

## Learning Gains through Play



Teachers and Senior Management Teams from the five project schools in the Western Cape attended a weekend of workshops in February 2015. The workshops were held at the MEED Offices in Kuilsriver and were attended by forty three participants and facilitated by Tracey Butchart with the support of Siphon Didiza and Rodney Nissan. With only two hours available on the Friday after school, the Saturday was a long but fruitful day.



**Purpose of the workshop** – As with the KZN schools in January, the purpose of the two new modules was to share research findings with the teachers and to discuss how the existing research and the Learning Gains through Play baseline research findings are directing the project. The focus was on how using the technology can meet the requirements of the Foundation Phase CAPS, engage the learners with the curriculum through play and develop and practise critical foundational literacies. Teachers were able to identify and explain these focus foundational literacies of the project: gross-motor skills, fine-motor skills, visual literacy and oral communication in English.

**What We Are Measuring** – Teachers were introduced to the project focus, foundational literacies through a presentation (available on Slideshare <http://goo.gl/d4DoKA> ) and an analysis of the project research rubrics. This focused them again on important verbs for assessing performance. A debate around the differences between ‘teaching’ and ‘training’, followed by the famous “Little Boy” poem by Helen Buckley, had all the teachers in agreement about the importance of nurturing creativity in the classroom.

**Fine Motor Skills** – The research-based value of developing gross and fine motor skills for academic progress and success was discussed with all teachers unanimous about the importance of these. A new tablet app, **Touchgrind BMX**, provided much of a challenge and laughter as teachers exercised their fine-motor skills to keep their BMX bike upright through the convoluted course. Internet-based activities to identify traditional fine-motor skills and the new fine-motor skills required for tablet use focused teacher on important verbs to link with the CAPS documents.



**Gross Motor Skills** – Saturday morning started with a blast of physical activity as the teachers participated in a quick shuttle relay race. The interaction of motor skills, perceptual skills and coordination involved was compared with the opportunities afforded by the Xbox games and a focus on the verbs in the Physical Education component of the Life Skills CAPS linked it all to curriculum. A Gallery Walk strategy was used and compared with the Learning Stations strategy and variations on both of these explored.

**Motivating Learning-Like Play** – Teachers were introduced to the Bartle theory of gaming motivation. The four gaming profiles – killers, achievers, explorers and socialisers were discussed in terms of gaming but analysed for classroom ideas to motivate NetGen learners. Teachers were requested to take the on-line Bartle Test themselves and to consider opportunities in classroom activities to satisfy the four different Bartle profile motivations of their learners.

**Visual Literacy** – A presentation on the importance of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century skill of Visual Literacy (available on Slideshare here <http://goo.gl/sd0yJzo>) kicked off an analysis of favourite tablet apps in terms of the visual literacy teaching and learning opportunities they offer. Components of visual literacy such as visual recognition, visual discrimination, visual interpretation, visual evaluation and visual memory were discussed. Emotion knowledge as an important case of visual literacy was explored and the development of this was promoted by the downloading and experimenting with new apps, **Tuli Emotions** and **Kidoko My Emotions**.

**Language Acquisition** – The difference between ‘learning’ language and ‘acquiring’ language was presented through videos by Prof Stephen Krashen, the famous educational linguistic researcher. Discussions of the stages of language acquisition led to analysis of the LGP learners and the challenge ahead for many as they shift from learning in the Home Language to English in the post-Foundation Phases. Teachers were in agreement as to the importance

of acquiring as much English as possible before Grade 4 and were excited by the opportunities for 'teachable moments' and 'stealth learning' offered by engagement with the English-medium of the Xbox games and tablet apps.

**Knowledge Sharing** – The concept of a published resource for Foundation Phase teachers using technology in their classrooms to deliver CAPS and to develop and practise foundational skills was met with great enthusiasm by the participants. Many teachers claimed their chosen apps and games to review even before the end of the workshop. We hope to make significant progress with this aspect of the project in the next couple of months. The LGP website was displayed and simply navigated to show teachers where they can upload their monthly Video Diary and Reflective Journal entries. This will be followed up in the individual schools by Rodney Nissen and his team so that teachers feel confident sharing their evolving classroom activities with the project researchers.



VIDEO: 2014 10 11 Teachers  
Xbox Workshop Western Cape



VIDEO: 2014 10 10 Bianca  
presenting



VIDEO: 2014.10.30.Grade 1  
Temperance Town Primary Xbox  
Kinect



VIDEO: 2014.10.11.Xbox Kinect  
Teachers workshop

**LGP Project Baseline Findings** – Unfortunately, as in KZN last month, time ran out and schools were only able to take away hard copies of their learners' baseline performances in the four foundational literacies. The discussion around these results, their analysis and how they relate to the future of the project will have to be included in the next workshop.

After a long, hard Saturday of work, participants left in surprisingly high spirits and the LGP Teachers' WhatsApp Group continued to buzz well into the evening with supportive and appreciative comments about the Learning Gains through Play project.

The photo Gallery of the workshop can be seen on the project website here <http://goo.gl/XqWYYA>  
A video of part of the workshop is viewable from the home page of the SchoolNet website [www.schoolnet.org.za](http://www.schoolnet.org.za) on the YouTube channel here <http://youtu.be/PHwO3HeG100>

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