

Accelerating Reading Growth with Relevant Content

Horizons Summer Program at Norwalk Community College

AT A GLANCE

After discovering The Juice from a list of resources sent out by Horizons, Rachel Zack implemented it with her 6th graders. Over the 6 week program, she found that it helped build reading skills and engagement with her students.

HORIZONS AT NORWALK COMMUNITY COLLEGE STATS

Horizons at Norwalk Community College is a tuition-free academic and enrichment program serving under-resourced students from the Norwalk, CT community.



6

Weeks in the summer



120

Pre-K- 8th grade students



97%

High school graduation rate for students who participate

CHALLENGES

- Preventing summer learning loss by enhancing reading skills
- Motivating middle school students to read during the summer

SOLUTION

Using The Juice to engage students and build informational text skills



The Juice
Current Events

RESULTS

1

Reading Growth

Students showed significant growth in their reading scores at the end of the program.

2

Student Buy In

Students found the topics in The Juice relevant and pertinent to their individual interests.



A RESOURCE TO SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT

As a teacher in her third summer with the Horizons summer program, Rachel Zack was looking for resources to captivate her twelve 6th-grade students throughout their 6 weeks together. She discovered The Juice from an email that was sent to the summer teachers and thought it was the perfect solution to grab her students' attention and enhance their reading skills.

“Teaching summer school for middle schoolers can be challenging,” said Zack. “I was trying to find a platform similar to the virtual platforms they are already using, so finding The Juice was amazing.”

While the Horizons directors provided teachers with potential resources, Zack liked that she had the autonomy to create her own curriculum. After speaking with the program’s leadership, she decided to implement The Juice on the days when her students had access to the computer lab, typically 2 to 3 days a week during their hour-long ELA block.

Zack introduced The Juice to her students and used a combination of instructional strategies, including modeling, discussions, and independent exploration to effectively engage her students. In the first week, Zack had students read articles in The Daily Juice together as a class or as partners. As the weeks progressed, she observed that students enjoyed reading the articles independently, allowing them to select the articles that piqued their individual interests.

Additionally, Zack harnessed the articles and questions in The Juice to reinforce informational text skills, such as identifying the main idea and practicing inferencing.


“I liked that students could choose their own learning path with the articles they wanted to read, and it was also good that I could see how students were doing on the quizzes,” stated Zack. “It was great that The Juice was student-centered and the students appreciated it too.”

POSITIVE EFFECTS ON READING GROWTH

At the beginning and conclusion of the program, reading specialists assessed the students on their reading skills using the STAR growth report. At the end of the program, the students in Zack’s class showed significant growth in their reading comprehension based on the results of the assessment.

“It was great that The Juice was student-centered and the students appreciated it too.”

Rachel Zack
Teacher
Horizons at Norwalk
Community College



Caitlin Fernandez, who served as a reading specialist in the program, administered the assessments to students in Rachel's class and noticed that Rachel's class exhibited the most significant growth in scores compared to every other class within the pre-K through 8th-grade program.

"When we tested the students at the end of the program we found that students in Rachel's class achieved an average growth of 35 points or the equivalent of 1.5 years growth," said Fernandez.

Zack attributed this growth to using The Juice.

STUDENT BUY IN WITH THE JUICE

Zack observed that students were enthusiastic about The Juice's content because it featured topics that were either highly relevant or ones they had encountered on social media.

"The student buy-in with The Juice was definitely a huge factor as to why I think they did so well on the test," said Zack. "Students were reading something they were actually interested in while still practicing skills like finding the main idea or inferencing."

Although Zack only had students read The Juice on the days they went to the computer lab, she noticed that students chose to read it at home on the days they didn't read it in the program.

"One of the biggest successes was students coming up to me the next day and showing me that they read The Juice at home or telling me about an article they read on The Juice at home," Zack shared.

By using The Juice, Zack was able to engage students in reading over the summer and support Horizon's mission of closing the opportunity gap and providing students with a chance to learn and grow.

ABOUT THE JUICE

The Juice is an interactive learning platform that delivers five timely current events articles at four reading levels to help students build literacy. Educators and students receive daily rigorous short-form content, vocabulary, infographics, videos, embedded scaffolds, formative assessment, progress monitoring, data-informed instruction, and more! Standards-aligned, The Juice provides educators with flexibility and can be used with core instruction, intervention, enrichment, credit recovery, and extended day/year programs.