



boardworks

Case Study

Developing a technology-based special education curriculum with Boardworks

THE CHALLENGE

Ed Placke's goal when becoming the Executive Director at Green Chimneys in 2017 was to allow students with diverse learning needs, who were not succeeding in the public school system to still access the demands of the curriculum via innovative and adaptive instructional strategies. He found that traditional instructional resources did not provide teachers with enough flexibility or interactivity to create highly-differentiated and engaging lessons. As a result, teachers struggled to find time to create customized lessons, often across multiple subjects, that optimized the learning experience for each student.

Green Chimneys needed something vastly different from the traditional curriculum to allow their students to succeed and flourish

"At Green Chimneys, we have students of average intelligence who also happen to have emotional difficulties and/or significant learning disabilities. When selecting a curriculum my concern was, we don't want to do the same old same old with our students. How can we differentiate the instructional strategies as well as the content? How can we tap into the fact that many of our students are visual learners and are really interested in technology?"

THE SOLUTION

Boardworks has provided invaluable solutions for Ed Placke's teachers and students at both Greenburgh North Castle and Green Chimneys. For students, it provides a level of interactivity that connects them to the content and allows them to access material in an individualized way. For teachers, strapped with the many demands needed to serve differentiated learners, it removes much of the preparatory burden – it provides easy-to-use, ready-made content needed to create lesson plans aligned to the state standards.

Bringing curriculum content to life with interactivity for diverse learners

"The minute I saw Boardworks at Greenburgh North Castle, my administrative staff and I fell in love with it. It was exactly what we needed at the right time. One thing I really liked about it was that the ELA really came alive for the students. For example, Shakespeare was written to be seen and heard, not read, because most of the folks in the days of Shakespeare were illiterate. Of course, our students have a difficult time with Early Modern English. Boardworks provides that modified version that is digitized and in more modern English with graphics and sound to help students connect to the play and understand it better.

Supporting overworked Special Education teachers in creating standards-aligned curriculum content

"We have self-contained teachers who teach every subject and that is one of the concerns from teachers. They are exhausted, number one. And secondly, they don't have expertise across five or six curriculum areas, whereas Boardworks does. Some of



Green Chimneys Special Education School

SCHOOL PROFILE

Green Chimneys, a New York State 853 school, is designed for students who have been unsuccessful in a traditional educational setting and who require a highly structured and supportive program. The therapeutic program incorporates academic, behavioral and emotional support in a comprehensive learning environment to help each child achieve new skills and confidence.

ENVIRONMENT

Two rural campuses located on a farm and a model forest, respectively, in Upstate New York.

SCHOOL STATS

- Total students: 252
- Average teacher experience: 4-5 years
- Average class size: 8-12 students

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

- 100% special needs
- 35% qualify for free & reduced lunch
- 84% boys | 16% girls
- 30% students of color

the other classes are departmentalized, where you are just teaching one topic, but you could be doing algebra, geometry, and business math, for example, so you have three preparations there. Boardworks takes some of the heat off of teachers. Teachers right now are under such pressure in regard to standards and results and outcomes. They have very little time to really put together extensive lesson plans. This is a tool that can absolutely support teachers. I think it'd be good medicine for their mental health."



Boardworks helps supplement a scope and sequence so that the content is predictable, which is good for both teacher and students.



IMPLEMENTATION

Ed's goal in bringing Boardworks to Green Chimneys was to ensure teachers used the resources consistently by incorporating them into their daily or weekly lesson planning. The process of previously implementing Boardworks at Greenburgh North Castle continues to inform his path forward at Green Chimneys. Ultimately, consistent integration comes down to creating a culture around technology usage in the classroom, as well as creating pointed professional development about how to use Boardworks.

Using professional development to create a culture of technology usage

"At Greenburgh North Castle, I learned the hard way. We introduced Boardworks during professional development week. However, because we didn't have continuous in-house professional development and continuous reminders, usage among teachers slightly decreased over time. What we ended up doing was saying, 'All teachers must use Boardworks in their weekly lesson plans, so you have to show the principals that you are utilizing this technology investment as part of your planning. Eventually it started to become embedded as part of the culture.

"At Green Chimneys, professional development is key. We build in PD time at the end of every school day, so once I or another staff member does the introduction, we work with principals who then will work with teachers every few days on getting comfortable with each subject – one day working on algebra, another day ELA, another day social studies, just to get people accustomed to it with more practice and exposure."

RESULTS

With Boardworks, Ed Placke's teachers at Greenburgh North Castle were able to create lessons that give their students with special education needs access to the regular curriculum by addressing their diverse needs. He expects the same to be true once Boardworks is fully implemented at Green Chimneys.

With Boardworks, teachers are more likely to create state standard-aligned lessons in all special education classrooms

"Boardworks is connected to the state standards which is absolutely terrific because when the teachers use it to write their lesson plans, their content is immediately aligned to the state standards. It is a real positive."

"Every student at Green Chimneys has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and Boardworks will be great in providing, for example, with a subject like Algebra, which a lot of our students struggle with, it will be so helpful that Boardworks is editable. With Boardworks, we can actually edit the content and make adjustments. Our teachers will really appreciate the fact that it is state standards-aligned but also something that can be modified on a daily basis to meet the needs of their students."



ABOUT ED PLACKE

Edward Placke is the newly-appointed Executive Director of Green Chimneys and is celebrating his 36th year in education.

Ed is known for leading a variety of diverse educational institutions, including private schools, public schools, BOCES, State Education Department and a special school district.

Before Green Chimneys, Dr. Placke served as the Superintendent of Schools for Greenburgh North Castle UFSD, a school district specifically for students with diverse needs, who also utilized the Boardworks Education resources.



ABOUT BOARDWORKS

Boardworks provides interactive teaching & learning resources that empower teachers to optimize existing classroom technology.

CONTACT US

Schedule a demonstration to learn how Boardworks resources can benefit your teachers and students.

Reach one of our education consultants by phone at **855-405- 7939** or by email at **inquiries@boardworkseducation.com**