Sharing good practice

In this last issue of SGP of 2008 we have an article that began life as a review. Lynn Bailey responded to our request for reviewers for Easi-Scope and reports on the great work that has taken place in her school using it. The second article is from our regular contributor from across the pond. Kelley De Boer shares her ideas about digital storytelling and the many free on-line resources she uses for this. WOTW is a bit of fun for Christmas, Talking Pets.

All at ictopus wish you a very Happy Christmas and all the very best for 2009.

Easi-Scope Digital Microscope

Lynn Bailey

Introduction

I am an ICT technician at Redbridge Primary School in London. At our school we enjoy using new equipment and we were fortunate, during the autumn term, to have a TTS Easi-Scope to use in our school. I found it was easy to install the software so that the images viewed with the microscope were displayed onto interactive whiteboards. I have encouraged staff at my school to incorporate the use of Easi-Scope to enhance the teaching of different areas in the curriculum.

Editor's Note

The Easi-Scope is a hand-held digital microscope available from TTS
www.tts-group.co.uk

It is a simple plug and play device that attaches to a computer via USB and includes its own LED lighting system.

It can be used to take videos or still images at up to x43 magnification.

Size: 73 x 50mm

Price from £25.00

Year One

The Year One Science topic from the QCA was **Ourselves** and for this lesson we were looking at body coverings. The teacher was focusing on animal body coverings such as fur, hair, skin, scales and feathers. She showed photographs of

different animals and asked the children to identify the animals' body coverings. When it came to look at the body covering of humans we decided to show the class the Easi-Scope. I started by asking the children to look at the Easi-Scope and to guess what the equipment was used for. Many were not sure but they were interested to find out so we demonstrated using it to magnify a pen. Following a short discussion about microscopes the teacher asked a child to come and show their hands and fingers under the Easi-Scope (after reassuring them that it would not hurt them) There were lots of keen volunteers! The first child showed his hand and we looked at fingertips discussing fingerprints. Now many children were keen to show legs, feet, knees, teeth, tongues and hair. They were quick to compliment each other with remarks such as, 'That's a beautiful finger!' Also they noticed that even their faces had a fine covering of hair but that the palms of their hands did not.

We also looked at some feathers and the class stick insects, which appeared to be almost transparent under the microscope. The teacher was able to take photographs using the Easi-Scope's built in camera.

All three Year One classes carried out similar lessons using the Easi-Scope. Mrs Alam used the pictures that were taken to form part of a class display on **Ourselves**.

These teachers felt that this was a very child friendly resource. The children had clearly enjoyed the lesson as at lunchtime one came and thanked me for bringing the Easi-Scope into their classroom.

Year Two

The Year Two children had been learning about materials and grouping them into man made and natural materials. As a lesson plenary Miss Lambri showed the class the Easi-Scope and asked them to guess what it was used for. I then used the Easi-Scope to show close-ups of some materials (keeping the materials themselves out of sight) and asked the children to guess what they were and to describe them. Next, Miss Lambri used the microscope to look at a range of materials that had been part of a Materials display in the classroom. She discussed with the children the difference between using your eyes to look at something and viewing it with the microscope. The children commented on the appearance of a small piece of sponge under the microscope, saying things such as - 'It's big.', 'Now it looks like a hard rock.'

A leaf was examined and children described it as looking like a lizard's skin or a frog's foot, glossy and wet. The children suggested that the inside of a large shell looked smooth when it was viewed with your eyes but when examined with the microscope it looked like a shiny cave or a rhino's horn.

Miss Lambri commented that the Easi-Scope was easy to use and she liked being able to photograph the magnified materials. She had encouraged the children to describe the materials and suggested these photographs could be used as stimuli for creative writing to get the children's imagination working.

