

TEACH

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Education for Today and Tomorrow • L'Éducation - Aujourd'hui et Demain

LE PROF

Math Pg. 291 #4

$$\begin{array}{l} 4a - 4 + -4 = -8 \\ b + 4 - +4 = 0 \\ c - 4 - -4 = 0 \\ d + 4 - -4 = 8 \\ e - 4 - +4 = -8 \\ f + 4 + +4 = 8 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{l} 5a 4 + 4 = 8 \\ b - 5 + -5 = -10 \\ c + 5 - -5 = 10 \\ d - 5 \\ e + 5 \end{array}$$

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Technology and Quality Learning**

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Styles d'apprentissage: comment permettre
aux enfants de briser le «moule»

Buy and Be Happy: A Unit on Advertising

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Welcome to the Jan/Feb issue of TEACH. This issue covers topics in psychology, mathematics, technology, advertising, and more.

What makes an individual unique is his or her particular way of thinking and behaving. But what about his or her particular way of learning? Diane Bisson explains how you can recognize three distinct learning styles amongst your students, and gives specific examples of what you can do to accommodate each.

For many students, math is a difficult subject. But is this due to their own intellectual shortcomings, the complexity of mathematical concepts, or the system used to teach math in our schools? Vanz Chapman shows that if you take away students' fear, build their confidence, and give them your complete attention, you could find their scores to dramatically increase.

What do you think of when you hear the term "Quality Learning?" Is it simply another "meaningless buzzword" or does it have a distinct history, definition, and purpose? Michael O'Toole approaches the topic and divulges interesting views from speakers at the Quality Learning Symposium.

Outside of the classroom, students are bombarded on a daily basis with targeted advertisements intended to persuade their thoughts and behavior. Advertising is increasingly finding its way into every crevice of life, and it is more important than ever to make students aware of the aims and techniques that agencies use to influence them. Our lesson plan makes this easier for you to do.

And Richard Worzel predicts a massive shortage of teachers in the near future. When the crisis hits, how will the ministries of education react and will it already be too late?

Bienvenue au numéro janvier-février, dont les sujets portent sur la psychologie, les mathématiques, la technologie, la publicité, etc.

Ce qui fait l'unicité d'une personne, c'est sa façon bien à elle de penser et de se comporter. Mais qu'en est-il de sa façon d'apprendre? Diane Bisson explique comment on peut reconnaître trois styles d'apprentissage bien distincts chez les élèves, et donne des exemples précis de la façon dont on peut adapter l'enseignement à la manière d'apprendre de chacun.

Pour nombre d'élèves, les mathématiques constituent une matière difficile. Est-ce le résultat de lacunes intellectuelles, de la complexité des concepts mathématiques ou du système d'enseignement utilisé dans nos écoles? Vanz Chapman montre qu'en éliminant la peur des élèves, en bâtissant leur confiance et en leur donnant toute votre attention, vous pourriez voir leurs notes monter de façon remarquable.

À quoi vous font penser les mots « apprentissage de qualité »? S'agit-il d'une nouvelle expression sans grande signification ou possède-t-elle une histoire, une définition et une raison d'être bien distinctes? Michael O'Toole aborde le sujet et exprime les points de vue intéressants de quelques conférenciers qui ont participé au colloque de l'Apprentissage de qualité.

À l'extérieur de la salle de classe, les élèves sont bombardés tous les jours de publicité visant à les convaincre d'adopter tel point de vue ou tel comportement. La publicité fait de plus en plus partie de tous les instants de la vie, et il est plus important que jamais de conscientiser les élèves aux buts et aux techniques des agences qui essaient de les influencer. Pour vous aider à le faire, nous vous offrons un plan de leçon.

Enfin, Richard Worzel prédit qu'il y aura une grave pénurie d'enseignants dans un avenir rapproché. Le moment de la crise arrivé, comment réagiront les ministères de l'éducation et sera-t-il déjà trop tard? ☹

Jennifer Kavur

TEACH

MAGAZINE

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Computers for Schools

Computers for Schools Program

Computers for Schools (CFS) is a federal government-led program that operates in cooperation with provinces, territories, and the private and volunteer sectors. The program collects, repairs, and refurbishes donated surplus computers from government and private sector sources and distributes them free to schools and libraries throughout Canada. Part of the government's Connecting Canadians initiative, Computers for Schools was established by Industry Canada and the Telephone Pioneers, a national volunteer association of current and retired telecommunications professionals. Hardware and software are provided to schools at no cost (warehousing and repair costs are absorbed by sponsors of the CFS program); however, there may be costs associated with transportation from provincial or territorial repair centers, and schools may be asked to pay for the cost of upgrading the donated computers to meet their needs. To obtain an application or donation form, call CFS at 888-636-9899, or visit the CFS Web site at www.schoolnet.ca/cfs-ope.

The Curriculum Foundation Awards

The Curriculum Foundation (TCF) distributes awards for projects that promote the improvement of classroom instruction and enhance the teaching-learning environment at the classroom level. By offering these awards, TCF hopes to support, inform, and promote the concept of quality education in Canadian schools. The awards are granted three times per year, and can range from a few hundred

dollars to a few thousand, depending on the strength and needs of the applicant's proposal and the amount of funds available to TCF at the time. Potential recipients must be from the education community and directly connected to schools and/or school systems. Applications must be submitted to the TCF office electronically or in writing in care of the Director, Professional Learning Services, and must be received by February 15th for the winter awards deadline. TCF is a not-for-profit affiliate of Curriculum Services Canada. For further details about The Curriculum Foundation and its awards, email tcf@curriculum.org or call 1-800-837-3048/416-591-1576. Support excellence in learning - please make a donation to The Curriculum Foundation.

Mediacs Media Literacy Workshops

Mediacs offers a series of media literacy workshops designed for children in grades 3-6. The sessions address many grade-level expectations of the (often neglected) language-based media literacy curriculum. Depending on the workshop, the sessions overlap with health, drama, physical education, and arts-based curricula. The workshops focus heavily on advertising because of its overwhelming influence on children's lives. Mediacs Managing Director, Debbie Gordon, has spent the last 15 years in the marketing and advertising world and is now harnessing that experience to help kids better understand how the media and marketers pitch products. Three workshops are currently offered, and more are along the way. "AD-Hawks" helps make children wiser and more critical in their media consumption behavior. The workshop encourages students to think, analyze, and challenge advertisers' watch,

listen, and buy messages. "Cool-Aid" encourages students to think about what constitutes "cool" and the media influences that make up the "cool" perception. The sessions delve into the nature of these pressures and focus on the difference between external and internal cool. "Junk Food Jungle" encourages kids to think about what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. The discussions go beyond the traditional definition of "junk food," and look at the food we eat, our levels of physical activity, and the ways in which the Gameboy, remote control world affects our health. Workshop rates are \$250 for a half day / \$350 for a full day. For further information, contact Debbie Gordon, Managing Director, at 416-462-3259, or visit Mediacs on the Web at www.mediacs.ca.



SMARTer Kids Foundation Accepting Applications for Connections Program

The SMARTer Kids Foundation is now accepting applications for the Connections program from teams of grade 5-6 teachers and their students for the 2002/03 and 2003/04 school years. Connections equips upper elementary schools with technology, provides teacher training, and promotes collaborative projects between schools. Teams of grade 5-6 teachers from public and private schools in Canada and the U.S. are eligible to apply, and applications must be received by February 28, 2002. Full program details and requirements are available online at www.smarterkids.org/k12/connections. Applications are available online at www.smarterkids.org/k12/connections/appform.asp, or by calling the SMARTer Kids Foundation office at 403-802-2549.



Schools **Jump** on the **JUMP** Program



By Vanz Chapman

"Math is hard" (The Barbie Doll). When Mattel introduced a talking teen Barbie doll in the 80's, the doll's voice box was programmed to say churlishly, "Math is hard." Rather than be perceived as tongue in cheek, educators and parents alike were up in arms about it. With young girls testing below boys in math class, the doll's joke came off as insensitive to the anxiety that girls were having in math. Ultimately, Mattel had inadvertently made a sad comment on the difficulty that many kids, boys and girls alike, were having in grasping even the most basic math concepts.

John Mighton wants to stop this. John has a Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Toronto, and he's on a mission to make mathematics fun for school kids.

Years ago, John was challenged to do something about what he saw as the general failure of the school system in Ontario. John's wife at the time, Regan, suggested that John walk a mile in a teacher's shoes and tutor some of the children that he felt for. "Regan told me I should stop complaining and start doing something positive," says John. So he did, and the seeds of JUMP (Junior Undiscovered Math Prodigies) were planted.

That was 1998, when John, with a handful of friends, began tutoring students out of his tiny apartment in downtown Toronto. Now, 3 years later, JUMP has over 160 tutors deployed in 9 schools across Metro Toronto. All the tutors work on a volunteer basis and it is not uncommon for many of them to take on more than one student a week. And to assure the safety of the children, all JUMP tutors undergo a police/criminal background check. Beginning in elementary school, JUMP

students can receive one hour of free and private math tutoring at their school, and the sessions are guaranteed up to grade 12.

Though all students in Toronto are welcome to take part in the program, JUMP feels the need to target public schools in low-income areas. For a lot of these families, private tutoring agencies like Sylvan are completely out of financial reach, so JUMP tutors are very well received, for example, in schools like Queen Victoria and Essex Public School. And in places like Parkdale, the presence of one-on-one math tutoring for children is a godsend.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED.

Math phobics welcome. Learn math properly by teaching it. – A JUMP Posting

It is not uncommon for grade 6 students who couldn't count by twos to be able to conquer grade 9 mathematics after completing a year in the JUMP program. A big reason is the type of volunteers that John likes to recruit.

Ironically, though John is surrounded by some of the brightest math minds in the world at his office in the Fields Institute (U of T's math research department), it is not they who he often seeks out. It's a plus to use tutors who aren't math wizards, says John, because they can empathize with students and help build relationships. He believes that the "chemistry between student and tutor is absolutely critical to the process of learning, even more so because we are teaching many kids who are in special needs classes."

But despite the fact that most of the kids who enroll in JUMP (or rather,

Photo: Maggie Licata(left), John Mighton(middle), Katie Baldwin (right).

whose parents enroll them in JUMP) are classified as remedial in math, excellence is always the aim of the program. This is because, for a variety of reasons and situations, a lot of children in these remedial classes don't get a chance to really see how bright they can be. They actually begin to believe that they can't succeed in this area. It may sound a bit Pollyanish, even Quixotic, but JUMP firmly believes that with even a modest amount of one-on-one attention and encouragement, these children will flourish.

