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Designing a Literacy Program for a Better Chance, Better Community (ABC2)

James E. Pittman

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Consultancy Project & Report

Organization:	Gardner-Webb University College of Education
Project Title:	DESIGNING A LITERACY PROGRAM FOR A BETTER CHANCE, A BETTER COMMUNITY (ABC2)
Candidate:	James E. Pittman, Jr.
Consultancy Coach:	Dr. Jeffrey Hamilton
Defense Date:	June 29, 2022
Authorized by:	Chester Williams, Owner/CEO

Approval

This consultancy project was submitted by James E. Pittman, Jr. under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to Gardner-Webb University College of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

Dr. Jeffery Hamilton, Faculty Advisor
Gardner-Webb University

Date

Chester Williams, Site Advisor
Owner/CEO

Date

Acknowledgements

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11); and for that, I say, thank you, LORD! My journey through my doctoral degree has been influenced by so many situations and people. I refer to it as a journey because with each step, course, semester, and year, I have grown and gained new knowledge. It has been a long and difficult journey but so well worth it.

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Abstract

DESIGNING A LITERACY PROGRAM FOR A BETTER CHANCE, A BETTER COMMUNITY (ABC2). Pittman, James E., 2022: Consultancy Project, Gardner-Webb University.

ABC2 is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that connects rural communities with resources in order to trigger youth power and advocate for practical solutions and healthier lifestyles. This project concentrated on the planning stage of developing a literacy program for students in rural Halifax County. The proposal was written to take use of both sides' current strengths while also looking for ways for the organization, community, and me to expand. Its assessment entailed three steps, including evaluation of whether the project met base criteria, assessment of the project's impact, and evaluation of the project's complexity. The primary focus of this project was to identify the concept of followership and what it takes for an organization to gain followers. Data were gathered using a mixed methodology approach. Surveys were carried out to determine the importance of media services and the best services for the community.

Additionally, ABC2 members conducted interviews to gain knowledge of the organization's outlook, culture, infrastructure, and purpose. The findings depicted that social media and networking with neighboring school districts are used to share information, receive information, and gather information, and for promotions. The findings illustrated there is a need for a literacy program to be implemented. For the program to be implemented, brand awareness should be created and effective financial management practiced. In reflection, the project enhanced my skills in research, balancing of project schedule with expectations and contingencies, and creating an organizational budget. Additionally, it led to the evolvement of my leadership concept.

Keywords: literacy, education, reading, scores, rural, community

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Project Purpose	1
1.2	Project Qualification	1
1.3	Project Complexity and Impact Assessment.....	1
1.3.1	Project Complexity	2
1.3.2	Project Impact	2
1.4	Project Charter	2
2	Project Objectives.....	3
2.1	Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives	3
2.1.1	Objectives	3
2.1.2	Success Criteria.....	3
2.2	Outline of Student's Objectives	3
2.2.1	Objectives	3
2.2.2	Success Criteria.....	4
3.	Project Scope	4
3.1	Definitive Scope of Work.....	4
3.2	Project Benefits	4
3.3	SMART Goals	5
4	Disciplined Inquiry.....	5
4.1	Introduction and Theoretical Framework	5
4.2	Hypothesis	5
4.3	Research Questions	5
4.4	Literature Review	6
4.5	Methodology	7
5	Continuous Improvement Systems.....	7
5.1	Continuous Improvement Planning.....	7
5.2	Continuous Improvement Actions.....	7
5.3	Continuous Improvement Feedback.....	7
5.4	Continuous Improvement Implementation.....	7
6	Deliverables.....	7
6.1	To Partnering Organization from Candidate	7
6.2	Deferred Deliverable	8
7	Communications Plan.....	8
7.1	Communications Plan Development	8
7.2	Stakeholder Engagement Plan	9
8	Risks	9
8.1	Mitigation and Contingency	9
8.2	Constraints	9
9	Budget	10
10	Analysis and Recommendations.....	10
11	Reflection	11
11.1	Professional Learning	11
11.2	Personal Development.....	11
	Appendix.....	13
	References.....	17

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Purpose

A Better Chance, A Better Community (ABC2) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization connecting rural communities with resources to activate youth power and advocating for realistic solutions and healthier lifestyles including reading comprehension from prekindergarten through fifth grade. This project will focus on the planning phase of creating a literacy program within the program.

