

SuccessMaker Breeds Success

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The impetus to introduce SuccessMaker on-site at Mahora School was the discovery that a Standard 4 student from our school was attending SuccessMaker courses in town. This boy was working with SuccessMaker, in mathematics, at a Form 4 Level. At school, he was in an extension maths group but it was clear his individual needs were greater than the teacher could provide. This was the beginning of Mahora School really using computers as a means of enhancing the learning opportunities of our students.

The range of reading ages of students in our standard four classes is from seven to fifteen plus years and, in common with other teachers, our teachers use a range of strategies to cater for their students' individual needs. I saw SuccessMaker as a programme that could give children appropriate individualised learning. SuccessMaker would do what a good teacher would do, if they had the time! Mark all the work, record all the assessments, and adjust the programmes of work to suit individual needs.

The features of SuccessMaker which make it a significant learning tool at our school, are:

- Each student is challenged at their specific level.
- The programme can be customised to each student.
- The learning activities are interesting and well structured.
- Every response by the student is assessed and the student's progress is tracked.
- The programme automatically adjusts to the student's learning level.
- Success is rewarded immediately.
- Explanations are given after a second incorrect attempt. Where appropriate, students are given oral instruction.
- The students enjoy their work.

This year we added a network of 5 computers to the 2 stand-alone computers. The extra computers gave the flexibility to allow access by all of our 370 or so pupils. Each day, nearly every hour of the school day, there are 7 children working on SuccessMaker programme in what we call our Success Centre.

The Success Centre is attached to the library and the children are supervised by Marion Crawford, a teacher aide who also has library responsibilities. Wayne Stent, Senior Teacher, has professional responsibility for the centre. Between Marion and Wayne, the Success Centre runs very efficiently. Mathematics and Reading are used the most but there are also programmes available in English, Spelling, Science and Keyboard Skills.

Each week my extension maths group has access to the Success Centre for an hour. The students are given practice at speed maths and then work on some aspect of math I

have chosen, with each child working at their own level. SuccessMaker will collate and analyse the student's individual results. Several children in the group, for religious reasons, are not permitted to use computers. This causes no problem because Marion prints off a set of work sheets, generated by the SuccessMaker programme, for them. Practice sheets for homework - no problem.

Frances Flynn, Assistant Principal and leader of our reading intervention team, uses the Success Centre for a group of older 5 years-olds who have difficulties in reading. The programme can be adjusted to emphasise specific skills but can be adjusted if a child has reached frustration level with a specific skill. Frances has another group of very competent 5 year-olds for extension activities using SuccessMaker.

We are aware that there is a range of software, far cheaper than SuccessMaker, on the market. We investigated a few of these but none could match the comprehensive nature of the SuccessMaker programmes. Many were no more than entertainment (great graphics) but none had a comprehensive assessment system that SuccessMaker has to offer, none had the flexibility of SuccessMaker.

I believe successful people succeed because they experience success. I believe this is also true for our students. The SuccessMaker programmes provide a non-judgmental, non-threatening successful learning experience for students.