

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH in Teaching Elementary Keyboarding

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Elementary school administrators and elementary classroom teachers continue to use the argument that there is not enough time in the school day, and particularly in the “required” curriculum, to teach keyboarding skills. With more and more classroom time being required for programs in QUEST, DARE, Gifted and Talented, Computer Literacy, Education for Employment and no way to “stretch” the school day, one needs to be a creative genius to fit it all in.

Here is an efficient approach to address the time crunch issue—integrate! This award-winning program integrates curriculum requirements in Computer Literacy, Education for Employment, Language Arts, and Creative Arts. In today’s technology-centered society, keyboarding is a basic skill needed of all students. More and more school personnel are acknowledging the need to include keyboarding at the elementary level to enhance children’s language arts skills. The introduction of the alphabetic keys, numeric keys, punctuation keys, and computer operation keys can be accomplished while integrating School-To-Work initiatives. Here’s how:

Program Description

Each fifth grade student is greeted with a handshake at the computer lab door with the words, “Welcome to United Keyboarding Incorporated, congratulations! You have been hired for the job. Your resume was

exceptional!” And thus six weeks begin as wide-eyed fifth grade students have their first experience with a job opportunity. Each is treated as a professional, complete with his/her own executive file folder and an executive name plate. (Classroom teachers can have their students create the name plate as an art project.)

Raises in the form of stickers represent a 25-cent an hour raise when classroom and home assignments are completed. All students learn teamwork through being a member of the executive mail room staff on a weekly rotation basis. File folders are placed in a filing cabinet and two selected “executives” hand out and pick up folders during their week of work. Reading comprehension and listening skills are used throughout the class day by reading instructions and following directions. An overhead daily planning guide makes students take personal initiative to organize their day’s work. Page numbers for a 5-minute warmup, keys that will be introduced, and language skills that will be used are presented at the beginning of the hour. Students learn the “touch method” of keyboarding while working on these interesting activities: alphabet typists; keyboard baseball, basketball, bowling, fishing, football, jogging, rollerblading, skiing swimming, tennis, and track; and Keyboard Rally.

During the six-week period, students learn what it is like to work in various departments of a company. One day

students may be a member of the Advertising Department of U.K.I. creating a business-like poster combining art and keyboarding. Students create a robot icon in business attire sitting up straight, feet flat on floor, eyes on hard copy, and hands on home row. This art activity promotes the value of U.K.I. and the world of work through a hall bulletin board display for underclass students, parents, and teachers to see. The picture depicts necessary work ethics and enforces the importance of having keyboarding skills to compete in a global society.

The Advertising department also creates newspaper ads to “sell” in either the Classified, Automotive, Employment, or Real Estate sections of the local newspaper. Another day students work in the Accounting Department using their 10-key pad skills to complete data entry projects to enhance their problem solving and computational skills. Students are introduced to the 10-key pad using the 4, 5, and 6 keys as home row. The * key is used for multiplication and the / key is used for division. Eight basic math problems in addition, in subtraction, in multiplication, and in division are verbally dictated. After stating each problem, students must input the problem, mentally compute the solution, and enter the correct answer before the next problem is stated. This math activity is used to discuss possible entry-level clerk jobs available for part-time employment opportunities during high school.

Students experience working in the Word Processing Department of a business in writing their own idioms, cinquains, memos, letters, address books, and telephone books to integrate language and writing skills by

composing sentences, paragraphs, and stories.

Each student receives a work performance evaluation during the last week of employment. Keyboarding techniques and employee work ethics are evaluated on a 30-point basis and an exit interview is conducted to motivate students to continue to practice by taking home practice packets or by completing home projects and school projects. (Simple grocery lists, a useful home Christmas card address book or a family telephone directory, a personal diary, school spelling lists, homework answers, or sort stories sent to friends or relatives can be keyboarded instead of printed using a pencil.)

The fifth grade course culminates in a Staff Awards Ceremony for employees, parents, administrators, school personnel, and community members. Course Completion Awards, Hardest Worker Awards, Most Improved Employee Awards, Technique Awards, Art Awards, and Math Awards are recognized through individually computer-created paper certificates in bright colors.

Students are aware at the end of their fifth grade keyboarding experience of their responsibilities to continue their practice until sixth grade when they are promoted to the Word Processing Department of the U.K.I.

The sixth grade course begins with a duplicate copy of the fifth grade performance evaluation to encourage Word Processing Department employees to maintain their precious technique policy and to encourage excellence in the work place. Each employee is given a salary performance sheet at the beginning of employment. Students receive a token \$1 daily wage for job training to stress daily attendance on the

job. They also receive project completion pay which stresses a “pay for performance” rate. A 5-point basis for each project is the attainable goal. This converts into \$5 for a “mailable” project. Students learn to format memos, letters, and reports as they learn to use a word processing package. Language skills are reviewed and emphasized.

The sixth grade course culminates with a token “paycheck” for their six-week word processing training at U.K.I. They learn how to write and endorse a check and learn banking procedures in depositing a check. Students continue using their new skill through classroom work and special projects in the computer lab. Social studies classes integrate keyboarding and word processing skills when students complete a 10-page report on the country of their heritage. Students use their 10-key pad skills when they submit an ethnic recipe for a class cookbook. The culminating report for the DARE program, is keyed using the computer. Students complete letter writing units and report writing assignments including cover sheets, table of contents, and bibliographies in completing other classroom assignments.

Conclusion

Children love to use the computer. Given the opportunity, they will fill the screen with creative ideas in the form of sentences, paragraphs, and stories. The more they key in, the more language arts decisions must be made. Students increase their command of grammar, sentences structure, capitalization, punctuation, syllabication, and spelling without even realizing it! And elementary school personnel can accomplish the many state mandates by using the integrated approach.

About the authors:

Harriet Rogers is Assistant Professor at UW-Whitewater, Wisconsin. She has teaching experience at all levels: elementary, middle, secondary, community college, and university. Presently, she is the coordinator of the Business Education program in the College of Education. She teaches methods classes and supervises student teachers in Business Education. Having supervised hundreds of Business Education teachers in the 10 years at UW-Whitewater, she has also supervised over 300 teachers extending their license to the elementary level. In 1993 she published an article on the “The Status of Elementary Keyboarding in Wisconsin” and in 1994 developed a booklet entitled “Creative Ideas in Teaching Elementary Keyboarding” published by Delta Pi Epsilon.

Since graduating from UW-Whitewater in 1968, Gail Davis has had the privilege of teaching business education subjects in classes ranging from kindergarten through adults in four different school districts and two technical colleges. Presently, she is the coordinator of Keyboarding and Word Processing classes in the Mukwonago School District. She received the Mukwonago Staff Specialty Educator K-6 Award for 1991-92. In 1993 she was nominated for the state-wide Kohl teacher Fellowship Award, which recognizes teachers of unique programs.

