Ukulele Music

Keith: welcome to the LeeCoSchools edcast number 17 with Thomas Ashbaugh now this episode was actually recommended to us by our previous guest miss Emily Jennings

Kyle: right

Keith: to talk about a project that Thomas has been working on and so tell us a little bit about it

Kyle: so this project is called read 2 mine he has found a way to implement gaming into schools that has a what I'm going to say a measurable effect on the way kids learn the way and how much they read it's something that I have been excited about ever since he started doing it and I've done I've told about do everything I can to help support him and it came up hey some kids need to know some information about this I'm like boy we got an idea for that I want something on the podcast and so I just this information came to us about three hours ago and boy we fired it off and fantastic the interview went great there's a lot of nerd stuff in there

because we're talking to some very technical people but super easy for anyone to understand and and learn about what this thing is that he's created

Keith: yeah and so this is going to be a great tool for positive reinforcement and rewarding great behavior and just rewarding what you should be doing in school anyways

Kyle: right one thing that I want to be sure we note is that the thing that Thomas has created is not a babysitting app no like somebody's app you know you go to I'm not gonna say the name zone but you go to some website and play some silly games or whatever this has nothing to do with that this is directly tied to things that matter as far as education goes

Keith: yeah directly tied to the students performance in educational related right absolutely so after this episode if you find yourself with any questions comments complaints criticisms compliments colloquialisms conundrums or concerns you can find us on the web at

www.lee.k12.al.us/cast you can find us on twitter and instagram @leecoschools you can find us on facebook at facebook.com/leecoschools we also have our own icon on the Lee County Schools app and you can email us at edcast@lee.k12.al.us Kyle

Kyle: here we go

Funky Transition Music

Kyle: we've been sitting here with Thomas Ashbaugh. Thomas tell us who you are tell us what you do here at Lee County

Thomas Ashbaugh: I'm the network engineer here at Lee County but my role is primarily more along the lines of systems administrator I handle the servers internet access phones student data authentication with third-party vendors and software like

Kyle: a lot of very highly technical stuff

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes

Kyle: um so there's this thing that we've heard about called read 2 mine so we got an email from our Teacher of the Year Emily Jennings and she said you know we really love to hear more

about it so since the whole idea sort of came from you we'd like to know how you thought of the idea do you tell us about that

Thomas Ashbaugh: yeah I saw my daughter playing a game on her phone that didn't look to be the type of game she'd play it was one of those strategy battle type games and I said I didn't think you liked those games she says I don't but the the pony princess game that she was interested in playing right was actually making her play other games as advertisements so that she could get more points in the in the in the other pony game really in a lot of the gaming online has gone that way these free games you get they are pay to win where you spend real-life dollars to to buy coins in the game or you watch advertisements to earn money in the game or you installed their paid advertisement games in order to win the game or get better content in the game in the game you like to play so I was thinking that's such a waste of time for her to play a game that she doesn't like just to get content in the game that she does like right and I thought I wish we could harness that for other things and I thought about how the schools have AR points for the that read a lot of books

Kyle: and so AR is accelerated reader

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes yes and they can't really spend those points they just kind of sit there and like one kid in each grade level gets a trophy at the end of the year

Kyle: so a scoreboard kind of deal

Thomas Ashbaugh: it winds up being just a competition between a handful of kids were if we made it to where they could spend the points all the kids would have opportunity to read more and

Keith: there's and incentive to

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes see something out of their summers something from their results yeah get some some kind of reward for their hard work right yeah and so last year I did write the code that kept track of the AR points Renaissance learning was nice enough to give me a file every night that has a list of all the books that were read and how many points they were worth by each student so I'll put that all into a database and now I have totals of all their points so I've searched around and looking for some free open-source games right games that are legally free for us to change their their games code without having to worry about any kind of ramifications of legal issues or yeah and I found the mine test which I rebranded as read 2 mine and made the game more about reading rather than about just playing minecraft

Kyle: right so this is just it's like a clone kind of a minecraft very similar in that nature

