

OCSD 5 launches program to bring students up to grade level

By DALE LINDER-ALTMAN, T&D Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, October 25, 2010 10:28 am

More than 2,400 people from Orangeburg Consolidated School District Five attended a block party on Tuesday to launch "Voyager," a program designed to bring students up to grade level in math and English Language Arts.

The district is in corrective action because of its failure to meet adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act for four consecutive years, and this program, available to grades K-12, is part of the effort to improve students academically.



CHRISTOPHER HUFF/T&D Maurion Gordon, 4, gives a thumbs-up to Vbot, one of the mascots of Cambium Learning Voyager's launch party Tuesday night at the Orangeburg County Aquatic Center.

The party was a "roaring success," said Greg Carson, district spokesman. Nearly 2,500 people signed in, and that's a big number in a district with only about 6,800 students, he said. But Carson noted there were probably more people there because a good many didn't sign in.

"It got our students, our teachers and our parents excited about the Voyager product and what we're going to be doing with it in this district," Carson said. "I consider it a very successful evening. Parents were asking a lot of questions of the Voyager folks, and they received a lot of information."

Dr. Sharon Berry, the district's new deputy superintendent, called Tuesday's party an awareness session to let people know that "Voyager is in town."

"It was to build up the excitement and to say, yes, we have a problem, Voyager is here to address those students that are not up to grade level in reading and math," she said.

Berry calls the Voyager program a "fun, foolproof way to ensure that students receive basic instruction in reading and math."

It's predominantly for special education students, even though other students who are behind will benefit from it, she said.

Voyager is both a teacher-directed and online program. It offers 30-45 minutes of intense, teacher-directed instruction a day above the regular classroom instruction, and the students are able to access educational activities that are presented in a "fun way" at home, Berry said.

While Voyager requires those who use it in the classroom to get special training, all of the work will not necessarily fall on the teachers' shoulders, Berry said.

Teachers' aides can do it; community volunteers can do it, she said. The training will be provided within the next few weeks in the district.

Voyager is already being implemented. Students in grades K-8 were scheduled for testing in math and ELA Oct. 21-22, and high school students will be tested next week.

"This will determine who's a prime candidate for Voyager," Berry said.

She said the district will have the program in effect by the end of November, and she anticipates it will result in improved test scores by the end of the 2010-11 school year.

The district did not have to put up the funds for Voyager or Tuesday's party, Berry said.

"We got additional funding from the government - from Title funds," she said. "It pays for supplies - for the program itself. The 'Y' donated the facility; community members came together with volunteers, facilities and food and gifts, and Voyager donated the gifts for the kids."

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