

8 May 2020

Project Evaluation Report
“eTravelers” TEAM Grant

Ms. Elizabeth Sanders, Grants Manager
Bradley/Cleveland Public Education Foundation
PO Box 4354
Cleveland, Tennessee 37320

Dear Elizabeth Sanders,

In early March, we sent out our letters of gratitude to all of our generous donors who supported the “eTravelers” Digital Library Bradley Cleveland Public Education Foundation [BCPEF] Team Grant initiative for 2019-2020 academic year and forwarded an email attachment copy of these four letters to you on the 3rd of March. On that same day we welcomed a visit from the BCPEF grant committee and showcased to a class of sixth graders the ease of accessing our Digital Library and some of its new offerings made possible through this generous grant.

On the 18th of November 2019, when we requested reimbursement, a copy of the expenditures was attached. In this email you will find additional copies of the invoices for the orders placed on OverDrive, detailing the specific titles selected in the five designated focused areas to fulfill the requirements of the written grant: Graphic Books; Audiobooks; STEAM; Multicultural; and Streaming Videos. On our library media center’s website, we’ve posted a video clip showcasing the “eTravelers” online library at: <http://www.ireadcms.com>

Making this digital shift at Cleveland Middle School Library Media Center nearly six years ago was a monumental milestone. The process began the 22nd of September in 2014, when we went live with our online circulating library of close to 500 new eBooks seeded by district funding sources. However, it wasn’t until February 2015 that our numbers started to grow substantially. By the close of our first year with our first BCPEF “eTravelers” TEAM Grant, we were able to double our initial collection, having by the start of summer 2015, a total of 1100 new eBooks, audiobooks, and streaming videos for our students and teachers to enjoy. At the start of 2015-2016, all of the incoming sixth graders were given an orientation which included an introduction as to how to access our digital library and each year thereafter. We did the same this year 2019-2020, adding a seventh and eighth grade orientation to remind students

about our digital library on OverDrive. Often when we mention to our students to look online for a requested book, their eyes light up and they are visibly intrigued by the idea that they can read or listen to a book or even watch a video from their computers, smartphones and tablets. This year we were awarded \$3,000 and added with the money 341 additional titles to our digital library at CMS, thanks to this BCPEF TEAM Grant. **So, at the close of our fifth year, as a district, we can boast of a digital collection of 5,225 copies of 4,860 titles, having spent close to \$69,613.75 to achieve this many titles. Of these, there are 3,121 eBook individual titles; 602 individual audiobooks; and 1,137 unique streaming videos!**

With the CMS Chromebook one-to-one initiative, each student is issued a laptop for the entire school year. Perhaps, this alone, has been the most significant development affecting our digital library since its inception; for now, all of our students have access to the digital library 24/7. Teachers regularly report that students are checking out items in class to read on their laptops during sustained reading times during R.T.I.. The convenience and the wider selection available has moved these tech-obsessed students to online reading. As teachers adjust their teaching practices to engage students more effectively, we are also finding that our online resources are being used in class to present content in a novel way; such as using one of our award-winning audiobooks to help sharpen a student's listening skills. Many of the titles were selected to relate to the curriculum, such as the thirteen episodes of Season 2 "*How the Earth was Made*," that covers in-depth many middle school science standards dealing with the Earth's Crust and natural disasters such as volcanoes with detailed graphics, diagrams and video footage. With spectacular on-location shooting from the Grand Canyon to Mt. St. Helens, evidence from geologists in the field, and clear, dramatic graphics help make this a stunning series from the History Channel, that shows how immensely powerful and at times violent, the geological forces can be that have formed our planet over millions of years. Or a series such as the seven episodes of Season 1 of "*The Ultimate Guide to the Presidents*" which deal with topical, relevant segments to help reinforce key concepts taught in history concerning the Constitution, Separation of Powers and a detailed look at the lives, service and influence of our Presidents. We've also added Seasons 1-4 of the popular television series "*The Magic School Bus*" where an eccentric school teacher, Ms. Frizzle takes her class on wondrous educational field trips with the help of a magical school bus. From germs to digestion, our special needs students, especially, have enjoyed watching these episodes to help them grasp the more complicated abstract science principles of space, the human body, and nature. Providing such a diverse collection of titles will only strengthen the digital library's use in the future.

In less than five years this district-wide online library has grown from nothing to having over 4,860 individual titles to offer for circulation, thanks overwhelmingly to the Bradley Cleveland Public Education Foundation's continual support and generosity. All of the critical signs indicate that our online digital library is becoming a resounding success. In their own words, here's a

sample of a few comments from our students over the past years: “OverDrive is fun and I like the audiobooks the most”; “OverDrive is more helpful for kids, it helps us learn more”; “I enjoy the audiobooks especially because it helps me read and understand more books”; “it is convenient because you do not have to go to the library to check out a book”; and “OverDrive is a great place to find a wide variety of books to read and listen to.” Having such a robust collection affects not only our 1400+ students and over 100 teachers and staff here at the middle school but since it is a system-wide digital library there are over 800 school employees and more than 5,200 students who can take advantage of the wealth of free choices OverDrive offers, for their reading and viewing interests and pleasure. It is gratifying to offer all of these students and staff access to an age-appropriate library 24/7. As commented on by a student, “we have books to read all summer long.”