1.2 Project Qualification

Initial contact was made via a phone call with the executive director of ABC2. In conversing with ABC2 CEO Chester Williams, the importance of reading comprehension was at an all-time low in Halifax County, and it was important to develop a literacy program for prekindergarten through fifth-grade students. The proposition was framed to utilize the current strengths of both parties while exploring opportunities for growth for the organization, community, and me. The common thread of children's reading growth was a bond between all potential parties as was the goal of expanding other counties in which ABC2 is located. The agreeing partners were transparent in expectations, Gardner-Webb University's policies, and ABC2 expectations. By consulting the organization, there was an opportunity to lead and learn about project management. Researching innovative techniques, trends, technology, and collaboration will allow all parties to play a role in strategically growing the organization.

1.3 Project Complexity and Impact Assessment

To complete the project assessment, there were four categories to review the project and determine its alignment with the base criteria. I consulted the project manager, Dr. Hamilton, to complete this section. The project assessment tool has four steps that critically examine the complexity of a project to define it as minor, medium, or major. The first step involves assessing if the project meets the base criteria. Ideally, a typical project should produce a specific product that is not part of routine work, such as making a specific change in a system. The second step involved assessing the project's impact, which involves evaluating the project's strategic contribution, return on investment (ROI), and operational effectiveness (Sasipraba et al., 2020). Under the ROI, I assessed the possible timescale for the project and obtained a slightly higher score since the project is likely to take longer than anticipated. Under the organizational effectiveness, I considered the extent to which the current organizational processes will improve and the notable changes or restructuring required. Notably, a greater degree of restructuring will imply more difficulty and risks in implementation (Sasipraba et al., 2020). Conversely, under the operational change, I assessed remarkable changes required for the project. After assessing all sections using the project impact assessment matrix, I obtained an overall score of 9 (possible range of 0-15).

The third step involves evaluating the complexity of the project. The notable sectors I considered under this section include delivery timescale, dependencies, operational change, contract complexity, in-house expertise, and stakeholders. Using the project complexity matrix, I obtained a score of 12 (possible range, 5-24). Step 4 involves determining the project type using the scores from the second and third steps. After obtaining the results from

Steps 2 and 3, I entered the outcomes on the grid to obtain the intersection point. Notably, my project's intersection point was 9, 12, which falls on the green part of the grid, meaning the matrix result I obtained implies that the project is medium.

1.3.1 Project Complexity

Several factors were considered when determining the complexity of the project. There were five criteria used to establish the project's level of complexity. The criteria were individually scored on a scale of 1 through 4. The criteria included delivery timescale, operational change, in-house expertise, and dependencies. Stakeholders scored 2 because the organization has internal and external stakeholders. Operational change scored 3. There will be significant changes to processes and work areas. In-house expertise scored 3 because ABC2 has experience producing community engagement. The project has very minimal links to other projects and no dependencies, resulting in a score of 2. The total score of criteria could have a minimum score of 5 and a maximum score of 24. The complexity of this project equaled 10.

1.3.2 Project Impact

ABC2 is a nonprofit organization, and the project was intended to make an impact on the organization. The impact of the project was based on the importance of literacy in the community, and the criteria were individually scored on a scale of 0 to 5. Strategic contributions were rated as very significant as the project intended to improve the strategic decisions of the organization (5). The ROI was rated low (2) due to the proposed timeframe of the project (3-4 years). Operational effectiveness rated high (4). The project also made an impact on the operational effectiveness of the organization. The total score of criteria could have a minimum score of 0 and a maximum score of 15. The impact of this project equaled 9.