Year Three

The Year Three science topic was **Teeth** and the class had already looked at diagrams/photographs showing the shape and position of human teeth. When I took the Easi-Scope in and showed an object under the microscope the children were quick to recognise that it was microscope. The teacher assumed the role of a friendly dentist and the children were eager to show their teeth to the class using the Easi-Scope. They looked at the shape and position and named the type of tooth. The teacher asked for a child who had lost a milk tooth to come and show the gap and the erupting tooth. Photographs of different teeth and the tongue were taken. One child commented that the pictures were, 'fabulous!' and said that if she had her own microscope she would be a spy. Three children went on to use the photographs and their ICT skills to create reports independently.

Mr Surman said, *'The unit was easy to use and stimulated creative discussion across the ability range.'*

One Tuesday 3ms looked at teeth.
This is a canine.
Canines are sharp and pointy.
Next to the canine is a yellow tooth.
Varahe did not brush her teeth.
I was interested in the microscope because I could see my teeth- they were large.

By Varahe

Jessye –tooth report

When we took pictures of teeth, people were excited. These were incisors.

The pictures were clear. I could see the taste buds. They were a bit like grey or white.

These pictures were fabulous. I thought that if we had our own we would be spies.

Children's teeth were yellow because they did not brush them a lot.

Children with English as an additional language (EAL)

The School's EAL teacher, Mrs Kambo, worked with a small group of beginner EAL children who are in Years Five and Six. These children have a limited English vocabulary and need lots of visuals to stimulate talk. The Easi-Scope was attached to a laptop computer and the children were given simple instructions about how to operate it. They enjoyed looking at a few objects including coins. This activity was used to promote discussion and description of every day objects and the children were encouraged to speak in full sentences. On another occasion the children practised asking questions in a 'Guess What?' game. When given the chance to use the Easi-Scope for themselves children were happy to lead sessions thus developing confidence.

Mrs Kambo also used the Easi-Scope in an English lesson during a cultural exchange trip to a school in China. This class comprised eleven and twelve year olds who are learning English as an additional language. The Easi-Scope was used as a lesson starter to link learning and talking to the main lesson which was based on the story of **The Rainbow Fish**. The children were shown shells under

the microscope and asked simple questions in English to which they replied in English. They certainly enjoyed looking at the images on the whiteboard.

Mrs Kambo said, *'The Easi-Scope is good value for money, a nice compact size and uncomplicated in use.'*

Finally I would like to say that using the Easi-Scope has added fun and excitement to our teaching and learning. For future development, all teachers thought that a possible improvement would be a stand or tripod to help keep the Easi-Scope steady and allow for easier focusing as it was a little tricky to handle on a few occasions.

Author Notes

Lynn Bailey is Lynn Bailey is an ICT Technician and HLTA At Redbridge Primary School in London.

Digital Storytelling to Promote Primary Literacy

Kelley DeBoer

Digital storytelling is sometimes described as the practice of using computer animation tools to tell stories. Just as with traditional writing activities, digital stories can focus on a specific topic, point of view and/or purpose. Digital stories are engaging because they mix cartoon-like pictures with the added attributes of music, sound and text. Kids love them because their stories come to life. Whether they are called digital stories, mini movies, or animated tales - they all stimulate children to create and think.

Allowing children to mess about with animation software is a powerful way of teaching about characters, setting, and plot in a visual way. Characters are easy to identify with if they have been drawn, created, or picked out of available clip art choices. Setting has to be considered carefully if background scenery is to be drawn or chosen. Plot is built up through animating characters to create the 'actions' for the story. After exploring animation children seem to be able to fill out story mountains, story maps, or other graphic organisers with a bit more detail.

I like to follow up the animated story by asking children to write about the animation they created. Linking digital stories to more traditional writing activities makes connections between the written word and the digital world of virtual reality.

For older children a traditional planning approach may be in order when creating a digital story:-

- decide on the topic - researching, note taking
- collect images and ideas
- plan - outlining, storyboarding, audience, point-of-view
- draft - writing a script
- animating - using the chosen animation website or software
- revising - modifying images and organisation
- editing - timing, images, narration
- publishing - the final product.

