

Quest to Learn School for digital kids

A Fictional Day in the Life of a Quest to Learn Student

Key Terms:

Q2L: Quest to Learn

Teachable Agents: assessment tool where kids teach a digital character how to solve a particular problem

The Way Things Work: a core course, focused on math/science

Being, Space and Place: a core course, focused on Humanities

Codeworlds: a core course, focused on math/ela

Sports for the Mind: a support course focused on digital literacies

Home Base: student advisory

Boss Level: two-week “intensive” where students apply knowledge and skills to date to propose solutions to complex problems

Metaplace: virtual world space customized for use in the school

Mission Lab: game design and curriculum studio for students and teachers

SMALLab: mixed reality environment focused on embodied learning

Specials: electives

XPods: teacher choice electives

Rai is a 6th grade student who entered Quest to Learn when it opened in 2009. The following describes a typical day for Rai at the school.

Preparing for School

Rai and her friends Joe and Celia exchange text messages on their phones the minute they get up, making a plan to meet at school at 8:15am to work on breaking the mathematical code they discovered yesterday hidden in one of the books of the library. Last night she had logged onto Q2L’s social network to post some of her homework to her blog, share a new video she’d remixed with the help of an online tutorial authored by her big brother, and do some work with Betty, the teachable agent she was working with to improve her understanding of fractions. Before leaving the house she made sure to pack her laptop, as she knew she’d need it at school and threw in her Nintendo DS as well, since Joe and Celia had one too.

Yesterday they’d been in the library learning how the Dewey Decimal system worked—they needed to find a specific set of books to complete one of the Quests they were currently working on for their class called The Way Things Work. Rai was struggling with solving the fractions needed to crack the code and Joe and Celia promised to show her how they worked—they’d found a great lesson on fractions online they could work through together. Later they were meeting up with some other students and a teacher who ran the Enigma XPod this semester—a learning pod focused on mathematical puzzles, code-breaking, and logic games that could all be accessed, designed and played within Q2L’s virtual world space, Metaplace. Last semester in her Sports for the

Mind class they had learned how to build a neighborhood in Metaplace and customize it with resources they could use and share with others. Last week she had added a map she had made in one of her classes, that she thought other kids in her class could also use.

Morning Meeting

Rai loves the Morning Meeting they have each day. She gets to see all the kids in the school and they have a chance to ask questions and make suggestions about things going on in the school—even 6th graders like herself! On Fridays they always have a guest speaker—last week a computer programmer Skyped in on the big screen in the gym and showed them how to make music with numbers. He'll be back in a few weeks to help them with their Boss Levels, which means she needs to work even harder on learning how to do her fractions. Rumor has it that several mathematical specialists will be needed on the teams, and she'd love to qualify for one of the spots.

Home Base

Mr. Smiley leads Rai's advisory group and after Morning Meeting she and the other kids in her crew head with their laptops to their meeting corner to check in with each other. Mr. Smiley sent them all a text message this morning asking them to bring their backpack to Home Base. Last week he helped them think about how to organize it so that they could carry the materials they needed for class—she and some of the other students had been losing track of their equipment. Rai had been working hard this week to keep things organized and was eager to show her system to the rest of the group.

Studio 1: The Way Things Work (Integrated math/science class)

After Home Base Rai headed to Mission Lab, where her TWTW section was meeting today to do some work in SMALLab, the mixed reality environment housed at the school. Today her team was working on chapter 2 of the Book of Then—they had completed three of the six codes required to complete the Mission and were going to spend today testing out some of their theories about the how fractions might be used to crack the final three codes.

They were going to spend part of class working in SMALLab to build a model of the code sequence to see if that helped them solve the code's puzzle. They had a theory that the RFID tags they wore while in SMALLab to track their activity in the space used numerical codes too, and were keen to ask the game designers at Mission Lab how the tags worked. They had been careful to document their research on their blogs, in case other students in the class had ideas that would help them.

Specials

Today was sign-up for the next round of Specials. Rai loves anime and decides to sign up for something called *Anime Tales Remix*. When she asked Mr. Smiley about the class this morning he recommended it, since she would have a chance to spend an hour a day reading her favorite stuff and he knew she would benefit from more practice reading. The Special also gave her a chance to add some more story component cards to the deck she had been building for Not's Lost Perspective, a Quest she was working on for her Being, Space, and Place studio. She needed to add some new character and setting cards to her deck, and planned to earn them as part of her reading plan this week.

Lunch

The cafeteria was always full of kids playing games over lunch, or reading, or sharing resources. Rai liked to play Pokemon Diamond and Pearl and spent part of lunch

pouring over a strategy guide, memorizing one of the walk-throughs for a level she was planning to play later tonight. She liked looking at maps, and found that she was pretty good at making them too, a skill she was becoming known for among her classmates. Mr. Smiley had suggested she add something about her interest in helping others make maps to her online profile, and list this master skill on the Expertise Exchange in Metaplace. The 8th graders were starting a Quest to locate hidden histories of Africa, and there would no doubt be opportunities for her to contribute to the design of some of the maps needed.

Studio 2: Being, Space and Place *(Integrated Humanities class)*

After she was done with the Pokemon strategy guide Rai decided to use the rest of her lunch period building a digital story deck with a couple of friends for use in their Being, Space and Place studio today. Rai had been able to add several new story components to her inventory, based on the reading she had been done in her Anime Tales Special, so she felt pretty good about the overall composition of her deck. Yesterday she had visited the StorySpace installation outside of Mission Lab, to collect some story starters from the digital stories on display. People from all over the world were writing stories through Twitter, and their updates were sent to the StorySpace archive, where they could be read, remixed, and extracted using her iPhone. She loved how she could touch her iPhone to the StorySpace screen and the text would download through Bluetooth to her screen. Cool!

Today in class they were going to do a story battle, which meant Rai and her deck would go head to head with that of another student. She had earned 5 points so far—7 shy of a “master” status in the game, so she was hoping to add another point to her total today! She had carefully organized her deck for upload to the class server—she’d had to convert several of the files to .jpegs on her laptop—as the story battle would take place using the studio Smartboard.

Studio 3: Codeworlds *(Integrated Math/ELA class)*

Since its Monday they were on A schedule, which meant today she had her Codeworlds studio. They were learning about Cuneiform writing, which she found hard. But her teacher had let her checkout a new game for the Nintendo DS that was helping her learn the characters. It was a multiplayer game so she had been playing it with her Mom and sister at home, so they were learning too.

Home Base

Rai stops off for the end-of-the-day advisory with Mr. Smiley and her crew. One of the students was having some trouble with another kid in his class—they didn’t see to eye to eye on a few things, and Mr. Smiley asked the group to think through some possible solutions to the conflict. The group quickly brainstorms 10 different strategies and posted them to their Home Base group online. Within an hour 25 other students have commented and added suggestions of their own.

Afterschool LAB (afternoon snacks)

After swinging by the cafeteria to pick up a snack from the local farmer’s market Rai quickly changes into her practice gear. She joined the soccer team this semester and they had practice today.

6pm

Before closing her locker to head home she sends Joe and Celia a text message: “Cracked the code to the second clue. Posted online. Txt me ltr w/feedback.”