**Boost Academy’s Innovative Platform**

**Bridges Distance Between Tutor, Student**

“What astonished me,” said Alastair McLeod, a La Jolla, Calif.-based tutor, “was that the experience was far more like being in the same room as the student than I ever thought possible. I found it as natural as breathing.”

 McLeod, who specializes in SAT and ACT college test prep, was referring to the first time he used Boost Academy’s iPad-based tutoring platform. McLeod happened to be in California, while his student, who had traveled to Europe for a family vacation, was in France.

Boost Academy’s app connects students and tutors remotely, enabling them to speak to each other in real time over the iPad. The app converts the iPad into a two-way whiteboard, making it ideal for both tutoring and studying math. Students and tutors are able to work together on the whiteboard, solving problems, reviewing homework and preparing for tests – all in real time and all as though they’re in the same room.

Of the system, McLeod marveled, “Not only was I able to move fluidly back and forth from the spoken word to written notes, to the markup of geometric diagrams, but I was able to use the technology in a way that markedly enriched the work. I came away from the two-hour session with my head full of thoughts about the unexpected richness of the medium, as well as the possibilities of teaching in modes never conceived of before.”

Mark Baucum, Boost Academy’s Director of Tutoring, and a former high school math teacher, says that McLeod’s response is often typical of tutors who use the platform for the first time.

“Whenever we hire a new tutor,” says Baucum, “I tell them that our mission isn’t to do away with face-to-face tutoring. Rather, we want to do our best to replicate it. And we think we have.”

Baucum points out that there are a few counter-intuitive issues about tutoring remotely over the iPad. He says that most people assume that it would be essential to have a video connection between the student and tutor. But Baucum says that’s simply not the case. In fact, there are a number of advantages to having only a two-way whiteboard.

“The whiteboard draws the focus to the math – to the work at hand. Little time is wasted with the distraction of having to watch another person.”

Anna Craver, a former biomechanical engineer who now tutors extensively with algebra and geometry students on the Boost Academy platform, says there are significant advantages to eliminating video.

“Most of my students tell me that they appreciate that we can’t see each other. Students are often fairly stressed about math in general and even more so if they have an adult looking over their shoulder. With just the whiteboard, they can open up and let their guard down a bit. It’s allows for a non-judgmental interaction, and students like that.

“And with younger students in, say, the 4th through 6th grades, I find it helps them to focus. If you’re right in front of them and you make a face because they’re doing something wrong, it’s a big distraction for them, and it can derail for a time the entire process.”

Baucum contends that tutoring over the iPad is in many ways better than traditional face-to-face tutoring.

“If I were in someone’s house tutoring a student, I’d typically sit at one corner of the table and the student would sit at the same corner next to me. But neither of us would really be looking at each other. Instead, we’d usually looking at the paper. The student writes something then slides the paper to me. I look at it, write something and slide it back. So in the end, I would say what is lost by not having video is the least important part of tutoring. It’s not that impressive watching someone do their work. It’s really the doing, not the watching, that’s important.”

Baucum says the genius of Boost Academy’s platform is in the real-time, two-way whiteboard.

“It seems simple, but it’s transformative. Everything happens in real time and there aren’t any wasted motions, distractions or movement. If I’m tutoring face-to-face, and a student makes a mistake with a problem, I’m not going to reach over and start writing on their paper. That would be awkward and intrusive.

“But with the Boost platform, I can interject something immediately. The student and I can interact instantaneously. It’s powerful. I can watch the student progress through a problem. I can actually see them think.”

Craver agrees.

“On the iPad, I can stop them if they’re going in the wrong directions and get them quickly back on track. You can’t do that with paper. The iPad is faster. It’s a better way for two people to work on math. And it cuts out a lot of awkwardness and wasted time that’s inherent in face-to-face tutoring.”

Another important factor to consider, says Baucum, is the comfort level of the student.

“Traditional tutoring usually happens in places where both the student and the tutor are the least comfortable. As a tutor, I’m not really comfortable sitting in someone else’s house, at someone else’s table with a lot of distractions around. The same would be true if I were tutoring in a coffee shop or library. And it’s true for the kids, too. They’re most comfortable in their room or in a comfortable chair. With the iPad, they can sit wherever they feel most comfortable. So can I. The platform directs the focus to the work and to the math. As a result, we can both be more productive.”

 Beyond the effectiveness of the Boost platform, there’s the obvious convenience that distance tutoring affords tutors, parents and students. That’s all icing on the cake, says Craver.

 “The convenience is great. It cuts out so much wasted time. If someone’s a little late for a session, I can simply work on something else. I don’t really lose much – not gas or travel time. Working from home on the iPad is great.”