

Using ICT to teach literacy

Effective use of ICT in English lessons offers the potential to transform teaching and learning. Computers, software, cameras and a range of ICT devices such as interactive whiteboards can all make teaching more effective and more fun for the pupils. When used appropriately, ICT can provide pupils with unique opportunities to assist and progress literacy and allow the teacher to access a wide range of information in various formats...

There are many benefits to using ICT to teach literacy:

- It allows the teacher to produce and modify resources quickly and easily.
- It allows access to a wide range of information in different formats.
- The pupils can engage directly with the area of literacy they are focusing on.
- Teachers can use different drafts to assess how work is progressing and what input is needed.

- Some software is able to assess the children's work and provide useful information.
- Using a large screen or overhead projector the teacher can focus the children's attention on different aspects of the text.

The number of activities and resources related to literacy and ICT is enormous - and because of this, literacy teachers need to judge carefully when and why they should use ICT. As a rule of thumb, ICT



should be only used if it allows the teacher or pupils to do something they would not otherwise have been able to do, or if it improves the process of teaching or learning.

For example, using ICT:

- Pupils can engage with text in ways not possible with paper based materials.

- Pupils can experience the interrelated nature of different areas of language - speaking and listening, writing and reading.
 - Pupils can focus on the contents at different levels - word, sentence and text level.
 - The development of reading and writing can be enhanced - through simulations, email, fax, the Internet, interactive books etc.
 - Pupils can make links between writer and audience - they are able to adapt the presentation and organisation of their writing to meet the needs of different audiences.
 - They can prepare websites and multimedia presentations.
 - There is flexibility in that the same piece of work can be used for different pupils in different ways.
 - Teachers can respond to different stages in pupils' writing, with some programs summative and diagnostic information can be provided. A saved or printed version of the work can be kept as a record.
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- ICT can support and enhance the study of literary texts, for example by using a split screen to look at different texts or using grammar checks to analyse texts.

How technology enhances learning

Speaking and Listening

With any form of sustained talking, the use of webcams extends interactivity, and allows for instant feedback and reflection on the processes involved in talking, both in groups and individually. In this way, asking and answering questions takes on a whole new dimension.

Interactive whiteboard

Perhaps one of the most useful tools in the literacy classroom, IWB technology opens up classroom communication by putting emphasis on pupils' responses. Sound recording, particularly transportable sound recording devices such as MP3 or MP4 formats, support emphasis on listening. Meanwhile, the use

of digital cameras helps the pupils' ability to reflect and comment on the use of language: gesture, posture and facial expressions are integral elements of speaking. In more formal situations, video presentations allow pupils to view and review formal and informal presentations from the earliest years.

Early reading

Learning to read can be a difficult process, and pupils can struggle to concentrate when using books alone. A key benefit of ICT is to increase concentration and attention time of pupils, so helping with study. In particular, there is a wide range of software available to support early reading using synthetic phonics. Many pupils view software differently from ICT – perceiving it to be more exciting. There are lots of audio-based reading schemes now available to schools, many of which offer significant advantages over books. Through the use of ICT-based phonics books, clear connections

can be made between sounds and letters on a page. For struggling readers, there are also many software-based reading intervention programs available that can dramatically improve pupils' achievement. Some feature speech-recognition software and integrated assessment for learning.

Use programs like My World to sort words, match words to pictures, word building. Use programs like Animated Alphabet and Tizzy's Toy Box for early years, and templates can be made with Pages/Textease, to allow children to build up words, or hear as well as see the words.

Vocabulary

Interactive dictionaries can prove invaluable in the classroom, and the essential development of vocabulary is made easier through interactive resources. Programs like My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary can be used to find words. Children can use word processors with in-built dictionaries and thesauruses to develop their vocabulary.

Sentences

There are many products available to help with sentence writing skills, such as Textease or Clicker, and many offer added speech facilities to help pupils check their work. Programs like My First Incredible Amazing Dictionary can be used to find words. Children can use word processors with in-built dictionaries and thesauruses to develop their vocabulary. In sentence construction, children can highlight a specific part of a prepared sentence or passage, and correct errors in a prepared passage.

Comprehension

Using resources that include aural and visual comprehension activities can make a significant difference to a pupil's development. Many products are available that offer paper-based comprehension activities alongside sound, animations and video. These multimedia products open up a world of experiences to the pupil, allowing them to develop core comprehension skills without even realising it. Use

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Talking books as a stimulus. My World can be used to order passages correctly. The children can also look at stories on the Internet, or use the Internet or a CD ROM for researching different topics.

Composition

Using word processors allows children to make changes without it showing on the page; they don't need to think about spelling or presentation and so can focus on the content. They can communicate by email, use Internet chat or send stories to the Internet to enhance their sense of audience. They can also present information in a range of ways and use a spell checker or thesaurus.

Presentational software and databases further extend what is possible for composition. Digital technology, with its ability to import images and manipulate text, means that the presentation of writing can be strikingly varied, and involve design features which paper-based writing does not allow.



Drama

ICT-based drama in literacy lessons allows pupils to be experimental. Digital cameras, capturing moving and still images, can greatly aid drama processes, particularly the development of dialogue. Capturing drama moments – by using freeze-frame functions – on camera and displaying the images on the IWB allows for ease of sharing, evaluating and extending understanding.

Internet

The Internet is a great tool for teaching literacy. Biographies, newspaper reports, fictional writing - the Internet offers millions of possibilities – as long as you have the time to search!

Sound

Making the connections between text on a page and text as it sounds is critically important in literacy development, and all you need to do this is a computer, sound recording software and a plug-and-go microphone. Pupils can record their own creative writing compositions for narrative work, interviews for non-fiction work, and music and words for poetry projects. The integration of sound into a project makes it immediately more exciting to the pupils, and allows the development of communication skills.

Video

Film making has always been an exciting and challenging activity for the classroom. With ICT, traditional

stories can be performed and recorded, scenes from plays or books can be acted out and recorded for whole-class discussion, interviews can be filmed for media projects, persuasive writing activities - such as composing adverts - can be brought to life with film, and non-fiction reports can be backed up with film-based 'evidence'.

Voting systems

Voting systems allow pupils to participate in lessons by sending responses to questions or discussion topics via an electronic keypad. The responses appear on an IWB or projector screen. Voting systems are often used in mathematics lessons – particularly in association with multiple-choice-based assessment software – but they can also help the literacy teacher. In creative writing, the pupils' emotional response to texts can easily be gauged. Similarly, comprehension activities that offer multiple-choice answers can be carried out and results recorded instantly for assessment and monitoring purposes.
