



Report on Presentation at the Microsoft Road Show in Durban

On 24 March three teachers from different Midlands Schools drove through to Durban to make a presentation at the Microsoft Road show. The objective was to demonstrate what teachers in the Learning Gains through Play project are doing in their classrooms with the Xbox Kinect which had been donated to the project by Microsoft SA.

The event was held at the Durban Yacht Club and attended by a large number of teachers and Microsoft partners. Four teachers had planned their presentation although Nthabiseng Hlela was not able to attend in Durban due to a prior commitment.



The teachers who presented are Thembisile Maphumulo (Triandra Primary) Joyce Ntuli (Thembelihle Primary) and Thabisile Nyide (Qhamukile Primary)

The programme consisted of a number of presentations. Jaye Richards-Hill presented on the many and varied uses of Office 365 as well as a range of new digital tools for teachers that Microsoft has recently released.

Joyce was the main speaker for the Learning Gains through Play team and she started her presentation by saying that even though they had only had the Xboxes for a few months they have seen an overall improvement in performance from their learners. Joyce also explained the configuration of the Xbox Kinect in the project whereby the games are projected onto a wall or screen while the learners who are playing the games may stand behind the sensor.



Joyce emphasised that using the Xbox was not an added burden but actually makes covering CAPS easier because Xbox games cover all the learning areas but particularly Numeracy, Physical Education and Language. She selected two examples of games, Kinect Adventures and 3 D Bowling which address the following prescribed skills in CAPS: gross motor, fine motor, locomotor, perceptual motor, hand –eye coordination, balance, spatial orientation and laterality.



Joyce then summarised the benefits that she had noticed while using the Xbox Kinect with her learners: Learner – centred, Slow learners gained confidence, Improved attendance, Learners disciplined themselves, Efficient integrates learning areas, Underprivileged exposed to the world, Learners become focused, Playing but learning, Teacher understands learners more.

To illustrate this last point Thembisile Maphumulo told the story of a learner at her school who was partially blind but she had only discovered this by the child's inability to follow any instructions on the screen.

Thabisile Nyide then added to the list of benefits by summarising her experiences of the Xbox and what she had found the benefits to be: Encourages creativity, Develops young child's problem-solving techniques and skills, Cultivates child's intrinsic motivation, Regards the child's active participation in the learning process as a major aim, Motivation gives the child the opportunity to develop positive self-concepts.



All three teachers thanked Microsoft for donating the Xboxes to their schools. They also thanked the D G Murray Trust for funding the project and SchoolNet for facilitating the process.

The remaining presentations included Karen Durandt from Vastratech who are the agents for SMART interactive white boards. Her presentation mesmerised us because SMART has now developed revolutionary functionality and software that is specifically designed to assist teachers and learners.

Other presenters included Brad Gerard from EDU365 who outlined how the school management software SIMS could vastly improve school administration.

The teachers from the Learning Gains project soaked up a great deal of new information about all the latest hardware and software. The other teachers attending this event were additionally wowed by the images of Foundation Phase learners playing Xbox games in class and were surprised to hear that the games were helping learners achieve the skills specified in the national curriculum.