The JUMP Tutor Approach

1. Constantly give encouragement - Every mastery of a new step, no matter how small, should be commended.
2. Don't belabor difficult concepts - In the beginning, only ask your students to perform (math) steps where they can't fail. The confidence gained will pay off in the end.
3. Always make students feel that they are working toward a clear goal – Tell students exactly what they will be able to accomplish after each session or section.
4. Repetition is important – Every lesson should start with a review of the previous lesson.
5. Patience is essential – Patience helps students change the way they negatively think about themselves.
6. Be firm – Many JUMP students have short attention spans, so keep them focused.
7. Isolate the problem – If a student is failing to do a problem properly, focus on the one part that he/she is failing, not the whole problem.
8. Teach your students to listen – Let students explain how they solved a problem in their own words.
9. Comprehensive homework is essential – Because tutors only see their students once a week, homework is essential in keeping them up to speed.

*taken from the JUMP Tutoring Manual

JUMP administrator Maggie Licata feels that the reasons for the program's success are quite complex: "Obviously, the one-on-one is a major factor, but the trust that is built between student and tutor allows the kids to build confidence, which is key to all learning." Because kids have so much anxiety around mathematics, the tutoring sessions are like therapy, and they help calm the students' fears. Fear is one of the biggest obstacles to students succeeding in math class. "Being able to get things wrong in front of one tutor is far less intimidating than getting something wrong in front of a whole classroom," says Maggie. She is also quick to point out that JUMP starts "where the kids are rather than where they're supposed to be."

It is also a consensus among teachers that the new math teaching programs are too language-based. When you are dealing with a student population that is increasingly ESL, it puts both students and teachers at a disadvantage. What John has done with the JUMP method is take math back to its most basic. He breaks concepts like fractions back down to pie charts and other visuals so that language, or lack thereof, doesn't become a hindrance in learning. The JUMP mantra is: METHOD FIRST – CONCEPT SECOND.

Acceptance

Maggie Licata is quick to point out that because of cuts to education, JUMP is especially well received by schools. More often than not, special education resources are the first to go. And many schools have had to bite the bullet and put the bulk of the resources that they're left with into language programs - because of this, math suffers. But with JUMP coming into the schools, the tutors become the de facto special ed math department.

Kathleen Love, a special ed. teacher at Queen Victoria School, knows first hand the importance of JUMP and was instrumental in bringing the program to her school. "The Quest 2000 manual (Teachers math manual) is hard to teach because it skips a lot of steps. So for teachers who are not naturally mathematically inclined, the students...suffer," says Kathleen. Teachers who employ the JUMP manual in their classes still follow the Ontario Curriculum, but they use JUMP strategies in achieving the goals set out by the province. Kathleen sees JUMP as a godsend. "In the last four years," says Kathleen, "we've seen the student population at Queen Vic grow from 900 to 1300, but the province has cut four teachers." So as the school gets bigger, the number of teachers gets smaller, and JUMP helps even things out a bit.

Breaking the Cycle of Ignorance

As mentioned earlier, many of the tutors are probably just as frightened of mathematics as their pupils. This is a point not lost on John. He has meticulously put together a tutor's manual that outlines in detail his method and approach to teaching mathematics in this environment.

Interestingly enough, the first lesson in the manual has almost nothing to do with numbers per se. It has to do with psychology. The JUMP program likens the present situation in grade school math classes as follows:

Imagine at the end of the school year, the children are led into the cafeteria and each student is given a seat and a plate of food. At the sound of a buzzer, the children are instructed to eat as much food as they can. Afterwards, the students are given a battery of tests to determine how well they are digesting the food. And the students who are judged to be superior eaters get to have well-balanced meals for the next school year, while the students judged to be poor eaters are put on restricted diets.

Dramatic? A bit. But it gets the point across (albeit in a condemning way) about what JUMP sees as a failure of many schools of thought with regard to how and why remedial students are classified and processed. After many years in such a system that is predicated on the concept that only a few students will excel, the failure of the rest of the students is evidence that no one is simply BORN to succeed - they are taught to.

It sounds a bit spiritual for an area of study that seems to be the antithesis of spirituality. But actually, many mathematicians honestly feel that mathematics is a spiritual activity. And at

JUMP, they hope to help children triumph over their phobias of numbers by realizing that mathematics at its heart is simply a different way of perceiving things and perceiving nature. It's a language that illustrates how ALL things in nature are connected, not just cold symbols that simply represent values.

JUMP was created out of a choice to do something concrete and go against the institutionalized apathy and ignorance that underlie many of the problems that these students face. At JUMP, we are learning that a large number of young children have a greater potential than people have been led to believe, and that "intelligence" is not as definitive as we once believed. By showing that even remedial math students can raise their level of competency to very high levels with JUMP techniques, it's obvious that sheer intelligence is also less important than we believed. Diligence and belief in self, available to all students, are paramount in the learning process. ☺

Vanz Chapman is a film critic for WORD Magazine, a television writer, and a 2nd year JUMP Math Tutor at Queen Victoria Public School in Toronto. For further information on the JUMP program, email jump@fields.utoronto.ca.

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Learning Styles:

Allowing Children to “Unmold”

When trying to instill values in children, “Kids are like modeling clay.” However, when attempting to analyse the way they learn, there is an urgency to allow kids to “unmold.” We, as caregivers, parents, teachers, and tutors, need to create an environment where the child is given the freedom to go past the set parameters that are oftentimes imposed on him. Opening the door to experimentation and creativity is one of the ways we can guide children to discover their strengths and abilities, and to recognize their weaknesses. I believe most curriculum, with planning, organising, and effort, can be adapted, modified, and implemented to suit the student’s preferred way of learning. However, may I add that making use of the MST method (Multi-Sensory Teaching) is one of the better ways for a student to understand and retain given information. MST incorporates three main learning styles: the *auditory*, which comprises the listening and the verbal learner; the *visual*, which includes the print as well as the picture learner; and the *kineasthetic*, which contains the tactile learner. Using MST, teachers can make learning fun and exciting by inviting, challenging, and allowing the student to choose his own way of working.

The Auditory Learner

The auditory learner learns best by listening or speaking. He is the most talkative of all the learning types. He loves to discuss, but can become easily distracted in the conversation. Because he has an ear for music, the auditory learner often enjoys listening to music while doing his work. If

your student is an auditory learner, he should be encouraged to listen to information and repeat it back to you. He most likely will not enjoy extensive writing activities and long periods of silent reading. When studying, he should read out loud the instructions of what is to be done and the content of what is to be retained. His notes should be recorded on tape in order for him to listen to them later. The auditory learner would also benefit from listening to books on tape. Real-life situations should be used to teach new concepts.

Reading should be done out loud to make it more interesting. Presenting a book report orally or on tape (audio or video) would also be more inviting. In spelling, the auditory learner should be encouraged to spell words out loud. Oral spelling tests could help the auditory learner achieve higher grades. Mathematics may become more enjoyable if the student is encouraged to make up his own word problems using the concepts he needs to learn. Mathematical problem-solving steps should always be verbalized. The auditory learner could learn multiplication and division facts by listening to them on a tape or in a tune.

There are two types of auditory learners: the listening learner and the verbal learner. The verbal learner is much more aggressive in his approach to the given information. He speaks words that represent exactly how he understands. For this reason, he needs opportunities to express verbally what he’s learning. He solves problems by talking about them. It is recommended that he be given the opportunity to work with someone else.



By Diane Bisson

The Visual Learner

A person who thinks in pictures or in words is called a visual learner. It's as if he has a movie camera in his mind - what he hears or reads is usually seen in images or in words. This style of learning includes the picture learner and the print learner.

The picture learner may often experience some difficulty with reading and spelling because to him, the letters represent sounds and not pictures. The picture learner should be encouraged to pay close attention to illustrations, graphs,

maps, etc., when studying. This picture note-taking will help him to organise and store the given information.

On the other hand, the print learner will think in words. Diagrams and illustrations may confuse him. He is more likely to ignore the pictures and concentrate on the written information. For this reason, it might be best if he reads and writes the information to be retained, and because he loves colours, he may need to underline or highlight the given information. The print learner should be given the opportunity to do his note-taking with different coloured pens, pencils, and paper. He will retain the information in words, not in pictures.

Contrary to the auditory learner, whose results are better when he works with someone else, the visual learner prefers to be left alone to read and to study quietly. He most likely will not choose role-playing or listening activities. He is usually organized in his work. His writing is neat. His binders, his desk, and his bedroom are usually well kept. He also likes to be neat in his appearance.

Reading comprehension for the visual learner may improve for the picture learner if he is allowed to draw or make diagrams of the characters and events in a story. The print learner, on the other hand, will prefer to write down the names of the characters in a story and make notes of the events. In spelling, the picture learner could decorate the new words or make them look like a picture. Word configuration could also be helpful. For the print learner, the new spelling words could be written with different coloured pens, highlighters, pencils, and paper. Mathematics may become more interesting if number facts are written on coloured flash cards. Bright number lines may also be a good tool to learn math facts. The picture learner could be encouraged to draw each step in solving math problems while the print learner could highlight the operational signs.

The Kineasthetic Learner

Many individuals need to use a whole-body approach to learn. This more comfortable way of learning is called the kineasthetic style, which incorporates the tactile method. The kineasthetic learner will learn best by using a combination of learning styles. He may need to listen (auditory) and look at (visual) the given information. He may then need to repeat it (verbal) in his own words. He may also have to write, type, or even draw (tactile) the information to be retained. Because he needs to move a lot, the kineasthetic learner is likely to walk around while working. He performs better when working in short spurts rather than concentrated blocks of time. Because of his pent-up energy, he often gets restless and fidgety. Sitting for long periods is extremely demanding on this type of learner. A sense of time is difficult for him. Instead of seeing out into the future, he only sees the present



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moment (which explains why he struggles understanding the consequences of his actions). Sadly enough, he is labelled hyper-active. He often appears to be disorganized, but to the kineasthetic learner, everything is more like “organized confusion.”

The kineasthetic learner should be encouraged to productively use his need for movement. His research for information could be directed to video, film, audio tape, television, or radio documentaries. By representing what he has learned through an experiment (science) with a model or graph (math) or in a mime skit (drama), the kineasthetic learner could demonstrate what he has understood and retained. Acting out vocabulary words or role-playing characters in a story may improve his reading comprehension. He could practice spelling by writing words in the air, on the table, or on someone’s back. Another way for him to remember spelling is to clap each letter of a word or use one stair at a time while naming the letters. Writing words on sand paper, wet sand, salt, pudding, coloured whipping cream, or even washed-out Jell-O are other fun ways for him to learn. Remember, movement and “being involved” are important for the kineasthetic learner. He should also be encouraged to act out mathematical word problems. Interactive computer programs that drill math facts may also be motivating for him.

