

## SUCCESS STORY

# Reading Motivation Soars at Robstown Independent School District With Beanstack

In 2018, librarians, educators, and administrators in Robstown Independent School District (ISD) outside of Corpus Christi, Texas, launched a district-wide mission to ramp up motivation for independent reading. While they recognized the importance of more fully engaging their students in reading, they also realized that finding a platform to serve the district's five schools and 2,588 students, spanning elementary to high school ages—72.7% who identify as a minority—would be no small feat. To achieve this transformation, the district looked to Beanstack as their platform of choice, with Jessica Juarez, district librarian at Robstown Early College High School, leading the implementation.

Six years later, Beanstack remains the school's reading motivation tool and a key contributor to its thriving reading culture, which has steadily improved despite the disruptions of the pandemic. Not only are educators observing progress toward independent reading across the district, but Juarez also noted, "Now, students are active participants in our reading culture and continue to motivate each other, creating more and more positive momentum."

"Beanstack has been a game-changer for our district," Juarez shared. "With its ease of use, we spend more time on the creativity and promotion of reading than on data reports and creating materials. Beanstack makes it easy to recognize students and staff for even the smallest milestone in their independent reading journey." Onward!



# From Pain Points to Progress in Reading



When Juarez and her colleagues adopted Beanstack to increase sustained district-wide enthusiasm for reading, one of her primary concerns was the status quo—students simply read as a means to an end. “Our previous program, Accelerated Reader, lacked any way to motivate students to read independently,” she said. “Students simply read books to take quizzes and get points.” One of the issues that Juarez pinpointed was the lack of freedom students had in choosing their reading material. Similarly, the approach was one-size-fits-all, without options tailored to those students who would benefit from additional support or more challenging material. With Beanstack, Juarez recognized an

opportunity to correct these issues. “What inspired me about Beanstack was the ability to get to the root cause of low reading motivation,” Juarez said. “Here was a platform with features specifically designed to increase motivation by actually getting students excited to read,” she added. “The flexibility to tailor reading to each student’s unique gifts and abilities is absolutely critical in our district. What’s more, the Beanstack reading challenge features have transformed our district’s reading culture with opportunities to center a joyful community experience.”



# Robstown's Reading Challenges Ramp Up the Adventure



After six years with Beanstack, Robstown ISD has hit its stride with running reading challenges and keeping students and staff engaged and excited. Juarez shared that they base their district-wide challenges around a central theme each school year. For the 2023-24 school year, their overall theme is "Passport to Reading." Each challenge builds the narrative, from the first—in which students "get ready for the adventure"—to the last, when the theme launches them into international travel. Within the larger arc of the yearlong theme, the district also includes genre challenges (such as reading a mystery) to encourage students to try new types of books.

These challenges align with reporting periods, running six weeks to ensure they work well for teachers and students. The shorter time frame also allows them to tally each period and create an important sense of completion—and ongoing excitement—for the community. Each challenge concludes with a celebration, which is yet another way to build excitement, motivation, and community around a culture of reading. "The Beanstack challenges have provided librarians a simple yet engaging way to involve students and their families in the reading journey. It's an invaluable tool in creating captivating, creative, and celebratory challenges," Juarez said.



# All Aboard on the Journey to Success



According to Juarez, the path to success in Robstown has taken a few twists and turns. “Initially, we struggled to implement Beanstack because we started training the staff in the middle of the school year. Then, the following year, the pandemic hit. It was harder to get buy-in with students when they weren’t on campus,” she said.

Despite these headwinds, Juarez shared that she and her colleagues are now thrilled with the results of Beanstack and glad they stayed the course, noting that, “For the past three years, it’s really taken off!” Junior high and high school teachers were the first to take initiative, with history teachers now running their own mini-challenges for their classes and one teacher even doing a mini six-week challenge based on news articles. While elementary teachers were slower to fully adopt Beanstack, they’ve also become believers, based on seeing their students’ increased excitement to read, Juarez explained. “Now they can say to their students, ‘You’re done with your work; okay, go read!’”

Librarians are the biggest cheerleaders within this new and improved reading culture. This school year, librarians rode the wave of increased enthusiasm. They even implemented Friday morning “shout-outs” during school announcements, spotlighting the reading achievements of individual students, staff, and classes.

“One piece of advice I would give someone looking to grow their district’s love of reading is to make reading visible and celebratory. Begin creating a culture of reading that recognizes reading as a joyful and communal experience.”



# A Love of Reading Blossoms in Robstown



With Beanstack, educators and administrators in Robstown ISD now see progress in their goal of fostering a deep, lifelong love of learning through reading. Despite the early issues in implementation due to the pandemic, Juarez reported that participation in reading challenges has risen by over 25% for high school and over 70% for junior high in the past year. But that's not all. The district is also watching with pride as evidence of a reading culture takes root across the community. The circulation of books has increased by 63% over the past three years, and high school participation in their Family Literacy Nights has increased by nearly 35%.

Juarez noted that different stakeholders are excited for different reasons. Administrators are pleased to see the number of minutes read in their district and other granular insights afforded by Beanstack, while teachers and administrators alike are excited by reading students'

book reviews, which demonstrate increased writing skills and comprehension. Student book reviews, in particular, have become a focal point around which Juarez has harnessed momentum. "Student book reviews have greatly increased, and the reviews are better written," she said. She now has a full display dedicated to student book reviews for easier student browsing. "Other students use the book reviews to help them select their next book," she added.

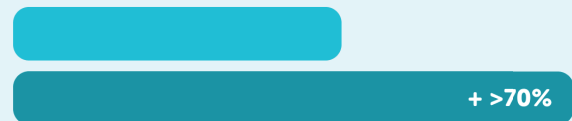
## Participation in Reading Challenges

- Last year
- This year

### High School



### Junior High



## Over the past three years



**63%**

increase in circulation of books



**35%**

increase in Family Literacy Night participation



# Reflections on a Newly Joyful and Thriving Reading Culture



Juarez and her colleagues have their reasons for loving Beanstack. The reading challenges have helped them get to know more students and the circulation numbers for books have increased. Additionally, the elementary library makerspace is getting more use now due to activities incorporated into reading challenges. And perhaps best of all, more and more students are asking for specific new titles, showing to Juarez and fellow librarians that students are becoming active participants in shaping their reading journeys.

“Students are more motivated to read regularly—that lifelong habit we want to create—and it facilitates community engagement. All campuses in the district can connect on this platform and not just compete with each other but also encourage each other. Our reading culture is now being nourished as a solitary activity and a dynamic and central part of our community.”





## About Beanstack

Beanstack helps public and school libraries effortlessly facilitate reading challenges and reading fundraisers. The flagship product of Zoobean Inc., Beanstack is licensed by over 10,000 public libraries, school districts, and corporations around the world. Its investors include Mark Cuban from ABC's Shark Tank and its founding members were previously Washington, D.C.'s teacher of the year and Google's first head of K-12 education outreach. To learn more, visit [beanstack.com](https://beanstack.com).