

CASE STUDY

The Positive Impact of Daily Reading Habits and its Effects on Standardized Test Performance

With Castleberry Independent School District, TX

When leaders at Joy James Elementary School challenged students to log 2,000 minutes of reading in Beanstack during the 2021–2022 school year, they knew reading could make an impact on student success. But the end-of-year results exceeded even the highest expectations: Student reading scores increased by an average of 67% and math scores by 47%. School leaders attribute that boost to Beanstack.

Joy James is part of the seven-school Castleberry Independent School District that serves more than 3,600 students in the Fort Worth, Texas, area. At Joy James, 90% of the students are economically disadvantaged and 42% are emergent bilingual students or English-language learners.



A “Wildly Important” Reading Goal



Joy James uses “Leader in Me” principles to nurture student success, including setting a school-wide “Wildly Important Goal” or WIG. The WIG for the 21–22 school year? Each student was challenged to read 2,000 minutes, which is just about 33 hours. School leaders knew that independent reading is a crucial foundation for success in all academic areas. In setting the 21–22 WIG, they followed [research](#) showing that healthy independent reading habits have a major impact on development and academic achievement.

Castleberry ISD had just introduced Beanstack to the district, and Joy James leaders knew it was the perfect tool to keep every student on track to meet the WIG. Beanstack made logging and tracking those reading minutes easy, and its gamification features like badges, streaks, and friends helped motivate even the most reluctant readers.

Principal Leigh Ann Turner and Teacher Librarian Neznaika Senerchia supplemented Beanstack’s built-in motivational tools with celebrations and rewards throughout the school year. Teachers helped students chunk their goals into checkpoints for 500, 1,000, and 1,500 minute marks. Joy James celebrated reaching these achievements throughout the year with student-designed rewards and parties.

The school also had great support from district leaders. Castleberry ISD’s superintendent, Renee Smith-Faulkner, sponsored a district-wide Superintendent’s Reading Challenge, and the district’s lead librarian, Heather Lamb, provided key support, leading Beanstack’s implementation and rollout.



From Extrinsic Rewards to Reading Love



While extrinsic rewards helped kick-start student reading motivation, reading became its own intrinsic reward for many students as the year went on. Senerchia was especially impressed by how Beanstack sparked student conversations about reading. "I have never had so many meaningful conversations with students about what and how much they are reading," she said. "They love to tell me and others how many minutes they've logged and what books they've been reading."

Those conversations in turn helped students deepen their love of reading. "Due to Beanstack, [the students] were learning what they like to read," Senerchia recalled. Teachers told Senerchia that Beanstack made it easier than ever to make meaningful book recommendations to their students. Students loved using Beanstack's friends feature to connect with their peers over their reading experiences. As students built their reading logs and explored books their friends logged, reading became its own reward.

Some of the most powerful evidence that Beanstack sparked a true love of reading in Joy James elementary students happened during free choice time. Senerchia frequently observed students choose reading and logging in Beanstack over computer games and activities.

Principal Leigh Ann Turner sums their year up this way: "It's amazing what this tool helped us accomplish with student goal setting and tracking. Reading motivation skyrocketed for ALL students last year. Beanstack helped us cultivate excitement and the love of learning through the use of rich literature throughout our campus."



Boosting Test Scores Across the Board



In the spring of 2022, the state of Texas required all students to take state standardized tests for the first time since 2019. The state paused its STAAR (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) program—which measures student achievement based on curriculum standards in reading, math, and other key subjects—during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While some state-wide scores dipped during the pandemic, students across the state were making a **comeback** by 2022, and even outperforming pre-pandemic levels in some subjects. For example, reading scores in grades 3–8 rose by 9 percentage points from 2021 to 2022. The gains at Joy James, though, were stunning.

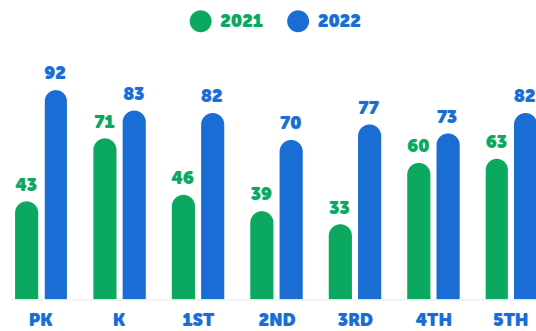
On average, student reading scores at Joy James increased by 29 points from 2021 to 2022—20 points higher than the state’s gains for grades 3–8—for a growth of 62%. First graders’ reading scores jumped by 36 points, from a score of 46 to 82; second grade scores leapt 31 points, from 39 to 70. Third grade reading scores saw an astounding 44-point surge, from 33 to 77.

It wasn’t just reading scores that improved at Joy James: Math scores for grades 3–5 rose, on average, 23 points from 2021 to 2022 (47% growth). Like their reading gains, these math improvements far outpaced state-wide growth during the same time, where students in grades 3–8 raised scores by 5 points.

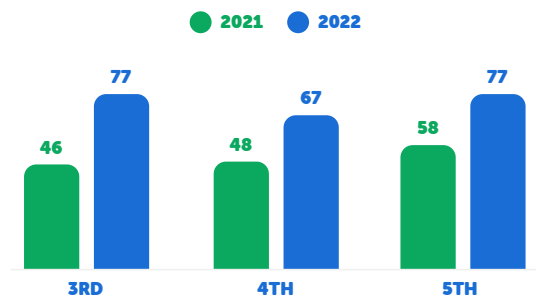
These gains helped raise Joy James’ overall school rating to 92 points—15 points higher than its last rating in 2019— and brought the school’s rating from a C to an A. According to the state, schools earn an A rating “for exemplary performance when they serve most students well, encouraging high academic achievement and/or appropriate academic growth for almost all students.” Not only that, Joy James also earned state **distinctions** in several categories, including English Language Arts/Reading.

When considering what made the difference, school staff knew that the amount of reading their students did enhanced the hard work of teachers and students.

STARR READING SCORES



STARR MATH SCORES



The Road Ahead



Castleberry ISD lead librarian Heather Lamb has big expectations for year two of the district's Beanstack journey. While she plans to keep a close eye on Beanstack's impact on STAAR scores, she stressed that the benefits of what she calls "rich reading habits" go far beyond academic achievement.

Those habits can take students out of their comfort zones, help them form new social connections, and deepen their understanding of others. "It's cliché, but they say that you can open a world in a book," Lamb said. "You get out of your group, and you see things, you go 'I didn't know about that, and I didn't know about you,' because of those behaviors that reading opened the door to."



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- Principal Leigh Ann Turner





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.