

ICT Capability through art activities with students with severe learning difficulties

Case Study

The aim of these lessons is to develop skills in using a mouse effectively and the creation and manipulation of screen images. The programs chosen for this were Dazzle plus and Serif Draw. These are simple but powerful graphics programs that can be tailored to the skill level of the individual student. Learning is achieved most effectively when the students find the activities fun and enjoy the end results.

These activities were undertaken with 3 groups of 12 students with severe learning difficulties, within these groups the level of ICT skills possessed by the students varied very widely. There was a special needs assistant available to help with these groups. All the students were within the age range of KS3, although practically all were working at level one. These lessons were undertaken on a RM connect networked suite of 15 machines.

Lesson 1

I talked to the students about making pictures on a computer screen and about the two main types of drawing, Vector and Bitmap images. I used the classroom whiteboard to illustrate the two types of picture and how they are made up. The first program that the students were to tackle was using a bitmap art package, Dazzle Plus. At the school as part of the developmental curriculum there is a cross curriculum theme each term. This term we were looking at growing things. To undertake this during the ICT lessons I wanted the groups to draw flowers with bitmap graphic tools. The students spent some time exploring the various tools that can be used to draw with. I then stopped the lesson and showed the group how to use two of the tools. This was done in two ways (a) getting all the students to come around one machine to demonstrate what to do (b) to use RM Tutor software which enabled me to take control of their desktop and demonstrate how to use each of the tools. The latter method seemed the most effective, although I did occasionally use the traditional method. If you have access to one of the new electronic whiteboards this could also be used very effectively with students with special needs. It is particular useful with students with sight impediments.

Lesson 2

This was a continuation of the first lesson but using another graphics package. Using a Vector drawing program is more difficult for these students to master and I initially thought that they would really struggle with this. I was pleasantly surprised at how much each student had managed to learn from the previous lessons. Once again they were drawing flowers. The level of difficulty was related to the skill level of each student with some needing considerably more help than other. The groups seem to really enjoy these activities and had no difficulty on staying on task for the whole lesson. The images they produced were saved into their own network folder, learnt from previous lessons. Some of the better pictures were printed out in colour and displayed on the wall. A follow up lesson involved using a word processor to write some simple captions and to import their images into a word processor document.

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