The tactile way of learning is part of the kineasthetic style. Should your student be a tactile learner, you will notice that he best understands and retains information if he can touch it, play with it, and manipulate it. Hands-on activities are the best tools for him. The tactile learner enjoys computers and calculators. An old typewriter can also be very good for this type of learner because he has to press harder on the letter and number keys. Drawing and writing with chalk, or using a whiteboard with coloured felt pens, is also enjoyable for him. He learns best through experimenting, trial and error, and going on trips and visits. Similar to the kineasthetic learning style, movement is important to the tactile learner. He does not enjoy long reading projects and listening activities, and he most likely will not like workbooks or worksheets because that entails sitting down to work.

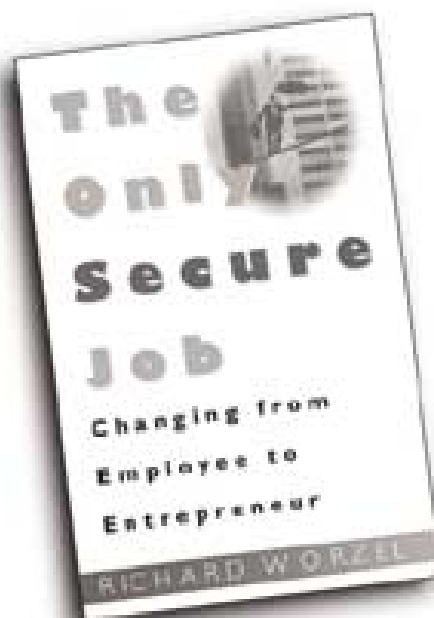
Identifying, addressing, and respecting a person’s preferred way of learning is always gratifying. Most importantly, teachers and parents of children aged 5 through 11 may see great improvements in a child’s academic performance and self-esteem once the above has been accomplished. As the child matures, he will discern how he learns, and will build a solid foundation on his strengths and develop strategies to understand his weaknesses.

Having said all that, allow me to offer this suggestion to all who love and work with children and young people: assess your own learning style. It could serve as a tool you may or may not want to use when working with youngsters. Based on my many years of working with children of different ages and backgrounds,

I can attest to the fact that once a child’s preferred way of learning is discovered, his potential is unlimited. As caregivers, let’s break the mould and “Celebrate what the child is all about!” ☺

Diana Lamarche-Bisson is the author of several home education manuals and children’s books. She works as a Special Education Specialist, Irlen Syndrome and Dyslexia Screener, and Learning Styles Workshop Presenter. For more information, visit www.dilam.com, or email Diane at dilam@mergetel.com.

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Notable Sites for Teachers

By Marjan Glavac

The Math Forum

<http://mathforum.org/>

When I first began teaching a home room at the elementary level many years ago, math



was one topic I dreaded. When I had to teach a math topic from the text book that I knew very little of, or when I was asked a math question that I had no idea how to answer, the first thing I did was head for the Internet. But back then, the Internet was full of trial and error, dead links, and very little useful information worth passing on to the students.

One site that has been around before the World Wide Web and just keeps getting better is The Math Forum. It is one of the first places I go to for information on math, and for any math questions my students ask me about that I don't know. It's one of the best sites for math resources on the Internet. You can search for math subjects, browse the Internet Mathematics Library, or for a specific stumper, you can "Ask Dr. Math."

The first section I usually go to is Ask Dr. Math. In the archives there are answers to questions that have been asked over the years. These questions, in turn, have been divided by study level - Elementary School, Middle School, High School, College & Beyond. It's a great place to have students research answers to classic problems and formulas.

The site's sections include: Discussion Groups, Forum Showcase, Internet Newsletter, Problems of the Week, Teacher2Teacher, Web Units and Lessons, Math Resources by Subject, Math Education, Key Issues in Math, K-12, College and Advanced Math, and Innovations and Concerns.

Anyone who has an interest in (or fear of) mathematics should spend some time

on this site. It has really made me appreciate the importance of mathematics and has reduced my dread of teaching this wonderful subject.

ThinkQuest

<http://www.thinkquest.org/>



ThinkQuest is a global network of students, teachers, parents, and technologists from over 100 countries dedicated to exploring youth-centered learning on the Net.

Through ThinkQuest Contests, opportunities are provided to motivate educators and students ages 12-19 to develop highly informative and researched educational materials collaboratively in teams. Currently, there are over 5000 of these researched educational materials in the ThinkQuest Library. It's a fantastic place to search for curriculum materials for your class. This site also contains many documents, articles, software, and the ThinkQuest Communities to support the design and creation of content for ThinkQuest contests.

The ThinkQuest Communities are very helpful resources. These communities are made up of other ThinkQuest members who share similar interests and will exchange and discuss ideas and resources for projects. Among the many useful communities that can be found here are: Client Side Programming, a place that focuses on technologies such as DHTML and JavaScript; Coaches helping Coaches, a community where ThinkQuest coaches can share experiences with each other; and a Writer's Cafe where participants can discuss writing for the Web, content, research, and copyright issues. If you want to channel your students' energy into an educational activity that will develop their team building, research, and technical skills and provide online support, this is one place to check out.



Travel Buddies

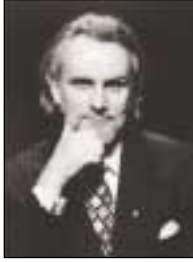
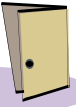
<http://rite.ed.qut.edu.au/oz-teachernet/>

Scroll down the left hand side of this teacher site from Australia and click on the link to Travel Buddies. Travel buddies are either soft plush toys or puppets that travel the world as representatives of your class. Sometimes they'll travel to many locations, or sometimes just to one. They have names like "Moose on the Loose," "Mr. Snapper," "Scully the Skunk," "Diamond the Dolphin," and "Timber Wolf." These travel buddies come into your class, participate in class activities, go home with your students, become tourists, and travel on field trips. After an agreed time, the partner class returns the travel buddy or sends it off to the next school by mailing the buddy, his or her diary of events, photos, and any other souvenirs of adventures back home. While the buddy is away, you can stay in touch using email. My classes have thoroughly enjoyed the visits of their travelling buddies.

The oz-Teachernet Travel Buddy program was established in 1995 and has a wealth of information and experience on how to run a Travel Buddy program. At this site, teachers can find detailed information on how to participate and integrate this project into their classrooms. Teachers can access the Travel Buddy Check-in Lounge to find a Travel Buddy, the Travel Buddy Code of Conduct, the Travel Buddies E-mail List Archive, or can join an email list of their own. Travel Buddies are a great way for Internet novices and experts to physically show students other schools from their own countries, or schools from countries other than their own.

Marjan Glavac is author of "The Busy Educator's Guide To The World Wide Web." He can be reached at marjan@glavac.com or <http://www.glavac.com>

When the Guacamole Hits the Fan



By Richard Worzel

I've been saying for some time that we are running out of teachers, and are about to experience a desperate shortage that will produce major problems with no good solutions. When I speak to teachers about this, the response I get is "Everybody knows that." But when I speak to people outside the education system, they're surprised, and often reject my analysis as foolish speculation. It may not be news to you, in other words, but the general public has no idea that it's coming, or how bad it's going to be. So, what happens when the shortage of teachers and principals can no longer be ignored?

I don't know, because forecasting this means anticipating how individual politicians will react to public sentiment – a practical impossibility. Having said this, here's my best guess (and that's all it is) as to what happens when the guacamole hits the fan.

The first reaction by ministers of education will be to deny that there's a problem. "School age population is dropping," they'll say, "so there is not now, nor shall there be, a shortage of teachers." This is a half-truth. There is a new baby bust emerging at the JK-SK levels, and it will continue indefinitely in Canada (though not in the States) so that there will be a steady decline in the school age population. However, this decline is going to take about 13 years to work through the public school system. Meantime, boomer teachers will be retiring in droves, and new teachers are dropping out at unprecedented rates, so we will be short teachers, especially as the U.S. has a much worse teacher shortage, and will recruit heavily up here.

Eventually, ministry denials will be shown to be wrong, and we'll reach the

next level, which will be band-aid solutions. "I'm announcing today," the Minister of Education will intone, "a dramatic increase in funding for teachers' colleges. This will release a flood of teachers into the system, and my problems – I mean, the system's problems – will go away!" But it will take two to three years to increase enrollments, which will mean four to five years before there's a significant increase in new teachers. Meanwhile, the shortages will become dramatically worse, and American recruitment here will be heating up.

This will take us to the next stage of band-aids, which will be to allow people to teach who don't have teaching certificates. This is already happening unofficially and without public acknowledgement. School boards, desperate to fill positions for teachers in math, science, languages, special ed, and substitutes are reaching out to almost anyone who claims to be able to do the work. I understand, for instance, that there are school boards in major U.S. cities where more than half of all their new hires are uncertified. But when the Minister moves to sanction uncertified teachers, the teachers' unions will play right in to their hands and attack the government. This will give the Minister the diversion she or he needs to distract voters from the government's incompetence at allowing this situation to develop in the first place.

Next, ministries will start wheeling in technology. Imitating some of the distance education experiments in the States and Canada, ministries will start hiring what are, in effect, baby sitters for classrooms, and have capable teachers from other schools or even other jurisdictions brought in by technology. This will require more money spent on computers, the Internet, and videoconferencing, which ministries

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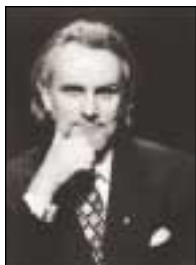
will point to as an achievement rather than a stopgap. But this may or may not be a sensible solution. They'll also start turning to computer-based instruction – including some of the horrible “drill and kill” systems that have been kicking around since the 1970s, because they are cheap and available.

I've said for years that using technology can be beneficial if it's done well. But if it's done badly, as it probably will be under the pressure of public scrutiny and the shortage of teachers, it will be a disaster. The old saying, “To err is human, to really screw things up takes a computer,” comes to mind. It's very difficult to do things well with technology, more so than in most other areas of endeavour. Introducing technology to the classroom requires a deft touch, and a willingness to experiment, admit failures, and to stretch for steady improvement rather than instant perfection. None of these qualities seem abundant in Canada's various ministries of education.

And what happens to the students through all of this? Here's the real tragedy. In the various ministers' attempts to evade responsibility for clearly predictable problems, and to come up with slap-dash solutions to deflect criticism, the education our students receive will suffer dramatically. This is going to be at least as much of a problem in the U.S. as it is here, with the net result that we may see an entire generation of students throughout North America receive lousy educations. Our society, our economy, and our standards of living will all eventually suffer as a result, all because ministers of education and the staff at their ministries are now ducking their responsibilities to plan intelligently for an obvious problem.

