KIDDIE ACADEMY
EDUCATIONAL CHILD CARE

An Age-Appropriate Experience
at Kiddie Academy in Cranberry Township and Wexford using TeachSmart® and iStartSmart® computers

Finding the Balance Between Screen Time and Face Time

Cranberry Township and Wexford

Located roughly 20 miles north of Pittsburgh, the Kiddie Academy centers of Cranberry Township and Wexford are owned and co-directed by Dave and Mona Bhatia. The Bhatias have been Hatch® customers for 10 years, and currently use iStartSmart® computers and TeachSmart® interactive whiteboards in their classrooms. Although she doesn't teach, Mona Bhatia has daily interactions in the classroom with the children and regularly helps her teachers develop their lesson plans and effectively incorporate Hatch technology into daily activities.

Why Hatch?

When she researched age-appropriate classroom materials and technology, Mona Bhatia said it was the quality of Hatch's products, along with the exceptional customer service provided by Hatch's Lisa Moore that drew her in and made the difference.

"The customer service is the best part of Hatch! I've never had any issues."– Mona Bhatia

Mona Bhatia said she was especially impressed with Hatch's commitment and lasting investment into customer happiness. With the purchase of each technology solution, Hatch installs the technology and provides in-class training sessions for the teachers who will be using the products.

"The training was excellent," she said. "Barb [The Classroom Integration Consultant] was very knowledgeable and did a great job. My teachers needed that training and mentoring to get them started, and since then, they have become very motivated to use it on a daily basis!"

She said the teachers at Kiddie Academy find Hatch technology easy to implement and flexible enough to work on regularly.

Growth Through iStartSmart

The Kiddie Academy Centers in Cranberry Township and Wexford use iStartSmart computers, which are student-directed computers that help facilitate individualized learning. iStartSmart computers use research-based software and activities to build literacy and math skills, and prepare children for kindergarten. Teachers at Kiddie Academy Cranberry Township and Wexford use the computers in multiple classrooms, thanks to the technology's all-in-one features and scaffolded levels. The computers are rotated throughout classrooms during the week and are used by children of various ages and skill levels.

Mona Bhatia said the many levels of the iStartSmart games present a great challenge for the older children in her classrooms.

"When children look over and see their classmate unlock and play a different game, they want to work harder to get to that point too." - Mona Bhatia

Mona Bhatia also loves iStartSmart's RMS reporting, which provides individualized documentation to teachers of each child's progress and highlights any areas in which they may be struggling.

"It's interesting to see how the children are meeting their developmental needs and cognitive and critical thinking levels. [The RMS reporting] helps the teachers a lot in this way," she said.

Using TeachSmart to Balance Instruction

Mona Bhatia said the children in her classrooms actively want to use technology during the school day. While this eagerness to engage with technology is encouraging, Bhatia strives to limit screen time in her classrooms and balance the use of technology with traditional face-to-face instruction: Engaging children in one-on-one and classroom activities is extremely important in early education.

For this reason, Mona Bhatia loves Hatch TeachSmart displays. The state-of-the-art interactive displays are complete with thousands of pre-loaded classroom-ready activities and combine innovative technology solutions to complement teacher-led instructions with both small and large groups.

TeachSmart stimulates group interaction and collaboration to incorporate the whole classroom in solving problems together. "[TeachSmart] really helps us, especially with the younger children, engage and practice social emotional skills," she said.

She said the children have learned to take turns, and are excited to help others with the activities by shouting out clues as they wait to play next.

"The [children] love the daily activities and time using the technology!" – Mona Bhatia

Along with providing many age-appropriate activities, TeachSmart helps teachers map out lesson plans, access their calendar and research other activities to incorporate into the curriculum. Mona Bhatia said using TeachSmart to research and pull other activities is especially helpful for teaching older children; TeachSmart allows teachers to continue to challenge the children even after they've mastered the Hatch activities.

In the future, Mona Bhatia hopes to dive deeper into the TeachSmart's digital portfolios, which capture individual children's language and writing samples. Since the younger children really love TeachSmart's painting and drawing features, Mona Bhatia said she would like to take full advantage of these assessment tools. She is also looking forward to incorporating more social studies and science into her lesson plans with the help of the TeachSmart display.

Learn more about iStartSmart computers and TeachSmart interactive displays.