# Super Star Online by Help Me 2 Learn
# - Summary of Results from 1st Grant Report -

**What is Super Star Online?**

Super Star Online is a series of educational software courses/titles offered by the Help Me 2 Learn Company to Help Develop reading and math skill for students ages 2 to about age 13. Super Star Online is the web/Internet version of these courses that offers access to the titles from both school and at home. Super Star Online features a "Parent" button to allow parents to work on the lessons with their child in a practice mode and also allows parents to see and print a progress report of their child.

**Summary of Grant Program:**

- A grant was offered from August 15, to December 20, 2009, to K-8 classroom teachers.
- The purpose of the grant is to study the effectiveness of building better reading and math skills by promoting parental involvement through the use of Super Star Online.
- Teachers had two short reports to complete to meet the requirements of the grant. This report is a summary of the results of the first report which was due in January 2010. A second report is due in May 2010.
- Each teacher was able to select one course title and use it for up to 40 students. The Super Star by Help Me 2 Learn titles that were available in the grant were:
    - Letters and Numbers
    - Phonics 2a – Intermediate Level
    - Phonics 2b – Intermediate Level II
    - Games of Math 3 – Multiplication
    - Games of Math 4 – Division and Fractions

**List of the Report Questions**

1. When the teacher began using Super Star Online in the classroom.
2. When and how the teacher made Super Star Online available to the students for at-home use.
3. How many students do you have in your classroom?
4. How many of the students have broadband Internet capability at home.
5. How the teacher made parents aware of Super Star Online availability.

6. What percentage of parents used Super Star Online to help their child with the online lessons (as reported in the Super Star Online Student Management - Parent Mode Reports).
7. The teachers overall assessment of Super Star Online as an effective resource for promoting parental involvement and for improving educational performance of students.


**Question 1:** When the teacher began using Super Star Online in the classroom?

**Results:** Most teachers began using the software anywhere from September to December of 2009. A few began using the software in January of 2010.


**Question 2:** When and how the teacher made Super Star Online available to the students for at-home use?

**Results:** While the answer to when varied greatly, here is a sample of the answers to how the teacher made Super Star Online available to the students for at-home use:

- Some teachers mentioned that they required students to complete the Pre-test at school, they then locked the Pre-test/Post-test and started allowing the students to use the programs at home.

- The most common answer was that they sent home a flyer with the link, the student user names and passwords. Some teachers used the letter or parts of the sample letter to parents as provided by the Help Me 2 Learn Company. Others made their own letter. Several teachers sent a follow-up letter or more than one follow-up letter.

- Some teachers asked the parents to return their note with the parent's email address on it so they could contact them.

- Several teachers spoke to the parents about use of the software. Some spoke to the parents and their parent/teacher conference. Some teachers showed the parents how to use the programs at an inservice meeting.

- Some teachers made phone calls to the parents.

- Some teachers sent emails to the parents.

- Some teachers gave a demonstration to both the parents and students on how to access the program.

- Some teachers sent letters to the parents in both English and Spanish.

- Some teachers placed a link on the school or teacher/classroom website.

- Some teachers placed instructions for using the website inside the report card.

**Question 3:** How many students do you have in your classroom?

**Results:** Each teacher had the opportunity to make one of our course titles available to all of the students in their class. The lowest number of student reported was 12, the highest number was 40. Most classes were around 18 to 20 students. The purpose of this question was to help determine what percentage of students had broadband internet access at home and what percentage of students used the program at home.

**Question 4:** How many of the students have broadband Internet capability at home?

**Results:** Though not absolutely required, broadband Internet capability is needed for a satisfactory user experience. It is assumed that if a home has broadband Internet capability, that they would have a computer at home. This question goes to the importance of online access as opposed to CD-ROM or network access at school. One of the biggest advantages of the online access version is that student can use the programs at school and at home thus greatly extending the time available for using the software. The second big advantage is that the online version is that it allows parents to view the lessons their child is working on, and it allow the parents to help their child with the lessons and track their progress.

