



Brainchild Has The Answer

Brainchild, according to Webster, is a product of one's creative imagination. Brainchild, according to Jeff Cameron, is a portable, personal education system that helps students aged six to adult learn what they need to know. It's also the name of his extended learning company. Yes, it did come from Cameron's creative imagination, but as with all useful inventions, real life experience helped. In Cameron's case, two events led to Brainchild's existence.

Watching his wife study for the licensure exam to become a certified financial planner frustrated Cameron, who had background in paramedic training and educational publishing. "After hours of reading and cramming, she'd take a sample test to discover that the answer was 'B' not 'A.' Then she'd have to sift back through numerous notes and text books to find out why," said Cameron. Even when she drove off to take the exam, she knew that she had studied hard, but wasn't confident that she had studied the right stuff," he added. "I couldn't understand why there wasn't a system that could give you immediate feedback on a wrong answer and tell you how to get it right, so that you'd spend time learning what you didn't know and could face a test with confidence," added Cameron.

Second life experience: Picture Cameron sailing with his young son, trying to engage him in the sky, water and wildlife around him. Instead, his son's attention is glued to a hand-held Gameboy. "I wondered if we could turn that enthusiasm for a game into an educational tool," said Cameron.

After several years of research and testing with teachers in the classroom, Brainchild units, called Study Buddies, and PC software went on the market. More than 5,000 units were in schools nation-wide within six months. Cameron calls the Brainchild PLS-1000 the "Model T" of computerized learning devices for students and adults. It works like a Gameboy or other hand-held games, but only offers educational software. About the size of a videotape and powered by three AA batteries, its tremendous variety of cartridges reinforce basic academic skills at about a tenth of the cost of a classroom computer.

Brainchild is getting rave reviews from teachers and middle school students as they learn the reading, math, grammar, spelling and vocabulary skills. The TEST mode lets teachers and students see what they know. That way if a student has mastered subtraction, but is weak on fractions, more time can be devoted to fractions. The STUDY mode offers randomized multiple-choice questions with immediate feedback. "If a student gets a question wrong, he can hit the explain button for instant guidance. The student progresses at his own pace. If he masters one level, he can move to the next," said Cameron. The questions are random in order to teach concepts, not memorization. The REVIEW mode is like an electronic flash-card where the student sees a question with an explanation. After working with the Brainchild awhile a student can TEST again on the same material to see his progress.



"Teachers appreciate Brainchild because it can reinforce whatever a teacher is teaching in whatever way she is doing it," said Philip Olive, Brainchild sales representative in Georgia.