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Address: Sparwood Elementary School
            1436 E Highland Road
            Cloverdale, WV 26884

            (PH) (486)278-3876

Project name: Mission Possible: Science Simulations for Success

Reason for grant: Mission Possible is a four-week program that will meet four hours each
            day, four days a week. Thirty students, selected to participate based on
            academic need, will complete classroom preparatory activities and
            participate in problem-based learning simulations in coordination with
            the Challenger Learning Center at Wheeling Jesuit University.

Grant request: $9,300

Tax status: Sparwood Elementary School is a public school and is tax-exempt.

Total project budget: $10,000

Dates covered by project Four weeks

Director: Julia Colaw, Project Director
             Julie@right2.edu

PROJECT

Mission Possible: Science Simulations for Success

Prepared for: Brian Knight
                  Vice President

Prepared by: Julie Colaw
                  Project Director

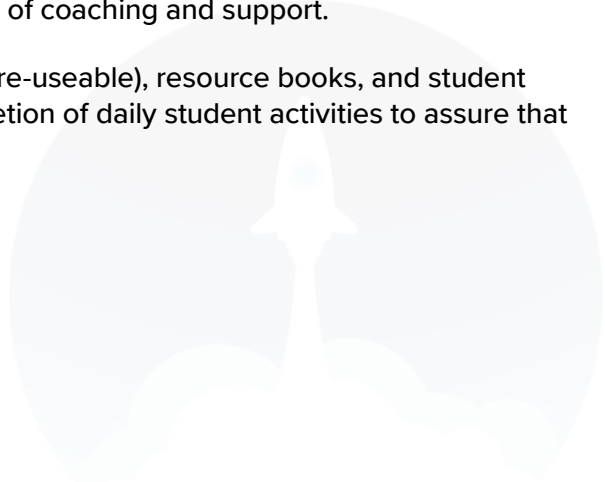# TABLE OF CONTENTS

⚛ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Objective...

- It is critical that our students become "thinkers" and are able to synthesize and apply the knowledge that they gain to real-world situations.

- There is an educational gap for at-risk students during the summer months. Summer programs for students at Sparwood Elementary School will provide educational experiences to at-risk students and help close the achievement gap.

The Opportunity...

- Prior to the four-week summer program, teachers at Sparwood Elementary School will be provided with professional development on using high-yield research-based instructional strategies through a RESA VIII training session.

- Students will experience high levels of academic growth and engagement during the preparation and implementation of two innovative simulation-based learning experiences.

The Solution...

- Mission Possible will provide professional development opportunities for all teachers at Sparwood Elementary School, centered on science content, the pedagogy of simulations-based learning, and the use of technology in teaching. At least 80% of teachers at Sparwood Elementary School will participate in the professional development session to be provided.

- The hiring of three teachers for Mission Possible will allow cooperative student teams to work with adequate levels of coaching and support.

- Science supplies (consumable and re-useable), resource books, and student incentives are necessary for completion of daily student activities to assure that Mission Possible is a success.

🔵 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Sparwood Elementary School is a K-6 facility with 620 students. Located in Grant County in the scenic Potomac Highlands, Sparwood Elementary is the heart of our rural community. The poultry, farming, and timber industries are the primary sources of income. Fifty-six percent of Sparwood Elementary Students receive free or reduced meals. The unemployment rate in Grant County is 8.6%, which is an increase of 8% from ten years ago. Twenty-one percent of Grant County children live in poverty. The average family income in Grant County is $27,743. Almost 20% of Grant County adults scored at Level 1, the lowest level of literacy skills. These adults typically have difficulty performing everyday tasks such as locating an intersection on a street map, reading and comprehending a newspaper article, or calculating total costs on an order form. Therefore it is not surprising that these parents, and possibly others, may be unable to provide their children with the support needed to help them reach their academic potential. This is particularly problematic for students who fall behind their grade-level peers. Research indicates that children living in rural and low-income communities often fall behind academically during the summer months. Summer programs for students at Sparwood Elementary School will provide educational experiences to at-risk students and help close the achievement gap.

Sparwood Elementary School's most recent Stanford Achievement Test 9 (SAT 9) results showed that Special Education students learning at Sparwood Elementary did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Results from the following year WESTEST also showed a lack of adequate yearly gains by the Special Education subgroup of students. Consequently, Sparwood Elementary School has been placed on School Choice and is designated as a Title I Improvement School.