1.4 Project Charter Information

The project charter is a document that described the project's scope, stakeholders, and objectives. Project charters are planning documents that market the project to various sponsors and stakeholders (Starns, 2019). The charter defines various roles and responsibilities of project participants and the project manager's authority in relation to the project objectives, me as the project manager as I will overlook the designing of the literacy program and Dr. Hamilton as a sponsor of my project. My project is also hosted by Chester Williams as the CEO of ABC2. The major stakeholders in the project include Halifax County community members; preschool, elementary, and middle school students; and parents.

The project's main purpose is to develop Phases 1 of 2 of the project to improve the learning and reading ability of students in the poverty-hit Halifax County. Phase 1 of the project will be the planning phase of the literacy program specifically for prekindergarten to Grade 5 students. The resources availed by my project hosts were previous testing scores of Grades 1-3 students in reading subjects versus the state score and national score. The project deliverables included project planning, which will be delivered to the CEO and board of ABC2 after all the scores are obtained. Notably, the project's milestone or accomplishment will entail the project planning, which will be developed in 1 year after retrieving reading scores from the district to plan the ABC2 program. The SMART objectives of my project

included formulating a strategic growth plan, increasing the timeframe, implementing an internal design team, and collecting/analyzing reading end-of-grade (EOG) exam scores from previous years.

Notably, the major known risk of the project is the difficulty of obtaining updated and accurate reading scores. Similarly, the project's main constraint is end data since the data will be developed in two phases. The project will depend on parent cooperation to bring the students and receive scores (information) from the hosts. Notably, the project's communication strategy would involve constant communication between the project manager and the project team, and meetings were held twice a month to provide planning updates.

2. Project Objectives

2.1 Outline of Partnering Organization's Objectives

2.1.1. Objective

The project about followership is essential to various partnering organizations since it outlines the importance of a good understanding between the parties. The project illustrated how the partnering organizations need to develop a good understanding between all the stakeholders involved in their daily activities. On most occasions, different organizations have failed due to engagement in different partnerships without understanding their objectives (Busari et al., 2019). However, the ability to have followers enables the organizations to build a strong strategy through conducting consultations with relevant sectors to share ideas. The project's main purpose was to identify the concept of followership and what it takes for an organization to gain followers. The project also entails keeping the followers active within the organization by involving them in essential decision-making processes. The project fits into larger work activities since the success of every organization relies on the effective participation of the followers.

2.1.2 Success Criteria

Partnering with ABC2 to design the literacy program would increase the success of reading comprehension of students in prekindergarten to fifth grades. The literacy program will also build community engagement in the desire for students and parents to read. Overall, this will increase the brand of ABC2.

2.2 Student's Personal Leadership Objectives

2.2.1 Objectives

Partnering organizations can use various means to identify their success in the market. Some of the measurements of such success include realizing the objectives of the partnering organizations. It is important for leaders to have qualities to be able to work with new and innovative programs such as a literacy program. A good leader should possess flexibility, division, and logical qualities.

2.2.2 Success Criteria

Based on the research project on followership, I developed various personal leadership objectives, which enabled me to develop different types of skills. For instance, through the project, I applied good communication skills. To have a strong follower, one needs to have a strong communication command (Curphy & Roellig, 2011). A good communication system keeps the followers informed about various activities within the organization and outlines how they can participate in the organization's developmental process. Like in other sectors, it is possible to identify the different potential of your followers through having a good communication approach with them. There are various incidents where good relations determine the success of the organization. For instance, there is the possibility of organizing various departments to operate toward the organization's objectives through good relations. Managing a huge group of followers also illustrates that one needs to have good relations with them. The management needs to identify various ways that make the followers happy and productive for the organization.

Consequently, the success of my leadership was measured in two different ways. The first occasion was through the successful coordination of the followers. It takes a high level of understanding for one to control a group of people towards a specific objective effectively by seeking feedback from the students, parents, stakeholders, and the community. My ability to manage and coordinate the followers and other individuals involved in the research project illustrates my coordination skills. Coordination enhances the success of various departments within the organization. Another personal leadership skill measured in the project is the ability to listen to people's objectives. I concluded how they feel about followership and some of its benefits and consequences by listening to people. In general, I displayed a good mastery of the project, which enhanced the development of the research conclusion.

