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Contact: Coleen King
Phone: 517.333.2048
Email: coleen@kingmedianow.com
Website: KingMediaNow.com

1555 Watertower Place, Suite 200
East Lansing, MI 48823
517.333.2048

kingmedianow.com

Kids Read Now Program Makes Significant Impact for Grand Haven Students

GRAND HAVEN, MI: In its first year, a reading program designed to reduce the “summer slide” in Grand Haven elementary students helped nearly 65% of student participants grow or maintain their reading level.

Through the Kids Read Now program, Grand Haven students in kindergarten through third grade received 10,298 new books over the summer, for an average of 7 books per participant. Students who signed up for the program got to select their own books, which increased the likelihood of consistent summer reading.

“We’ve tried a number of things to encourage summer reading for our students, but it’s hard to do when you don’t see them,” says Mary Jane Evink, GHAPS Executive Director of Instructional Services. “The Department of Education endorses this program because it is backed by research – which shows when students have access to high-quality books of their choosing, they are more likely to read.”

To measure program effectiveness, GHAPS compared reading assessment data from May and October 2019. While the outcomes for all ages were encouraging, the program was especially successful for students moving from kindergarten to first grade. On average, that age group experienced no slide after reading at least six books through the program.

Literacy is a major indicator of student success. Studies show that children who can read at grade level by third grade are far more likely to have desirable outcomes later in life.

Programs like Kids Read Now do require a financial investment, which makes community support essential. For Summer 2019, this program was fully funded by a generous donation from the Grand Haven Schools Foundation (GHSF) and a subsidy from the Michigan Department of Education.

“Our community has a wonderful pattern of wrapping its arms around causes that invest in our children. They understand that if we’re not investing in our children, we’re not investing in our future,” says Hannah Olechnowicz, GHSF Executive Director. “This program was enticing to us because it allows the parents to be strategically involved, and through testing, donors can see measurable results.”

“GHAPS is incredibly grateful to our community for this support and we are thrilled that literacy is so important to our community,” says Evink. “We are lucky to be a part of a community that cares deeply about learning.”

Grand Haven Area Public Schools is a district of distinction for students preschool through 12th grade. With a goal of providing exceptional educational experiences, GHAPS is committed to success for all students and strives to provide exemplary programs and opportunities to meet the diverse needs of students.

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