Staff members at Sparwood Elementary School are committed to assuring success for all students. Goal 2 in Sparwood Elementary School's Unified School Improvement Plan states "The students at Sparwood Elementary School will meet (AYP)... as established by the West Virginia Department of Education." Our first improvement objective is "...PES staff will analyze test data to determine grade-level strengths and weaknesses. Teachers will develop and initiate re-teaching strategies to provide intensive instruction to students in the lowest quartile." Analysis of last year's science test scores has been completed and a partial comparison of scores is shown below.
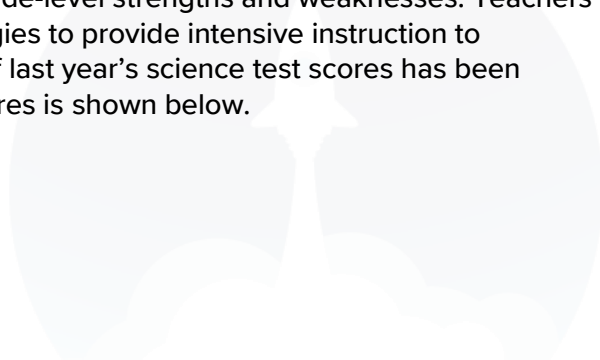
Table 1: Previous Year WESTEST Science Results

Grade Level – Cell	% below mastery	Grade Level - Cell	% below mastery
3- All Students	18	5- All Students	27
3- Students with Disabilities	31	5- Students with Disabilities	56
3- Economically Disadvantaged	27	5- Economically Disadvantaged	35
4- All Students	21	6- All Students	14
4- Students with Disabilities	60	6- Students with Disabilities	38
4- Economically Disadvantaged	28	6- Economically Disadvantaged	24

WESTEST previous year results from Sparwood Elementary show higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities in each grade level not reaching levels of proficiency compared to the "All Students" cell. Further analysis of test scores showed specific areas in which there are problematic trends across grade levels and subgroups. These areas are: interpreting data, drawing conclusions from data, inferring using evidence, using reason in making decisions, drawing conclusions, reasoning conclusions, impacts of technology, and identifying tasks to complete. The ability to interpret data showed the greatest number of questions on which scoring was below the 60th percentile. This is true for grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 and may indicate curricular or instructional strategies weaknesses.

The abilities to reason, draw conclusions, infer, solve problems and apply science concepts all require higher levels of thinking in Bloom's Taxonomy. It is critical that our students become "thinkers" and are able to synthesize and apply the knowledge that they gain to real-world situations. This will require a change in the way instruction is delivered from "teacher-directed" to student-centered classrooms. The use of high yield, research-based instructional strategies must be utilized to increase student achievement. Therefore, it is imperative that staff development focusing on effective research-based instructional strategies is part of the plan for increasing student achievement for all students. Mission Possible will provide professional development opportunities for all teachers at Sparwood Elementary School centered on science content, the pedagogy of simulations-based learning, and the use of technology in teaching.

The primary task of Mission Possible will be to address specific science content areas through participation in hands-on, student-centered instruction. At-risk students will be given priority in the selection process. Mission Possible staff will teach student participants learning strategies that will help them understand science content and apply that knowledge in real-life situations. This instruction will be delivered in coordination with the Challenger Learning Center at Wheeling Jesuit University and Eastern West Virginia Technical College.

Mission Possible

🔵 PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

The following outlines our projected programs and activities.

Goal 1: Prior to the four-week summer program, teachers at Sparwood Elementary School will be provided with professional development on using high-yield research-based instructional strategies through a RESA VIII training session.

Objective: At least 80% of teachers at Sparwood Elementary School will participate in the professional development session to be provided.

Activity: Research-Based Professional Development

The first phase of Mission Possible will be a professional development program provided through a RESA VIII staff at Sparwood Elementary School. The focus of the session will be the use of research-based instructional strategies through Problem-Based Learning (PBL) scenarios. Particular focus of this training will be on the strategies of cooperative learning, setting objectives and providing feedback, and using cues, questions, and advanced organizers. All of these are strategies that will be utilized for student instruction throughout the Mission Possible summer program.

A study of the use of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, Nelson & Skon 1981) shows that cooperative learning, when compared with strategies in which students individually compete with others, has an effect size of .78. This same study also shows a .78 effect when compared with strategies in which students work individually on tasks without competing with each other.

Setting objectives is the process of determining the course for learning. It is a skill that successful people have mastered to help them realize both short-term and long-term desires (Marzano, Pickering and Pollock 2001). Specific strategies for teaching students to set specific but flexible goals or to set contracts for the attainment of goals will be addressed in this staff development session.