3. Project Scope

3.1 Definitive Scope of Work

The program aims to access children and assign them groups: dysgraphia, those who have impaired handwriting; dyslexia, those who are impaired in decoding words; and oral language with reading comprehension and learning disability. Body movement is an important aspect when it comes to learning. This has a significant effect on emotional and cognitive learning. ABC2 enables motor skills to combine with cognitive abilities and enables learners to develop their writing and reading abilities and their emotions that aid in developing effective responses to their weak responsive areas.

3.2 Project Benefits

Benefits for designing the digital literacy program include reading textbooks and workbooks with a learning focus on reading comprehension for parents to share with the medical and educational personnel on motor milestones, both comprehension and reading. Students' comprehension and reading scores are important aspects to incorporate into the learning process. Parents will adapt when the learners reach specific goals in their reading scores. Involving parents helps in the movement, as ABC2 allows them to monitor their children's

skills and other behaviors. This allows understanding of how movement behavior affects literacy learning. Through the program, students would obtain reading comprehension workbooks and different reading materials throughout their grade level.

3.3 SMART Goals

SMART goals for the project include identifying how copying one's handwriting relates to a static environment, such as self-care skills. Another smart goal is assessing the word decoding and reading rate to identify how it relates to an unpredictable environment. For instance, five-word-level skills are correlated with self-care and classroom skills in an unpredictable environment. The SMART goals for the digital literacy program would be to formulate a strategic growth plan, increase student engagement, implement an internal design team, and research and gather reading comprehension data for Grades 3-5 with the local school district(s) ABC2 serves.

4. Disciplined Inquiry

4.1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Research was conducted to provide feedback and recommendations during the project. Reliability and validity were priorities when designing research methods. There is a demand for collecting data. The research focused on key elements needed for the success of the planning phase of the literacy program with ABC2.

4.2 Hypothesis

ABC2 will research elementary schools in the Halifax County School District for reading comprehension scores and analyze grade levels for student scores based on North Carolina reading EOG test scores to determine if there is a difference between students who are in the literacy program with the ABC2 group and students who are not in the program. The reason for the digital literacy program is that reading comprehension scores are averaging lower than normal, especially in Halifax County School District. The literacy program will assist students in the development of reading and reading comprehension.

4.3 Research Questions

1. Based on the analysis of the reading EOG test data collected from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years, in your opinion, which grade level needs more assistance in reading comprehension?
2. In your opinion, should the Literacy Instructional Training program begin before second grade? What factors influence your decision?
3. In your opinion, what influence does the ABC2 group have on literacy and therefore on reading EOG test scores?
4. In your opinion, what influence does the Literacy Instructional Training program have on literacy and therefore on reading EOG test scores?

5. In your opinion, should the Literacy Instructional Training program be an after-school activity, or should it be implemented during the traditional school day as a part of the school's instructional program?
6. In your opinion, what percentage of parents are involved in their child(ren)'s literacy education?
7. In your opinion, should the ABC2 Group have a parent's night on the fundamentals of reading for their child(ren)? Why or why not?
8. Do you have any sense of what the ratio is of pass/fail rates of students who seek assistance from ABC2 both before and after they have participated in the Literacy Instructional Training program with the ABC2 group?

4.4 Literature Review

The professional literature review examined the implementation of summer school reading programs through a study conducted by Denton et al. (2010). The study mainly assessed oral language and reading skill development. Denton et al. used a quasi-experimental design with a comparison group of 28 students and a treatment group of 25 students from four high-poverty schools. The researchers put the treatment group in large groups for listening comprehension and vocabulary learning and small groups for essential reading and comprehension skills for 20 summer school days under regular teachers. There was a marked improvement for these students in phonemic awareness, listening comprehension, and fluency in reading.

