

School Program Combines Learning With Video Games

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Honeysuckle Middle School is taking a high tech carrot-on-a-stick approach to improving students' reading and math scores.

Students in the school's technology lab use an online skills mastery program called *Kid's College* that rewards hard work with play. The computer program quizzes students on reading and math skills, and for every five questions students answer correctly, they get 30 seconds to play sports-related video games. The program also tracks students' performance in certain skills, giving teachers an indicator concerning what skills they need to reinforce in class.

"It's reinforcing what they know and introducing them to new material on or above grade level and above all preparing them for standardized testing," said Carol Sprunger, a teaching assistant.

Sprunger said that in addition to the games and progress tracking, the program also has other useful features. When students answer questions incorrectly, the program explains why their answer is wrong and suggests ways to get the answer right. The difficulty level of the program can also be adjusted for special education students.

The program, created by Learning Through Sports, Inc., has some claim to success. According to the company's Web site, after not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two years in a row, 17 Alabama schools began using the program in 2006. Fourteen of the schools achieved AYP in 2007. According to the company, students in these 14 schools showed high usage of the digital game-based learning program.

Sprunger says Honeysuckle students have seen improved performance in reading and math performance since the program was introduced to the school in August. Software for the program was purchased with about \$17,000 in grant money.

Delvin Kimbrough is a seventh-grader at Honeysuckle who comes to the computer lab about once per week for study hall. Kimbrough said the program has made learning more interesting.

"I don't like sitting in class," he said. "I like doing things."

Online: www.dothaneagle.com/gulfcoasteast/dea/search.apx.-content-articles-DEA-2007-12-14-0008.html.

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