After analyzing almost 8,000 studies, researcher John Hattie (1992) had this to say about the importance of providing feedback: "The most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. The simplest prescription for improving education must be dollops of feedback." Teacher participants will be trained to provide corrective, timely, and criterion-specific feedback. Teachers will also learn strategies to help students provide some of their own feedback.

Cues and questions are ways that a teacher helps students utilize knowledge that they already have about a topic. Research in classroom behavior indicates that cueing and questioning might account for as much as 80 percent of what occurs in a given classroom on a given day (Davis, O.L., & Tinsley, 1967; Fillipone, 1998). Available research provides generalizations that can guide teachers in effective use of cues, questioning, and advanced organizers.

RESA VIII staff will provide training to maximize student benefits from all these strategies. Future professional development sessions related to research-based instructional strategies will be provided following analysis of this session's evaluation forms.

Goal 2: Students will experience academic growth and engagement during the preparation and implementation of two simulation-based learning experiences.

Objectives: Participants will show a 20% increase in ability to interpret data, a 20% increase in ability to draw conclusions from data, and a 20% increase in ability to infer using evidence. Participants will also show a 20% increase in ability to use reasoning in making decisions, a 20% increase in their ability to understand impacts of technology, and a 20% increase in their ability to identify tasks to complete.

Activities: Student Simulation-Based Learning Experiences

The first simulation, Operation Montserrat, is all about Earth's fragile systems and the interplay between life, land, air, and water. This simulation encourages students to take on the role of scientists by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data to solve real-life problems. At the end of the mission, the flight director conducts a post-mission briefing and reviews the event, giving the young scientists the opportunity to evaluate what they have learned.
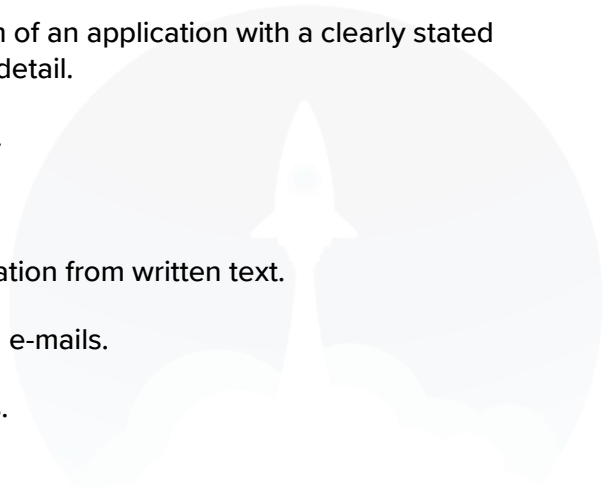
Throughout this mission, students will:

- Use tools and techniques to analyze and interpret data.
- Create descriptions, formulate explanations, and make predictions using evidence.
- Think critically and logically to determine relationships between evidence and explanations.
- Conduct a systematic risk analysis: identify the type of hazard, analyze the risks, and predict the human consequences.
- Graph incoming data using X, Y coordinates or latitude/longitude.
- Make estimates and predictions based on the data.
- Apply and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve problems.
- Communicate scientific thinking to peers, teachers, and others.
- Gain relevant knowledge of Earth systems and the interplay between life, land, air, and water.

The scenario used in the second simulation, Moon, Mars and Beyond, takes place in the year 2080. Mission controllers on Mars (Mission Possible Students) monitor a routine launch from our moon to Mars. Soon after the launch, Earth Mission Control blasts through with an urgent message. An exploration vessel has not communicated in five days. It is feared that the ship and its crew are lost somewhere in the far reaches of the solar system. Mission Control requests the help of student scientists in this rescue mission. The Mars Mission Controllers (Mission Possible Students) join one of five emergency teams and become one of three specialists: rescue, navigation, or cargo. The teams work together to find and rescue the lost explorers.

Throughout this mission, students will:

- Interpret data that tells where the ship has been spotted over the last five days.

- Use critical thinking skills to track the course of the lost ship and predict its current location.

- Use graphing skills to plot the location of each planet on an X – Y coordinate plane, locate and plot any unknown objects, and create a map of the ship's route.

- Use math skills to figure out how much food, water, and oxygen is required for the rescue, with two astronauts making the trip out and four coming back.

- Become familiar with earth systems science.

- Become familiar with the solar system and nine planets.

- Design a way to demonstrate scale.

- Apply prior knowledge of daily life in space, make inferences of similar concepts, and draw conclusions.

- Write a persuasive piece in the form of an application with a clearly stated position or opinion and supporting detail.

