, the hope was that future fund allocations could be applied to obtaining the same curriculum for 2nd grade, to best meet the needs of early literacy intervention, and maintain a consistency in curriculum so the students can develop confidence and increased growth in reading and comprehension.

Consultants hired by the district sat in on small reading groups during May, to help assist in recommendations and advice on how we can best meet the needs of our students. These consultants worked closely with the grade-level teachers to further identify the weakest areas for current and upcoming students, as they suggested materials and interventions to improve on these recognized areas.

May/June 2015 update – Since the research, leg work for this graduate project, and writing of this paper began, there have been many meetings and a couple of administrative changes, requiring several very positive modifications.

- May 11, 2015 - During the Board of Education meeting, a presentation was given to the board members, by RK's (then) interim principal, Amy Holek, and the afore-mentioned reading consultants, for the Board's consideration and approval regarding the purchase of the Reading Street™ curriculum. The consultants had worked out an initial payment plan with the publishing/distribution company that would include several days of professional development for teachers, as well as the potential to cover more grades. This program adoption was being strongly backed by DAS's new superintendent.
- May 19th, 2015 – During a Staff Meeting at RK with the superintendent, the staff unanimously agreed to the appointment of Amy Holek as the new building principal. It was also presented by the superintendent that, in agreement with this research/proposal project, the adoption of the Reading Street™ curriculum would now include 2nd grade; encompassing ALL three grades at Robert Kerr, providing students a consistent reading curriculum throughout the building.
- May 20th, 2015 – During a rescheduled “Committee of the Whole” Board Meeting, the adoption of the Reading Street curriculum was further discussed. One question posed to me by the Board was whether or not the terminology “3rd Grade Reading Initiative” was just a current, educational “buzz word” or bandwagon. I was able to reference the Lesnick/Smithgall/Gwynne study, detailing the importance of reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade.
- May 21st, 2015 – At the regular MTSS Spring Data Review, RK again received significantly reduced scores on its PET-A evaluation, due to lack of a core/comprehensive reading program.

- Upon entering the Memorial Day Weekend, it looked positive that the Reading Street comprehensive reading curriculum would be adopted, in some form. Emphasis was being placed upon obtaining the curriculum, as stated early on in this project: for Robert Kerr in its entirety, 2nd through 4th grades, as well as 5th and 6th grades.
- May 28th, 2015 – During an early morning, unrelated meeting involving the new superintendent for the Durand district, the DEA (Durand Education Association), and several staff members, he stated it was leaning positively toward the board of education approving the adoption of the Reading Street™ curriculum; its purchase being made through the suggested allocation of Title 31a funding and on a payment schedule. Details and/or confirmation were to be given during the June 8, 2015 Board of Education meeting.
- June 8th, 2015 – During the regular, monthly Board of Education meeting, a motion was made and seconded to approve the purchase of the Reading Street™ comprehensive reading curriculum, using Title 31a funds, for 2nd through 6th grades, and on the budget presented in Phase 4 of this project. Motion was passed by a unanimous roll-call vote.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION/REFLECTION

This project began with the hope of obtaining a comprehensive reading program to help our struggling readers find greater academic success. During the time it has taken to do this research, talk to necessary parties, obtain data, and investigate options, the tide has turned positively toward obtaining the targeted reading program. Although adoption of the program was not originally presented in meetings to encompass the 2nd grade level, as was the intention of this project, it is for the greater good that Robert Kerr purchases the approved reading curriculum to cover all of its grade levels. Recent meetings have included 2nd grade in the purchasing process. The unanimous decision by the Board of Education, on June, 8th, agreed to the purchase of the proposed reading curriculum for grades 2nd through 6th.

If I could give a few recommendations as to what I would do over again or change they would be:

1. Involve more people from the onset. When I focused on the only individuals I thought to be involved or play a part in our district's grant process, it felt as if I kept running up against a brick wall. Once I expanded my efforts, I gained interested parties who shared the same ideas

as me. Through administrative changes, these people turned out to be my strongest allies and resulted in turning the tide in our favor.

2. Investigate more corporate or non-traditional grant sources. From my initial presentation in 2014, I was told my best bet would be to have funding allocating from our Title 31a grant. Any efforts I made in gaining support in obtaining other grants were dismissed. Were I to do this over again, I would have exhausted every resource. Even though the result was just what I wanted and more, a lot of time and frustration could have been saved were I to have secured funding from an external or corporate source.
3. Inspire and motivate awareness and involvement. One of the best things I did was talk about my project, for a year, to administrators and directors. I forwarded copies. I asked for opinions. It was those very activities that got the data and studies noticed.

A very large component leading to the ability to finally get the funding to purchase our reading curriculum was finding allies within the district to assist our cause. Countless weeks have gone into learning about grants and how to write them, research, meetings, and presenting evidence to administrators willing to listen and help lead the charge. What began as a project to obtain information and options for funding a program, has ended far more successfully due to the collective involvement backing it.

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