Why is it so important to teach children how to type?

Keyboarding is a way of life today, not only in schools or in the workforce, but also as a means for communicating with others, for sharing ideas, for expressing thoughts, and even for utilizing entertainment through multiple technology devices such as computers, tablets, gaming consoles, smart televisions, and even larger cell phones.  Currently, typing is the primary means of interfacing with a computer.  It is estimated that by the time elementary-aged students enter the workforce, the majority of all jobs will require the effective use of computers.  There is also proof that a person who uses the two-finger "Hunt and Peck" method to type takes significantly longer than a person who has mastered touch-typing techniques.  Hence, people who don't know how to use computers and who aren't efficient with a keyboard will be at a major disadvantage in the job market.  Therefore, learning how to use the keyboard properly is an essential 21st Century life skill that students must develop.

Research shows that learning how to type should be taught to students at an early age, before bad habits form. This early introduction of typing skills reduces bad habit development and provides additional benefits in English Language Arts that include improvements in spelling, writing, and reading comprehension.  Data shows that students who learn how to touch-type early develop writing skills quicker through word processing because it facilitates the review and revision process through the use of editing.  Globally, keyboarding has evolved from a transcription typing skill where, historically, secretaries typed handwritten letters; keyboarding is now a generative typing skill involving composition of original thought and creativity at the keyboard.  Efficient keyboarding skills allow students to emphasize concept development and proper usage of grammar, instead of focusing on key location.  Studies have proven that students who become efficient on the keyboard early in their education compose better, show more pride in their work, produce documents with a neater appearance, and have higher motivation.  Even primary- aged children are actively involved with using computers on a regular basis to communicate electronically and play games that involve using typing skills.  These young students must be guided toward efficient keyboarding habits.  Appropriate placement of keyboarding instruction in the elementary curriculum and reinforcement throughout their school years builds a strong foundation for the rest of our students' lives.

Mastering typing involves learning technique (physical positioning and movement), ergonomics (safe and comfortable keyboard interaction), and acquisition of proper key location.  Learning how to type effectually by using proper key location requires a sequential introduction of the keys, along with a great deal of repetition and reinforcement, to develop the kinesthetic memory traces that lead to keyboarding automaticity.  Simply put, developing the required muscle memory needed to touch-type takes time and practice.  In addition, keyboarding is a cumulative skill.  What can be learned or perfected at one level is heavily dependent on what has been learned or refined at a prior level.  As such, the depth of keyboarding knowledge and skill expectations in the curriculum grow with every grade level of instruction.

In kindergarten, students are introduced to the computer formally for the first time in school.  At this level, the alphabet and numbers, zero through nine, are reinforced as students are introduced to their associated key locations on the computer keyboard.  Basic function keys, such as delete, backspace, and enter are also introduced.  Next, students are instructed to use the left index finger for the left side of the keyboard and the right index finger to strike keys on right side of the keyboard as they develop other basic skills using various software programs to complete developmentally appropriate learning objectives across the curriculum.

Students in grades one and two are introduced to proper keyboarding technique that includes having proper posture and hand placement on the keyboard.  Students in these grade levels perfect the use of home row position while continuing to develop their knowledge of multiple software applications on age appropriate cross-curricular topics of study.

*From Crazy4Computers.net / Site Created by Amy Spalt*