An April 2009 survey by the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project shows 63% of adult Americans now have broadband internet connections at home, a 15% increases from a year earlier.
- Teachers from rural communities report very low rates of broadband Internet access.

- Here is a sample of the responses with the number of students with broadband internet access over the number of students in the class: 21/25, 28/38, 12/17, 17/19. 11/18, 12/17, 20/20, 8/17, 5/20, 20/20, 31/33, 13/14, 5/25, 4/14, 5/15, 17/17, 19/19, 12/15, 20/28.

- Besides these numbers, there were comments that some students access online programs from the school library and that some families made a special effort to visit the library to use the programs. Others reported that the students used the online programs at the grandparent's home.

- These numbers go to the question "How should at-home technology be integrated in the school curriculum? Obviously, teachers can't expect

students to complete online assignments at home when all of the students in the class don't have access to the programs. And teachers can't expect parents to work with their children at home with the programs when parents don't have Internet access at home.

The following are some possible solutions to this problem:
- o Make use of the programs through before or after school programs or school computer access.
- o Use the school or public library computers.
- o Make at home online assignments extra credit assignments and give students without online access an alternative written assignment.

**Question 5:** How did you make parents aware of Super Star Online availability?

**Results:** This question was meant to be directed specifically at the parents, though many of the answers in question 2 overlap. It was very obvious from the reports that some teachers put a lot more effort into trying to involve the parents than others.

- A teacher reported that she emailed and called all of the parents and offered the students a contest and had them bring their completed gold star certificates to class.

- A teacher said that when the parents came to pick up the students, they would see them on Super Star and she would talk to the parents about the program and the advantages of using it for extra practice at home.

- A teacher said she showed the students and parents how to access the program at a weekly meeting.

- A teacher had students carry a letter home and continued weekly reminders on agendas and newsletters.

- A teacher showed parents how to access the program using a Smartboard.

**Question 6:** What percentage of parents used Super Star Online to help with the online lessons (as reported in the Super Star Online Student Management – Parent Mode Reports)?

**Results:** Again the results varied. The highest reported use was 50 percent; there were several that reported no parent participation as recorded by the Parent Mode Reports. Though we try to measure the parental involvement

through the Parent Mode Reports, this does not necessarily mean that parents weren't helping their child or encouraging the child to use the programs because the parents can do these without entering the parent mode.

**Question 7:** Did you find Super Star Online as an effective resource for promoting parental involvement and for improving educational performance of students?

**Results:** Most teachers responded very positively to this question. Here are some of the comments:

- Absolutely!

- In the beginning it was difficult to get parents involved.  I believe the follow up phone calls really got parents involved as did conversations about the program when I ran into a parent in the building. Most parents were excited about the program once they got started. Many told me how much their kids enjoyed using Super Star and how they were happy to have something educational available for their children to do online.

- I think it is improving educational performance of my students, but I am disappointed that more parents are using the resources provided.

- I definitely think it is an effective resource for improving educational performance of students.  I like the speed round and I am amazed at the growth of many of the students.  I think many students know their letters and sounds but it is getting the speed for the Letter Naming and Sound test on the Response to Intervention benchmarks.  This activity is motivating for the students to try to beat their score each day they are in the lab. I have many students who ask me if they can use the computer program each day.  It is great to see students learning and having fun at the same time.

- Super Star Online is a great way for students to get extra practice if they need it.

- Yes, easy format and another home academic review option for parents.

- I do find that it is an excellent source for educational performance. Some of the students have really excelled with this program. On the other hand, I thought that I would see more of them using it at home. I am a little disappointed in the lack of parent involvement; considering most of them have internet access.

- My students love the Superstar Program. When I recently took my class of first graders to the computer lab for our weekly session, I was amazed at how long they stayed on task while using the program. When I have used

other math or language arts based programs the students will often ask if they can change to another program after fifteen or twenty minutes. They are excited about using the program in the classroom as well, but we have fewer computers to share. The children are definitely excited and motivated to use the program when they have access to it.