Digital stories can vary in length, but those created by my pupils last from 10 seconds, for clay animation, up to around 10 minutes. Topics covered by digital storytelling include: recounting of historical events in clay; describing life cycles; understanding our community; creating a simple adventure an animal might have. Most stories that primary children write are well suited to the digital domain of animation.

There are so many wonderful sites to use for digital storytelling - I am sure you will find one that suits your needs. The following site does a great job of explaining the educational benefits of digital story telling:
http://digitalstorytelling.coe.uh.edu/index.html

Here is a list of my favourite sites and the tools I use with my primary classes.

My Life Cartoon Builder – Elephant
http://www.myglife.org/workshop/master/en/play/Casual/cartoonbuilder/elephant
Cell based animation - make the elephant dance. My 4 and 5 year olds love this, and giggle and giggle.

Flux Time Studio
http://fluxtime.com/animate.php
Can be used online or downloaded This is a real favourite with my 7 year olds. They are especially taken with the space background and objects. It doesn't offer sound - but that doesn't seem to matter as my kids make their own sound effects for their story.

Shidonni
http://www2.shidonni.com/
Children draw an animal in a simple paint program on line and the animal comes to life. They draw the background (setting), and even create food the pet eats. My 6 year olds got help from my older students to write the story that went with their movie.

Moovl
http://www.moovl.co.uk/
Moovl is a unique online tool which teachers and children can use to draw, animate and apply physical properties to objects in order to bring their pictures and words to life. I love this one because it adds science to the story writing process.

Me and My Movie
http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/meandmymovie/
Super simple animation movie maker - just drag and drop clips for a fast mash-up.

Wild Life Film Maker
http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/filmmaker.html
Make a custom nature film with animal clips - another great mash-up.

Digital Films
http://digitalfilms.com/index.php
Make your digital film for free! Choose a background scene, characters, animated actions, dialogue, introduction, and ending credits. Put your name as the producer and email the movie to your friends! You can also signup for free. I suggest using those temporary email accounts for your class.

Animasher
http://www.animasher.com/create - create a short movie on line

Movie Blender
http://www.blender.org/ - 3D animation

Junior Movie Maker
http://j3.juniornet.net/movie/movielauncher.cgi?method=make&source=J2-MAMV-FP - make a movie with animated stickers

Kerpoof
http://www.kerpoof.com/create - super simple story writer.

Zimmer Twins
http://www.zimmertwins.com/ - animation make a movie

Fuzzwich
http://www.fuzzwich.com/ - has two programs. Minivid is dead simple animation. It's never been easier to put your thoughts into motion. Currently under development is the Animator http://www.fuzzwich.com/animator/ This will be a complete online animation studio, with powerful features and the freedom to let you flex your expressive muscles.

Dvolver Movie Maker
http://mm.dfilm.com/live/moviemaker.html - helps you make a movie in a few simple steps. When completed you can send it to a friend, post it to your website, or use Cam studio do a screen capture.

Aniboom
http://www.aniboom.com/ShapeshifterAnimachine.aspx - allows you to create animation online.

Author Notes

Kelley DeBoer lives in a little town outside Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. She began as a preschool teacher and has taught in a multi-age classroom, 6 and 7 year olds and, for the last 10 years, ages 5-14 in the computer lab.

Website of the Week – Talking Pets

http://www.talkingpets.org/

Like a real pet, this is not just for Christmas but it is a fun website for you and your family to play with during the holidays. You can choose a pet cat or dog (or import a photo of your own) and make the pet talk by typing up to 200 characters of speech. You can then send a link for the message to your friends. Good fun for Christmas messages or other greetings.

Many thanks to Kelley De Boer for this WOTW☺

Please let us have your suggestions for WOTW through the 'contact us' link on the website.

Can you make some time over the Christmas break to write something for SGP? The focus of each edition will be an article or articles contributed by readers. If you feel that you could make a contribution please contact me at contact@ictopus.org.uk (we pay a small £50 thank-you fee for each piece published).