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AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT EXPANDS USE OF TABULA DIGITA’S EDUCATIONAL VIDEO GAMES TO 22 MIDDLE AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

DimensionM Immersive Video Games First Used in Summer Jump Start Program: High Level of Engagement Drives Students’ Mastery of Mathematics

New York, Jan. 6, 2010 – According to Texas state law, all 8th grade students must pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) mathematics test in order to be promoted to the 9th grade. They have three chances before the end of June and then a Grade Placement Committee determines their fate. Couple that with the uneasiness many students have with mathematics and Algebra, and you have a real dilemma. For educators at Austin Independent School District (AISD) the solution is to alleviate students’ fear of learning a complex subject by teaching it through more engaging and exciting means – immersive educational video games.

This month, AISD is expanding its use of the DimensionM educational video games from Tabula Digita to 7 middle and 15 private schools. The district utilized the immersive games in a summer pilot program that proved so successful, administrators immediately sought to use the supplemental games year-round.

Developed by Tabula Digita, the leading developer of innovative, standards-based educational video games to students and K-12 schools, the DimensionM multiplayer video games are designed to teach and reinforce key mathematics concepts from grades 3-12. The games incorporate a series of first-person action adventure
missions that feature graphics, sound and animation similar to those in popular video games. By successfully navigating a myriad of embedded lessons, students quickly master the mathematics concepts previously discussed in class. This helps to simplify the complexities of mathematics by presenting them in a format – video games -- that today’s students understand.

The introduction of the supplemental games began in July, as part of the intensive 10-day JumpStart program for 350 students in the 8th grade who failed the mathematics portion of the TAKS retest, for the third time. The program, designed to prepare students for 9th grade Algebra I, ran from July 22 – August 4 and offered students four hours of accelerated core instruction each day. Program organizers decided to test the DimensionM games as a new instructional approach to drive student achievement and combat the inherent fears in mathematics.

“We asked the impossible of Tabula Digita and its DimensionM games and they met and exceeded our expectations,” said Norma Jost, Secondary Mathematics Supervisor for AISD. “In just a few weeks time, they instructed our teachers on how to incorporate the games into the acceleration curriculum; students were given 30 minutes a day to play the games. What we saw next was amazing – our students were not only succeeding but truly becoming interested in learning mathematics again.”

According to Dr. Mary Thomas, who oversees state and federal accountability for AISD, “An important consideration in selecting the DimensionM gaming software for the pilot program was the mounting research showing that game-based learning is a highly successful 21st century teaching and learning tool for today’s digitally-advanced students. Equally important was its alignment to standards set by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Texas state standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) for mathematics,” she said.
During the 10-day program, students were assessed twice by way of a survey. Nearly 82 percent of the student respondents indicated they were improving in understanding key mathematics concepts such as negative numbers and generalizing patterns. Over 86 percent of the students were quick to respond positively to the question about whether they liked the games and whether they thought they were helping them to improve their mastery of mathematics.

“How schools teach and how students learn is rapidly changing,” said Ntiedo Etuk, chief executive officer and co-founder of Tabula Digita. “These students are sending a clear signal to administrators about how they want to be taught and what will help them learn. The good news is that AISD administrators and educators are listening and rethinking the delivery of education in this new digital landscape. The reward will come as their students progress to higher levels of mathematics with greater understanding, confidence, and achievement.”

About Tabula Digita
Tabula Digita is the world leader in the development of innovative educational video games. Research-based and aligned to state standards, the award-winning DimensionM and League of Scientists instructive tools currently support mathematics and science curriculum for elementary, middle and high school students.

Through its fusion of collaborative, content-rich, immersive learning environments, Tabula Digita’s single and multiplayer products have been proven highly effective in increasing student engagement, time on task, and achievement scores. Tabula Digita games are currently being used in school districts across the country including New York City Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, Broward County Public Schools and the Ft. Worth Independent School District in Texas.

In 2008, Tabula Digita’s DimensionM gaming series was named the Best Educational Game/Simulation from the Software Industry Information Association (SIIA). For more information, please call 1-877-6-TABULA or 1-877-682-2852 or visit www.DimensionM.com.

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