

School Spotlight

Cultivating a Culture of Reading at Ventura Elementary

Media specialist Taryn Kalsch can confidently say, “Ventura Elementary Tigers are READERS!” This hasn’t always been the case. In a few short weeks, Ventura went from a total of nine minutes logged in Beanstack to achieving the ninth spot in the Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) leaderboard—a district of over 300 schools! Ventura Elementary boosted participation quickly and efficiently through staff training, parent outreach, and classroom visits. They’re building excitement and keeping the momentum going with a community goal and friendly competition.



“ The students and staff are watching Ventura climb the ranks [in Beanstack] and it is driving them to not only log, but to read for fun!

Taryn Kalsch

Media Specialist

Ventura Elementary School

Goals

The school's primary objective was to foster a strong reading culture and inspire students to read for fun. Specifically, Ventura aimed to increase student participation in Beanstack and reach a community goal of 225,000 minutes before winter break.



Building Awareness: Timing is Everything

Taryn collaborated with media clerk Ruth Orosco and school and district admin to bring energy and intention to the training and outreach process.

- **Staff Training:** Along with OCPS resource teacher Jennifer Norton, Taryn and Ruth led a training session about Beanstack and digital media resources offered through the district.
- **Parent Outreach** Just hours after the session, freshly trained staff shared information about Beanstack with families at a school open house.
- **Classroom Visits:** In the following days, Taryn and Ruth visited classrooms to offer storytimes and teach students how to log minutes in Beanstack.

Creating Excitement: Competition, Rewards, and a Little Mystery

- **Friendly Competition:** Sharing the top-performing grades each week created a buzz among students, who worked hard to snag the top slot on the school leaderboard.
- **Rewarding Teachers:** Ventura's principal provided fun incentives, like goodie bags and extra classroom supplies, to teachers who brought students to the library. This boosted both reading time and library circulation.
- **A Community Goal:** Ventura set a community goal with the promise of a special surprise at the end. Curiosity proved to be motivating and students rallied together to meet the goal before winter break.

Outcomes

Ventura Elementary's efforts led to remarkable results within a single week, and they haven't slowed down.

- In just a week, the school went from no participation to 20,000 minutes logged and 54% participation.
- Ventura students reached their community goal and were rewarded with a special "Polar Express" reading and viewing party.
- They reached 80% student participation in just three months, achieving the Beanstack Reading Culture Trailblazer award.

CONCLUSION

Ventura Elementary's success demonstrates the power of shared vision and collaborative effort. By uniting the school community, providing timely training and communication, and maintaining enthusiasm, Taryn sparked a culture shift at her school and created genuine excitement for books and reading.