

FE5: Designing and interactive whiteboard game to encourage child care students to participate and contribute in class

Sandra Hall, Childcare Tutor, Bishop Auckland College, Durham Cluster.

Aims:

- To help students to build the confidence to contribute in the classroom
- To offer students personal satisfaction from their learning
- To enable tutors to obtain evidence of subject knowledge gained by students
- To build confidence with using ICT in sessions
- To encourage students to research subject knowledge

Background – FE college, tutor and classroom

I am the course co-ordinator for the CACHE Foundation Award In Caring For Children (CFCC), a level 1 programme at Bishop Auckland College. Typical students are not high achievers in academic terms; the entry requirement for the course is GCSE E in English. Since taking leadership of the course I have recorded evidence from the students in tutorials that they dislike being asked questions during the plenary session due to past negative experiences from secondary school. They disclose that if they gave the wrong answer then they would not dare to answer another question fearing that they would fail and be embarrassed.

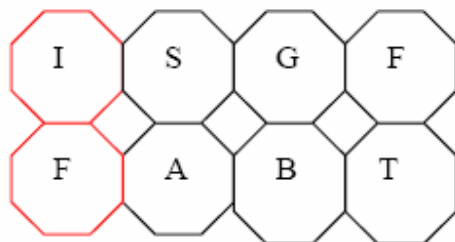
However, it is important that the tutor gathers evidence of subject knowledge gained from the learners, and that learners gain confidence in speaking in challenging environments. I thought about how to build confidence in students so that they were able to contribute. I also needed to check required learning had taken place.

The Child Care course on which I teach consists of 7 units. Each unit consists of a 3 hour session on the subject being taught ie. Health and safety over a period of 10 weeks. There is also one unit 'Play and Practical Activities' that covers 20 weeks.

Designing an Appropriate Game

I designed a simple game that could be played on the interactive white boards. There is a grid of 25 adjacent hexagonal cells, each containing an initial letter. As in TV quiz games, the object is for individuals or teams to successfully answer each question and capture a cell, with the intention of building a vertical or horizontal route of five cells. The letter in the hexagon will be the starting letter for the answer to the question. e.g. What 'I' is a preventative programme that takes care of your child's health? (Immunisation). Each team has a colour code horizontal green, vertical red. Colour each hexagon with the team's colour that got the correct answer. The team to gain a line of joined coloured hexagons wins.

See brief example below of layout:



The interactive whiteboards enhance this game, but certain boards are especially useful as they have the shapes already built into the system and are extremely quick to access. Furthermore, with the use of IT you can go to stored questions (that students have researched) if you wish to extend the play.

Intended Outcomes

I hope that the colourful focus of the whiteboard activity will capture students' attention and that their ability to influence the whiteboard will have impact. I think the students will be motivated as the subject is fun and non-threatening.

I believe that through getting satisfaction from learning with ICT the students are better able to retain the subject information gained. Students are also more willing to participate in researching information on the subject being taught because they enjoy contributing information to the game.

Collecting Data

When I first introduced the game into the sessions, I developed the questionnaire cards for one unit only: 'Play and Practical'. I quickly found out how much the students enjoyed the game and I asked for their help to extend the game to involve more subjects. I then built into my session plans (as an area of differentiation) that when students who had completed their normal work ahead of the time allotted, they could sit with a reference book and research information (which was double checked to ensure it was accurate) on the subject being delivered. To ensure all students took an active role I then allotted a time slot during group tutorials where they were encouraged to research for 1 hour.

Findings

In Child Care Training, students are taught that the best way for young children to learn is through fun! Research suggests that children learn through play.

E.M. Matterson. "Play is the way in which a child learns what no-one else can teach them" I have found that this is not just a fact for children. I believe that as adults we are able to consolidate information more clearly when it is gained in an enjoyable, non-threatening learning environment in which students are involved and have a sense of belonging. This contrasts with students' past experiences of being bored and excluded in a 'set-to-fail' situation .

Managing the group experience

When the students were placed into groups, they were given very clear instructions that it is a team effort and every member must take an active role to achieve; and this was to be done by sharing information, rather than individual members shouting out the answer. I was worried at first that this might cause pressure on the more limited students within the group. I was concerned the more dominant members would place pressure on them or even worse ridicule them. However this was not the case, the groups huddled together and worked out the answer then nominated a team member to answer. This ensured every student offered feedback during the session.

Building Confidence

The more limited students who feared speaking up during previous plenary sessions appeared to have found their voices. They found out they were working amongst friends who shared their subject knowledge and experience and they gained confidence in themselves to offer feedback during plenary sessions.

Reflecting on the study

The project has been very successful in building confidence in the students who feel limited in offering feedback during plenary sessions. Although the students themselves reported being frightened to answer due to negative experiences from secondary school, this did not mean that they did not know the answers. It was just a case of them gaining the confidence to speak up in public settings. The project has further helped to form new friendships, by students working with different members of the group.

The next step

The game has proved to be very successful. This is evident by students, displaying self-confidence skills when offering feedback, having FUN while learning, aiding the students' memory skills, and working cooperatively to gain valuable research skills and ICT skills. This will aid the students' progression in their vocational training.

There are aspects of this study that I could research further with such a group:

- How exactly does ICT create opportunities for 'fun' in lessons – i.e. to enjoy active learning experiences in which they feel involved and are confident to contribute?
- How can I create the conditions for students' new esteem and attitude to learning to extend beyond the ICT lesson?

In my teaching before getting the interactive whiteboard, I organised the students to research information in pairs so that they would discuss their emerging findings and check their understandings with each other. This both extended and consolidated their learning. Can I use games like the one outlined above to encourage more paired researching?