Thomas Ashbaugh: it's very similar to Minecraft and in fact it has some of the features that I've added that make it more like these pay to win games you see on Android phones and smartphones except in order to pay a set of paying real money you pay with AR points so yeah you can play the game with limited limited fun experience without reading any books but if you were to spin your AR points you get much better items and much more more fun students at this point in time students can spin their ar points to change the way their character looks to make themselves look like a princess or or Jedi you know things like that and

Kyle: well and so okay so that's also and so most anyone who is a parent who has a kid above the age of about three knows what minecraft is how hard was it for you to implement the minetest system with the AR points

Thomas Ashbaugh: well I mean it does require a custom written database running on a database server that makes the game talk to these points but I've got ten years of experience of shovelling student data to all these different vendors that we've got so just shoveling student data out into systems is what I do from early right so this was normal work for me to just get all the the data because there's more than just their AR points I'm putting their gender in there so when a boy logs in he gets a boy character when a girl logs and she gets a girl character and I've got their student numbers and they're in their state ID numbers in the game so that I can reference other things like their school each student starts at their own school in the game so they have a sense of community and they can start with their friends without being bullied by kids at other schools

Kyle: so like that you know most of time when you would start a game for people who don't know you start in the starting area but you have looked at where these kids are attending school and there's a custom built school in the game that you designed where they can be in their community in the game

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes that way they have a place to go back to to spin their there AR points right yeah there's like a physical shop on the wall uh-huh where they can go and purchase different items for their home

Kyle: that's really cool um and so now we're talking about multiple schools in this world how do you come back I guess combat how do you how do you handle where you know you don't want to have kids fighting other kids in the other

Thomas Ashbaugh: we talked about how I've got more data than just their AR points in the database the game also knows what grade level they are so right now students can't hit each other it just doesn't work at all right but the bows and arrows are an extra mod that was added on so technically so they could for a while their shoot each other with a bow and arrow so what I've done is I've made it to work kindergarten one and two just can't be shot with arrows monsters don't attack K, 1, & 2 either the game the K

one and two when their player does they don't lose any of their stuff the game is much easier for the younger kids and the older kids can't shoot each other with bows and arrows unless it's a player from another school the schools are spaced apart so far away

about half a kilometre in real life walking from each other so that the students pretty much or unless they stumble upon another school in the wilderness right they're not going to bump into each other and shoot each other

Kyle: and so to mention real quick you mentioned bows and swords now the reason that those are in the game are for the game mechanics of fighting monsters and things that are in the game

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes it's for compatibility with the minecraft minecraft has those items we're cloning minecraft and making it very similar right so we have those items oh and I'm hearing some positive feedback about it that students are getting excited about reading because they do want to log in and spend the points they've earned there's a lot of cool items in the game that

can buy even a UFO a flying object that lets them fly normally normally they can't fly in Minecraft yeah so we've given them a flying vehicle that they can purchase with about 200 emeralds which is the in game currency and that's an average of three Harry Potter books three large books yeah would get you that so we're trying to encourage students to read large books or large numbers of books the idea being that reading has been proven to improve your IQ sure and your test-taking skills if you have better reading comprehension you can read the questions on the test and understand it better absolutely so you in theory if the students read more they'll be smarter they'll do better on their standardized tests and the school does a whole but perform better in all aspects Keith: and then the building part that helps foster that creative side as well

Kyle: well and and now I could talk from my Minecraft experience which I have a bunch because I'm a nerd but there's lots of things that would as my son was coming up I was able to show him you know we started learning about redstone which isn't like true electricity but it's close enough and so you can start to do like we you know some of the gates and how this works and things like that and so just the world itself like you said fosters this this learning in by the sandbox learning environments and then in order to get to foster that creativity you have to read books like I think it's just a win-win yeah yes how many schools do you have involved with this right now

