

Guest editorial: GLLP program is a possible ‘dream’ for every student

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It is no longer a dream.

It is possible and happening in Sonoma Valley as we speak – the goal is for “every student to be within grade level or above in both reading and math by the third grade.”

Sonoma Valley students who are English learners (EL), those currently below grade level or even high achievers, all benefit tremendously from participating in the Grade Level Proficiency Project (GLPP). The program is in place at Dunbar, Sonoma Charter School and Sassarini, and are all providing outstanding student academic improvement in just the first year! In addition, the academic progress builds self confidence in the child which goes a long way to continued future educational success.

“GLPP is designed to catch kids before they fall; the program provides the learning foundation upon which future success is built,” says Melanie Blake, principal at Dunbar Elementary School. “It complements our common core work and offers the best learning

opportunity for every child at Dunbar Elementary School. Our plan is to enhance the outreach to K-5 so every child leaves Dunbar prepared for the rigors of future learning. We are grateful beyond words for the community support that has made our program a reality.”

Why is this project working so well?

- Provides coaching and professional support for the teachers
- Provides instructional support to include a modified instructional model
- Provides independent, individually paced learning for every student as foundation to integrated common core learning
- Utilizes state of the art technology, iPads and engaging software integrated in to the classroom daily
- Focuses on first, second and third grade students



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Teachers, instructional assistants, principals and students all embrace and rave about the program

What are the takeaways and early indicators/metrics of student performance and success?

- Early implementation of GLPP is critical at first grade, as it establishes the foundation for success and growth.
- Reading by the third grade is essential for continued academic progress and educational student success.
- Better results are achieved the earlier you introduce GLPP
- Best student progress test results in first grade compared to introduction of GLPP at third grade

Reading 2015 Test results using Lexia (the reading software program):

First grade progress in less than one year:

- Dunbar students: 20 percent were within grade level initially, and 76 percent were within grade level in May 2015



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- Sonoma Charter: 27 percent of the students were initially within grade level and progressed to 78 percent in May

- Sassarini students: 18 percent were initially within grade level and 81 percent were within grade level or above in May

Mathematics 2015 Test results using Dreambox (the math software program):

First grade progress in less than one year:

- Dunbar students: 7 percent were within grade level initially and 98 percent within or above grade level in May 2015
- Sonoma Charter: 10 percent initially within grade level and 95 percent within or above in May
- Sassarini students: 2 percent were within or above grade level initially and progressed to 100 percent in May 2015

Kevin Kassebaum, director of Sonoma Charter School, say the results of the program have been remarkable.



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“Every class has achieved significant gains in both language arts and mathematics,” says Kassebaum. “The GLPP is an effective, efficient blended learning program. Our students were also highly motivated to participate regardless of their academic ability.”

The metrics are outstanding, but we need to ensure that we have a program which is sustainable and scalable. This is our charge for this next year.

The initial funding for GLPP came from private investors and this past year the Sonoma Valley Unified School District and the Sonoma Valley Education Foundation jointly funded the project. The major contributor in 2014/2015 was the Sonoma Vintners and Growers from Wine Country Weekend, which contributed over \$250,000 to support GLPP.

This dream is becoming a reality and the next two years will ensure that our hopes are fulfilled – that every student is within grade level in reading and math. What an achievement that will be for our community that has student demographics which challenge our educators every day. When successful, this will become a model for educators and students everywhere.

Roseland in Sonoma County has expressed keen interest in GLPP and would consider adopting the program if we were able to make it available and support it successfully. So this demand for GLPP is just another important indicator of the success we have seen to date!

All of us can assist in making this dream come true. We will need your support and ongoing investment this coming school year to fund the critical GLPP professional visionary implementation staff in our schools.

This is not an impossible dream!

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Gary Nelson is the founder of Nelson Family of Companies.



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