

P.14 To research how Talking Photo Albums could improve children's learning.

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I am a full-time nursery nurse working as a classroom assistant in reception at Hunwick School. The school is situated in the centre of a relatively affluent Wear Valley Village.

In this study I focussed on the use of Talking Photo Albums to help one particular child to encourage early Literacy and enhance communication. The research was carried out in a reception class over a period of a few weeks in the Autumn term 2004.

Background

In this study, the focus was on Literacy lessons. One of the resources the reception teacher uses to introduce and reinforce the letter sounds to the children is Jolly Phonics. The teacher uses an interactive whiteboard with a programme called Active Primary in a desk top mode alongside a power point of the Jolly Phonics children's worksheets. The initial sounds are taught to the children through a series of worksheets and actions. The children were also able to practise the letter sounds using the Jolly Phonics Jingles CD. It is hoped that the children make the connection from the action on the worksheet and the children use this as a reminder when they start to write their letter sound.

I work with one child (aged 4 yr 5 mth) who has poor concentration, and difficulty in understanding. This child found concentrating on the Jolly Phonics worksheets hard. She would often wander off to a different area within the classroom e.g. to the computer area or to the interactive whiteboard. Consequently, I decided to use a Talking Photograph Album to help this child.

A Talking Photograph Album is very similar to a traditional pocket-sized photo album. However, at the edge of each page, is a button which activates a slim voice recorder in the cover of the album and which can record information about the picture or photo which is displayed in the cellophane pocket. Thus I was able to prepare an album with each pocket displaying a large letter of the alphabet, and together we recorded the appropriate letter sounds that she could then take pride and pleasure in replaying as she worked through the book. Together we worked through the material from the Jolly Phonics worksheet until she had confidently mastered the material

One of the best features of Talking Photograph Albums is its flexibility. You can record four minutes of the child's speech, 10 seconds at a time for each of the photo/picture pockets.

Gathering Evidence of Change

Photographs were taken by the class teacher whilst I worked with this child. I also used the digital blue camera to video myself and this child whilst carrying out this activity. Her response was very meaningful to her. Choosing to record

this activity while using the albums was a great starting point which has helped her to further develop the recognition of letter sounds and she is beginning to write her name. Before we started to use the Talking Albums her writing was unrecognisable.

I looked at my own role during this activity, and I became more aware of how, when working with this child, I can contribute to the reinforcement and development of her learning using I.C.T. The Talking Photo Album is a simple, inexpensive, but effective and easy-to-use device that has many potential uses for the children.

I found it very important to feedback to the class teacher, regarding the child's progress. This information was then used to help plan further work to reinforce and develop the child's learning, by using the Talking Albums in numeracy for number and colour recognition.

It was difficult to collect the child's response as I needed to ask her questions about the activity due to her poor communication skills and of her age. This child was able to say she liked the albums because 'the talking books are her own books' and she can hear her voice. However, although I couldn't gather detailed spoken feedback of her development, from the work that she produced, and her positive attitude to the task, the reception teacher and myself were able to be reasonably confident that the Talking Photograph Album did make a significant contribution to the child's progress. She is showing more confidence in every aspect of the classroom.

Taking the Ideas Forward

I decided to do a whole class activity on making Talking Photo Albums. The children take the cameras home to take a photograph to put in the class talking book, which they add a caption to. I chose this method of differentiation because I felt that involving all the children in the class project, no matter what their ability may be, makes them feel better and their contribution is valued and therefore builds the child's confidence. I have found while working with the children on this activity, it provided an excellent basis for the children to collaborate and learn together.

I feel I could develop this child's knowledge in using the Talking Photos Albums, by encouraging her to introduce Talking Photograph Albums to the other children in her class. Hopefully this will build her confidence and self esteem to tackle activities within the class situations. This child will be able to explain to the children what they will do and this will give her a chance to reinforce her learning and understanding.

Reflections

Looking back at my research, I found out that using the Talking Photo Albums has helped generate communication skills in speaking and listening. TPAs provide a meaningful focus for communicating with children who are demonstrating limited communication skills. I have been able to use Talking Photo Albums to help overcome difficulties which have arisen when that child is not able to relate or make sense of the given task they are working on. I felt

that this was a very good way to transfer the child's literacy skills into a medium with which she feels comfortable and that she will understand.

The albums have provided an excellent basis for this child to collaborate with adults. This child was able to work with myself and present her work in new exciting ways, I have been able to observe the child's enjoyment of the Talking Albums and this has led to an increase in my own confidence to further support Talking Albums. As the child/children progress Talking Photo Albums can be used and adapted with digital photos, book cutouts, symbols, drawings, newspaper clippings and own writing. It could be used for instructions, to tell stories, to facilitate daily conversations etc. which allow the child to make connections to new knowledge and make sense of this by relating it to their past experiences

I feel this action research has contributed to my professional relationship with the class teacher due to her full support. We have had a number of valuable discussions about how children learn, barriers to learning, and how we can best combine our skills to meet all our children's needs.

In many ways the Talking Photograph Albums have built upon my developing ICT skills of supporting children's use of Digital Blue video, Powerpoint, scanners, Interactive Whiteboard and various software use.

As a trained Nursery Nurse working as a Classroom Assistant, I have been able to build upon my skills of giving individual attention to a child and have used the Talking Photograph Album as a device that encourages a child to begin working independently and with other children.