- I found that using Super Star Online and notifying parents and encouraging my students to use the program at home is an effective resource for promoting parental involvement and for improving educational performance of students.  My students really like the fact that in the word problems their names are used.  It also encourages students to strive and get better and faster at the games when they find someone has beaten their score.  None of my students have gotten discouraged. Even my two that are below grade level still find success.

- Yes, I am excited about the program, and the parental response/feedback have all been positive. My parents seemed appreciative that they now have a free resource they can utilize at home with their kids to improve phonemic awareness.

- Most of my parents didn't take advantage of this great opportunity. I was rather disappointed.

- I wanted to share with you a special success story I have had using the Language Arts Phonics 3A program. I am the Reading Intervention teacher at our school. For the past 6 weeks or so I have had 6 sixth grade boys using the program. I have told them that they needed to get 20 right on the speed round and get a gold medal on each of the sections. The boys have really had to work at it. But when they achieved success, they were so happy (to say the least). Now, these are boys who have never had any or little success in reading. It has made a difference in their attitude towards reading and their own self-esteem. I am constantly hearing how they can now sound out big words and read books they were afraid to try before. None of them have been able to successfully pass the whole program but it motivated them to try to learn. I want to thank you for supplying the program that helped reading click for these kids.

- I found that the Super Star Online Phonics 2a is a very useful tool in my classroom.  The program allowed me to easily observe which students were having difficulty both in reports and in observation while students were working on the program.  Both of these features have improved students performance on targeted tasks.

  By reviewing the individual reports I am able to see how many times it took a student to get a GOLD STAR in an area.  If a student took multiple times to get a gold star then, I know I need to follow up with a target lesson in that area.

As I observed the students working on the program I noticed many features of the program that helped me individualize instruction time. For example, I really liked the feature on either side of the star that shows the number of right and wrong answers. This allows me to easily observe the students right and wrong answers on the screen as I am walking by the computers. If the student has multiple wrong answers I can stop and check for understanding then explain the concept before they move forward. During my observation, I found that many students were having difficulty with the Homonyms. Immediately, I was able to re-teach that student the skill by clearing up some misunderstandings on vocabulary. And reminding students to look at our Long A Phonics card on the wall to check for correct spelling of the words. Later, I was able to plan a whole group instruction lesson to ensure that all students have mastered the Homonym skill.

I like the fact that I can introduce the concept using the program with the SMART Board in class and then give the students an assignment to go to in the program for hands on games. After giving the assignment I can check progress then re-teach or pull out students for individualized instruction.

All of these items have improved my teaching of the targeted concepts which in turn enhances student educational performance.

The parental involvement in the program has not been as good as I expected. I think this is because we live in a rural area which as limited internet access. And a lot of our students are in families that at or below poverty level. I will continue to notify parents of the benefit of the Super Star Program and encourage those who have internet access to utilize the program.

- Even though the students did not access this program at home, I feel that they were excited about the program and talking about it with their parents. When the students receive certificates for completing the gold stars, they are able to take these home and share them with their parents. This program is also something that we share with parents when they come for parent/teacher conferences.

As far as educational performance of students, I feel that it has been an effective program in helping my class. Many of them came in struggling to learn sounds of letters and are now doing great. They sing the songs even when we are not doing Super Star. They love the program.

- I hope parents are using it but I have not had any feedback from them.

- Being able to use the program at home has been beneficial in helping my lower students earn gold stars on activities that would otherwise be hard for them to pass. I do try to help when possible, but I can't help all my students personally like they need when they don't understand a particular activity, because of my time constraints. I encouraged many of them to go home and work with a parent, so they could learn and understand how to pass the activity. Our parents here at Shiloh do want their children to succeed, so many of them took advantage of the program at home.

  The half of my first grade students that did not access the program from home either did not need the extra help, or their parents lost the letter with the login information.

