

EBOOKS, DESTINY, AND DIGITAL DEVICES: A FORMULA FOR LITERACY SUCCESS

CLAY HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
JACKSONVILLE | FLORIDA

How can districts use technology to improve literacy in struggling readers? The challenge of helping every student succeed can be addressed strategically and systemically with proper planning, collaboration, and the right resources. One important lesson learned? Struggling students feel more comfortable with individualized instruction through a device, and eBooks play a huge role in language and digital literacy.

Tracey Kendrick is a Principal in the school district of Clay County, Florida, which serves 36,000 students in 41 schools. Just a few years ago, Kendrick led the district in the development of a model for a technology-enabled school while she was at Clay Hill Elementary. Together with her colleague Tammy Taylor, Kendrick successfully implemented trailblazing technologies leading to significant gains in student achievement. Today, Kendrick and Taylor are applying what they achieved at Clay Hill to their new assignment at another school within the same district – Oakleaf Village Elementary.

“A student who reads because he or she wants to learn or experience or grow is a student who will continue to progress long after their first change agent (the educator who captures their imagination) is long gone.”

TRACEY KENDRICK
Principal at Oakleaf Village
Elementary School



THE STORY OF TRANSFORMATION

Between them, Tracey Kendrick and Tammy Taylor worked at Clay Hill Elementary for 10 years, and during that time, the duo transformed their impoverished, small, and rural school into a digital powerhouse. The school's at-risk students grew into some of the most digitally literate children in the district. The process resulted in a school that boasts new levels of reading and writing comprehension among their students and now serves

as a model for others in their district. Additionally, Clay Hill uses more eBooks in their program than any other Follett customer, and their students continue to make literacy gains while using this digital content.

At Oakleaf Village Elementary, Taylor and Kendrick are in the process of implementing the same 1:1 program as Clay Hill. As the school year unfolded in fall of 2016, Kendrick

and Taylor set out to improve literacy, digital and otherwise, for their new students. "We saw what the program did for the kids at Clay Hill," Taylor said, "and knew we just had to try to replicate that success at Oakleaf." With that in mind, Kendrick and Taylor garnered \$5,000 from the district's STEM director, to be spent explicitly on eBooks at Oakleaf Village Elementary.

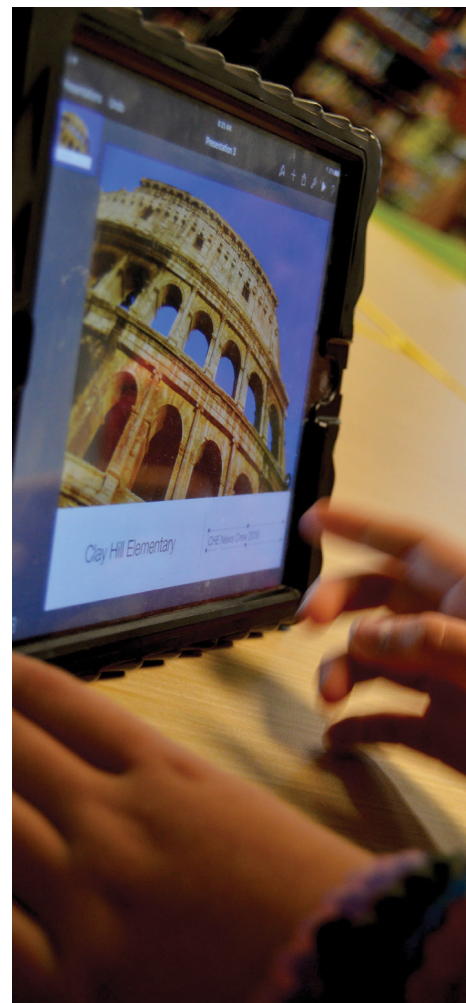
LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

When Kendrick arrived at Clay Hill years ago, she encountered profound poverty and students who were widely disengaged in learning. Those two issues combined to develop a severe opportunity gap between Clay Hill students and those at more affluent schools. "I was seeking ways to make education relevant and engaging for students while exposing them to more of the world," Kendrick shared. "Many of our students were neither reading at grade level, nor did they have access to books in their home. The closest county library was more than 10 miles from the school."

She soon realized the impact digital resources could have on these students, if she could only reach them. "I was excited to learn that many of my students had Internet access at home with a smartphone or another device," she said. Kendrick's plan to become a 1:1 school was approved, and the school purchased hundreds of iPads. "iPads had just hit the market and held great potential for transforming

learning, so that was the path we took," she said.

