La Habra Boys and Girls Clubs

A Southern California After-School Program Enriches Each Day with English Instruction

After-school care programs are critical in many communities. Not only do they give students a safe and comfortable location to go when the formal school day ends, but the best programs also extend the learning day with homework assistance and lessons designed to enrich their students' lives. It is just this type of mission that drives the Boys and Girls Clubs of La Habra in Southern California. They have invested in the necessary curriculum to make good things happen.

The Boys and Girls Clubs of La Habra collaborates with the La Habra City School District in supporting over 700 students at seven elementary and two middle school campuses. Most of the students in the Clubs are Hispanic and some have limited English proficiency. In addition, some of these Limited English Proficient (LEP) students encounter varying levels of academic challenges due in part to their limited English skills. To address this, a core part of the Clubs' curriculum includes English instruction using *Carousel of IDEAS* from Ballard & Tighe, Publishers.

Carousel of IDEAS is a systematic and comprehensive language instruction program that is proficiency based rather than grade-level based. This distinction makes it fit perfectly into after-school programs like La Habra's where a grade-level based curriculum would be difficult to implement. Furthermore, *Carousel* is steeped in

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> Senior Director of After-School Programs
> Boys and Girls Clubs of La Habra, CA

well-regarded research and has been successfully used to teach millions of students. As at most after-school programs, not all of the staff at La Habra are credentialed so it helps to know that by using *Carousel of IDEAS*, their students are going to make real gains in grasping English.

Senior Director of After-School Programs, Ofelia Hanson, likes that the program implementation is flexible and allows her staff to use it for individuals or in group settings. They can also select particular components depending on the students they are working with on a given day. "We have different students with us from one week to the next," says Ms. Hanson. "A program like *Carousel* gives us the flexibility to deal with this constantly changing population as well as the individual variation between students."

In a program like La Habra's, there is a lot more to do each day with the students than just focus on English instruction. Students spend only 20-30 minutes a day on *Carousel*, but they show noticeable improvement even after a few short weeks. "It is nice that the curriculum uses picture and word cards to teach English," says Ms. Hanson. "Students really get excited by the graphics, and it is clear that they are building their language skills because they pick it up so quickly."

When asked what makes the use of *Carousel* most effective for them, Ms. Hanson replies that following the more formal instructional approach is the best. "We might be tempted to take a casual approach to this because we run an after-school program, but we find that kids get more out of [English instruction] when the lessons are done as a class." She also points out that teaching in groups not only makes learning more fun, but it builds the students' conversational skills.

It is immensely rewarding to nurture a child's growth, and this gift is never lost on the staff at the Boys and Girls Clubs of La Habra. Providing enriching activities in a caring environment gives pleasure to the children *and* teachers. "After a stressful day at their schools, it is nice to see our students smile and giggle when they are practicing English with us," says Ms. Hanson. At Ballard & Tighe, this is one of the greatest kudos our curriculum developers could hear.