So when the guacamole hits the fan, we'll all receive a face-full of the stuff. Get ready. ☺

Richard Worzel is a Toronto-based futurist who volunteers his time to speak to high school students as his schedule permits. You can contact him care of this magazine, or by email at futurist@futuresearch.com.



Par Richard Worzel

Je dis depuis quelque temps déjà que nous allons bientôt manquer d'enseignant-e-s et que nous sommes sur le point de connaître une pénurie désespérée qui va engendrer de gros problèmes sans solutions adéquates. Lorsque j'en parle aux professeurs, on me répond : « Tout le monde le sait ». Par contre, lorsque j'en parle à des personnes extérieures au système d'éducation, elles sont surprises et rejettent souvent mon analyse qu'elles assimilent à une spéculation sans fondement. Autrement dit, ce n'est peut-être pas nouveau pour vous mais le grand public n'a aucune idée de ce qui va arriver, pas plus que de l'ampleur des dégâts. Alors, que va-t-il se passer lorsqu'on ne pourra plus sous-estimer la pénurie de professeurs et de directeurs ou de directrices d'écoles ?

Je ne sais pas, parce que prévoir c'est anticiper la façon dont les politiques, individuellement, réagiront à ce que ressent le public — ce qui est une impossibilité pratique. Ceci dit, voici ce qui, à mon avis (et ce n'est qu'une présomption de ma part) risque d'arriver lorsque la situation explosera.

La première réaction des ministres de l'éducation est de nier le problème. « La population d'âge scolaire décline, diront-ils, il n'y a donc pas actuellement de pénurie de professeurs, et il n'y en aura pas à l'avenir, ». Ce n'est qu'à demi vrai. On constate, en effet, actuellement, au niveau du jardin d'enfants et de la maternelle, un nouvel effondrement de la natalité qui, au Canada — non aux États-Unis —, se poursuivra indéfiniment, de sorte que la population d'âge scolaire déclinera régulièrement. Néanmoins, il faudra environ treize ans pour que ce déclin se fasse sentir dans le système scolaire public. Entre temps, les enseignant-e-s de la génération du baby-

boom partiront massivement en retraite, et la relève abandonne à un rythme sans précédent, ce qui fait que nous allons manquer de professeurs, d'autant plus que les États-Unis — qui connaissent une pénurie pire que la nôtre — viendront largement recruter ici.

Finalement, les dénégations ministérielles s'avéreront fausses et nous atteindrons l'étape suivante qui se caractérisera par des solutions de fortune. « J'annonce aujourd'hui, entonnera le ministre de l'Éducation, une augmentation considérable du financement des instituts pédagogiques, ce qui devrait inonder le système de professeurs ; ainsi il n'y aura plus de problème, ni pour moi ni pour le système ». Mais il faudra de deux à trois ans pour augmenter les effectifs, ce qui signifie quatre ou cinq ans avant qu'il n'y ait une augmentation notable du nombre de nouveaux professeurs. Entre temps, la pénurie n'aura fait qu'empirer, d'autant que le recrutement américain au Canada se sera intensifié.

Et nous en arrivons à l'étape suivante de solutions de fortune : on autorisera à enseigner des personnes qui n'ont pas les certificats pédagogiques voulus. C'est ce qui se passe déjà officiellement à l'insu du public. Les conseils scolaires, prêts à tout pour remplir des postes d'enseignant-e-s en maths, en sciences, en langues, en éducation spécialisée et pour trouver des remplaçant-e-s, s'adressent pratiquement à n'importe qui se déclare capable de faire le travail. Il paraît, par exemple, qu'il existe dans certaines grandes villes américaines des conseils scolaires où plus de la moitié des nouvelles recrues ne sont pas certifiées. Et lorsque le ministre se mêle de sanctionner ces professeurs non certifiés, les syndicats font son jeu en attaquant le gouvernement. Ceci crée, pour le ministre en place, la diversion nécessaire visant à détourner les



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Cable in the Classroom
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électeurs de leur préoccupation essentielle, à savoir l'incompétence du gouvernement qui a laissé se développer une telle situation.

Ensuite, les ministères feront jouer la technologie. À l'instar de certaines expériences d'éducation à distance, aux États-Unis et au Canada, ils engageront des personnes qui ne seront que des babysitters de classe, et importeront d'autres établissements, voire d'autres villes, des professeurs compétents en technologie. Cela exigera de dépenser davantage d'argent pour les ordinateurs, l'internet et les vidéoconférences, ce que les ministères ne manqueront pas de faire valoir comme une grande réalisation alors qu'il s'agira d'un pis-aller. Ceci ne sera pas nécessairement une solution avisée. Ces ministères commenceront également à se tourner vers l'enseignement automatisé — y compris certains systèmes horribles connus de répétitions à mort qui traînent depuis les années 1970, parce qu'ils sont sur le marché et qu'ils ne coûtent pas chers.

Je répète depuis des années que la technologie peut être profitable si elle est bien utilisée. Mais si elle l'est à mauvais escient — ce qui sera probablement le cas sous la pression publique et la pénurie de professeurs —, elle risque d'être un désastre. On dit parfois ceci : « L'homme commet des erreurs, mais il faut un ordinateur pour vraiment flanquer la pagaille ». Avec la technologie, bien plus que dans d'autres domaines, il est très difficile de faire bien les choses. Introduire la technologie dans la classe exige une extrême habileté associée à un désir d'expérimenter, de reconnaître ses erreurs et de préférer une amélioration constante à une perfection instantanée. Or, aucune de ces qualités ne semblent abonder dans les différents ministères canadiens de l'éducation.

Et qu'advient-il des élèves dans tout ça ? C'est là qu'est la véritable tragédie. Car dans les diverses tentatives des ministres pour éluder la responsabilité de problèmes tout à fait prévisibles, et proposer des solutions hâtives afin de détourner la

critique, c'est l'éducation que reçoivent nos élèves qui en souffrira, ô combien. Le problème sera au moins aussi grave aux États-Unis et risque de se solder par une piètre éducation pour toute une génération d'élèves nord-américains. Notre société, notre économie, notre niveau de vie, tout finira par en souffrir, et cela parce que des ministres de l'éducation et les fonctionnaires de leur ministère se dérobent actuellement à leurs responsabilités qui consisteraient à faire des prévisions intelligentes pour résoudre un problème évident.

Ainsi, lorsque la situation explosera, on va en prendre plein la figure. Préparons-nous. ☹

Richard Worzel est spécialiste en prospective. Il habite Toronto et va, bénévolement et selon ses disponibilités, faire des communications dans des établissements secondaires. Vous pouvez le rejoindre par le biais de cette revue ou par courriel à l'adresse suivante futurist@futuresearch.com.

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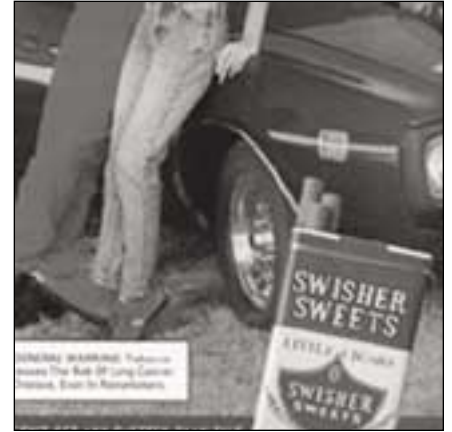
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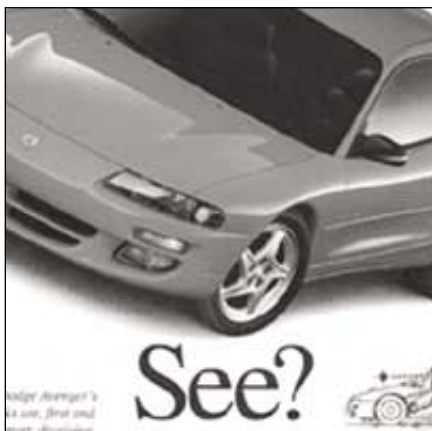
BUY AND BE HAPPY: *A unit on advertising*

Introduction

According to the Alliance for Children and Television, between the ages of 2 and 12, Canadian children see about 200,000 television commercials. They also encounter advertising messages on signs and billboards, in newspapers and magazines, on the Internet, on cereal packages, in the movie theatre, on radio, even in some classrooms. In fact, just about everywhere kids turn, there is advertising.

Some of the advertising they see is intended for adults. Much of it is directed specifically at children. To advertisers, children have become an important segment of the market. Not only do they have buying power of their own, children also have a great deal of influence on how family money is spent. Because they are more easily influenced than their elders, it pays for advertisers to target them with their ads.

"Research from Micromedia, Toronto shows children 9-12 are highly aware of brand status. This is largely due to the pressure they feel to wear fashionable clothing. When children are actually buying or influencing the purchase, they will more likely choose a brand-name product. So it is important for marketers to plant the first seeds of brand loyalty at an early age."



The TV Bureau of Canada, Instafacts

Children are exposed to a wide variety of ads. Food and toy advertisements predominate during children's programming on television. At other times and through other media, they are exposed to ads for clothes, cars, furniture, electronics, and many other products.

There is no doubt that advertising does its job. In 2000, the U.S. Surgeon General found that advertising and promotion seems to stimulate adults to smoke and encourages young people to take up the habit. Teens and younger children buy the most heavily advertised brands of cigarettes.

"Today's average 14-year-old already has been exposed to thousands of tobacco ads and promotions. The deluge of images on billboards, in-store displays and magazine pages has created a friendly familiarity for tobacco. It has shaped a society in which tobacco use is seen as normal, social and even glamorous. As adult tobacco consumption has levelled off during the past two decades, the tobacco industry has nearly quadrupled its spending on marketing. It has refined and targeted its messages to youth, communities of colour, low-income communities, and other high-risk groups."

- Washington State Department of Health
- Tobacco Prevention and Control Program
- www.doh.wa.gov/Tobacco/fact6.htm

Advertising contributes to poor food choices. A diet of heavily advertised food items is high in sugar, fat, and salt and low in protein, vitamins, minerals, and calcium.

Ads effects aren't limited to encouraging us to consume the products they promote. They also influence children's world view. Advertisements reflect a world in which consumption and material wealth are equal to happiness, coolness, and fun. In a study reported in the *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, children under the age of 10 were asked to look at pictures of people. The children described people shown with large homes, new cars, and trendy clothes as happier than people without these things. Many kids believe the message implicit in ads: the more you have, the better off you are.

