

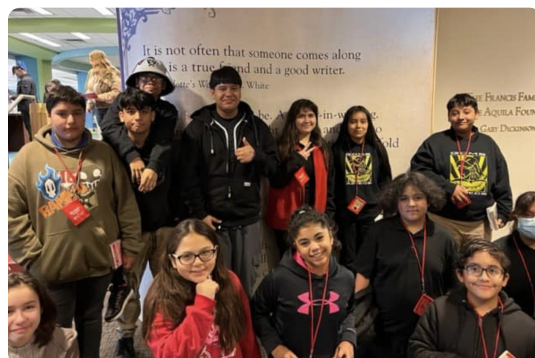


School Spotlight

Guadalupe Centers Middle School: Growing Readers and Building Connection with Aztecs Read

Guadalupe Centers Middle School in Kansas City, Missouri, is a Title I charter school with a resourceful, can-do spirit. With 70% of students identified as English learners, the school provides significant support and structure to help students grow in fluency and proficiency. Beyond a structured approach, staff are dedicated to helping students learn to love reading.

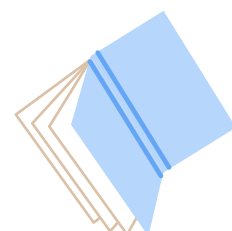
Without a library or librarian in the building, the English Language Arts (ELA) team has taken the lead on building a culture of reading. At the forefront is Christopher Leavens, ELA teacher and lead, who helped launch their Aztecs Read initiative and continues to expand it with Beanstack.



“ I really think something that's important is the social aspect of it, kids having the opportunity to see one another read, and trying to make spaces for them to see themselves as readers.

Christopher Leavens

ELA Teacher and Lead, Guadalupe Centers Middle School



Growing Engagement with Aztecs Read

Through the Aztecs Read program, student engagement is about building connections, tapping into community resources, and motivating readers year-round.

- **Beanstack as a social connector:** Without a physical library, Beanstack serves as the hub that unites classrooms and students around reading.
- **Community partnerships:** Students visit the Kansas City Public Library twice a year and earn incentives from partners like the Kansas City Royals, Science City, the zoo, and Chick-fil-A.
- **Book of the Break challenges:** Fall, winter, and summer challenges are essential to the program. They keep students engaged with reading even while school is out.



Gathering Reading Culture Feedback

A unique element of Christopher's approach is creating a continuous feedback loop to ensure students have a voice in shaping their school's reading culture.

- **Student surveys:** Annual questionnaires measure reading enjoyment, volume, and preferences.
- **Building ownership:** Students help decide how to celebrate their reading achievements.
- **Meaningful insights:** Survey results, paired with Beanstack data, inform book purchasing, challenge planning, and grant writing.

Connecting with Families to Build Reading Habits at Home

The school's first reading challenge coincides with parent-teacher conferences and a schoolwide book fair. These strategically timed events are designed to raise awareness of the importance of independent reading at home early in the school year.

- **Book fair partnership:** Working with Rainy Day Books, a local independent bookstore, the fair offers bilingual titles, graphic novels, and other high-interest selections that reflect student preferences.
- **Family engagement:** Families can attend together, purchase books, and learn about independent reading, including the upcoming Book of the Break challenge.
- **PTO outreach:** Christopher also speaks at PTO meetings to strengthen family awareness and support.



55% Love Reading

55% of student reported that they like or love reading, surpassing the national average.



54% Read More

54% of student said they read more than the previous year, up from 30% when surveys began.



100,000 minutes

Students logged an impressive number in the first year, setting a baseline for future growth.

Conclusion

At Guadalupe Centers Middle School, building a reading culture means embracing creativity, partnerships, and persistence. With no library to serve as the heart of reading, Christopher and his fellow ELA teachers have leaned on Beanstack as a virtual hub that creates connections, builds excitement, and keeps students engaged. The result: more students see themselves as readers, families are engaged, and the school community is working together to grow a love of reading.