

Customer Case Study

District: Lamar CISD
State: Texas
District Size: 28,332 Students
Economically Disadvantaged: 48%



Lamar Consolidated ISD

Summer Internet Access Gives Rising Kindergartners an Extra Boost

How do we equip rising kindergartners with the early-reading skills they need to succeed? In states where universal preschool is not a requirement, the risk for these children is even greater. Parents are on their own to make sure their children are prepared for the challenges of kindergarten. But even in states with robust preschool programs, struggling students who lack early-reading skills are at a disadvantage when they enter kindergarten.

That is the problem that Chad Jones, Director of Technology Development for Lamar Consolidated Independent School District, is helping to solve. He explains how the idea got started:

“Mandy Bryan, one of our Technology Development Specialists, came back from a conference and asked, ‘What would happen if we took the preschoolers who need the most help before heading into kinder and we gave them each a laptop, Internet access, and access to an online reading program for the summer?’ And since we had computer carts going unused over the summer, we figured out a way to make it happen.”

Kajeet was founded in 2003 with the goal of providing children and parents a safe mobile experience. The Kajeet SmartSpot®, a MiFi brand mobile hotspot by Novatel Wireless, with customizable filters to limit Internet access to safe, educational sites, offers students a way to continue educational pursuits beyond the classroom.

“Children are expected to know so much before even starting kindergarten. Providing these students additional instruction gives them the right start and the confidence they need from the beginning,” said Daniel Neal, CEO and founder of Kajeet.

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The GROW Project is Born

Inspired by the success of the UPSTART program in Utah, which offers early reading support to rising kindergartners who haven't had access to preschool, the technology team at Lamar CISD founded the GROW Project.

Fifty students at an early-learning center were identified as needing reading assistance. They were given a pre and post-test to assess the effectiveness of the program. The students were then given repurposed laptops, a Kajeet SmartSpot, and an early-reading curriculum provided by the Waterford Institute. Parents were encouraged to work with their children over the summer to prepare them for the kindergarten curriculum using the materials provided. Data collection is still ongoing, but one thing was clear – both teachers and parents loved the program.

Shauna Dubec, the parent of a rising kindergartner who was in the test group last year, is extremely pleased with the results she's seen in her child.

“He is ahead of other kids in his class now and has been all year. It's really helped him. He learned so much from the program and he loved doing it. We used it every day - sometimes more than once.”

Looking Forward

The Lamar Consolidated Independent School District is continuing their commitment to help at-risk preschoolers get ready for kindergarten and is preparing for this year's program, serving more children throughout the district with the combination of laptops, Kajeet SmartSpot devices and the Waterford pre-reading program. Shauna is also looking forward to this summer when her youngest child will be a part of the GROW Project and follow in his brother's footsteps. *“He watched his brother use it last summer and can't wait to get started himself!”*



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