Inspiration®

Mary Hare School Case Study

The advantages of using visual thinking and learning techniques in the classroom to improve student progression

Visual thinking is a learning style where the learner better understands and retains information when ideas, words and concepts are associated with images. Research tells us that the majority of students need to see information in order to learn it. Some common visual learning strategies include creating mind maps, concept maps, webbing, graphic organisers, outlining and more.

At Mary Hare School they use Inspiration in many of their lessons. It is a school for profoundly deaf children in Berkshire. It is an auditory/oral school where children use written and spoken English all the time. Pupils often start the school with language delay or with a more limited vocabulary than other children of their age so staff aim to make text as accessible as possible.

'Inspiration is brilliant,' said Lesley White, Literacy Co-ordinator at Mary Hare. 'We have a site licence and all our teachers use it, in fact, it is on every computer in the school.' Teachers can create a mind map for a subject which has all the core vocabulary and key ideas in a simple visual form. Children can see the structure of what they are studying instead of having to work through text heavy material. But if the staff are good Inspiration users, the pupils are often even better. 'They can become very creative in their use of mind mapping. Some of our students are outstanding users they can make lots of notes in Inspiration, with illustrations from the web or clip art files to act as pegs. This helps them to structure their writing and create a text outline.'

Inspiration 9 is a sophisticated thinking tool with many useful features so users can:

- Build up ideas and add images and symbols
- Make notes fill in gaps and develop an overview
- Get pupils to use it in small groups for collaborative projects
- Link to multimedia files, websites
- Outline View provides a linear essay plan which can be exported into Word
- Use the spell checker (UK spellings)
- Use the Word Guide, an on-the-spot dictionary/thesaurus tool
- Export documents to a learning platform as PDFs
- Start work on an iPad and then transfer it to a laptop, export to the cloud or a memory stick

Joe Beech a teacher with dyslexia also recommends it:

'Inspiration is a simple but very effective piece of mind mapping software which I love. It allows you to simply click and type your ideas then link them together in whatever order you like. You can then go on to link files, change icons and add notes. The beauty of this software for me is in the ability to turn the mind map into an ordered plan which you can then transfer directly into Word. I would consider using this with a class, to present work or even to plan a lesson.' Founded over 30 years ago, the Inspiration Software suite of visual thinking and learning products are used by over 25 million students and teachers worldwide!

To find out more about how Inspiration can benefit your institution
visit www.inspiration-at.com