

P.27 Monitoring the impact of using Digital Blue video cameras in whole classes with an emphasis on children of lower ability.

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Aims

For children of lower ability to become more independent learners, to collaborate in groups and to improve their speaking and listening skills.

Introduction to Digital Blue cameras

Digital Blue video cameras are robust, easy to use and relatively cheap to buy. They are used with a computer or laptop and can be used on or off the pod. Teachers and children soon learn how to use them and the children can make short movies and animations in 2 or 3 one hour sessions with little or no support.

Year 3 and Year 6 class studies

The children's first experience of a Digital Blue camera, in both classes, was when they entered the class room and saw their moving images projected onto the interactive whiteboard. After the initial excitement, the children were instructed how, and allowed, to film other children while we all watched and discussed any problems. The children learned to take clips, put them together to make movies then add titles, credits and special effects.

Progression

In the second lesson the children worked in mixed ability pairs. They took clips of anything in the classroom, made a movie with them then 'played' with the software adding titles, sounds and effects. The children found this highly amusing and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

(Y6)

In the third session the children worked in mixed ability groups of 4 and were on trust to move around school unsupervised. They successfully filmed all over school and interviewed anyone they met on the way. Some clips were unsatisfactory because someone possibly laughed or forgot what to say but the children just put the clip into the bin and shot it again.

(Y3)

Again the children worked in mixed ability groups of 4 but they required adult support when working away from the class room and the noise level was too high when everyone was filming at the same time. We had to use another session for each group to film individually with an adult.

The final lesson was used to edit the clips and to put them together to make a movie. Titles, music and appropriate effects were added. The finished movies were saved and shown to the rest of their own class.

Once the children were familiar with techniques and procedures the Y6 class worked for 3 consecutive afternoons. The children were put into mixed ability groups of 3 and were asked to make a short movie to show others some important facts about a science topic to help with revision for SAT's. Each group chose a different aspect of Science such as electric circuits, parts of a plant or magnets. Some set up experiments and filmed various stages independently while others read the facts and showed the resources. They made the clips into short movies to show to the rest of the class.

All children took part in these lessons.

Evidence of change

1) My observations

In the small groups I found that the children with lower ability and/or behavioural problems were the most responsive. They had decisions to make independently and only had adult input if requested. They shared responsibilities and worked co-operatively. Every child appeared in the movie as well as taking some of the clips.

2) Children's Feedback

These are comments from some of the children

A lower ability Y6 boy said, 'It was excellent. It was the best lesson ever.'

A Y6 boy with behaviour problems and of lower ability said, 'It would be good if you could do it every day.'

'That's the clip we took at the end – you'll love it.' Y6

A Y3 pupil with lower ability showed great enthusiasm when working in front of the camera.

One Y3 pupil wouldn't appear in front of the camera at first but by the time we'd finished, his confidence had grown so much that he volunteered for every clip.

A Y3 girl said, 'I love using the Digital Blue cameras, Can we do it again tomorrow?'

3) Colleague's feedback (Y6 class teacher)

I felt that the lessons had a positive effect for most of the children. They worked collaboratively most of the time and only needed little support in their groups. Some of the children had to be guided occasionally to ensure they all took turns.

It provided me with opportunities for Science assessment. As written evidence is limited from the low attainers so the camera provided the required evidence without the children realising. Speaking and listening skills were high profile for the children who have poor communication skills. The children provided science revision to share with others in the class.

Conclusions and recommendations

Advantages of using Digital Blue

1 Independent and collaborative working

All children can participate because they work together in a group.

Children can work at their own level and pace. They have their own ideas and can work independently. When working independently in a group, the children must discuss what they want to do and how they want to present their work. They have to come to some agreement.

A Y6 pupil said, 'We discussed the order for our clips and what we wanted to put for our headings and labels. We did what the majority wanted'

They soon learn how important it is for only one person to speak at a time. They also realise that they have to speak clearly if they want to be heard.

2 Use in Assessment

These short films can also be used for assessment purposes, either to see what the children have learned in a subject or what ICT skills they have used.

Digital Blue video cameras can be used in a wide range of subjects. e.g. to record experiments in Science, to discuss movement in P.E. and to make news reports in Literacy.

3 Meeting lower ability learners' needs

Lower ability children participate with enthusiasm because they are able to give verbal input rather than having to record their ideas in writing.

4 Increased motivation

Lower ability children in particular were enthusiastic in all aspects of the projects. They participated well collaboratively and when required, were able to work independently (with minimum support). All children gained confidence to speak clearly in front of a camera and listened to comments of other children.

The children enjoyed the relative freedom of these sessions so attitudes were more positive.

Advice

Prepare story boards first because the children need to know what they are doing.

Filming can be a noisy, whole class activity, so for younger children, allow one group at a time to work with an adult.

Editing can be done in class with all groups at the same time.

In addition to the aims, children developed their skills of filming, directing and speaking. They grew in confidence and were able to ask and answer relevant questions. There were many opportunities to more accurately assess children's work.