

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Office of Curriculum and Instruction

"To fully understand humanity, we need the arts."

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Update on Elementary Level Keyboarding Instruction

The following keyboarding plan has been developed and will be implemented during the 2005-06 year. It is the culmination of work by the Keyboarding Committee in 2003-04, reflections on the programs in the four elementary schools in 2004-05, the input of the four elementary technology teachers and the four building principals, assistant principals, Cheryl Dyer and myself.

Research shows that keyboarding skills are critical to fluidity of thinking and expression. As students are required to perform more and more complex writing, keyboarding must be as easy as handwriting. With adequate instruction, students can develop the ability to key 2-3 times faster than they can handwrite. The use of a keyboard for writing has proven to be more effective as a writing tool than is a pen or pencil.

Research indicates that the best time for students to begin major skill development in keyboarding is in grade four with prior exposure to the keyboard in grade 3. This learning process is to a large extent drill; development of good posture, memorization of letter and key locations, finger placement and muscle memory. Time must be allocated for this activity. That is always a challenge in our busy schedules.

The plan is as follows:

Grade 3

Building principals will schedule four formal 25-minute lessons in September. Placing this activity early in the year will enable technology teachers to reinforce learning throughout the year. Reinforcement can be at the end of integrated lessons, between projects for short periods of time or once per month for 10 minutes. This instruction will consist of exposure to: the home-row of keys, reaches (which fingers to use to reach which keys), and *Type-to-Learn* software/games.

Classroom teachers will be in the labs observing during this instruction. They are asked to be supportive. Teachers can support the initiative by signing up for the lab between projects and by casually observing the students and reminding them to use the skills that they have learned.

Grade 4

Formal instruction will take place from September 12 to November 23, 2005 in the computer lab. It will consist of two 25-minute sessions per week, for 10 weeks totaling 500 minutes of instruction. Understandably, the time for this instruction must come from other areas of the curriculum. This has been discussed, and will be addressed by the principals in each building. Essentially the time gained for keyboarding will be subtracted from all of the other subject areas. This instruction will consist of exercises using *Type-to-Learn* software. Keyboards will be covered with “speedskins,” which are vinyl covers for the keyboards that have no lettering on them. They are already in use in most buildings.

After the 10-week formal instruction period, keyboarding will be reinforced by inserting a lesson or two between projects, short practices at the end of integrated lessons, and at the end of the year. The software is available on the network, so students can be given opportunities to work independently in the classroom as well as in the computer lab. The key here is to remind the students of the importance of keyboarding, and continue to encourage skills, first in accuracy, and then speed.

Grade 5

Again, there will be reinforcement in September for two lessons, but with continuing emphasis placed on speed and accuracy throughout the year. Formal instruction can be inserted between projects, for short practices at the end of integrated lessons and at the end of the year.

One last note, in the future, keyboarding will be added to the report card. The intent of this action is to reinforce the importance of skill development. “You get what you check.” Students must know that keyboarding is an important skill in which progress is expected.

Your cooperation and support are paramount to the effectiveness of this initiative. The intent of this plan is not to place the responsibility for this instruction with the classroom teacher. It is the responsibility of the technology teachers. But for it to be truly effective, as with everything that is taught in the schools, we need to be supportive of everyone. Classroom teachers are asked to be active observers.