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Chapter I

Introduction

uBoost captures student performance data, translates data into points that students can redeem for rewards... all to build and maintain learner engagement that leads to positive student outcomes.

The uBoost platform is designed to engage 2nd to 12th grade students, teachers, and parents in the learning process by enhancing curriculum via a performance-based rewards system. uBoost's mission is to surround the student with layers of motivational elements including:

- relevant rewards for incremental academic achievement
- support
- encouragement
- recognition from parents, teachers and peers

—so that each student strives to perform at his/her highest level!

This guide will provide tips, strategies, and technical information, enabling teachers to easily and effectively

integrate uBoost into their instructional practices. Integration of uBoost into the classroom will allow teachers to harness:

- powerful technology tools for communication and learning
- the immersive and engaging value of a virtual world
- immediate and automated reporting on student performance data

An Electronic Weekly Reader

uBoost has partnered with Weekly Reader to provide teachers with an electronic version of its popular *Weekly Reader* magazines. Students will now be able to interact with the *Weekly Reader* editions online and engage in quizzes based on content addressed in the editions. Teachers will also receive immediate performance data on students' comprehension of the content.

For almost eighty years, *Weekly Reader* magazines have been used as supplemental educational materials in Pre-Kindergarten to high school classrooms reaching more than 9 million students each year.

How Does uBoost's Core Beliefs Impact Stakeholders?

Central to uBoost's mission are our core beliefs that are fundamental to our direction:

- uBoost recognizes that all stakeholders (teachers, students, and parents) must be engaged in the learning process to positively impact student academic outcomes.

- uBoost appreciates that learners are unique, that they learn differently and are driven by different motivators.

Using these core beliefs to guide uBoost offerings, we seek to involve teachers, students, and parents in the learning process with the following solutions:

Teachers

Needs:

- An easy-to-use solution for reaching low achieving students (due to lack of confidence and motivation).
- an efficient strategy for monitoring and evaluating student achievement.
- a solution for opening up communication between home and school.

uBoost Solutions:

- Reward students for incremental academic performance by making achievement visible to all stakeholders (teachers, parents, and peers).
- Provide teachers clear and comprehensive reports on student performance, allowing them to focus their time on creatively using the data for teaching.

Future uBoost plans include providing a custom, report-building feature.

- Deliver immediate and regular learner performance data to parents to facilitate a dialogue between home and school.

Parents

Needs:

An easy-to-use method for:

- Motivating a child to enjoy learning.
- Recognizing a child's achievement.
- Strengthening the communication between the school and home.

uBoost Solutions:

- Varied layers of recognition including:
 - Tangible rewards as well as student-generated digital assets.
 - Diverse learning activities that build and maintain student engagement in learning.
- Immediate and regular learner performance data (sent via e-mail) that encourages continual recognition and reinforcement.

Students

Needs:

An engaging solution for learning that is not only fun but boosts students' self-confidence and fosters a love of learning.

uBoost Solutions:

- A performance-based rewards system
- A customizable virtual environment for expression and creativity
- A recognition platform to make achievement visible.

Stories That Explain How to Participate

To illustrate the power and effectiveness of uBoost, the following scenarios provide examples of how different stakeholders participate.

Participant

uBoost Reward

Josh, Age 10

Josh is at a developmental age when children are able to read for extended periods of time and solve problems. However, he's a very slow reader and he's very self-conscious at school.

His class transitioned to the online version of the *Weekly Reader* that Josh can access at home and he's discovered that he's comfortable accessing the *Reader* at home. He has learned to re-read paragraphs and look words up in an online dictionary so that he can earn the maximum amount of points. In the past, whenever he read the printed version of the *Weekly Reader* at school he hesitated using the dictionary in his classroom

Joshua's points may be used to purchase rewards in the uBoost Mall. His options include objects for his virtual room or offline rewards certificates that may be printed and presented to retailers in the area where he lives.