The findings supported the hypothesis provided by Denton et al. (2010) that there was a consistent gap in reading ability between high- and low-income families and that most summer school reading programs did not focus on comprehension and vocabulary. This outcome was further elaborated by the assertion that only 17% of students from the low-economic status were proficient readers compared to 79% of those from high-income families (Denton et al., 2010). Such facts highlight the need for efficient interventions to avoid the perpetuation of the problem. The poor instruction delivery of teachers was attributed to the poor reading ability of students regardless of economic status. Previous researchers emphasized the importance of early proper reading instruction for students at risk of reading difficulty.

Other studies confirm that summer school reading programs are appropriate interventions for students at risk of developing reading and comprehension problems (Denton et al., 2010). The risk of low-income students losing focus of the previous school year's learning emphasizes the importance of summer school reading programs. The study highlighted the need for its implementation. Denton et al. (2010) purported that the lack of evidence-based curricular activities is the main reason for the failure of previous summer school programs. The study's main limitation was using a small sample size that limited generalizability.

4.5 Methodology

In completing this project, I used the following methods of qualitative data analysis: interview questions, direct observation, written documents, and focus groups. The focus groups involved interviewing the director, program manager, and employees of the program.

There are many strengths of using the qualitative data analysis tool. First, it allows the collection of data to determine strengths and weaknesses; then it allows the results to be analyzed; and last, it allows options to be developed to make growth changes. Qualitative data should be measured without bias. It is useful in service to consultancy as it helps transform decision-making by creating openness and opportunities for consideration of new ideas. Qualitative data analysis also provides an in-depth look into organizations by documenting attitudes, behaviors of members, and stakeholders.

5. Continuous Improvement Systems

5.1 Continuous Improvement Planning

ABC2 researched streams to support the organization. The organization has consistently created advertisements via social media. ABC2 has accepted media content and increased its brand awareness. ABC2 intends to implement recommendations of this project in increments. As the organization grows, recommendations will be implemented if needed.

5.2 Continuous Improvement Actions

Recommendations to increase the improvement of the literacy program with ABC2 is to reach out to local internet companies for internet and technology means such as mobile hotspots, tablets, and laptops for students who are in the literacy program to have access at ABC2 and at home. ABC2 is currently located in two other nearby counties, implementing the digital literacy program in Bertie and Northampton counties.

5.3 Continuous Improvement Feedback

Students will have equipment such as Chromebooks and tablets to complete literacy programs. Another improvement would be digital internet hotspots for the participants to complete activities from home.

5.4 Continuous Improvement Implementation

Content, internet access, equipment, and tutors will be critical to planning the future of ABC2. ABC2 will employ tutors and equipment will dictate the budget and the amount of equipment needed based on the enrollment of students in the digital literacy program.

6. Deliverables

6.1 To Partnering Organization from Candidate

All key deliverables for this project were expected to be delivered within the first 3 years after the project charter was agreed upon. Each deliverable is imperative to the creation of the digital literacy program through ABC2. These deliverables were the crux of the project.

The key deliverables for this project are

- digital literacy program growth
- create mission and vision statement
- design logo
- establish social media presence
- collect data – through word of mouth with participants and parents

6.2 Deferred Deliverables

There were deliverables during this project that were believed to require additional time and attention; thus, these items were removed from the initial deliverable list and are planned to be introduced by the end of 2023. The focus of the project was to create a recognizable brand that provides educational and literacy programs in the local area and online. Per the data collected, social media and word of mouth are the most impactful methods of obtaining information.

7. Communications Plan

7.1 Communications Plan Development

Effective internal and external communication is critical to the success of any project; hence, communication plans highly matter in projects. Executing the review and approval process, asking a coworker where a file is kept, collecting comments on a deliverable, and other day-to-day project duties need communication (Schwalbe, 2009). As a result, a successful project requires a communication plan that identifies stakeholders and outlines when and how to engage them.

While the goals of project communication may differ, they always center on the same concept: preventing severe communication failures (Schwalbe, 2009). In this regard, the communication plan I developed aims to keep stakeholders informed about the project's schedule, requirements, and critical milestones; provide an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback; and earn stakeholder trust by providing insights into the project's direction.

