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A Boys & Girls Club Story

How to switch on the light bulb about learning for children who tune out in school?

The Boys & Girls Club of Collier County offers an answer: TUNE *in*[™] to READING.

Initiated by Lisa Morse, the club's vice president of operations, TUNE *in*[™] to READING is up and running within the club's current summer camp after a successful launch during after-school programs last year.

"Boys and Girls Clubs are always looking to improve academics and life skills, but it's very hard for youth development people to teach reading," she explains. "This is a way to do that and achieve real outcomes without having it seem like school."

The club's young members think the software is all about singing - but data from the after-school program show children improving their reading, on average, by 1.53 grade levels in just 9 weeks.

Ms. Morse first heard about the software from a colleague and found a private grant to pay for it. She used the grant to match federal "21st Century Community Learning Center" funding, which is a key source of support for her club's after-school programs.

TUNE *in*[™] to READING appealed to Ms. Morse for a number of reasons. First and foremost, she saw how much fun it was and she was impressed by the research by literacy experts at the University of South Florida showing significant gains for struggling readers. She also saw it would be easy to implement because she could use existing staff - and the recommended 9-week time frame made it simple to build into her schedule with two sessions per week. She even added her perspective to a presentation about TUNE *in*[™] to READING at a conference on best practices in after-school and summer programming for 21st Century Community Learning Centers grantees.

The positive experience within the after-school program convinced her to expand the program for the 4th and 5th graders in her summer camp. "There's a lot of research about summer learning loss," she adds. Middle-class kids go on exotic vacations, attend drama or computer or sports camps and often work on academics through the summer. For disadvantaged kids, this is rarely the case - except at the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County, where camp includes fun, games and field trips plus math activities and TUNE *in*[™] to READING.

The best part? "They really like it!" Morse says.