

DOINGWHATWORKS



PRESENTATION

3:40 min



Benchmark Madness

KIPP Delta College Preparatory School,
Arkansas

February 2011

Topic INCREASED LEARNING TIME

Practice MAXIMIZE ATTENDANCE

Highlights

- » Principal Jemar Tisby explains how Benchmark Madness, inspired by March Madness in college basketball, is a strategy to get students engaged and interested in preparation for statewide benchmark assessments.
- » Benchmark Madness starts with a kickoff celebration and outlining the rules of the event.
- » Students move from one classroom to another and participate in fun educational activities.
- » Past events have shown that Benchmark Madness can spark students' interest in school, promote their sense of engagement, and motivate them to put more effort into learning.

About the Site KIPP Delta College Preparatory School
Helena, AR

Demographics:

- » 99% Black
- » 1% White
- » 90% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

- » 3% Special Education
(National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems, Arkansas School Performance Report, 2009)

KIPP Delta College Preparatory School aims to close the achievement gap, get all students on track for graduation, and develop their college-going aspirations. The school attributes its academic success to:

- » A longer school day, Saturday school, and a mandatory three-week summer school;
- » Needs-based academic remediation and a choice of extracurricular enrichment during after-school hours;
- » Instruction and academic support tailored to students' mastery level;
- » Continual assessment to determine students' need for academic supports.

Full Transcript



Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to Benchmark Madness.



Slide 2: Introducing Mr. Tisby

My name is Jemar Tisby, principal of KIPP Delta College Preparatory School in Helena, Arkansas.



Slide 3: Motivating students

Students so often get excited about sports, athletics, other things outside of school. We want them to put just as much energy and just as much enthusiasm into their education. So Benchmark Madness is kind of modeled after March Madness in college basketball, getting students pumped and excited about the Benchmark Test, which is the Arkansas State Assessment.



Slide 4: Simple expectations

So Benchmark Madness is the kind of big fun push and kickoff to the test prep season. Simple expectations, we want them to have fun but not be silly. And so we want them to laugh with each other not at each other. We want them to follow directions even though they are doing a lot of fun activities. So we just lay all that out for the students at the beginning.



Slide 5: Activities

We have lots of different activities lined up for the students. We began the night with a carnival. In the carnival we had five or six different activities—ring toss, things like that. We also had cotton candy there, popcorn machine there. We had inflatable sumo suits that the kids could compete with each other in. We had tie-dyeing t-shirts where they could pick their own colors and tie-dye their own T-shirts. We had competitive cup stacking where they race each other to see who can do these formations the fastest. Improv drama where they play all types of games with drama and acting. Salsa dancing where they can learn a few of the basic steps. Building a tower out of toothpicks. And lots of other different activities throughout the night.



Slide 6: Whole-community involvement

It's one of the premier events of the school year. Most kids say it's the most fun they have all year. And we love it because it's fun and it's academic, and we want to show kids that learning *is* fun. It's not learning *or* fun; it's both and: learning can be fun. So it's entirely worth the effort. We think about the Benchmark Madness event all year long, and we spend about a month of focused planning leading up to the event. We get dozens of volunteers to help us out. It takes lots of help from vendors and facilities people. So a lot of hands are involved, but it's completely worth the effort because once we do it, the kids have a blast and they can connect the fact that the hard work they are about to do prepare for the state test can also be fun as well.



Slide 7: Impact on students

We have done this event for five or six years now, and we will keep on doing it because the impact on students is that they are so much more motivated to do the hard work that it takes to prepare for any assessment but especially the state assessment. We can constantly refer back to Benchmark Madness and the activities that we did there, to show them, hey, school can and should be fun, and while we work hard we also play hard. So we want the students to know that it's not an onerous thing to come to school and to do a lot of work. In fact, that is the joy because that's when you are really learning, that's when you are really getting smarter. And we want them to know that they should enjoy that and have fun with it, and we call it in the KIPP world *joy factor*. So that goes to build our culture, and it makes it lot more fun to do this very serious task of making sure kids have the college preparatory education they need to get to and through college for the life of value, joy, and integrity that we want them to lead.



Slide 8: Learn more

To learn more about using enrichment activities to promote academics, please explore the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.