Students were understandably very excited by the opportunity to engage with content in this way, and Taylor, who also serves as a reading resource teacher, sought new ways to use the iPads to increase reading time and improve reading skill levels and test scores. From her perspective, the opportunity to build on the 1:1 program by investing in eBooks was clear, so she approached Kendrick with lists of books and the rationale for her choices. They shared an enthusiasm about the limitless prospects, and the very first order for eBooks was placed via Follett Titlewave®, which provided curriculum tags to ensure their new digital collection aligned with learning objectives.





TRANSFORMING A LITERACY PROGRAM

Taylor and Kendrick are putting into practice the lessons learned at Clay Hill in their effort to achieve new levels of literacy at Oakleaf Elementary. In addition to the recent purchase of eBooks for the school, they are collaborating with teachers and administrators to move the literacy needle continuously upward. “I got other teachers involved in what we’re trying to accomplish and had them share what books they were reading with their students, so they also could talk about books,” she said.

Past experience has shown Kendrick and Taylor the importance of using and sharing data across the school, and they are actively applying that

knowledge at Oakleaf. “Collaboration isn’t limited just to educators,” said Taylor. “Here at Oakleaf, we’re transferring the ownership of learning to the students themselves, and helping them see how they have control over their own learning.” Taylor went on to say, “I have shared their data and the research that shows them that their independent reading has huge effects on their performance. When they see the gains they are making, they are completely invested! I am very excited because this school will be getting Chromebooks within the next two years for every student, and I know from our experience at Clay Hill, student eBook usage will explode.”



“Struggling students appreciate the privacy a digital device provides. A tablet does not display the cover of the book they are reading, offering the opportunity to read and practice without fear or intimidation, even if someone is reading well below grade level. Students can enjoy books on the appropriate level without fear of embarrassment and, as we know, enjoyment of the experience is critical to developing a passion for reading.”

TAMMY TAYLOR

Title I Lead, 5th and 6th Grade ELA Specialist and Reading Coach
Oakleaf Village Elementary



ADDING DESTINY TO THE MIX

The use of eBooks at Oakleaf took some getting used to, and Taylor called upon her knowledge of and experience with Follett Destiny® to help her make the transition to using digital content a smooth one. Taylor and the library staff consistently rely on the features in Destiny to stretch student reading levels. “I have been using Follett Destiny Discover® with my new classes to get them acquainted with eBooks,” she said. “I chose some high-level, high-interest titles as well as some great lower-level, high-interest fiction titles for struggling readers. I made sure to include the books that are always checked out from my class library so I can direct students to eBooks when print versions are not available.”

Taylor also provides instruction outside of the library and works side by side with teachers. “Tammy will be working with the other teachers to show fifth graders how to use Destiny Discover,” said Kendrick. “She’s working with the

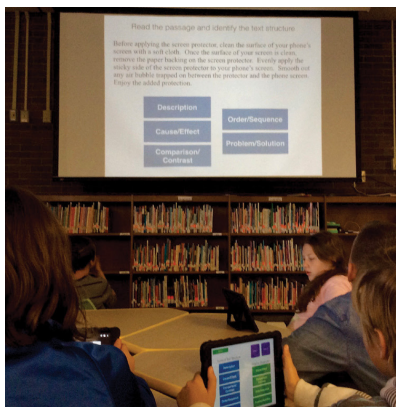
media tech first, in order to prepare her for the types of Destiny messages she will be receiving, and therefore she’ll know how to approve student reviews for publishing. She’ll share her findings with the staff in just a few months.”

Taylor and Kendrick are seeing how, with digital devices and content, their Oakleaf students are learning faster than they ever could have imagined. “It’s great to see how they take the lessons and extend that learning, and transfer their knowledge into other areas, almost without even thinking about it.”

“By the time I left Clay Hill,” Tammy says, “I felt that my third to sixth grade students were proficient users of Destiny and, most importantly, they were engaged, challenged, and motivated readers. Now here at Oakleaf, I’m applying everything we learned at Clay Hill, with a new focus on Destiny Discover. I love the simplicity of having all our resources

in one place – books, eBooks, and databases. I was very pleased to see the new interface and the ability to browse by topics that are graphical, so even younger students can be taught to use it.”

With Follett Destiny and eBooks in their arsenal at the new Oakleaf Village Elementary, both Taylor and Kendrick are confident in their students’ potential to become better readers, writers, critical thinkers, and collaborators. “Our students have so much promise, and we know we can promote learning and improve literacy across the board if we apply the same program we implemented at Clay Hill,” said Kendrick. “Those lessons are invaluable now as we set out to help every student at Oakleaf become more digitally literate, and help them develop the skills they’ll need for a successful future.”



“With eBooks and Destiny, struggling students felt a sense of equality and ownership and knew they were growing and accomplishing goals that were just as valuable as those of their peers.”

TRACEY KENDRICK
Principal
Oakleaf Village Elementary School