For kids heavily influenced by advertising, not owning certain products can have an effect on self-esteem. Not only do some children feel badly about themselves when they are unable to acquire the current symbols of cool, these items can also become the source of school yard conflict. A heavily advertised toy or pair of running shoes can lead to teasing, bullying, and even violence. The same items can lead to conflict in the family as well, as parents and children battle over which products to buy.

"Advertising's influence on children's behaviour is not as straightforward as one might expect or as advertisers might hope. As children grow older and develop an increasing awareness of how advertising works, they also develop increasingly negative attitudes toward it. These attitudes however, are not reflected consistently in their buying behaviour."

Judith Van Evra

"Television and Child Development"

The effects of advertising can be mediated. Research tells us that media literacy skills help to make people of every age less susceptible to advertising messages. The more you talk and think about advertising, the more you learn about advertising techniques, and the less likely you are to be influenced.

It is important to recognize that ads contain messages designed to influence others for the benefit of the sponsor. Students need to recognize that every ad has a purpose, a target, and a sponsor. The purpose might be to influence opinions, emotions, and/or attitudes. The target is the group the message is aimed at, such as kids, women ages 18 to 35, pet owners, or parents. The sponsor is the organization or individual who has paid for the ad's creation and distribution. Students need to practice recognizing the message or purpose in ads, who the target is, and who will benefit from the ad. They also can also begin to take apart the ads to understand the advertising techniques used to persuade the target audiences.

Among the advertising techniques students will be able to recognize and identify are logos, slogans, jingles, sweepstakes and contests, and celebrity endorsements. These are all methods sponsors use to persuade their targets. One of the most effective techniques is simple repetition. Just exposing people



to the ad over and over and over again is a great way to get the message across. So is being annoying. Really awful commercials get our attention and that's what the sponsor wants.

In this teaching unit, students will analyze advertisements from a variety of media and then apply what they have learned by constructing their own ads. Many of the high-level thinking skills used in making the ads, including analysis, evaluation, design, and persuasion are the same skills needed to think critically about the advertising in the world around us.

This teaching unit explores the following curriculum areas: language arts, media studies, and social studies.
Recommended grade levels: four to ten.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- A. Assess where and when they encounter advertisements in their daily lives
- B. Recognize that every ad has a purpose, target, and sponsor
- C. Analyze and deconstruct advertisements from a variety of media to understand the techniques used to persuade
- D. Evaluate the influence of advertisements on themselves and others
- E. Apply methods of persuasion through concept, design, word choice, language use, and other techniques

Brainstorm

Have a discussion with your class about advertising. Ask students where they encounter ads. How often during the day do they see them? What kind of products do they see advertised? What media do advertisers use (television, radio, Internet, billboards, etc.)? Which ads do they encounter most often? Are they likely to buy products after experiencing the ads?

Talk about what ads students like best. Which ones do they like least? Why do they like some ads and dislike others? Do they buy the products whose ads they like?

Point out to students that they know an awful lot about advertising and products. Make some lists to illustrate their expertise. For example, ask students for product slogans. Have them keep a list. How many can they come up with? Next, list categories of products and services likely to be promoted, for example cars, clothes, and toys.

Talk about the point of advertising. What do people who make ads hope that they will do? Explain to students that the purpose of advertisements is to influence. Ask them what influences ads might be intended to have on their lives. Besides getting them to buy certain products, ads can also be intended to influence their behaviour. (For example, anti-smoking ads are intended to prevent people from smoking.) What techniques do ads use to influence them? Among other things, ads use music, celebrities, slogans, repetition, and humour to persuade. They may also bombard you with their message by advertising in print, on tv, on radio, and on the Internet, so that everywhere you turn you encounter their ad.

Point out to students that every ad has a purpose, a target, and a sponsor. The purpose is to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, or behaviour of the target. The target is the group the ad aims to influence. It might be kids, teens, parents, homeowners, voters, or smokers. Advertisers find that the more specific the target is, the easier it is to influence them. Finally, every ad has a sponsor - the person, company, or organization who creates and pays for the ad. The ad always benefits the sponsor. The purpose of the ad is to influence the target to the benefit of the sponsor. Look at the ads on these pages or have students suggest some ads that everyone is familiar with. Name the purpose, target, and sponsor of each.

Finally, talk about the effects of ads on students' lives. Do ads make them want to buy certain things? Do they make them want to avoid certain products? What about other effects on their lives? For example, does their desire to buy some products cause conflicts with their parents? Do ads influence what foods they eat, how they dress, or how they want to look? Do ads change how they feel about themselves? Has the fact that some products don't live up to their advertised promises made them feel cynical about the world? Do they think ads effect the way other people feel about themselves?



Research Activities

Students will complete at least two of the following:

Ad Journal: Keep a journal of every ad encountered over the course of three days. Record the product advertised, where the ad appeared, and the time it was encountered. Afterwards, analyze the results. What products and product types did the student encounter most? Where were ads most prevalent? At what times of day did the student experience the most advertising?

Ad Influence Questionnaire: Work with a team of 2 to 4 students to prepare a questionnaire that looks at the difference between the ads young children see and those an older age group sees. First, determine which two age groups to study. For the younger age group, you might choose a younger grade in the school. You will need to write your questions very simply so that young children can understand them.

For the older group, you might use an older grade, the school staff, or parents. Choose questions that will help you find out where the subjects of your investigation encounter ads, what kinds of products they see advertised, and how often they see ads. Distribute the questionnaire to at least ten people in each age group. After you have collected the data, analyze it. What kind of products does each age group see advertised? How many products are the same and how many are different? Do the two age groups see the same number of ads? Do they encounter advertising in the same places or different places? In conclusion, do advertisers treat the two age groups the same or differently? Explain your answer.

Old vs. New: Choose one of the older ads included on these pages or a vintage ad from the Internet. (Many sites with old ads can be found by typing "history of advertising" into your favourite search engine.) What kind of product is advertised? Look through magazines and newspapers to find a current ad for the same type of product. Compare the two ads. Are the targets and purposes of the two ads the same? How are the illustrations the same? How do they differ? How do the written messages compare? Do they use any of the same words? How are the slogans the same or different? Do the two ads mention the same features of the products? How old is the older ad? Do you think advertising techniques have changed since the first ad was designed? In what ways?

Compare Two Ads: Choose two ads. They can be from the same medium (television, print, billboard, Internet, etc.) or different media. They can advertise similar products or very different ones. Describe each ad. Determine the purpose, target, and sponsor of each. Study it carefully and try to figure out how the ad tries to achieve its goals. How does it get its message across?



What techniques does it use? How are the two ads the same? How are they different? Which one do you think is the better ad? Why? Do you think either ad has influenced you personally?

Ad Targets: Do you think the audiences for sports and news are different? In what ways? What type of products do you think you could sell to each audience? Choose one sports magazine and one news magazine. Go through each and record the categories of the first 20 products advertised, for example cars, clothes, cigarettes, foods. Now watch 15 minutes of a televised sporting event. While watching, record the categories of products advertised. Finally, watch 15 minutes of a television news program. While watching, record the categories of product advertised. Do the products advertised during the sporting event and in the sports magazine differ from those accompanying news content? How many are the same and how many are different? Are there more ads for some categories of products associated with news than with sports? Were your theories about what types of products you could sell to each audience confirmed by your research?



Diet and Advertising: Go through several magazines and cut out pictures of advertised foods. Using the pictures of the foods, make up some meal plans by putting together pictures to show what you might serve for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks for two days. Compare the meal plans to Canada's Food Guide. Are the meals made up from advertised foods healthy and balanced? Are some food groups missing? Which ones? Describe the meal plans based on advertised foods in terms of their nutrition, taste, cost, and how easy they are to prepare. What are the benefits of eating advertised foods? What are the drawbacks?

Ad People: Go through several magazines and cut out pictures of the people in the ads. Make a collage using pictures of people you've cut out from advertisements. Take a good look at them. What hair and skin colours are represented? What age groups are represented? Who is missing? Do the ads show people of a wide range of heights and weights? Do they show people with disabilities? What messages do ads send us about how people should look and dress? Do you think



you are influenced by the kinds of people who are in ads? Do you think other people are?

Toy Give-Aways: Visit the Internet site www.toymuseum.com and take a tour of the Museum of Advertising Icons. Here you will find hundreds of toys used to promote and advertise products. Examine some of the toys or think about the toys you have received to promote products. What kinds of products are promoted with toys? Make a list of as many products as you can think of that have toys associated with them. Which toys are give-aways? Which do you have to buy? Are the toys themselves ads? If the sponsor makes toys, what does that tell you about the target of the ad? What messages do kids get about a product when they get a toy?

Tricks, Techniques, and Gimmicks: Using ads from the media you most consume (Internet, radio, television, magazines, etc.), make a list of the gimmicks and techniques advertisers use. Some typical ones are appeals. For example, "Trusted for seven generations" is an appeal to tradition, "Recommended by doctors" is an appeal to authority, and "Because your family deserves the best" is an appeal to excellence. Other ads use beautiful people, cool music, or gorgeous scenery to make their product seem more attractive. Toy ads often show the products doing things they can't really do, such as moving on their own or flying. Toy ads may also show older children seeming to have fun with toys intended for younger children. Look for ads that employ meaningless phrases or use words to confuse you. Some of these include super sayings ("New and improved" or "Advanced formula") and fake phrases ("Part of a balanced breakfast" or "The taste of real..."). How often do ads give you facts and information about the product such as its price, the age group who would most likely use it, what it is made of, and how