When crafting the communication plan, the information needed includes the details about stakeholders and their respective duties, the sorts of data required to be communicated to stakeholders, and the plan's purpose and objective. The information that will need to be communicated is the project's status, which enlightens the stakeholders on how the project progresses. Difficulties that arise throughout the project, the budget, and any scheduling modifications will also be communicated. The methods of communication used in this project include scheduled virtual meetings, email, text, documentation, and informal meetings. The methods used to determine the type of communication are the levels of responsibility and the type of communication individuals prefer to use. The frequency of communication was also determined by the level of involvement and responsibility in the project.

Communication plan will provide the digital literacy program as one of the programs ABC2 will serve for the communities with innovative opportunities and resources to foster community development; youth empowerment; and healthy living activities through a sense of culture, ideas, community, and awareness.

7.2 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

A major effort was made to identify project stakeholders. I prioritized stakeholders based on their stake in the project and their overall effect and influence on the project. Stakeholders were engaged with interviews and surveys from time to time. External stakeholders will also be included in the project's dashboard to see the progress in real-time. They will also be able to provide feedback on the project deliverables. The stakeholders increased the project's success. By collecting and evaluating project needs with stakeholders, I will be able to get their "buy-in," increasing the likelihood of the project's success.

8. Risks

8.1 Mitigation and Contingency

Project risks were identified based on internal and external factors affecting the organization. Mitigation factors were considered to overcome identified risks. Contingency plans were designed to help ABC2 address and overcome identified risks. The likelihood of each risk occurring was factored into each mitigation strategy and contingency plan. Identified risks include but are not limited to the pandemic and student and parent engagement with the digital literacy program.

8.2 Constraints

Project risk management involves the incorporation of dynamic resolutions to meet a set objective and mitigate complications using various methodologies (Muriana & Vizzini, 2017). Considerations for the satisfaction of projects include timelines, budget, and standard assessments, but unpredictable dynamics change these risk management factors.

In an educational setting, the school-based project is a risk due to various issues such as participation of parents, students, and volunteers, and consequently, time and managerial constraints. These issues command different risk levels hence urgency in consideration. Foremost, being a school-based project, student participation is high, projecting the negligible risk factor. However, time, location, and transportation might hinder involvement among the students, parents, and volunteers. Being an after-school event might limit parental involvement or consent to the students.

Moreover, logistical issues such as transportation might suffice. For instance, there is a median risk factor of parents not being able to cater to their students' and personal transportation to/from the school. Consequently, the location of the project poses a median level risk factor. After-hour involvement of suggested locales such as the school or community center might be limiting. Furthermore, volunteer involvement has a median risk chance considering the location, notwithstanding the timing and transportation.

According to Muriana and Vizzini (2017), resolving such risks requires the dynamic incorporation of mitigation techniques in limiting hindrances. Initial collaboration with the community and stakeholders mitigates location problems, translating to incorporating volunteers, students, and parents. Secondly, resolution of location enables management of parent and student involvement through analyzing optimal transportation logistics. Raising funds to cater to parents unable to transport themselves and the student enhances their

involvement. More importantly, educating and training volunteers, parents, and students increases their knowledge of the project, reducing the risk of their noninvolvement. Lastly, even with the COVID-19 restrictions, creating virtual training and learning chances would enable the organization to grow.

9. Budget

The budget finances for the project are divided into Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3. The Year 1 budget comprises the equipment, which amounts to \$8,500: laptops for 30 students, \$7,500; and miscellaneous, \$1,000. The overhead, which entails teacher support in Year 1, amounts to \$3,000. Therefore, the total budgeted amount in Year 1 is \$11,500. The Year 2 equipment amounts to \$500.00, and the overheads amount to \$1,000. Therefore, the total budget for Year 2 is \$1,500. The Year 3 budget equipment finances total \$500.00, and the overheads amount to \$1,000. The total budget for Year 3 is \$1,500. For the 3 years, the total equipment finances amount to \$9,500, while overheads add up to \$5,000.