Joshua's favorite reward is a half-off certificate to a miniature golf-course in his neighborhood (Note: Rewards in the uBoost system are regional due to partnerships with rewards partners. For example, the miniature golf-course reward may not be available in every state).

Participant

uBoost Reward

because he felt everyone was watching. Now that he accesses the Weekly Reader at home, he can take his time. The quizzes now have a few more questions and students receive instant feedback about the points that they earn from correct answers. Each week, Josh and his classmates (Ed and Kyle) compete to see who can earn the most points. Josh's parents are thrilled to see Josh reading at home and they feel his self-confidence has increased.

Steve, Age 16

Steve is a high school student who has discovered that the points he earns by taking *Weekly Reader* quizzes can be used to purchase valuable auto-related certificates for the family car. Steve

Now that Steve has his license, he's required to pay for gas, and the more points he earns, the more discount gas certificates he can purchase. Another bonus: he's learning!

Participant

uBoost Reward

has grown up with the *Weekly Reader* and although he's been thinking that it's a kids magazine, he values the rewards enough to take the quizzes every week.

Cheryl, Steve's Mother

Steve's mother is a single parent and she appreciates that the uBoost system provides auto rewards that help Steve pay for his car expenses. She has also watched the uBoost Mall expand to include certificates for eyeglasses, vitamins, books, pet supplies and movie tickets.

When Steve's teacher registered him on uBoost, Cheryl received an e-mail invitation to download a parent widget program that she keeps on her computer. She knows that the new *Weekly Reader* is available on Wednesday's each week and she watches to see Steve's score. She receives a message every time his points go up. Steve knows that his mother keeps an eye on his score to keep up with his progress at school but he also realizes that she uses his points to stretch the family budget. Steve is proud that the points he earns can be used to purchase certificates that help his mother pay for things his family needs.

Participant

uBoost Reward

Margaret, Age 32

Margaret is a teacher who has been using the *Weekly Reader* in her classroom for over a year. She has six students who were impossible to motivate but now that they have lives inside uBoost's virtual world, they're busy earning points so they can purchase virtual objects for their rooms. Margaret does not mind that so much of their energy is devoted to their virtual realm because they're all reading! They're not only earning high scores on *Weekly Reader* quizzes but their other skills have also improved.

Margaret accrues points as a percentage of the points that her students earn. Like Steve, Margaret likes to purchase auto-related certificate for savings on gas and oil changes.

Kyle, Age 10

Kyle is the youngest of three children and he has two older sisters who are straight-A students. Although his sisters classes have access to the *Weekly*

Kyle uses his points to purchase half-off certificates for miniature golf as well as music CDs.

Participant

uBoost Reward

Reader, they are not as motivated to earn points because of their high grades. Kyle has always had trouble following in his sisters' footsteps at school but now that he's earning points and competing with his friend Josh, his point scores are three times as high as his sisters'. He may not be a straight-A student right now but he's very proud of the points he earns to top his sisters!

Emily, Kyle's Mother

Although Emily has always worried about Kyle's progress at school, she's comforted by his increased participation in school-related work since he has joined uBoost. She knows he participates because of his desire to compete with his friend Josh but she sees their rivalry as a benefit because he's enthusiastic about reading.

Emily has the parent widget installed on her computer and she likes the fact that she can track Kyle's scores and also receive messages from Kyle's teacher.

Participant

uBoost Reward

Kevin, Age 30

Kevin is a teacher who has been using the printed version of the *Weekly Reader* in his classroom for two years.

Kevin switched to the online version of the *Weekly Reader* when it was first introduced and he feels it has revolutionized the way that he teaches.

Kevin signs up every student at the beginning of the school year and sends e-mail invitations to parents asking them to download the parent widget—the software that parents use to keep track of their children's weekly point scores.

Kevin used to distribute the print version in class but found that it was difficult to tell whether his students were reading or daydreaming. Now that he's using the online version, the uBoost teacher's portal provides him with details about each student's participation (Note: students log on to uBoost to participate).