Thomas Ashbaugh: I believe six of the seven elementary schools are using it and some more than others it looks like from what I'm seeing that if we just leave it on for the students some of the students will pick it up and play it and maybe mildly motivated by it but the best results I've seen or when the teacher or media specialist hype it up to the kids yeah and once the hype is built the kids get excited about reading the books now that they know that they have a way to spend their points but not only that the teachers that allow the student to go and play it during free time as a reward time yeah how have said that they're seeing good results on behavior where only yes where if student performs their task properly or does not get in trouble and then they're allowed to go spend ten minutes during free time on the read 2 mine system which has been very helpful for the ones that are using it other teachers may not know that it's out there or may not have time to use it I know we're pulled in many different directions on other software that requires the students to use global scholar exams there's just so much going on that we may not have time to use read 2 mine every week but the way it works is students receive points automatically generated based on their grades based on their attendance and based on their discipline if a student's been written up they'll get negative points for the week and they may not get to play them if the students has all Fs on all their grades they're they're gonna lose points as well right but if they have all A's they gain points yeah and you know C is like an average so it gives their zero points for that and basically these reward points are one minute of game time during school

Kyle: and the key word that I think you said was automatically this is not so the teacher has to go in and manually put in

Thomas Ashbaugh: yeah that was the idea that there currently isn't a portal for the teachers to use to view their students reward points or change them we didn't want to make more work for the teachers they do enough data entry as it is in fact they're already into entering attendance discipline and grades in the Inow already so this read 2 mine system pulls that data every Saturday from the inow database and then just assigns points for it all if you've missed the day that week you will actually not get the extra 15 points but if you had perfect attendance for the week those just 15 free points right there yep and you get three points per a two points for a B

you lose three points for an F right great and that is your average entry and you know yes not each entry in the grade but that's not each item graded that's just the average okay I love each course yeah but every week

Kyle: so as long as the teachers are maintaining that good you're in that class if you've done a hundred things or one thing you can still keep going though

Thomas Ashbaugh: I have to put a side note here that teachers that wait till just before the grades are due to enter all the grades their students won't see as much of effect from the service yes if you enter the grades as their as they're graded right you'll actually the students will see every week what their average is when they turn on the read 2 mine program it'll tell them what their averages are in every class yeah and how many points they're in that week because of it

Kyle: well and that's such a good thing because I mean I know on the other side of things as a parent you know if I'm trying to be on top of what my kids doing it's really difficult if for the first five weeks of the course you know we're kind of just we don't know we have we got one graded thing a week one and that's it that's sort of created some positive reinforcement for the teachers as well yes yes and and when I was mentioned the automated thing I'm calling that a good thing that is fantastic because anything that creates more work is not yes because we have a lot that we do

Thomas Ashbaugh: we do this was supposed to be set it and forget it

Kyle: yeah so cool six six of the schools what I'm hoping people who are using this system can use this podcast so we're talking on now as a resource for kids you know some kids didn't have Gaming experience at you and I had coming up we need lots about games we could do that but what are some things that you would try to tell the kids the players about this world that's a big question

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes students log in with their regular username and password they use for everything else in Lee County so we tried to make it easy for them once the game loads and they've logged in they'll start at their school for the first time and there's some rules well I don't run on the wall with some instructions and if any time that you're characterizing it the / key and type school the / key is the one with a question mark key on it okay /school will return them back to their school if they get lost out in the wilderness and they need to get back awesome at school and if they press escape the game is already designed to show them a list of controls it shows them that W is the move forward key and the spacebar jumps and they press I to open their inventory so once they get the hang of that I put posters all over the wall because I've noticed some students have trouble left clicking and right clicking so there's a poster that shows them how to right-click on items that need to be right clicked on and there's a poster that shows them how to open their inventory so that they can see the things that they've mined or purchased with their AR points there are also other post posters that show them how to jump and other game mechanics like the action yes now in this school area can they can they modify the school in any way no that is a confusing thing for the students the first thing they do is they start punching everything when they say I get in the game and if they look at the top left the there is text going by everything they do is the server's telling them you can't modify the school you need to leave the school before you can build around or mine so once they go outside of the school then they can mine and you can tell where the mining starts it should clear yes there's a there's a perfect school with flat area and then once the students get to where they can

change the area it just looks like a war zone they've chopped everything up and dug holes and exploded this man so you can tell where the were the nice protected area is and then where the students can modify

Kyle: gotcha okay

Keith: well so it's really great they bought it because I never got around to playing Minecraft so whenever I log in as an administrator to mess around and do some of the beta testing for you I didn't know what I was doing half the time and still don't frankly guess I'm just getting to that age where games are beyond me

