

## QuickMind.net: Protean and Powerful

By Sean Budlong

**L**IKE THE SEA GOD PROTEUS OF GREEK MYTH, WHO COULD CHANGE SHAPES AT WILL, QuickMind.net appears in different forms depending on a teacher's priorities—entertaining review and enrichment, customized learning, targeted instruction for students with special needs, or a strong link between home and school. Across Washington Township school district in New Jersey, QuickMind.net morphs from one classroom to the next as teachers creatively take advantage of its versatile features.

From the learning center in her fourth grade classroom at Wedgwood School, Christine Southwick sees QuickMind.net as “a clever program that any Internet user can access at school or at home. It provides an entertaining way to review and enrich classroom instruction.”



At the Bells School, what Rachel McCalley sees in her first grade classroom is a versatile tool that gives her first graders exactly what they need. “I used QuickMind.net in the classroom last year as an option for our computer center. After several practice trips to the lab as a class, the students logged on themselves and accessed

their personalized list of activities I had assigned. The activities reviewed and strengthened their skills in math and language arts. I loved that I could differentiate instruction and allow students to work on individual skills as needed.”

The Intervention Referral Team and teachers of “Good Morning Math” see a program of targeted instruction for third, fourth, and fifth graders with special needs, as Lori McEntee, the technology coordinator at Whitman Elementary, observes. “The teachers have used QuickMind.net as a center in the classroom. They love it because the students can use it independently, yet the teacher guides the choice of activity. In ‘Good Morning Math,’ we use a two-fold instructional model. Part of the time is for direct teacher instruction, and the other part of the time is for students to reinforce skills using computers.”

**L**ori has her own perspective. For her, QuickMind.net is far more than simply a targeted learning tool. “Many parents and teachers are looking for ways to use the computer constructively for assisted instruction, but they are faced with the dilemma of having children who want to play games. With regular Websites, we often find students drifting to games and other sites. I always recommend QuickMind.net to those parents and teachers. QuickMind.net helps us where regular Websites fail because



students cannot ‘click out’ of the area we want them to be in. The students win because of the engrossing game-like environment, and the parents and teachers win because they can choose the activities that best suit the needs of the children.”

Engrossing and Internet-accessible, QuickMind.net appears to many other teachers, like Kellie Gorski, as a perfect way to strengthen the home-school connection. “For myself, I have found the program to be a wonderful opportunity to provide extensive lesson-planning, homework, and assessment resources for students to use at school, home, or anywhere they have an Internet connection.”

Teacher Rachel McCalley saw similar possibilities. “I have yet to find any child in my class who didn’t like the program. Many loved it when I accessed their individual result pages and saw all the ‘green smileys’ next to their completed assignments. What a sense of accomplishment!” Knowing that her students would like nothing better than to spend more time with QuickMind.net, Rachel capitalized on their enthusiasm. “I sent a parent letter encouraging students to work on QuickMind.net from their home computers. Many parents loved the program and the idea that if they wanted additional practice for their children, they could access it themselves at home without asking me for worksheets.”



Teachers can also reach out to parents in new and inventive ways, as Cheryl Dauth, a third grade teacher at Thomas Jefferson School, discovered while planning a Back to School Night presentation with the QuickMind.net Presentation Builder. “I’m hoping that parents who miss the actual night will be able to log on to QuickMind.net at home and access some of the key points I’ll go over.”

**W**hereas Proteus, not only a sea god but also a seer, changed shapes in order to remain elusive, reluctant to yield up his secrets, QuickMind changes precisely to expand its accessibility. Unlike other software, which is limited to the confines of the classroom and the clock that stares down from the wall like a Cyclops’ eye, ticking relentlessly and reaching the end of each period far too quickly, QuickMind.net defies time and place. At any hour of the day, teachers, students, and parents can use the program from any Internet connection. Making the most of the many faces of QuickMind.net, the classes in Washington Township that have integrated the program are covering more and accomplishing more. As Rachel McCalley says, “I am anxious to use QuickMind.net again this year. I can’t wait to spend more time using all of the additional resources the program offers now.”