

Chat strategies that work

by Carolyn Keighley

Teachers are often concerned about holding an online chat using only one computer and a data projector, especially in the older primary classes.

They fear the boredom factor –

30 passive kids sitting around one computer, whilst someone types for them

A method that I have used on several occasions that I have found to work is as follows: (as well as ensuring everyone has participated in chat rooms and are aware of chatiquette, etc).

Possible scenario ... a class of 30 students with 5 computers

- Prior to the chat children record a series of questions that they would like to ask within the chat. I tend to structure this around Blooms Taxonomy and use a memory jogger sheet for the children to use.
- Children have to write at least one question in each section.
- We compile everyone's questions into one big class list. From this list the children choose the top 24 or so questions that they would most like to see answered.
- These questions are then divided up and written on to 5 sheets of A3 paper (5 because there are 5 computers).
- The class is then divided into those who will be sitting:
 - in groups of 3-4 around a computer
 - as a group with the teacher/scribe at a computer hooked up to a data projector.
- An A3 sheet of questions are then placed by each computer and the children at that computer are responsible for making sure that these questions get asked and answered within the chat room.
- The groups of children at the computer are assigned roles:
- The scribe who is responsible for typing the question from the A3 sheet.
- A person is responsible for making sure that the questions gets answered by checking the text of the chat.
- Another child is responsible of making sure that they do not repeat questions. If someone from another school asks a question they have got on their A3 sheet, it gets crossed off so that no one asks the question again.
- The final child is responsible for passing a soft toy to the next computer when their group has asked a question.
- The soft toy is a visual cue for the children to indicate that they can now type a question for the chat room. NO child/computer group can type a question until the soft toy is at their computer.

I find the above method is useful as it:

- Helps avoid all questions being asked at once by the children.
- Assigns roles to children within a group, so that even though they may not be typing on the computer they are still engaged.
- Ensures a higher quality of questioning.
- Ensures that the same old questions are not constantly being asked.

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