- I think it is an effective resource if parents are willing to take the time to use the program with their child. I would have liked to have had the grant at the beginning of the year and been able to explain and promote it at back to School Night. Sending letters and newsletters home is not always effective with my parent population... I believe the program can improve the educational performance of students, especially those that are below grade level.

- I think it could be helpful with parental involvement but only if the parents are willing to participate. I think in most cases, the children work on the program on their own. This Sounds and Letters program is fairly simple and the children usually understand it themselves.

- Yes, for the few students with broadband access. I did not realize that so few families had broadband at home.

**Additional Questions:**

Teachers were supplied with a list of optional questions or activities for parents and students. One teacher had 5 letters from parents and letters from the whole class. Here are a few of those comments:

- I love when my kids use the Games of Math 3. I have two third graders and one fifth grader and all of them enjoy the Super Star program, and have advanced because of it. They are learning as they play, so it is a joy to have it at home.

My youngest has really improved her math skills since she started, and looks at it as a privilege to get to play it. The lessons are very kid friendly and understandable, so it is a very painless teaching device.

It would be a very big disappointment to no longer have the program. My children all have improved their math skills.
- Parent

- I just want to say the Super Star program is an excellent program. Very educational & superb for the kids. I love the leaning skills it performs. Also the teacher parent contact is great. My child loves it and it helps a lot while improving her skills. Thanks for such a great program & keep up the great work & fundamentals of improvement for our kids in this society.
  - Parent

- Games of Math 3 have helped me so much in multiplication. Now I know how to do my math easier because you taught us easier with games. And you have really changed the way I do math I do it a lot lot lot super faster now. And I would recommend it to other kids so they can learn as fast as me. I really enjoy all of your computer games and I hope you make lots more!
  - 3rd grade student

- Help Me 2 Learn has helped me learn multiplication because I love to play your games like basketball, long jump and all the games. I always go on it that what help me learn.
  - 3rd grade student

- I just love the Games 3. How do you do that stuff and my favorite part is when I get all the answers right. And why I want other people to recommend it cause to me it's the best thing ever. You people are the best game of math 3 and 4 makes. Oh and it makes me a better student.
  - 3rd grade student

## Conclusion:

It is extremely clear the Super Star Online by Help Me 2 Learn is regarded as a valuable instructional asset by teachers, students and parents. While this in itself is a highly desirable outcome, it is our belief that the programs can be even more effective when they are used at home and with parental

involvement. As stated before, the purpose of the grant is to study the effectiveness of building better reading and math skills by promoting parental involvement through the use of Super Star Online.

The study points to several barriers to fully effective use of the programs:

1. Many families still do not have broadband Internet access at home. This is particularly a problem in rural communities and in low income families. Often, it is the children of low income families that could benefit the most from the additional instruction.
2. Most teachers are extremely busy. It takes an effort to encourage and promote parental involvement and some teachers are not willing to make that effort. On the other hand, some teachers went out of their way to send letters to parents, email parents, call parents and speak to them personally about the benefits of using the program.
3. It is pretty clear, that when given the opportunity to use Super Star Online at home, most students are very willing to do so. Even so, it still takes the encouragement of teachers and the help and the support of parents to give them this opportunity.
4. The most challenging link in the partnership, at this time, is parental involvement link. One of the goals of Super Star Online was to give parents an easier, more accessible and a fun way to become more involved with the education of their child and a way to track the progress of their child. Of course, there are many excellent parents who are very involved, but as shown in this report; there are a large number of parents who are not involved and not interested. This is not surprising; in fact it is one of the reasons that the parental involvement features were added to Super Star Online. It will take more parental education to inform parents about the availability of the parent features in Super Star Online, this task will need dedicated teachers willing to spend the time to do that.
5. The next report is due in May of 2010. It will be interesting to see how many teachers have made progress with not only their students, but with the parents of those students.

For more information about Super Star Online by Help Me 2 Learn, visit www.helpme2learn.com or call 800-460-7001.