Kyle: well and in our early testing when you discovered that putting the things on the wall was important you know I think that we you were following a couple of kids trying to watch them do stuff and I think you found that that helped out a lot too so so you might just look on the wall now when your everything

Keith: yeah all right whenever I get some free time yeah yeah absolutely so they can't build inside school either

Thomas Ashbaugh: no they can't build or change anything inside the school if it were allowed the schools looking to be there anymore right

Keith: I get not being able to demo the school but you can't build anything else at school

Kyle: because then you would have kids that would build all the blocks I built a wall in front of this door you can't get out now you know yeah so

Keith: and it's inside the school and he can't affect it right yeah

Kyle: yeah so for people who don't know I guess when they do get past that school and they can start mining so it's just similar to Minecraft there's minerals and there's trees and there's blocks that they can harvest to try to build houses and things like that

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes just like Minecraft do you mind things to craft with and you craft things to mine with okay a lot of the students didn't understand that they had to put now and they launched the game window comes up in their web browser that shows them a tutorial on how to craft many of them didn't realize that they could make their own items or the mining though that there was a reason to mine things yeah so now that now it can be launched the game they get a window that pops up that shows them how to craft new items like a pickaxe things you'll need in the game yeah succeed okay and oftentimes they don't have a lot of time during class to play during the school day however I do see the after-school programs using it very heavily really yep and the students whose parents are teachers or on an often as well but students during the day you know they have to they have class sure but one teacher has shared with me that she already has been in years past letting her students go to the library to check out a book when they need a new book think of the library they check out a book they come back now they get 10 minutes of free time in the library to log in to read to mine they'll spend their points that they've earned from the book they just took the quiz on and they'll ten minutes is off is enough time to just browse and what's available to purchase purchase some new things set the new things down in their house and then log out and go back to class

Keith: yeah so I one of the one of the students has built my house and put my stuff in it can Kyle as another student come in and raid my house and steal my stuff we're tearing my house down

Thomas Ashbaugh: so we've actually made it easier to build a house in Minecraft gathering all the resources the different color cracking them into bricks that look good and making glass for your windows and roofs that have angles to them it's all of that takes a lot of time and these kids with the ten minutes in the library before they go back to class don't have time to build the whole house yeah so we've prefabricated a bunch of houses the students can just purchase with their AR points purchase a whole hat they purchase purchase a whole house that gives them a block they walk in they found the place they set that block down and the block immediately grows into a whole house so we've got about ten houses and three castles to choose from and the students have already been using these the problem is they need to buy a protection block also to answer Keith's question they can put these protection blocks sometimes the houses are so big it takes several around their house and no other player can modify anything that's near their protection block within 20 blocks of it

Kyle: so kind of in the same way the school is under a protection there's this protection block that will do the same thing for their

house

Thomas Ashbaugh: yep and then only the owner of the block can modify that area

Keith: nice man I used to read a few books and well just get the one block maybe put a little water on it

Kyle: it's good that you've thought of those things to help them in their limited limited space because I mean you know like you said build the house in Minecraft if you're gonna do it right and I've seen the houses that you've got like it would take me forever to do some of these things

Keith: but they still have that option they don't have to buy the yeah that's why the prefab house they can just like in the real world forget their mobile home looking but they can buy yeah

Thomas Ashbaugh: yep and you know they're decent looking houses yep and some of them do chop them down after they build them and then redesign them the way they want yeah time allotted

Keith: so they chop now they get to keep the resources from the house

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes yes you can chop it down and keep the resources and replace the blocks how you see fit nice some of the resources are very difficult to come by anyway so it's easier for them to get the resources by just buying the house and then chopping it up

Keith: yeah there's like tear downs in Florida where the rich people go buy an old house only to tear it down and build something else but they just wanted a lot basically

Kyle: yeah so okay you mentioned one of the first things that when it when someone logs is that they see the wall with rules now those rules I'm sure are pretty clear what do they look like no

Thomas Ashbaugh: no harassing other players you're not supposed to go chop down someone's house even if they don't have a protection block keeping it safe the little kids do that especially the kindergartners they get in they don't read the rules they just chop everything they see

