



Case Study

The Banyan School



“The Maplewoodshop Program has given our students a way to shine.”

-Wendy McNeill, Principal,
The Banyan School



► School Vitals

School: The Banyan School is an elementary and high school for students with specialized learning needs

Students: 275 students of all learning levels

Location: Northern NJ

Grades using the program: 6-12 (ages 11-21)

Teachers trained: 5 teachers; reading specialists and math teachers. None were ever previously trained in woodworking

Use: Grades 9-12 use it during school time as an elective. The elementary students use it as an enrichment club activity after school, where it is set up in the gym

► Why Maplewoodshop

With Maplewoodshop, more students have the opportunity to explore woodworking as a career choice. Students from special needs schools like The Banyan School often have difficulty getting into local tech schools, which have become increasingly selective. Exposing students to woodworking through the Maplewoodshop Program helps them practice and master basic trade skills, and increases their chances of trade school admittance.

Reinforcing practical skills outside of the classroom allows children ample opportunity to master what they are learning. Maplewoodshop gives them a way to practice math, reading, and language processing skills. Beyond academic reinforcement, woodworking enhances their interpersonal skills. It promotes social-emotional learning and motivates them to complete the project with their learned skills and feel the power of accomplishment.

“Woodworking enhances their interpersonal skills, their social-emotional learning and just gives them a forum within which they can be doing something hands-on and enjoy the process, and also be proud of their product.”

-Wendy McNeill, Principal, The Banyan School

► Educating With Maplewoodshop

Projects created: Tool tote, keepsake box, footstool, string art, car, jigsaw puzzle

Concepts reinforced:

- Reading
- Language processing skills
- Measuring, counting, basic math functions
- Safe and proper use of tools
- Practiced or mastered fine and gross motor skills

Life Skills learned/reinforced:

- Cooperation
- Teamwork
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Pride in work

“Woodworking has really filled a very important role in our school ... It’s given them a way to use the practical skills that they’re learning in math, the language processing skills that we work on in class to follow directions, but it has given them an incentive to practice measuring, to practice reading a short set of directions. It’s given them the motivation to be able to accomplish something on their own and in the end, to feel that power of accomplishment.”

-Wendy McNeill, Principal, The Banyan School

► What’s Next?

Wendy and her administration are rolling the Maplewoodshop Program out to more students. They will continue to use it as a club in elementary school, helping more students to learn and create with pride. The high school students enjoy the program as an elective and the administration is excited to get so many students exposed to the trades.

Building confidence, creativity, and community in students through woodworking.