



Your Place - Your Pace

The Learning Place: New ways of learning



This article is available online at www.education.qld.gov.au/learningplace email: learningplace@qed.qld.gov.au Phone: (07) 3421 6656

Focus on: Counselling goes online

AS many as one in five Australian children have a significant mental health problem, but only one in four of these will receive professional help, says Coombabah State High School guidance counsellor Kevin Glasheen.

"When you have a thousand students in a school, one in five is a lot of kids," Mr Glasheen said.

"Students suffer from anxiety, depression and more serious problems, but they often perceive barriers in their way to accessing guidance and help.

"Something as simple as the location of the guidance office, if it's near Admin, for example, might make a student unwilling to go to the office."

Other barriers, especially for boys, were communication issues, a hesitancy to talk about problems, and a fear of being seen as "weak".

It was this student reluctance to seek face-to-face assistance that prompted Mr Glasheen to look for alternative ways for students to access help. He found the answer online.



Instructions for chatting with the guidance counsellor are very clear on Coombabah State High School's website.

"Online is where lots of young people virtually live, so I felt we should be using that," he said.

Coombabah was successful in being accepted as one of 17 demonstration schools for the MindMatters Plus initiative, which assists in building a school's capacity to provide support and pathways to care for students with high support needs in the area of mental health.

Through the secure environment of a Learning Place project room, a

Guidance Chat Room was set up. Students were able to log on and chat online with a guidance counsellor. An option for students was using comic chat, creating a cartoon character to present concerns and problems for them.

"The anonymity of being online, being one step removed, seems to enable some students to feel braver and safer and more able to discuss their concerns," Mr Glasheen said.

"It's been especially successful with some physically impaired students."

Face-to-face counselling often followed online contact, with students receiving assistance with personal and educational problems.

Mr Glasheen said students could access the chat room from school or home.

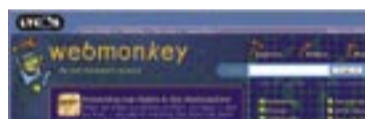
"While there haven't been huge numbers using the chat room, I believe it's been crucial in assisting some students, especially boys, who were in need of personal help. And if it helps one person it's worth it."

EduSites



Flash classroom

Gives a very clear rationale for the use of Flash in the classroom, as a teaching tool and as a learning tool for students, as well as providing step-by-step lessons in all aspects of animation from one who has been through the process and wants to make it easier for the beginner.



WebMonkey: the developer's resource. Tutorials are available on Java, Javascript, Flash and other Web languages, as well as six lessons on Photoshop. It also introduces HTML and multimedia topics like animation.

Animation with a digital camera

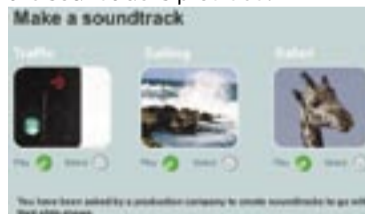
This site provides a five-step process for instructing students on how to create an animation using the digital camera.

Animation tips and tutorials

This about.com site contains over fifty links to tutorials and general information on computer animation, including "blinkies", animated gifs and banner ads. Find these highly recommended sites and many more in the CX resource centre <http://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources/>

Learning objects

Check out the Sonic series from the Le@rning Federation (TLF). These objects allow students to listen to sounds, then match them to images, moods and situations, experimenting with order, volume, pace and repetition. In some of the series, the aim is to create a soundtrack for a slide show. In others it is to create animated visualisations to match the soundtracks provided.



This example is *Sonic time: our world*

Others in the series include:

- *Sonic time: fun time*
- *Sonic space: city*
- *Sonic space: micro*
- *Sonic space: future mall*
- *Sonic space: home*
- *Sonic space: remote region*
- *Sonic space: travel*
- *Sonic motion: water world*
- *Sonic motion: living earth*

Look for these TLF learning objects in the CX resource centre <http://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources>

Digital resources

A recent addition to this collection provides background to a symbol of the 2006 Commonwealth Games:



London Bridge, Port Campbell c1900.

A black-and-white photograph of a natural structure in Victoria with an interesting history, this resource has much to interest students, as outlined in the accompanying text.

Look for digital resources in the CX resource centre <http://learningplace.eq.edu.au/cx/resources>

TIPS



Identity: looking in and out of ourselves

The four to six week unit integrates computers into art classes and extends students' self concept and awareness of social and cultural issues. It was part of the Artists' Books project, developed by State Library of Queensland in partnership with Education Queensland.

Hot topics

Global conflict presents a comprehensive range of online resources in the Studies of Society and Environment and Modern History curriculum areas.

www.education.qld.gov.au/tal/tips/hot_topics/

Principals quick to learn value of PLC

PRINCIPALS of Sunshine Coast North District have found that the Learning Place's professional learning community (PLC) meetings area has added a lot to their monthly teleconferences.

The teleconferences are one of the main ways that key systemic and district business is delivered by the Executive Director and district personnel to principals.

"Principals can now share documents, PowerPoint presentations, websites, calendar items and photographs," principal education officer, School Improvement, Sunshine Coast North District Stuart West said.

"While the principals and District Office staff are involved in the teleconference, anyone can put an item up online at any time and share it. There's no delay, no prior preparation needed."

Mr West said he was actively looking for ways for participants to share documents quickly and effectively to support agenda items.

"This needed to be interactive and changeable within the course of the teleconference. None of the ways I considered, like email and data conferencing, were especially suitable for our needs," he said.

"Then I happened to mention the need to Helen Penridge, Learning Place mentor for Sunshine Coast North."

Ms Penridge suggested using the Learning Place's professional learning communities meetings area.

"Helen pointed out that the meetings area could cater for all our needs," Mr West said.

"And it had the advantage that it took about one minute to show people how it worked."



Using the Learning Place's PLC at their monthly teleconference are, standing from left, senior guidance officers Greg Kiorgard and Joe Hannan, and front from left, executive director Suzanne Innes, principal education officers Stuart West and Suzanne Rothwell and senior guidance officer Neville Bryce.

The principals now use the meetings area regularly to share information and good ideas; discuss new policies and plan how to respond to them; and talk over school management issues and school planning.

"The tools are totally interactive," Mr West said.

"For example, the agenda can be changed during the course of the teleconference; items can be added or deleted on the run. If a topic is raised, participants can put up resources for everyone to look at, raise points and discuss immediately. It also becomes an electronic record of meeting items that principals can refer to in the future."

Mr West said that some principals found the technology "a little daunting" at first.

"When we first began, one principal said that he'd get one of his Year 3s to show him how to log on! But now he's fine with it.

"In our most recent teleconferences, 56 out of 63 district principals were online, actively participating. Many have said they're far more confident with the technology now."

Mr West hopes to expand the use of the PLC meetings area to other groups in the district.

"This has been the perfect solution for our needs," he said. "We now have the ability for everyone to look at the same resource at the same time, and to ensure that everyone participating has similar access to information."

Check out the Switched on Teachers PLC site: <http://www.learningplace.com.au/ea/sot>

It's a web community for all state school teachers in Queensland who are interested in making information and communication technology (ICT) integral to learning. Visit right now and find out how to earn a full TRS day.

The Learning Place is Education Queensland's e-learning environment www.education.qld.gov.au/learningplace