Kyle: sure yeah

Keith: that's what I did yeah first thing is I was punching trees, pigs

Thomas Ashbaugh: they're not supposed to use curse words or any kind of harassing language

Kyle: so right there's a chat feature in this game too

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes they can chat with other players but I've recently done a whole lot of work on revamping much at filters I'll talk about that I've now made it to where students can only chat with students from their school okay unless the students from the other school are within 80 blocks of them so if they're close by you can chat to each other but otherwise the chat is only showed up to students from your school okay that cuts back on some confusion with them talking a lot and in too much chat flying by right yeah also if a student says a curse word and I've got an extensive list of curse words and an extensive list of harassing like let's arrest like new phrases you think

Kyle: if they type that in the hit enter what happens

Thomas Ashbaugh: they get struck by lightning the first time in the end no

Kyle: but it also won't post anything well

Thomas Ashbaugh: it doesn't show it any other player yeah extract some with lightning and tells them that they can't use bad words or harassing language and the second time they type it in or something harassing from that point forward they get sent to jail

Kyle: so tell me about jail because I've seen jail and jail is fantastic

Thomas Ashbaugh: there's trapped underground in bars with lava all around behind iron bars and there's like zombies and skeletons walking around and they can't chat in jail the chat features just turned off

Kyle: how long are they in jail for

Thomas Ashbaugh: the first time is one minute the second time is two minutes and three minutes and so forth okay and they they can logout but when they log back in later they're still in jail their time does it they got it they've got to serve their time yeah and that just basically burns up their reward points they've earned with those good grades or that good attendance yeah and not being written up gives them reward points

Kyle: interesting so have you built other places in the game so I know you've got the schools and we've talked about jail have you built other places in the game

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes there's a great library where the students each school has a teleporter that takes them to the great library I wanted there to be more fun content coming in the future to keep the game interesting for them so they don't get bored with it and give up but we want them to never give up on reading right so they can if they've read five or more books they can teleport to the great library by standing on the teleporter at their school is clearly marked with the signs and the pictures of the library

Kyle: and that just unlocks and once they've done that they're unlocked forever

Thomas Ashbaugh: and once they're there we're gonna start putting and eventually more teleporters to new places that they can explore it ten books and fifteen books and so forth but that will keep them motivated to continue reading yeah

Kyle: and I've seen this place it is enormous and it's got a really well-designed did you design this er

Thomas Ashbaugh: I copied it from another design but I built it myself and my daughter Julie does a lot of the level design for me so she's built most of the houses and much of the great library was built by her

Kyle: well and you know at the time we're recording this is supposed to Halloween and so I think you've done stuff with like seasonal things like there's pumpkins it's everywhere

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes we're gonna work on a holiday village for the upcoming winter holidays however right now it being fall we've introduced about 15 fall football skins you can pick Alabama fan Auburn fan Georgia fan or Georgia football players Alabama football players can play an Auburn player as your character

Kyle: and all of those skins cost

Thomas Ashbaugh: 10 emeralds which is roughly two two and a half AR points yeah when I say roughly we've scaled the game for the younger kids so the younger kids to get more emeralds per AR point because it's hard for a first grader to earn a hundred AR point yes that's a lot whereas you know a a sixth grader could read three Harry Harry Potter books and be close to that right so basically

Keith: so there's a scaling exchange rate

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes the kindergartner gets twice the in-game currency per AR point yeah as a sixth grader would get okay okay cool we've kind of level the playing field for them

Kyle: that's fantastic and so all those skins are available all they have to do is keep reading you have to get those things that make them feel unique

Thomas Ashbaugh: but yes there's a giant pumpkin in the middle of the great library for fall and they can purchase Halloween costumes and Halloween candy for their character things like that masks to wear with their character which are different than skins that they work like armor that goes so you can have the Harry Potter skin but you can be Harry Potter in a

Kyle: in a pumpkin mask that's crazy and all these things you put in there sort of by hand

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes and we're going to do it again for the for the next holiday and the next one and so forth to try to keep the game interesting and keep film playing and keep them reading this is the main goal with all this

