Funding the Future of Reading at Dutchman Creek Middle School

At Dutchman Creek Middle School in Rock Hill, South Carolina, media specialist Amy McMichael oversees a library that is truly the central hub of campus life. It's a space where students play arcade games, participate in STEAM challenges, do yoga, and most importantly, learn to love reading. Amy's philosophy: "You have to get them in the door before you can put books in their hands," and her creative programming makes sure they do.

After years of using a district-created dashboard that tracked only books read, Amy wanted a more equitable and impactful approach that emphasized time spent reading, not just the number of titles completed. Amy knew that Beanstack was the tool to make this shift possible. The only challenge? Funding. Discovering Beanstack's built-in fundraising functionality was a game-changer. A schoolwide reading fundraiser at the start of the year sparked excitement and paid for the program itself.

> **"** I was literally doing a reading fundraiser to pay for a reading program—and it worked!
>
> **Amy McMichael**
> Media Specialist, Dutchman Creek Middle School, SC

It Started With a Fundraiser… and a Chicken Costume!

Dutchman Creek kicked off the year with a high-energy reading fundraiser that didn't just raise money, it laid the groundwork for increased reading engagement throughout the year.

- **Reading with Purpose:** Students logged their minutes in Beanstack to earn incentives and fund the program. Amy tracked progress on a large bulletin board outside the library, building momentum from day one.

- **Principal in the Spotlight:** When the school hit its fundraising goal, the principal promised to dress in a giant inflatable chicken costume for the day. For the reading goal, he volunteered to be duct-taped to the wall. Needless to say, students couldn't get enough.

- **From Fundraiser to Foundation:** Students embraced logging as a daily habit, motivated by their growing reading streaks rather than just prizes.

Engaging Teachers and Growing Momentum

Amy knew meaningful teacher participation was essential for the program's success, so she focused on building engagement in the classroom.

- **Classroom Integration:** Amy encouraged teachers to use Beanstack during silent reading or as a daily warm-up, weaving it naturally into classroom routines.

- **Friendly Competition:** Inter-class challenges sparked fun rivalries and boosted engagement among students and staff alike.

- **A Community-Driven Approach:** The reading fundraiser bulletin board transformed into a central place where the school celebrated top readers and impressive circulation numbers.

Outcomes & Impact

Dutchman Creek's creative and student-centered approach to using Beanstack has led to measurable and meaningful results.

- **Increased Circulation:** The school's average checkouts rose from 12 books per student in 2023 to 20 in 2024, a nearly 70% increase.

- **Widespread Participation:** Dutchman Creek has surpassed 80% student participation, with many maintaining streaks and embracing monthly challenges.

- **Sustainable Funding:** By using Beanstack's fundraiser functionality, Amy has established a self-sustaining model, ensuring the program's future.

LOOKING AHEAD

With Beanstack now an essential part of campus life and reading culture on the rise, Amy is already planning for summer reading, ongoing monthly challenges, and next year's reading fundraiser. "This is just the beginning," she said. "We've built the habits. Now we get to grow them."

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