- Identify specific locations on a map.

- Use map symbols.

- Read to locate and interpret information from written text.

- Use context clues within letters and e-mails.

- Recall information to interpret clues.

🔷 PROJECT METHODS

In order to effectively implement the Mission Possible summer program, staff for this program must understand how inquiry and problem-based models of instruction work. Staff development will occur prior to implementation of Mission Possible and will be required for Mission Possible Staff. Mission Possible teachers must complete training from the RESA VIII as well as staff development activities from the Challenger Learning Center specific to implementation of Operation Montserrat and Moon, Mars and Beyond. These trainings will ensure that Mission Possible staff members are able to guide students through pre-flight and simulation activities with the maximum educational benefits using research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. The research-based strategies stated below will be the focus of staff development. Mission Possible teachers will utilize these strategies and others to assure student success in all aspects of this program.

A study of the use of cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, Nelson & Skon 1981) shows cooperative learning, when compared with strategies in which students individually compete with others, has an effect size of .78. This same study also shows a .78 effect when compared with strategies in which students work individually on tasks without competing with each other. Throughout the entire Mission Possible program, students will be immersed in activities with their cooperative learning teams.

Setting objectives is the process of determining the course for learning. It is a skill that successful people have mastered to help them realize both short-term and long-term desires (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock 2001). Strategies for teaching students to set specific but flexible goals or to set contracts for the attainment of goals will be addressed in a staff development session. Students will learn to set personal and team learning goals as an integral part of the Mission Possible curriculum. They will also learn how to evaluate these goals.

After analyzing almost 8,000 studies, researcher John Hattie (1992) had this to say about the importance of providing feedback: "The most powerful single modification that enhances achievement is feedback. The simplest prescription for improving education must be dollops of feedback." Teachers will be trained to provide corrective, timely, and criterion-specific feedback. They will also learn strategies to help students provide some of their own feedback. Again, this professional development session is required for Mission Possible staff. Mission Possible and Challenger Learning Center staff will provide ongoing feedback to Mission Possible students during pre-flight and simulation activities to assure a successful learning experience.

Cues and questions are ways that a teacher helps students utilize knowledge that they already have about a topic. Research in classroom behavior indicates that cueing and questioning might account for as much as 80 percent of what occurs in a given classroom on a given day (Davis, O.L., & Tinsley, 1967; Fillipone, 1998). Keeping this in mind, it is imperative that teachers maximize the benefits of cueing and questioning to encourage students to think and perform at higher levels. Mission Possible is based

upon a classroom environment where students work cooperatively in teams to identify, research, and solve problems; gather and interpret data, and apply their experiences to real-world situations. The teachers in Mission Possible activities will be cognitive coaches rather than "imparters of knowledge."

The use of technology is a large part of Mission Possible activities. Students will learn to use tools and techniques in the classroom and on the Internet to analyze and interpret data. Students will participate in online research and gather pertinent information to help them make and defend decisions in Mission Day activities. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recognizes the impact that computer technology is having on the world. The NAEYC states that the use of technology should be integrated into the regular learning environment and used as one of the many options to support children's learning.

Strategies in Review:

- RESA VIII staff development focused on inquiry and problem-based cooperative learning, setting objectives, providing feedback and effective use of cueing and questioning. (All Sparwood Elementary and Mission Possible Staff)

- Challenger Learning Center professional development specific to implementation of Operation Montserrat and Moon, Mars, and Beyond. (3 Mission Possible Staff plus available space for 27 other Sparwood Elementary teachers)

- Follow-up staff development session, Fall. Teachers will share how they were able to utilize information from this session. Further professional development needs in this area will be discussed.

- Mission Possible will utilize problem-based learning simulations in which the student assumes the role of an active problem solver and decision maker.

- Students will explore science content with teachers guiding this educational experience using high-yield research-based instructional strategies. Using inquiry and investigation the students will develop possible solutions to relevant problems.

- The use of technology is a large part of Mission Possible activities. Students will learn to use tools and techniques in the classroom and on the Internet to analyze and interpret data. Students will participate in online research and gather pertinent information to help them make and defend decisions in Mission Day activities.

- Mission Possible will provide students an opportunity to experience high levels of academic growth and engagement during the preparation and implementation of two innovative simulation-based learning experiences.

- Each simulation will involve nearly two weeks of pre-mission planning and research with culminating activities that are interactive, live broadcasts with flight directors at Challenger Learning Center's Mission Control.

Throughout the Mission Possible program, students are immersed in activities with their cooperative learning teams.

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