Improving Complex Literacy Skills with Simple Science Activities

At Chauncey H. Duker School, the ELL Resource Teacher for grades 3-5, Carrie Willemarck, shared how two of her instructors use the Follett Science and Literacy Connections Program™. These kits support the science concepts they are teaching, resulting in positive effects in students. “As with any program, the impact is gradual. Students need to be taught how to correctly use the program,” Willemarck said. “However, I have seen an increase in student motivation, which does help the program impact faster. And, students are much more engaged in science concepts. Because the program is leveled, the students’ confidence is growing. The books are grade-level appropriate and, while they are difficult for some students, they like the fact they are reading the same books as their peers.”

Willemarck is happy her team is using the kits because of their efficiency and ease of implementation. “Everything is organized for the teacher, which makes planning and differentiation much easier,” she said.

The Science and Literacy Connections Program is available in English and Spanish, and follows the 7E instructional model (establish background knowledge, engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate and extend). The program allows students to closely engage with each book or activity, enhancing skills in literacy, content knowledge, vocabulary and more, with differentiated worksheets and journal activities. This makes implementation simple for the school’s Special Education Teacher, Edgar De La Mora, whose third and fourth grade students are mostly Hispanic and ELLs. De La Mora sees his students improving as they work with the kits. “My students need a lot of support to gain understanding, but using this kit is very helpful for all of us,” he explained. “It’s helping my students in a way that is easier for them to learn and review information at three different levels of complexity. Students are enthusiastic about learning the skills in both languages. The Spanish materials are great and have lots of useful resources and information. We are able to practice a set of skills, learn a lesson until we have mastered it or, if the lesson is easily learned, we can go to the next level of complexity.”

As his students progress with science concepts, De La Mora is seeing their literacy skills improve at the same time. “The vocabulary words included are great to enhance their language skills along the way.” De La Mora is thrilled with the changes he’s seeing in student confidence and study habits since the kits were introduced at Chauncey H. Duker School. “Students are eager to learn more about the themes explained in the kit. They have become more proficient in the use of scientific words and they like to apply what they have learned. We’re so happy to have these kits for our ELL and Special Ed kids.”