



GRACEMERE PREP

Leanne Paxton & Anne-Maree Hawton

Digital Story Telling a Tool for Improving Literacy

KIDSMART SNAPSHOTS





Anne-Maree and
Leanne Paxton



GRACEMERE STATE SCHOOL IS LOCATED 10KM WEST OF ROCKHAMPTON IN THE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND TOWN OF GRACEMERE. THE SCHOOL HAS FEWER THAN 300 PRIMARY CHILDREN FROM PREP TO GRADE 7, WITH A HIGH PROPORTION OF LOWER INCOME, SINGLE PARENT AND INDIGENOUS STUDENTS.

> Investigation

“How can we use ICT as an integrating tool to increase motivation and participation of boys in multiliteracies.”

Gracemere preschool during this investigation had a high percentage of boys (15 of 25) many of whom were reluctant to participate in extending and scaffolding play-based episodes to deepen their literacy understandings and skills. Right from the beginning of the year it was the boys who were always timetabled to use the computer and if they were not using the computer they would watch and interact with the other preschoolers currently on the computer. The next hurdle was to capture this enthusiasm for technology and use it to diversify into other areas of learning. We observed four boys in particular who were developmentally delayed in their language and social skills and documented their technological journey.

After the first couple of KidSmart seminars we realised we could tap into this enthusiasm with technology to engage these boys in experiences of increasing complexity in multiliteracies to achieve a deeper understanding of learning. As we changed our pedagogical practices and technology transcended from the computer as a stand-alone educational tool to technology being an interconnected component of child initiated learning processes we observed these boys successfully interacting with others and developing a positive attitude to learning.

> Observations

Two boys who previously had difficulty conversing with others used the technology for a month and were given an opportunity to explain and direct other children in the use of the software ‘Jellybean Hunt’, ‘Fribbles’ and ‘Freddie Fish’. They were tutored on various 3D activities associated with the programs, for example we made a large grid on the floor, where students had to take turns either giving verbal directions to each other to locate a jelly bean, or be the one following the directions, similar to the ant in the software program Jelly Bean Hunt from Trudy’s Time and Place House. The key concept from Fribbles, a program from Thinkin’ Things involved students using attributes of the characters to identify and predict a particular Fribble, this was extended in the 3D activities where students would make characters using play doh and collage, the students would then take turns giving out clues for the other person to select the right character such as “Purple one with stripes”. By developing and implementing a multimodal approach to teaching concepts we observed the oral language skills from these two students develop notably, as the students were required to engage in

conversation with the other children, which also supported their independence and confidence which extended to other activities beyond the computer.

We also observed two boys whose play during inside time was not developing. It was boisterous, unstructured and they were very reluctant to scaffold their play episodes so to construct new knowledge and skills. We observed that when their play was connected with technology these boys were one of the first to engage in them and their type of play also changed. When African animals were added to the preschool in response to a member of the preschool visiting Africa these two boys used the animals to re-enact fighting scenarios and were very reluctant even with adult interaction to change this play or research and construct props (jungle habitat) to extend their play. They were also unwilling to transpose their play into any written or drawn form. The boys were encouraged to explore software programs that allowed them to take on the roles of authors and publishers such as *Make a Story* from **Bailey's Book House** where they could investigate the concept of characters, setting and plot, and also *Make a Movie* from **Sammy's Science House**, which emphasised the importance of correct sequencing. The next week the digital camera was introduced as a tool for the children to use to record their play episodes during the day. When it was suggested the boys could use the camera to record the interactions of the African animals and then a photostory could be created to retell their play we noticed a new direction to their play. After discussing that fighting scenes would not be appropriate to show other preschoolers, they went about unaided in creating a story about two animals and their search for water. They took their own photos and created their own photostory including their own story line and narration with much enthusiasm. They were so proud of their accomplishments and the literacy skills used were more complex than these boys had employed before.

One year on:

This year we have endeavored to extend the learnings when making the claymations. The children were given more control over the process. They brainstormed various claymation ideas and then were asked to research the behaviour, lifestyle and environment of the Australian animal they had selected. This research was then included in the claymation story line, scenery and production. The finished product was then critiqued to establish good points and improvements for future claymations. The children were engaged and motivated to research



Students used different mediums to share stories, including puppet shows, claymation and role play.



*Leanne Paxton
– prep teacher*

their animal to find out interesting facts. The children who had previously been reluctant to delve into books were observed keenly finding information and joining in the conversations about the storyline. Positive interactions ensued while setting scenes and taking photos. Everyone wanted to type in storylines and credits and the reluctant children effectively critiqued the claymations. The whole process enabled all children to construct new knowledge and skills with increased motivation and participation.

> Future Direction

One extremely pleasing outcome of the project is how naturally integrating productive ICT practices into the Early Childhood curriculum has become. When the Preps negotiate their learning program I am constantly thinking which technologies can be implemented to enhance, inspire and compliment their learning.

Another interesting outcome of the project was how independent and competent the children are at using various technologies. At the beginning of our journey the computer experiences, particularly the digital camera was almost totally supervised and teacher directed. As the project progressed we observed the children using the technologies skillfully and responsibly. We now provide the children with technologies to use autonomously and child directed with a great deal of success.

Reflecting back, our beliefs and practice have dramatically changed, not only in what we use the computer for but also how we allow students to engage in the resources. At the commencement of the Kidsmart project technology was used in the curriculum as a stand alone computer, it was not integrated into my planning; we did use the digital camera, but mainly to produce pictures for class books. This project challenged my notion of what real integration was, having the computer on with relevant software options was not integration. We now have a vast range of effective strategies to incorporate technology with 3D learning experiences into a play-based curriculum. We are now looking at more ICT's that we can utilize in our Prep program, in particular an electronic interactive whiteboard. We are now confident to try new ICT experiences that promote a deeper knowledge of numeracy and literacy particularly with reluctant learners. Kidsmart has transformed our use of ICT into an interconnected and integral component of an effective child-negotiated play-based curriculum that makes a significant difference to the learning outcomes of prep children, particularly reluctant learners.

THIS INVESTIGATION HAS HIGHLIGHTED HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL AND LITERACY SKILL OF PRESCHOOLERS, ESPECIALLY BOYS.