The reports on the uBoost teacher's portal also help Kevin differentiate instruction in class and they also help him save time. He can quickly identify students who may need additional small group instruction on specific comprehension skills and he no longer needs to grade quizzes, track scores, and manually compare student performance.

Participant

uBoost Reward

Kevin has also discovered that the parent widget program helps him keep parents very involved in their child's progress at school. In his e-mail invitation at the beginning of the school year, he describes the points that everyone can earn and he's learned that points helps him persuade parents to sign up.

FYI...

The next edition of this guide will include a chapter that includes tips on implementing uBoost in the classroom.

We'd love to hear how you have been using uBoost in your classroom! Use the message feature in uBoost to send us your story!

Notes

Chapter 2

uBoost's Virtual World

Researchers say youth-targeted virtual worlds are driven by four emotions: fun, self-expression, control and social needs.

In June 2007, Stanford University hosted a conference called the Virtual Goods Summit for entrepreneurs, venture capitalists and gearheads to discuss the future of virtual economics. Kyra Reppen, Senior Vice President of Neopets, was one of the speakers. Her company, acquired by MTV in 2005, is up to 2 million registered users, and is adding virtual goods to its traditional Neopoints economy. According to Reppen, users complete over 750,000 daily transactions of virtual goods at 22 million user-created shops.

Watch Us Evolve Into A Social Networking Site!

Future uBoost versions will include social networking features similar to those found on sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Webkinz. Today's students are very comfortable with networking online. In fact, a recent survey discovered that ninety-six percent of U.S. students ages 9 to 17

who have internet access use social-networking technology to connect with their peers, and one of their most common topics of discussion is education!

Putting Virtual Fuel into Education

We believe that uBoost's virtual world is the key to drawing and retaining student interest in our rewards and recognition platform. Each uBoost student adopts a virtual space or command center (room) within the uBoost environment. Rooms can be decorated with furniture that contain embedded animations, pets, posters and other objects that a student purchases with points earned by completing quizzes and other activities associated with educational curriculum.

The uBoost virtual world is a visually rich and immersive world that presents entertaining characters as guides. Teachers are the real gatekeepers in the virtual world because they register students and control their access. Once a student is registered, they select a room to inhabit and explore all that the room has to offer:

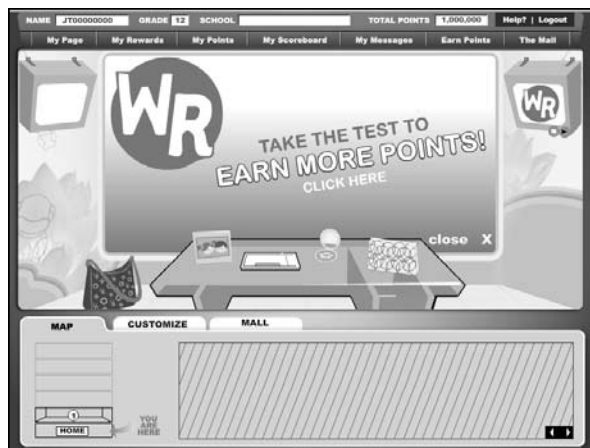
- Clickable objects that link to curriculum, messages, a point history and a mall where points can be turned into rewards.
- Surprise animations that are embedded in objects.

- A mysterious other-worldly realm inhabited by creatures that may be from space, or an underground as-yet undiscovered realm (Note: at its launch, the uBoost world will present a partial back story that's designed to entertain and pique curiosity).

Quote...

People in schools should not take shortcuts in their search for clarity and solutions. They need to engage with all kinds of ideas to improve what they are doing.

*- Michael Fullan
Educational Researcher*





Teacher Visits to uBoost

We recommend that you visit the virtual world to learn more about what takes place.

FYI...

uBoost is planning a teachers' demo that will be ready by the next release.