Monitoring the budget is critical, and it entails a regular comparison of income and expenditure against the budget amounts. Monitoring helps in financial management and allows financial control (Chugunov & Markuts, 2019). An actual position is established, and after that, the actual amounts are compared with the budget. Variances are calculated if the budget varies from the project's income and expenditure (Chugunov & Markuts, 2019). The reasons for variances are established to determine the needed control measures. There are different reasons why variances occur: inflation, change in a country's GDP, the currency value, corruption, and government legislation.

Actions are finally taken to implement control of the variances. In case there is a misuse of the project resources, such loopholes are sealed. However, reconciliation is made when economic changes impact the budget variance since no action can be taken to change the situation. A budget report containing the controls is produced and presented to the stakeholders. The budget variances are dealt with, and recommendations are made concerning the success of the project.

10. Analysis and Recommendations

An inquiry was conducted to understand literacy programs in the high-poverty rural community of Halifax County. Social media and networking with neighboring school districts are used to share, receive, and gather reading comprehension EOG data. The findings show that based on the reading and reading comprehension EOG scores in Halifax County School District, a literacy program is needed. To create this program within ABC2, I have recommended the following.

Completing surveys and interviews for the planning phase of the digital literacy program, there were several conclusions that the program should be implemented. First, reading scores throughout the area were below the North Carolina standards. Another factor was the students reading below their grade level, causing their scores to be lower than normal.

Create Brand Awareness

To attract the community, it is recommended that ABC2 find a niche service to provide. A niche or specialty service narrows the market and provides an opportunity to stand out. A niche creates brand awareness for a target demographic. The organization should utilize communication between ABC2, the community, and area school districts to increase enrollment in the literacy program.

Financial Management

Practice effective financial management. Create a business plan and be strategic when seeking funding. Maintain sound bookkeeping practices and create a risk management plan for the organization. Effective financial management gives you tools to chart your course into the future, adjust your direction when needed, and help you find your way through challenging times.

11. Reflection

11.1 Professional Learning

During this project, my research skills were enhanced by implementing and planning the literacy program for ABC2. From researching the organization and identifying best practices, these are some of the reasons for implementing the digital literacy program. Resources were explored that I had never previously considered. Sharpening those skills has expanded my subject matter knowledge and resource knowledge base. Learning to balance a project schedule with expectations and contingencies was an interesting challenge. Creating an organizational budget and schedule was a skill I learned during the project. The delicate dance of progress and setbacks creates valuable teaching moments, and learning to brace for the unknown was uncomfortable. Embracing the unknown was a premise I struggled to accept (still do at times); however, the best skill I learned was to do the work, provide the recommendations, and let the organization move in the direction they see fit.

11.2 Personal Development

My concept of leadership evolved during this project. I used caution during the project to ensure a strong culture was built so the company attracts people who believe in the mission and organization. I had a journey of self-reflection throughout the project. I reflected on the recommendations to make sure I prepared objective suggestions. I learned to step back and follow when necessary. I had to adjust my “I can do it all” mentality to show confidence in the team and recognize that I was a consultant. Being forced to step back provided a different perspective that was valuable to my leadership styles which are servant leader and strategic planner, organizational skills, and influencer. This project forced me to address my leadership areas of need. I will not claim victory over my areas of need, but I am pleased that I recognized them and made progress toward becoming a better leader. As a servant leader, this process and being an educator made me understand that I am here to serve all students, parents, and the community, especially students who are struggling in the field of reading and reading comprehension. The ideal goal of students is to become better especially in the form of reading and reading comprehension. Servant leaders understand the importance that it is all about giving of themselves with the ultimate goal of

helping and assisting and not being a hinderance. We should always be prepared to serve and have a servant's heart. As an educator and working with this project, transformational leadership is a "game-changer" that changes the lives of others. Servant and transformational leadership styles are important in my development as an effective leader.

Appendix A

A Better Chance, A Better Community (ABC2) Vision Statement

“ABC2 LIT program will remove the impediment of illiteracy from the lives of our most vulnerable children with the help of teachers, volunteers, mentors and role models.”