Kyle: yeah when you know I've been sort of following you as part of this process and I got to tell you it's just something I'm super excited about not you know you've got a couple of schools that are really pushing this thing and I think when we start looking at data at the end of this this year we're gonna see some we're gonna see some amazing things that have happened at that school yes even if it's they've read you know thirty percent more books that did last year this has been something that has had a positive impact on them and you know the state of Alabama we

have we have reading coaches here because we start testing reading on a third-grade level and so this can only have a positive impact on that so I'm just I'm super excited about it I'm super excited because the data comes what it all looks like and so

Keith: I think it's great you've been working from over six months now haven't you

Thomas Ashbaugh: yeah I did the research last year on it and got the green light this summer to start on it so we kind of threw together really quick just before school started and I had it ready by the second week of school yeah but it's been growing and growing and growing every week I introduce something new I try to like I do a lot of the work after hours when I get home I'll program for a couple hours in the afternoons yeah or every weekend I'll dedicate like a day to just sitting there and adding new content or programming or fixing bugs there's been a lot of bugs me

Kyle: sure this is the first thing that's ever been done like this as far as I know you know they have like Minecraft for edu but that's it's there it's a little bit different than what you're doing you you've created this unique environment just for Lee County's kids that actually is not just like oh log in to this minecraft game and learn about this like no no you have to have done some prework there

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes and I'm gonna do more with that in the future I see this going further then than it is now we're at the tip of the iceberg on it my next goal is to call Moby max and other people we have the students do work with and have them send me a file every night so not only will the students earn emeralds from their AR points I'll introduce another currency called rubies and they can buy cool things with these rubies but they buy that with Moby max money moby max is a learning repository of educational content for K through eighth grades in Lee County Schools

Kyle: and so it's part of their curriculum is things that they're doing as part of school

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes okay so so reading is great and it helps improve their IQ yeah but some of the things in Moby max actually targets their skills that may be lacking like if we know the students lacking in adding fractions well the teacher tells them to go do the moby max lesson and then from there I could then reward them in the game with something cool so that they felt like their hard work was paid off yes yes

Kyle: I remember being that young eight year old now and so it's really hard for them to understand that there's gonna be some payoff later on yeah and so you've created this system that gives them that immediate payoff and I think that's fantastic and I feel like the system of Education could really benefit from using that mindset

Thomas Ashbaugh: yep and we're gonna ruin I'm trying to prove that because in the future I see next year I'm probably going to try to work on a project using this same system but not the same mine test world or read 2 mine world basically I'm going to have the server spin off a generic flat world with no features no chat no anything every time a student goes to login if the teacher has assigned a test and exam in inow read 2 mine should in my mind's eye check inow see if there's any tests assigned in the grade book if there's a test today assigned in the grade book that has no graded it instead of letting the student play the student is forced into this other world that this blank where he can't chat with other players and the questions of the test are on the wall and the games and then he has a b c d e f or truthful blocks yeah buttons are blocks and he has to

go setback oh a block down that's right on the answer plate got all the letters yes so he'll have a question on the screen with a b c or d answers and he and sets the right answer down and then the door will open he goes in the next room there's the second question the door will close behind it but if the teacher doesn't want them to go back and change answers yeah and then would be like the school he can't edit anything other than placing the Block in that one spot to answer the question and then when he's finished taking the test the scores and automatically injected in inow that way I'm thinking that in the future instead of a teacher grading papers and taking the time into the data and I know the teacher just one time enters mine test - and the test name that they've made mine test - math exam 1 CSV and as soon as they entered the test name and word minetest in front of it take their kids to send the kids to the lab kids go to lab they log in they try to play but they're redirected to the test instead they all take the test and then that can which is program to not let them open up web browsers right let's not let them open up a calculator here yeah so I can secure the environment for a testing environment fairly easily with the software and then they take the test it gets injected back into the gradebook without the students actually well he'd you have to grade papers the students actually had fun doing it and maybe based on their grade they could get a reward in in their actual mine test on their own their character they play yeah if they did a good job on the test they get a good reward in the game and the teacher can just sit back and keep their feet up because they didn't have to grade papers and manually do data entry to get the data back in inow right so we could share the test - since we're on like a district-wide pacing guide each course yeah we could just make one test for math you know grade three first nine weeks one test for a ninth grade you know - first nine weeks and so forth