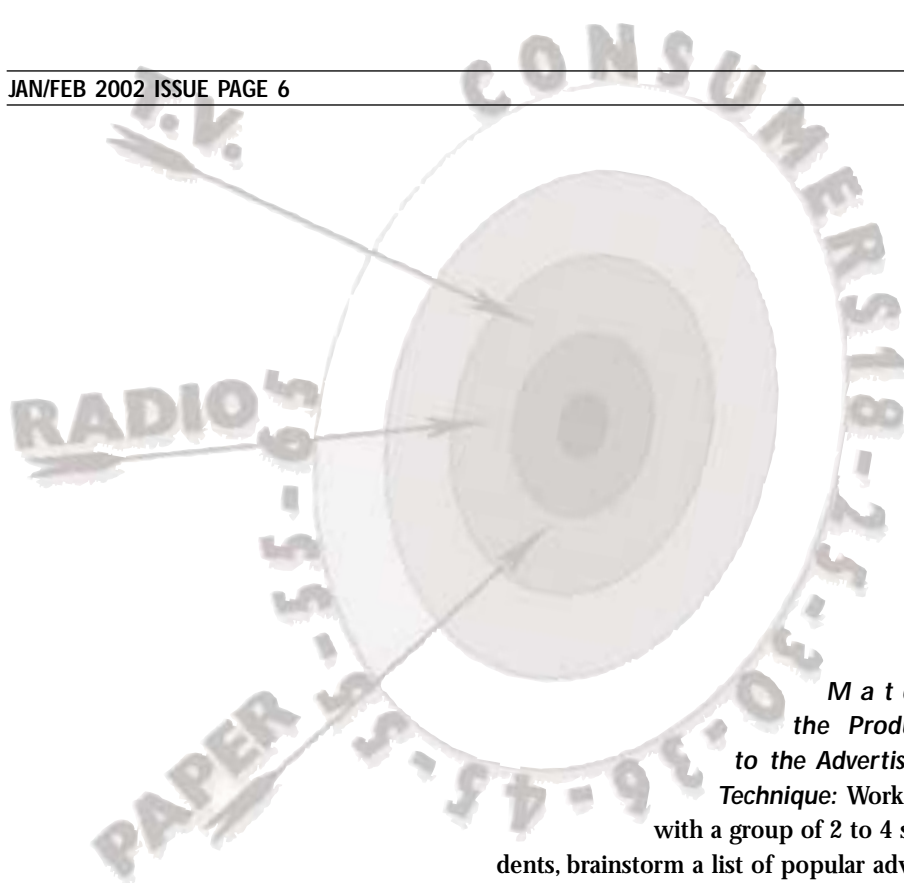
long it will last? What techniques are used in the ads you like best? What techniques are used to advertise the products you buy most often?

Tricks Used in Toy Ads:

- Show older kids using toys for younger kids.
- Show accessories and products not included with the toy.
- Show the toy moving on its own.
- Make the toy look bigger than it is.
- Don't show the boring parts, like trying to put the toy together or setting up the game.
- Have the kids playing with the toys smile, laugh, and act like they are having fun.

Familiar Slogans:

- Because I'm worth it.
- Don't leave home without it.
- Reach out and touch someone.
 - The uncola.
 - Snap! Crackle! Pop!
 - It's the real thing.
- You deserve a break today.



Match the Product to the Advertising Technique: Working

with a group of 2 to 4 students, brainstorm a list of popular advertising techniques. Some of the techniques might include developing a character to represent your product (Pillsbury Doughboy, Ronald MacDonald), having a celebrity endorse your product, running a contest, making up a catchy jingle, claiming the product is cheaper and better than the competition, and promoting the idea that everyone else has one so you should too. When your list of techniques is complete, start searching magazines, the Internet, television, and other media for examples of products that use each technique. How many examples can you find of each? Do you think some techniques work better than others? Which are your favourites?

Creative Activities

For the last part of this unit, have students (either on their own or in small groups) design and create their own ads. They can make posters or print ads, write and record jingles, create ads for a Web page, or write and produce television commercials on video. No matter what their medium, they should follow these steps:

❶ Choose a product to promote. It might be an existing product or one that is made up. Students might choose to

advertise a charity, an event, or a service. They might want to create an ad that promotes a certain set of behaviours (healthy eating, study skills) or values (hard work, punctuality).

❷ With a product in mind, it is time to craft a message or objective for your ad. After experiencing the ad, what idea or feeling do you want to leave people with? Do you want to provide them with some information, give them the idea that the product will make them popular, or show them how much fun they can have with the product? A well-defined objective or message is essential to creating a persuasive ad.

❸ Decide on your target audience. To whom is your message directed? Your choice of advertising techniques, language, visuals, musical styles, and so on will all depend on who you are trying to persuade. Be precise.

❹ Choose one or more techniques. Music, humour, celebrity endorsement, contests, brand characters, give-aways, slogans, repetition, and being annoying are just a few of the ways of being persuasive. What will you do in your ad?

❺ Finally, produce the ad. No matter what medium you choose, be creative and find interesting ways to be persuasive.

When all the ads are in, have an Ad Fest in which students share their ads with others in the class or even the whole school.

Resources

www.mediaawareness.ca

www.adbusters.org

www.zillions.org

www.adage.com

www.cme.org

www.aeforum.org

www.toymuseum.com

www.advertising.utexas.edu/world/

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No Free Lunch on the Internet

Technology and Quality Learning

By Michael O'Toole

Quality Learning has always been something of an elusive term. “Meaningless buzzwords” claim cynics. According to its keenest advocates, however, Quality Learning is more than a preparation for life: it is life! This bold assertion sounds impressive, but still leaves most of us just a little baffled. Highly fashionable since the 1990s, the “quality” banner, which adorns numerous educational initiatives across North America in the current age, can be traced to a rather unlikely source.

After WWII, a little known statistician named W. Edwards Deming, then working for an AT&T subsidiary, was asked to act as a consultant to aid the rebirth of Japanese industry. His resulting principles of Total Quality Management defined “quality” as “meeting or exceeding the needs and expectations of the customer.” In light of Japan’s spectacular economic success in the 1980s, Total Quality Management found its way back across the Pacific and into the heart of Western business. Since then, a burgeoning “quality” franchise extended into mainstream educational thinking in the form of Quality Learning, which draws, not without controversy, on aspects of the business mindset.

In the late 1990s, the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) was one of the first school boards in Canada to come out with a comprehensive approach to Quality Learning, embracing all the systemic processes. The broad philosophy was that teaching practices designed to engage learners and promote independent thinking would best prepare students for an increasingly competitive and complex world requiring different kinds of competencies and attitudes. In effect, everything that happens within the Board’s jurisdiction is said to revolve around a Quality Learning process. Amid the florid rhetoric that often embellishes the presentation of this topic, three generic stages can be identified: *targetting areas for improvement*, *defining goals*, *assessing success*. These businesslike aims can be traced directly back to Deming’s groundwork and what became known, rather misleadingly, as the “Japanese” concept of *continual improvement*.

Inevitably, questions concerning the appropriate use of technology in schools have to be factored into the process. It is not surprising, therefore, that technology has emerged as one of the key themes of CBE’s *Quality Learning Symposium* (Palliser Hotel, Calgary, November 7-10).

One of the most prominent speakers at the conference was Jamie McKenzie, Bellingham-based publisher and editor of the monthly electronic technology newsletter *From Now On*. His chosen topic,

“Beyond technology: Questioning, research and the information literate school,” is one that has preoccupied him for a number of years as a school principal, writer, and publisher. His recurring message is a warning to not put the cart before the horse by overemphasizing equipment at the expense of learning priorities.

“Once they install their networks,” McKenzie laments, “a lot of schools are finding that they’ve paid too little attention to learning goals and have no satisfying definition of purpose that might mobilize teachers to embrace the new technologies with enthusiasm. Added to that is something I call ‘the screensaver’s disease.’ Schools have dumped all these computers in classrooms with almost no spending on professional development, which should ideally account for 25-30 percent of the whole technology budget.”

McKenzie asserts that teachers need 30-50 hours of professional development per year for 3 years in order to make good use of a network. About half that time, he believes, needs to be taken up with learning how to carry out the kinds of investigations that teachers will be assigning to their students. The other half of the training should engage teachers in inventing the actual online investigations and projects that will form the basis of class assignments.

Another significant obstacle to progress, according to McKenzie, is the reluctant/skeptical teacher who is instinctively unwilling to acquire the necessary skills. This educator may





Jamie McKenzie

computer sessions are a waste of time for both students and staff.

In the U.S., research indicates that reluctant/skeptics may account for up to 70 percent of the teaching fraternity. McKenzie concedes that in the last year there have been signs that districts are waking up to the problem and realizing that nothing is likely to change until teachers are given the level of support that they need. By itself, he argues, the Internet is a jungle and therefore virtually useless for culturing curriculum-based learning and proficiencies. McKenzie advocates teacher-generated online projects that have been developed with three to four days of input in order to find good resources and create structure so that the task works efficiently.

"When planners start with curriculum questions, it should be clear that there's no 'free lunch' on the Internet." This is a favourite Jamie McKenzie maxim, from a man well-known for his snappy one-liners. "When I go into schools, I'm looking for evidence that students are being shown how to explore the most important questions in the curriculum and in life. Computers should be tools for making meaning."

The essential questions, as McKenzie sees them, are related to the most important problems and choices that we face as individuals and as a society. What are we going to do about acid rain? How do we manage declining fish stocks? How do we maintain employment for people in declining industries? The challenge should be about using new tools to help students master the key concepts and skills embedded in the science, social studies, art, and other curriculum standards. It is not so much about power-pointing, spreadsheeting, or word processing. But it is essential that networks should support learning activities that contribute measurably to student performance.

Another speaker addressing the topic of technology and education is Steve Dotto, presenter of the computer television



show *Dotto's Data Café* that takes a populist approach to technical advice on all aspects of computer usage. Considering his day job, some of Dotto's views seem a little startling at first.

"When my kids' schools asked me to help raise money for computers, I refused,"

says Dotto bluntly. "I told them I'd help raise money for the soccer team or the jazz band. These days we're caught up in putting better labs in schools, which is all fine and dandy as long as we're not sacrificing the rest of the program."

Pouring resources into a lab that sits locked up and students have access to for an hour a day isn't the answer, insists the robust TV guru. "If it came to a choice, I'd much rather my kids never touched a computer but were still involved in music programs, sports, and the photography club. Computers shouldn't replace the social side of what school is all about."

Dotto believes that it is more important for us to ensure that children have access to computers at home. The greatest problem that he identifies, therefore, is the economic gap between the haves and have-nots.

"Don't get me wrong. I'm not *against* computers in schools. In a lot of areas the use of technology is really appropriate. I like the really cool projects that are happening out there. Teachers who understand HTML are having their students do Web sites and publish their ebooks on the Web. There are interactive projects where schools sign up so they can go online and watch someone climbing Everest. Multimedia labs where students gain access to systems and work on various projects are very commendable if they're run well and taken advantage of."

However, Dotto, like McKenzie, proffers the criticism that planners tend to ignore the teachers' needs in the equation. "When equipment is donated through computers for schools programs, they're often older systems and teachers have no idea how to network or support. We need to consider issues like how many classrooms have got a telephone so the teacher can talk to the help desk. We should be concentrating on getting a computer on every teacher's desk and spending money to train them. That's where my passion lies."

Dotto's vision is centred principally on the basics, such as providing teachers with email and a marks program to facilitate the preparation of reports and feedback to students and parents. "It's good that people are pushing the envelope in terms of the more entertaining aspects of technology, but I don't believe they're getting enough out of it as an organizational communication tool. My own computer is important to me because it keeps me on track and keeps me communicating. That, and an adequate grasp of networking and appropriate software tools, are the things that teachers need to focus on."

