



Jones-HELP Math Pilot Background

The Jones Center for Families, Inc., and HELP Math collaborated on a project designed to help Hispanic parents in their efforts to support their children's education. This project is an extension of the successful HELP (Help with English Language Proficiency) Math program implementation in Springdale and Rogers school districts in Northwest Arkansas.

One unexpected outcome of implementation of HELP Math in schools was that teachers found the web-based intervention to be a great tool for parent involvement. An added benefit of HELP is that passwords are portable and may be used at home, community center, library or wherever the student has broadband access; some parents of Hispanic students were using HELP Math at home alongside their child, although to date there had not been an explicit effort to include parents in the program. The HELP Math team has been told by teachers that the program is an "empowering" tool for some ELL (English language learner) parents as it makes them feel more able to help their children learn math, and in the process, also improve their own math, English and technology skills.

The Jones Center-HELP Math Pilot built on the positive experience. The program was conducted at the Jones Center for Families in order that students can continue learning while they are away from school and so their parents can become familiar and comfortable with the program as well.

Jones-HELP Math Pilot Description

The pilot brought parents and students together at the Jones Center to explore learning math online via the HELP Math program. Ten students and their parents in Springdale participated in this six-week pilot, conducted each Saturday in autumn 2008. Below is the schedule of activities:

Session 1: Introduction to HELP Math Program at the Jones Center (assessment of need and level math, English, Spanish, homework help)

Session 2: HELP – Math use online program, tips on doing homework with your children (focus on technology and math)

Session 3: HELP – Math use online program (focus on math and English language development, social psychologist visit)

Session 4: HELP – Math use online program, tips on how to connect with your child's teacher (focus on math and English language development, teacher visit)

Session 5: HELP – Math use online program, more tips on doing homework with your children (focus on math and English language development, social psychologist visit)

Session 6: HELP – Math use online program; Awards Ceremony

Jones-HELP Math Initial Findings

The post-pilot evaluations show:

- 90% of the families participated in every session, which shows interest and commitment.
- On the parent self-assessment where 1 represents no proficiency and 10 high, all participants marked themselves as fluent in Spanish (10) with mixed levels of English reading and writing competence, ranging from none (1) to medium-high (8).
- On the same parent self-assessment, participants marked themselves with mixed levels of computer skills, ranging from 0-8 and mathematics ability, ranging from 5-8.
- 100% of families expressed interest in continuing to use HELP at the Jones Center for Families.
- 100% of parents said they would like to continue to use the program with their child; less than 10% said they would use the program on their own.
- 75% of families said that they would use HELP if the only thing provided was the computer, broadband, and program access (i.e., they did not need the child care or transport).
- 38% of families said that they would use HELP on their own, but would prefer to use HELP as part of a structured program (similar to the pilot). There were a number of write-in comments saying that the social psychologist was most helpful.
- Two months after the end of the official pilot, about 55% of participating families continued to use HELP after-school at the Jones Center, as shown by HELP time-on-task records.

About HELP Math

The HELP Math program was created as a suite of products that serve the needs of Hispanic English language learners (ELLs) and other students in-need while addressing important, timely trends in education and technology. HELP Math consists of over 200 hours of standards-aligned interactive math content for elementary and middle school students, grades 3-8. The HELP Math instructional intervention has undergone rigorous formative and summative research for the past four years. HELP Math research is conducted by the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and funded by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) and previously by the Colorado Department of Education. Academic gains have been significant with more than 70% increase in math test scores in the target population and 40% gains when research was extended to include high school students. Last year was the first year that the program was implemented outside of a research environment.

HELP Math is currently being used by more than 7,000 students in nine states. With support from the Walton Family Foundation grant, HELP Math is being used in eight schools in the Springdale Public and six schools in the Rogers Public Schools. HELP Math engages students through multimedia lessons (incorporates voice, music, games, visuals, text, animations, contextual hints, real-world scenarios and interactivity) that break down math terms and concepts, so that students can easily understand and retain the math content. The program emphasizes technical math and other academic vocabulary and prior concept knowledge, and it also develops problem-solving and test-taking skills such as how to read, comprehend, and answer standardized test questions. It is the only supplementary web-based program to use *Sheltered Instruction*. Sheltered Instruction is based on an important pedagogical foundation: an understanding that a profound link exists between language proficiency and content knowledge (e.g. mathematics, science). It is a proven approach which uses specific instructional strategies such as visuals, repetition, and reliance on prior knowledge to

make subject-content instruction comprehensible to students while simultaneously developing the learner's overall English language abilities.

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(Visit the HELP website and see the “HELP Boosts Achievement” video, filmed as part of the Jones Center project.)