

## CASE STUDY – October 2009

### **ACCESS TO *PfS* LEARNING - developing a learning platform as a route to engaging and strengthening links with partner schools**

Name of *PfS* centre: **WARRIORS STUDY CENTRE**

Partner: **JUST2EASY (J2E)**

Local Authority: **Worcestershire County Council**

Government Office region: **West Midlands**



*Playing for Success (PfS)* is a Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) initiative established to provide out of school hours study support centres within sports clubs' stadia, using these environments as a motivational tool for learning to maximise students' potential and to reconnect them with their learning, particularly in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Centres have the autonomy within these parameters to develop learning programmes which focus upon improving key skills, boosting self-esteem and confidence and developing independent learning skills.

Just2Easy (J2E) is a company formed by a team of educational software designers creating educational software for schools in an e-safe environment. It is an on-line document processor that runs in a web browser. The Warriors *PfS* Study Centre at Worcester Warriors was introduced to J2E in spring 2009 following the appointment of a new centre teacher. J2E was offering a free trial period for use of its software within the local authority and following an initial meeting between centre staff and the technical director of Just2Easy, the centre agreed to trial it over the summer term 2009.

The study centre was keen to develop a learning platform to give *PfS* students access to learning activities, from home and in school, in an attempt to introduce students to an unfamiliar on-line learning environment. It was also viewed as an opportunity to engage parents in supporting their children's learning and a route to strengthening links with partner schools.

As an introduction, a decision was made to trial the platform for the weekly *PfS* programme 'Extra Time' tasks that students voluntarily engaged with as a home/school research task.

The purpose of the 'Extra Time' tasks has always been to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and to further develop a learning culture within the home and in the students' own time. No restrictions upon sourcing the outcomes of the research were placed upon the students and they were actively encouraged to view the research as a problem solving task - use the internet/text/library books;

- ask your parents/grandparents/friends/teachers
- support your team mates, etc.



*... centre teacher introducing 'Extra Time' task on platform...*

A particular incentive for the students has been the centre's Premiership Points rewards system in pursuit of their weekly targets and the opportunity to become Player of the Week or a member of the Team of the Week.

The pilot work involved eight primary schools, two middle schools and two high schools, engaging a total of 112 students in additional voluntary home-based learning as follows:

At KS2  
35 Year 5  
21 Year 6  
At KS3  
42 Year 7  
14 Year 8

Over the first five terms of the centre's *PfS* provision approximately 31% of all *PfS* students completed some of the tasks, a minority engaging rigorously. Staff at the centre wanted to increase active engagement amongst those students who regularly did not commit to the tasks, particularly at KS3, and further develop the learning of those who responded well to the tasks. J2E appeared to be an opportunity to address this.

As a starting point a decision was made to pilot the rugby themed 'Extra Time' research tasks. The platform and activities were to be accessed throughout the pilot via the centre's newly developed on-line blog, with the students also being able to keep abreast of what was happening at the study centre.

By the first week of summer term a new programme of research activities had been designed encompassing all the major sporting activities throughout the summer term including the Lions Tour, the Ashes and the Wimbledon Championships. The first activity drew 'Extra Time' responses from 55% of KS2 *PfS* students using J2E. More surprising was the revelation that 67% of KS3 students had done likewise. The following week 75% of KS2 and 73% of KS3 *PfS* attendees submitted their responses to the set tasks. Although numbers of students engaging fluctuated over the ten week *PfS* programme 54% of all students used J2E on a weekly basis, particularly KS3 students. In the end of course evaluation 73% of students stated that they had enjoyed accessing all or some of the activities.

Following this success the study centre is now working to develop an on-line *PfS* support curriculum on J2E designed to further encourage parents to support their child's learning. This will include learning activities that no longer feature in our current *PfS* curriculum and a varied range of literacy, numeracy, problem solving and thinking skills tasks. Students, parents and partner schools will be approached and invited to contribute to a spring term 2010 evaluation of the next stage of the development.

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