Someone whose endeavours are undoubtedly encompassed by Dotto's reference to "really cool projects" is Calgary's own adventurer Bruce Kirkby. A veteran of expeditions to Everest, Arabia's Empty Quarter, and the Blue Nile Gorge, Kirkby is also a pioneer



Steve Dotto



Bruce Kirkby

of the "online adventure" for schools. His Everest and Empty Quarter expeditions in 1997 and 1999 were tied in with Internet student education programs that allowed students to follow his exploits while also gaining access to free curriculum in core subjects.

In April 2002, Kirkby plans to develop the concept further on his expedition to the unexplored Chang Tang region of Tibet. Partnering with CBE, the expedition team will offer a program that allows children to participate in the events rather than just observe them. Students will be able to contribute to the planning and preparation for the journey, as well as work on projects with input from students in other countries. CBE is developing specialized multi-curricular units based on the expedition, through which children will help plan the route, research critical equipment, and advise the team on nutritional needs.

Quality Learning, or just a cool project? W. Edwards Deming probably didn't have this kind of thing in mind when, in the 1950's, he devised his system of Total Quality Management that is now looked on as the source of modern Quality Learning

strategies. Having worked on initiatives to apply Deming's principles in the classroom, McKenzie feels that Quality Learning, in the right hands, has real value.

"To me, Quality Learning is about preparing students to make choices and solve the problems and challenges they will face as adult citizens. It should take them past memory and information to understanding and competence. There's no doubt that it's been trendy in the last decade to attach the word 'quality' to everything. That doesn't make it meaningless, but it's important that we back up the word with substance. That, to my mind, is what the *Quality Learning Symposium* in Calgary is about. How do we translate those concepts into real learning and healthy schools?"

As CBE and other school districts across Canada and the United States attempt to promote Quality Learning as a new way of thinking about education, the challenge remains not only to overcome the perennial resistance to change, but to persuade "reluctant/skeptics" in all walks of life that a clear vision actually exists. Lunch on the Internet may not be free. We may hope, though, that it is at least nutritious. ☺

Michael O'Toole is a freelance writer and journalist with extensive teaching experience in the field of ESL. He can be reached at: Broomitser@aol.com

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Styles d'apprentissage :

comment permettre aux enfants de briser le « moule »

Lorsqu'il s'agit de leur inculquer des valeurs, « les enfants sont comme de la pâte à modeler ». Cependant, lorsqu'on essaie d'analyser la façon dont ils apprennent, on ressent l'importance de les laisser briser le « moule ». C'est à nous, parents, enseignants, tuteurs ou gardiens, de créer un milieu où l'enfant aura la liberté d'aller au-delà des paramètres qui lui sont souvent imposés. Encourager l'expérimentation et la créativité est un moyen d'aider l'enfant à découvrir ses forces et ses aptitudes, et à reconnaître ses faiblesses. Je suis persuadée qu'avec un minimum d'effort et d'organisation, il est possible d'adapter, de modifier et d'utiliser la plupart des programmes scolaires pour qu'ils correspondent au style d'apprentissage préféré de l'élève. J'ajouterais, cependant, que l'une des meilleures méthodes pour permettre à l'élève de comprendre et de retenir l'information qui lui est fournie, est celle de l'enseignement multisensoriel (EMS). Cette méthode fait appel à trois grands modes d'apprentissage : le mode **auditif**, celui des élèves qui apprennent par l'*écoute* et par l'*expression orale*, le mode **visuel**, celui des élèves qui apprennent par l'*image* et par l'*écrit*, et le **mode kinesthésique**, celui des élèves qui apprennent par le *toucher*. Cette technique permet aux enseignants d'enrichir et d'agréments leur enseignement en stimulant les élèves et en les invitant à choisir leur propre style d'apprentissage.

L'apprenant auditif

L'apprenant auditif apprend le mieux en écoutant ou en parlant. C'est le plus bavard de tous les apprenants. Il adore discuter

mais il est facilement distrait pendant une conversation. Vu qu'il a de l'oreille, il aime écouter de la musique en travaillant. Lorsque vous avez un tel élève, il faut l'encourager à écouter l'information et à vous la répéter. Il n'appréciera probablement pas les longues activités écrites et les périodes de lecture silencieuse. Lorsqu'il étudie, il doit lire à voix haute les instructions et le contenu à retenir. Il serait bon qu'il enregistre ses notes sur bande magnétique de façon à pouvoir les écouter plus tard. L'apprenant auditif aura également intérêt à écouter des livres enregistrés. Il faut partir de situations de la vie réelle pour lui enseigner de nouveaux concepts.

En outre, lire à haute voix l'intéressera davantage. Il est aussi préférable qu'il prépare un compte rendu de livre oral ou sur bande (audio ou vidéo). En orthographe, il faut encourager ce type d'élève à épeler les mots tout haut; cela pourrait même lui faire obtenir de meilleures notes. En mathématiques, cet élève comprendra mieux si on l'encourage à rédiger ses propres énoncés à partir des concepts qu'il doit acquérir. Il faudra toujours énoncer oralement les étapes à franchir pour résoudre un problème mathématique. L'apprenant auditif pourrait apprendre les tables de multiplication en écoutant une bande ou en les récitant sur un air de musique.

Il existe deux types d'apprenants auditifs : celui qui apprend par l'*écoute* et celui qui apprend par l'*expression orale*. Ce dernier est beaucoup plus agressif dans sa démarche face à l'information qui lui est fournie. Il utilise les mots qui correspondent exactement à ce qu'il comprend. Il a donc



Par Diane Bisson

besoin d'occasions d'exprimer oralement ce qu'il apprend. Il résout ses problèmes en parlant. Il est recommandé de lui donner l'occasion de travailler avec quelqu'un d'autre.

L'apprenant visuel

L'apprenant visuel est une personne qui pense en images ou en mots. C'est comme s'il avait une caméra dans le cerveau — il voit généralement en images ou en mots ce qu'il entend ou ce qu'il lit. Ce style d'apprentissage est également celui des personnes qui apprennent par l'*image* ou par l'*écrit*.

Ceux qui apprennent par l'*image* éprouvent souvent des difficultés à lire ou à orthographier parce que, pour eux, les lettres représentent des sons et non pas des images. Il faut donc les encourager à se concentrer sur les illustrations, les graphiques, les cartes, etc., lorsqu'ils étudient. Prendre des notes picturales les aidera à organiser et à emmagasiner l'information.

D'autre part, ceux qui apprennent par l'*écrit* pensent en mots. Les tableaux et les illustrations risquent de créer la confusion dans leur esprit. Ils auront tendance à ne pas voir les images et à se concentrer sur l'information écrite. Il est donc préférable que ce type d'apprenant lise et écrive l'information à retenir; comme il aime beaucoup les couleurs, il pourra souligner ou surligner à son gré. Il serait bon qu'il dispose de crayons, de marqueurs et de papier de couleurs différentes pour prendre ses notes. Il retiendra les informations en mots et non pas en images.

Contrairement à l'apprenant auditif, qui réussit mieux lorsqu'il travaille avec quelqu'un d'autre, l'apprenant visuel préfère être seul pour lire et étudier au calme. Il ne choisira probablement pas des activités qui entraînent des jeux de rôle ou de l'écoute. Il est généralement organisé dans son travail. Son écriture est soignée et ses classeurs, son bureau et sa chambre sont généralement en ordre. Il aime aussi être bien mis.



Pour l'apprenant visuel privilégiant l'*image*, la compréhension de la lecture s'améliorera s'il peut faire des schémas sur les personnages et les événements d'une histoire. Par contre, l'apprenant visuel privilégiant l'*écrit* préférera écrire le nom des personnages et prendre les événements en note. Pour l'orthographe, le premier pourra décorer les mots nouveaux et leur donner une allure d'image. Il serait peut-être utile également de faire des configurations de mots. Le second pourra, quant à lui, apprendre les mots nouveaux en les écrivant avec des crayons,

des marqueurs et du papier de couleurs différentes. Les mathématiques l'intéresseront davantage si les chiffres sont inscrits sur des fiches de couleur. Pour apprendre les notions mathématiques, il serait peut-être bon d'avoir des lignes de chiffres de couleur. On pourra encourager l'apprenant visuel privilégiant l'*image* à dessiner chacune des étapes de la résolution d'un problème, alors que celui qui privilégie l'*écrit* surlignera les signes des opérations mathématiques.

L'apprenant kinesthésique

Bien des gens ont besoin de tout leur corps pour apprendre. On qualifie ce mode d'apprentissage plus confortable de kinesthésique et il recouvre l'apprentissage par le *toucher*. L'apprenant kinesthésique apprendra le mieux en combinant plusieurs styles d'apprentissage. Il faudra peut-être qu'il écoute (auditif) et qu'il regarde (visuel) l'information qui lui est fournie. Il aura peut-être besoin de la répéter (verbal) ensuite en ses propres termes, de l'écrire, de la dactylographier, voire de la dessiner (tactile). Comme il a besoin de beaucoup bouger, l'apprenant kinesthésique se promènera probablement en travaillant. Il réussit mieux lorsqu'il travaille par à-coups que pendant de longues périodes de concentration. Étant donné qu'il a beaucoup d'énergie contenue, il est souvent agité et ne tient pas en place. Il lui est très difficile de rester assis pendant de longs moments. Il acquiert difficilement la notion du temps. Au lieu d'entrevoir l'avenir, il ne voit que le moment présent (ce qui explique qu'il ait de la peine à envisager les conséquences de ses actes). Malheureusement, on l'appelle un hyperactif. Il apparaît souvent désorganisé, mais pour l'apprenant kinesthésique, il s'agit davantage de « confusion organisée ».

Il faut encourager cet apprenant à mettre à profit son besoin de bouger. On pourra l'engager à se documenter à partir de bandes vidéo ou audio, de films, en regardant la télévision ou en écoutant la radio. S'il représente ce qu'il a appris au moyen d'une expérience (sciences), d'un modèle ou d'un graphique (mathématiques), ou d'un sketch mimé (art dramatique), l'apprenant kinesthésique saura montrer ce qu'il a compris et retenu. Pour développer sa compréhension des textes, on pourra lui faire représenter des mots de vocabulaire ou jouer les personnages d'une histoire. Il pourra, par exemple, s'entraîner à l'orthographe en écrivant des mots dans l'air, sur la table ou sur le dos de quelqu'un. Un autre moyen de se souvenir de l'orthographe consiste à taper dans ses mains chaque lettre d'un mot ou à les prononcer individuellement, en montant ou en descendant l'escalier. Il pourra aussi écrire des mots sur du papier à poncer ou dans du sable mouillé, du sel, du pouding, de la crème fouettée colorée ou même du jello rallongé d'eau. N'oubliez pas que le mouvement et la participation sont importants pour l'apprenant kinesthésique. On pourra l'encourager

à jouer les énoncés de problèmes mathématiques. Les programmes informatiques interactifs qui font apprendre les mathématiques à force d'exercices sont également motivants pour ce type d'apprenant.