Appendix B

Professional Literature Review

The rationale for summer reading programs is to build foundational skills for students to become more proficient readers. The key areas the summer reading program emphasizes are building phonemic awareness, reading fluency, and comprehension. The summer school reading program is an example of a holistic reading approach that can dramatically improve the students' reading skills, especially children at risk for reading difficulties. The purpose of this paper is to review the study conducted by Denton et al. (2010) on the implementation of a summer school reading program.

Denton et al. (2010) conducted a pilot study in which they investigated the implementation of kindergarten summer school reading programs in four high-poverty urban schools. The study aimed to assess both basic reading skills and oral language development. The study employed a quasi-experimental design in which 25 students were randomly assigned to the treatment group, and 28 students were assigned to a comparison group. The study, which lasted for 20 full-day summer school sessions, involved instructional delivery by regular teachers. On a daily basis, the treatment group was placed in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and small group lessons targeting basic reading skills and comprehension. The intervention proved useful for the treatment group concerning improved reading fluency, listening comprehension, and improved phonemic awareness.

The primary argument presented by Denton et al. (2010) is that despite the emphasis on the importance of early reading instruction by novice educational initiatives, there is a persistent gap in reading achievement between students from high-income and low-income families. Another gap Denton et al. identified concerns the fact that previous research on summer school

reading programs mostly concentrated instruction on word-level reading skills at the expense of vocabulary and comprehension. According to Denton et al., socioeconomic factors play crucial roles in student reading proficiency. Using the data from the 2007 report by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, Denton et al. stated that only half of the U.S. fourth-grade students eligible for free or subsidized lunch programs could read at or above the basic level. Subsequently, Denton et al. observed that only 17% of the students from the low socioeconomic group had reading proficiency. On the contrary, 79% of students ineligible for free or subsidized lunch programs could read at or below the basic level, whereas 44% of such students within the higher socioeconomic group could read proficiently. These statistics prove the fact that without effective reading interventions, primary grade students with reading problems will continue experiencing difficulties in the upper levels and secondary grades. Denton et al. also noted that lack of effective instruction contributed to the gaps in reading performance regardless of the socioeconomic advantage of the student.

The researchers emphasized that early quality reading instruction was crucial to help students at risk of reading difficulties. The article refers to researchers like Foorman and Torgesen (2001) who explained that quality reading instruction enhanced the students' phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, reading fluency, vocabulary mastery, and reading comprehension. Denton et al. (2010) equally agreed with other researchers (Enri et al., 2001; Bishop & Adams, 1990; and Scarborough, 1989), who argued that phonics-based instruction, phonological processing, and oral language proficiency predicted later reading abilities.

Concerning summer learning, Denton et al. (2010) observed that students from low-income families are likely to lose focus compared to middle- and high-income families who are likely to maintain consistency in knowledge and skills learned from the previous school year.

The findings concerning word reading and listening comprehension were consistent with those of Schacter and Jo (2005), who noted the positive correlation between summer school programs and increased proficiency among students with reading difficulties. Summer school programs increase opportunities for the children at risk for reading difficulties, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, to build a wider background knowledge when instructions are provided through listening comprehension aside from word-level instructions.

The greatest controversy is the fact that summer school programs disproportionately favor higher-income students; however, the results of Denton et al. (2010) indicated that low-income students who attended intensive summer reading programs registered better gains in word reading, phonemic awareness, text reading fluency, listening comprehension, and vocabulary. These results were promising as they contradicted previous studies that suggested a gap in academic performance between low-income and higher-income students.

The study by Denton et al. (2010), however, is limited by the fact that a small sample size was used, making it hard for generalizability. Only three teachers provided instructions, while most students in the pretest did not attend summer school and were also unavailable for the assessment as they left before the summer school term. Nonetheless, this pilot study demonstrated summer school provides more opportunities for educators to enhance instructions that have positive reading outcomes for students from low economic backgrounds. The authors concluded by reinstating that the current summer school instruction available for primary grade students is weaker and consists of low-intensity activities with little instructional guidance and objectives. The reason why summer school programs fail is due to the failure to utilize evidence-based curricular activities; therefore, emphasis should be put on narrowing the reading outcome gap between children from low- and high-income families by implementing quality instructions.

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