This year we’ve added a Heritage eBook series to our online multicultural collection, from India to Vietnam, to Mexico to Korea, this eBook series explores the geography, languages, religions, food, and culture of countries represented in our diverse classrooms. Studies show that such titles can help inspire within the student body more understanding, camaraderie and empathy. Timely titles such as “*Racial Profiling and Discrimination*”; “*Globalization*”; “*Terrorism*”; and “*Defining and Discussing Human Rights*” discuss the harsh realities of modern society and eBooks such as “*Autism*”; “*Race Relations*” and “*Immigration Nation*,” provide true stories of the displaced and the changing American Identity of the Twenty-First Century. Many of the titles selected for the S.T.E.A.M. collection deals with mental health and identity. Titles include “*Schizophrenia*”; “*Smartphone Safety*”; “*Keep-Calm Guru*”; “*Group Bullying*”; and “*Girls Resist! A Guide to Activism, Leadership and Starting a Revolution.*” All encourage the development of a social conscience and promote an awareness of mental disabilities, disentangling the truth from the lies often found in social media. Classics in audiobook format, such as “*Sarah, Plain and Tall*”; “*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*” and “*Charlotte’s Web*” were specifically selected to allow students who struggle with reading to still enjoy listening to a masterful storyteller and their timeless tales. Graphic titles dealing historically with violent conflicts that have scarred our world like the series “*On the History Trail with Ariane & Nino*” provide our students with another way to appreciate a story of historical significance that presents frightful events in a visually compelling way.

Our students and teachers have at their fingertips an incredibly rich array of subjects and entertainment choices. With a click on an icon they can sign into the digital library with their school’s usernames and within minutes, from the comfort of their homes or cars, be able to curl up with an eBook, listen to an audiobook, or watch and be informed through a streaming video. More and more through word of mouth students are trying it out. Our statistics are hopeful...since inception in late September 2014 we've had over **45,389 checkouts!** That is nearly double from last year’s statistics of 27,688 total checkouts from our Digital Library. In

other words, 6,045 audiobooks; 34,453 eBooks, and 4,891 streaming videos; with 8,638 holds, and with over 3,274 unique users since inception have been enjoyed immensely! District wide in all branches in the month of November 2019, we had 1,632 active checkouts, after we received the titles from this TEAM Grant.

Here at Cleveland Middle School we are all working towards a common goal, to encourage all of our students to read more and read more widely to improve their fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and knowledge. We were unable to give the spring benchmark assessment, “iReady,” a district-wide tool which specifically monitors and comprehensively reports on a student’s reading fluency, due to the COVID-19 crisis this year. However, the pre-tests that were given in the fall and the winter terms, offer a measurable growth index to help us track a student’s progress as they become more fluent readers. Remarkably this year, across all grade levels our students showed tremendous growth. These statistics offer one critical indication of our student’s targeted actionable growth and grade level proficiency. Understandably, there are many factors that affect a student’s effectiveness at reading. Fluency or reading in a fast and fluid manner, is what often distinguishes a good reader from a poor reader. Research says that the two most common instructional methods for developing fluency are guided oral reading and independent silent reading. And as expected, correlational studies find that practice makes perfect, the best readers are the ones that read the most. So, by providing many exciting choices within our 24/7 digital library [including a wide selection of guided audiobooks and narrated eBooks] OverDrive has played a significant role in providing for our students more independent and silent reading opportunities which has helped bolster reading achievement this past academic year.

By far the biggest challenge school libraries such as ours are facing amid the digital boom is cost. The purchase price of e-Books from OverDrive tends to be much higher for libraries than individuals. Each publisher sets a different pricing structure. Some require that we re-purchase an eBook after a certain period of time, while others place limits on the number of checkouts before re-purchasing the eBook. For this grant and the majority of all the items we’ve purchased so far, we’ve selected the one copy/one user option rather than the more expensive metered access version. The cost of recent best-sellers is nearly prohibitive; for instance, the popular audiobook: *The Lightning Thief Percy Jackson and the Olympians Series, Book 1* sells for \$51.00! So, sometimes with prices nearly four times the cost of what they should be, we foresee the development of our digital library as a multi-year project/resource building process.

As the traditional classroom continues to evolve, so will we. Learning now takes place anytime, anywhere, through a myriad of devices, applications and instructional approaches. Educators will continue to get creative using tools such as OverDrive to enrich -- and personalize -- learning and improve outcomes in their classrooms. Technology doesn't necessarily make our

students learn any easier or faster; but it helps engage a generation that grew up with being gratified instantly.

We are all so appreciative of the ongoing support the BCPEF offers us each year at Cleveland Middle School. Again, thank you so much for your tireless behind-the-scenes hard work. Such innovative tools as our “eTravelers” CCS Digital Library, help us teach to the challenges facing these 21st century students. Without your steadfast commitment in nurturing these connections with generous donors in our community, none of this would be possible. Again, thank you so much!

Regards,

Grace M. Dyrek, CMS Library Media Specialist
Cynthia Van Pelt, CMS R.T.I. Coordinator
Dr. Lenada Laing, Cleveland Middle School’s Principal