L'apprentissage tactile relève du mode kinesthésique. Si votre élève est un apprenant tactile, vous remarquerez qu'il comprend et retient mieux l'information s'il peut y toucher, jouer avec ou la manipuler. Les activités pratiques sont excellentes pour lui. L'apprenant tactile aime les ordinateurs et les calculettes. Une vieille machine à écrire lui sera très utile parce qu'il faut appuyer plus fort sur les touches du clavier. Il aimera aussi écrire à la craie ou utiliser un tableau blanc avec des stylos-feutres de couleur. C'est la méthode par tâtonnement qui lui convient le mieux, de même que les sorties et les voyages. Tout comme pour l'apprenant kinesthésique, le mouvement est important pour l'apprenant tactile. Il n'aime pas beaucoup les projets qui exigent de longues heures de lecture ou d'écoute, et il est probable qu'il n'aimera ni les cahiers ni les feuilles de travail parce qu'il faut s'asseoir pour y travailler.

Il est gratifiant de découvrir et de respecter le mode d'apprentissage de l'un et de l'autre. Et ce qui est encore plus important, c'est que lorsqu'ils en tiennent compte, les

enseignants et les parents des enfants de 5 à 11 ans constatent que les enfants ont de meilleurs résultats scolaires et une plus grande estime d'eux-mêmes. À mesure qu'ils grandiront, ces enfants découvriront leur style d'apprentissage et se construiront une base solide à partir de leurs forces, et sauront développer des stratégies pour compenser leurs faiblesses.

Cela dit, à tous ceux qui aiment les enfants et les jeunes et qui travaillent avec eux, je me permettrai de faire une suggestion : *sachez évaluer votre propre style d'apprentissage*. Ce sera un outil dont vous voudrez ou non vous servir avec de jeunes enfants. Ma longue expérience de travail avec des enfants d'âges et de milieux différents m'a appris qu'une fois qu'on a découvert le mode d'apprentissage préféré d'un enfant, son potentiel devient illimité. Sachons donc briser le moule et laisser l'enfant se développer harmonieusement. ☺

Diane Lamarche-Bisson est l'auteure de plusieurs manuels d'éducation à domicile et de livres pour enfants. Spécialiste de l'éducation à l'enfance en difficulté, de la détection du syndrome d'Irlen et de la dyslexie, elle anime des ateliers sur les divers styles d'apprentissage. Pour en savoir davantage, visitez son site Internet www.dilam.com ou envoyez-lui un courriel à dilam@mergetel.com

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Crisis in the Chateau: A Canadian Learning Adventure: New France 1534-1670, by EDUTECH Productions and Arnold Publishing, is an interactive CD-ROM that combines an enormous amount of information about the settlement of New France with a challenging game/trial format to develop critical thinking and analytical skills. The colourful graphical interface, music of the time, and the voices of the historical figures make this period of Canadian history come alive for students.

*“...students learn about
the historical period
through a very interactive
and realistic portrayal of how
individuals lived at the time...”*

By presenting the various historical characters through their voices as characters in a trial, the problems and issues become much more real for students than if they were reading a textbook. Each character - settler, fur trader, Bishop, etc., - presents issues facing himself in the context of the time. The student who has signed in as the trial judge can evaluate the arguments, consider the information, and conduct research to further extend his knowledge base. Research tools are presented in the format of an atlas with very clear outlines of the geographical area. The atlas also has the capability of zooming out and enlarging its maps. The zoom feature is available for all the other illustrations and pictures, and is an excellent enhancement that enables students to have very detailed, visual information. The glossary is very useful, and many of the less familiar words are hyperlinked and clickable for complete definitions. There are research books on exploration,

colonization, cultural exchange, French colonization, and British colonization that present and extend the information in a colourful and interesting format. The interactivity that involves clicking on many of the objects for information, voice, and story makes it a very fast-paced learning experience. It suits students who have developed clicking habits from other types of media. One of the other excellent features is the library index that encompasses an encyclopedia, music, pictures, and video clips - all organized in an alphabetical list for easy accessibility.

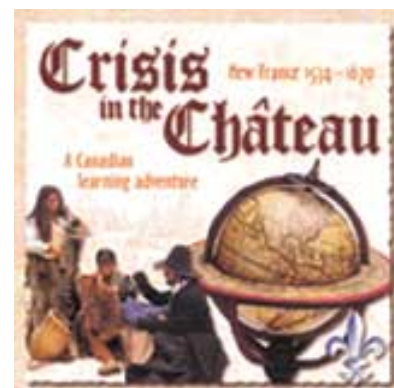
However, what makes this CD-ROM stand out beyond its obvious solid content and become an enjoyable learning tool for students is the game format. Gathering evidence allows the participants to earn collector cards when they verify the evidence in the scored quizzes. The clues provided by the mystery guests add to the challenge by testing the students' knowledge. The final aspect for the student judge is to make decisions and write out the judgement, providing an opportunity for the teacher to assess thinking and writing skills in a very concrete and appropriate manner. An important component of the content and process presented in the software is the connection to the Ontario Grade 7 History Curriculum. Many expectations are introduced and achieved as students learn about the historical period through a very interactive and realistic portrayal of how individuals lived at the time and what problems they encountered in the early settlement of New France and Acadia.

The software features a help screen that is accessible as one maneuvers throughout the courtroom to the characters, the court tools, the research books, the evidence, and the exhibit wood blocks. The one drawback is that it is not

intuitive as to what might be the next step. By clicking and going through a logical sequence, one does get to the comprehensive and thorough information, but moving back and forth from one aspect to another is awkward. A back button would be useful for navigation. The bottom screen, which features Quit, Options, and Help does not easily enable back and forth navigation. However, students may find this less of a problem once they have worked through the program. Certainly, the presentation of content, the curriculum focus, and the pleasurable learning experience outweigh this small problem.

Crisis in the Chateau costs CDN \$49.95 (home version)/\$79.00 (school version) and runs on both Windows and Macintosh platforms. To order, contact EDUTECH Productions at 5215 Dalcroft Crescent, N.W. Calgary, AB T2A 1N6, Tel: 1-800-817-4551, Email: info@edutechproductions.ab.ca. For more information, visit www.edutechproductions.ab.ca/crisis/c_41.html.

Rose Dotten is the director of Library and Information Services at the University of Toronto Schools. She is also the principal of the OISE/UT School Librarianship Course, instructor of the Librarianship Specialist Course, and an adjunct professor in the pre-service program at OISE/UT. Rose can be reached at rjd@uts.utoronto.ca.



St. Vital School Division Success Story: Dakota Collegiate Students Reach Out to Seniors with iMac & iMovie

By Jeremy Simon / Editorial Sponsorship

Think that seniors and computers don't mix? A fascinating and heart-warming project currently underway in Winnipeg will change your mind.

Dakota Collegiate sits in the middle of St. Vital School Division, right next to three apartment buildings for senior citizens. Dakota wanted to reach out to local residents who didn't have school-age children, so they sent the seniors some letters of inquiry. "What can we do for you?" they asked. The answer came back loud and clear: "We want to learn about computers!"

St. Vital School Division provided some general funding for a seniors computer course, and teacher Kirsty Dunlop wrote a curriculum. Community liaison workers Leslie Later and Linda Watson became program supervisors. Four high school students were hired as instructors along with eight classroom assistants to teach a ten-week session for about fifty seniors. As Later describes it, the subject matter involved everything from "turning on the power to surfing the Internet."

Josephine (Jo) Hogg is a 72-year-old graduate of that first session. "Now I can access my bank accounts over the net and I'm sending e-mail messages like crazy," says Jo, who bought an iMac last November. Her next project is tracing her family tree online. "Many people think that seniors don't want to keep on learning, but that doesn't describe the people I associate with. I find computers fascinating."

Jo and the other participants have nothing but praise for their student teachers. One of the instructors, Kyle Bailly, was only 14 when he began teaching the program. "There is such a variety of people in the senior class," he reflects. "Some have a surprising amount of knowledge, and others are afraid they'll break the computer

if they press the wrong key." He says his experience in the program has given him a new perspective on his future career, as well as his high school classes.

The program has had far-reaching results. The Winnipeg Free Press published a feature about the program, as did a community paper called the Lance. Seniors, students, and teachers formed a committee called Inter-Ages to plan and guide the activities. A second session of the course was launched, and the enrollment number more than doubled. As well, student tutors are recruited by Inter-Ages to teach on-site at computer rooms in the seniors' apartments.

Now Apple has introduced an idea to enrich the experience. In a workshop with the Inter-Ages Committee, Apple Canada's education account executive Randy Kokesch demonstrated iMovie. Kokesch's presentation was such a hit that it sparked a proposal for a special pilot project: a small group of five or six seniors will make a movie and contemplate ways to integrate this technology into their lives. Apple is lending the project an iMovie-equipped PowerBook and a digital video camera.

Later says that seniors can see how iMovie is a great new way to stay in touch with their grandchildren who live out of town. "They were really enamored," she recalls, "and we're going to have trouble limiting the pilot to a small group. We have an iMac DV in the school that's wonderfully equipped for iMovie. We plan to dedicate it to the moviemaking project when we get it all going. Everyone's quite excited."

Irene Nordheim, teacher and divisional PR committee member, isn't surprised that iMovie is such a popular idea "Seniors are looking for ways to keep in



touch with friends and family, especially in the winter when they can't get out as much." Movie making with iMovie is both an interesting activity and something they can use to communicate. E-mail is another incredibly popular application for seniors who learn to use computers.

Seventy percent of the seniors who enroll in the St. Vital computer course want to buy a computer when they finish. Students Todd Noakes and John Williams of nearby Glenlawn Collegiate have been applying to private foundations for grants to equip computer rooms at the seniors' apartments. They've also been recruiting and organising more students for the tutoring program.

The computer learning program has helped draw the community together. Citing a recent Student-For-A-Day event in St. Vital School Division that was attended by many computer course participants, Nordheim reports that local residents are now frequent and welcome visitors at the school. Best of all, the program has opened the lines of communication for many more beneficial activities in the future - once again disproving the myth that seniors and computers aren't compatible. ☺

Jeremy Simon is a freelance writer based in Toronto.



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