Kyle: well I know that's something that like dr. Hunter's been working a lot on these tests and giving all the tests uploaded is this this thing is so that's a goal of theirs

Thomas Ashbaugh: yep so if I could get copies of those tests I could make my system work with them as well and then all you'd have to do is just put the test name in the gradebook and the next time or your students trying to play the game it makes them take the test instead and then they can play the game and get a reward based on this Wow and then you get up integrates in the gradebook either Wow but that's not here yet

Kyle: no no no this is all future stuff yeah um

Keith: so I want to backtrack to near the beginning where you're talking about with before this the AR points it was just never had the most got a trophy at the end or whatever so but if they're spending them that if the school still wants to do a thing then they could just go on however it was earned

Thomas Ashbaugh: yes exactly if the database of points spent as part of the game yeah so technically Renaissance place the company that runs AR knows nothing of what they've actually spent yeah so from the media specialists point of view all they see is the amount of points the students have earned okay

Kyle: okay yeah and I know you had a you had a goal if we talked about that goal you mentioned just briefly but is there a reward for people to get the most at the end of the year or not

Thomas Ashbaugh: not anything yet okay the UFO was considered as a type of reward like that that's why the price was set so high so far only five students that even bought the UFO so so far

this year yeah so it's pretty good that's less than less than one student per school yeah and I've got other other cool things about implement there's a helicopter there similar to the FOS a flying vehicle as soon as I get the bugs worked out of its code I'm gonna get it implemented as well and they can spend their points as it is now on things like lightsabers that light up the area at night while they're chopping

Kyle: I've seen the lightsabers and it's it's fantastic it's so good you walk around you see little thing it makes fun always yeah

Keith: but it's off by just there so my scimitars

Kyle: I hear you

Keith: I mean this is you know for one thing it's a passion project it's entirely working on it in your off time it's been a family project for you as well and we're gonna do nothing but benefit from it and I think it's I think it's fantastic so if the school already isn't or if there's a teacher that's listening to this and their school wasn't using it what are they what kind of what do they need to do to be able to have this as an option for their students

Thomas Ashbaugh: well we're not forcing this upon anyone obviously and we're making the principal request it be used in their school we don't want to just push games to a principal school without principals consent sure yeah so if your school wants to use it just have your principal send me an email it's no big deal we'll get something a school built for your school in the game within a week and have it all pushed out to everyone yeah however that being said I do have a a some inquiries coming from one of our middle schools to see what how things would work if they were to allow their students to use I'm still working out the logistics on that because I'm not sure how how much the high schools and middle schools are utilizing accelerated reader right yeah we may move forward with something like the moby max idea for them

Kyle: right so my last question is what would you tell a student who's listed this who's interested in this game and they want to do more with it what are some things you would tell them

Thomas Ashbaugh: number one would be make sure you're reading in your spare time if you have downtime at home pull out your library book that you've checked out from school and read it take the AR test when you get back to school and then you can enjoy the benefits that the tag line I put on everything in the game is read books get stuff yeah and I've been meaning to make a promotional video to hype it up to the students were or it's just like a kid standing an empty room in the game and then read books get stuff and then constantly more and more stuff keeps flashing into his room yeah oh yeah is the idea I just never had time I can either devote my time to make the program better or working on that the book the programmer adding content but I need a video that this basically read books get stuff and that's that's the whole idea the concept I want to this out of the kids is you can do better at this game you can win this game you can show off all the cool stuff you have to your friends and all the cool ideas you have about the items you want to build you can show those cool ideas off if you just read books

Kyle: yeah well we've probably taken it way more of your time than we need to but I will go on record on the podcast saying that we have the luxury of talking to one of these smartest human beings I've ever had the privilege of working with and knowing for way longer way longer this trip we work with here and I hope that the people at Lee County appreciate what you do what

you put into it because I'm telling you when it comes test time when it comes time to you know see how these kids are doing the ones who have taken advantage of your system and have a measurable advantage over everyone oh yeah anything I can to support because I'm just so passionate about I think it's great

Keith: stay awesome

Kyle: he'll continue to be awesome waiting for you

Thomas Ashbaugh: thank you for having me on guys

Keith: all right thanks the end

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