

Banzai!™ Case Study: Wasatch High School

People are Talking:

“Our students must become financially literate in order to be responsible members of society. Not only does Banzai teach key financial principles, but also a system which they can use throughout their lives.”

- David F. Babbel, PhD
Professor Emeritus of Finance
The Wharton School,
University of Pennsylvania

“I love the way Banzai uses jars to teach the principles of personal finance. My students really enjoyed the system. I look forward to using it again next semester.”

- Susan Edwards,
Wasatch County School District,
Utah

“Banzai offers a whole philosophy...to help people control their spending habits.”

- Fortune

Background

Early in the spring of 2008, Susan Edwards, a teacher at Wasatch County High School in Heber City, Utah, decided to add Banzai to the curriculum of her two financial literacy classes and one accounting class. Susan has taught business education courses for more than twenty years and was intrigued by the idea of using a web-based tool to teach students principles of personal finance.

The three classes comprised approximately 60 eleventh and twelfth-grade students. The significant majority had checking accounts with debit cards and approximately one in five had credit cards. Most received income from a parental allowance or after-school job.

The classes were taught in a classroom wherein each student had access to a computer. Note that, beginning with the class of 2008, all students are required to complete the General Financial Literacy requirement to receive a diploma from a Utah high school.

Preparation

Susan prepared to introduce students to Banzai by reviewing the first sample lesson plan, available for download from the Banzai website and working through the exercises herself. She reports that the supplementary support material was also helpful. She quickly cleared up a couple of unanswered questions by contacting Banzai Support via email.

Prior to teaching the first lesson, Susan created a Banzai account for each student by using the teacher interface to upload a spreadsheet file containing their names and email addresses.

Student Introduction

The students in Susan’s class were introduced to Banzai over the course of two class periods, the second of which was oriented primarily towards reinforcing what had previously been taught. She began by introducing the concept of jars, using actual glass jars for a demonstration, before instructing the students to login to Banzai for the first time.

Susan walked the students through the examples featured in the lesson plan before instructing them to setup their own jars and accounts. She used this opportunity to teach the budgeting concepts covered in Standard 3, Objective 1 of the General Financial Literacy Core.

A few days later, she revisited the concepts. Though there are four sample lesson plans available to teachers, Susan felt that the students

“As an educator, there are far too many software applications that ‘help’ students by taking the thought out of the process. Banzai makes them think which I find refreshing and far more useful as a tool in the classroom.”

— J.B. Haglund
Lower Merion School District,
Pennsylvania

were sufficiently comfortable with Banzai at this point that further reviews were unnecessary.

Assignments

Once she felt they had mastered the basic functionality of Banzai, Susan assigned the students to use the system to keep track of all of their income and expenses from that point forward. Students were able to enter these transactions either at home or during occasional in-class catch-up sessions.

A small minority of students reported that they never spent or received money. Susan encouraged them to enter transactions representing what their behavior *would* be if they had an income.

While students were encouraged to use Banzai to track real-life income and expenses, Susan told each class that they were free to enter fictional transactions if they were concerned about privacy. Students were not asked whether they were recording real or fictional entries.

Grading

Students were graded based upon the number of transactions they properly recorded during the period in which they were assigned to use Banzai. Because Susan was able to review her students’ work by class using the teacher interface, she reports that the entire grading process took only a few minutes.

Student Reactions

Approximately 80% of the students who used Banzai rated the system “Excellent” or “Good” in an anonymous survey distributed at the conclusion of the term. A number of students expressed the intent to continue using the system after their upcoming high school graduation, a good indication that they will carry the lessons they learned in Susan’s class into their college years.

Conclusion

In an interview conducted after the term had ended, Susan indicated that both she and the students found Banzai to be a valuable part of both her financial literacy and accounting courses. The system helped students apply principles which are normally abstract to their own lives.

Susan commented that Banzai is vastly superior to other systems she has used to teach budgeting principles and that it will become a permanent part of her teaching curriculum. Starting next semester, she intends to introduce Banzai to students earlier in the course, giving them more time to learn from their own patterns of spending and saving and increase the chance that they will permanently establish patterns of responsible behavior.

Contact Information

Susan Edwards, Wasatch County HS: susan.edwards@wasatch.edu
Banzai for Education: support@banzaiway.org or (435) 503-1462