CASE STUDY

True Engagement

An edtech director at one of the largest private schools in the country discovers a standout keyboarding instructional solution that students love.

FAST FACTS

Name: Bryan Miller
Role: Director of Educational Technology
School: Pine Crest School, Fort Lauderdale FL
Challenge: How to incorporate an essential component of literacy into an already full curriculum.
Solution: QwertyTown with school and home access.
Results: Enthusiastic students who have mastered essential keyboarding skills.
Contact: David Grammerstorf
Second Nature Learning
10 Seaman Lane
New Windsor, NY 12553
845.458.1539

School can be hectic, and keyboarding is not always a number one priority for busy educators and school technologists — but this school saw its real importance and made it work. “It’s been a crazy beginning of the school year, as we have just helped build an integration between our SIS and our new LMS system,” says Bryan Miller, Director of Educational Technology at Pine Crest School in Fort Lauderdale and Boca Raton, Florida. Pine Crest is the second largest private independent preparatory school in the country with over 2,500 students from grades pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade set across two beautiful campuses. The Department of Educational Technology’s specific role is to help educators integrate technology into their daily lessons, through lesson planning, demonstration, classroom instruction and training. They have a separate IT Department that handles all other technology issues, so Bryan primarily deals with curriculum and training. “Fortunately, I found QwertyTown through social networking on Twitter,” he says. “Subscribing to the hashtag #edtech, I learn about tons of small startups and I love to take risks and go for the newest and the best of what is out there.”

Why QwertyTown

QwertyTown fit the bill for Pine Crest School because it solved two problems for their school, as Bryan explains it. One, they were looking for something that was hosted in the cloud that students could do from home. Secondly, it provided students with a social feature and gaming component. “I’m big into game-based learning and this had avatars, achievements — and really stood out from others,” says Bryan. Despite the fact that they

Innovative leader. Bryan Miller likes what QwertyTown has to offer and says his students love it.
have been with other software titles for many years, Bryan recognized a winner and stands firm in his choice, saying, “QwertyTown was innovative in their design and delivery.” Bryan has more to say about the value and benefit involved in using this solution. “The students love it! They honestly cannot get enough. We have students going home and trying to unlock new achievements, just so they can share it with their friends.” From the technical side, the account management has been “fantastic” according to Bryan, allowing them to break each class up and set different benchmarks for students to achieve bronze, silver, or gold medals. “For us, it is the removal of the stressors of teaching keyboarding, because it truly engages our students and keeps them wanting to achieve more,” he says.

A Benchmark for Success
Further, QwertyTown serves as a benchmark in the Pine Crest School technology continuum. Students have requirements that they must achieve each school year, and QwertyTown makes it easy for their teachers to track their performance. Interestingly enough, the school does not outright teach keyboarding in their daily routine. “With the change of input devices, the question that I have posed is, do we need to teach formal keyboarding in a curriculum?” Today, says Bryan, students are using different devices to place the written word on a page, through tablets without keyboards, to phones, to dictation. “We have so many additional skills we want our students to become prepared with, that keyboarding is taught outside of the classroom, at their own pace,” he says. “Yes, it may be used as free time in the classroom, but it has been left up to the parent and the child to decide how much they want to ‘play.’ The students know what they need to achieve and we monitor that – but we only worry about the following benchmarks: speed, and accuracy. How they achieve this task is up to the students.”

Making Learning Fun
The students think they are playing a game, which is the real draw to the students, according to Bryan, and with the addition of speaking instructions to the students, the school can now have the youngest of students practicing their keyboarding. “We need to provide more opportunities for our students and teachers to become risk-takers and solve problems creatively,” says Bryan. Gone are the days of teaching in front of the classroom, he says. “Teachers need to embrace the power of the Internet, and the fact that students will learn with or without us, so we need to become facilitators of learning. We need to teach our students how to effectively and efficiently find answers to their questions, while sitting back and letting them make mistakes; but using those mistakes as the best opportunities to teach.”

Final Thoughts
If you are looking for an innovative way to teach keyboarding through game-based design, then “this cloud-based solution is a great fit for any school!” says Bryan. “Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any questions. We are doing some amazing things at Pine Crest School!” — including making sure that an innovative keyboarding solution is a key part of their success.

www.QwertyTown.com
Fluent keyboarding as an essential component of today's literacy.

© Copyright 2013 Second Nature Learning, LLC. All rights reserved.