

Bristi Chatterjee's Development Work: **Making movies to support young children's learning** at Chater Infants School, Watford

Bristi was still a Newly Qualified Teacher when she joined a Teacher Led Development Work (TLDW) group led by the ICT Adviser at Hertfordshire CSF. She was a confident ICT user herself and wanted to help the school realise its vision to become a school that uses technology as an integral part of daily life. She was also concerned to help to improve the speaking and listening skills of the many pupils for whom English was a second language. She discovered that the school already possessed some 'Digi-Blue' cameras. The Digi-Blue, short for 'The digital blue movie camera', is a low-cost digital video camera, which enables pupils to record their own video and sound clips for use in a wide range of curriculum areas. It can be used with children from aged 5 and upwards (Digital Blue Corporation, 2005). This seemed to be an exciting tool which had not yet been used other than to record pupils' drama activities. Bristi wanted to experiment to see how else it could be used to support learning. She began by investigating how the cameras they had been used before in educational settings (Kent County Council, 2004; Roberts, 2005).

The importance of involving both pupils and colleagues right from the start had been discussed in the TLDW group and reinforced through Bristi's reading (Durrant and Holden, 2006). Her project began with a group discussion with six Year 2 children (6 year olds). They talked about cameras, what they are for and how they could be used to help learning. They looked at the cameras together to see what they could do. Bristi's discussion with the pupils revealed that they believed that the cameras were only for teachers to use and when she suggested that they could use them, they became very excited. They thought that cameras could help them to 'remember important stuff'. It was agreed that they would be tried out in the classroom. Bristi talked to the other Year 2 teacher about her idea and she agreed to help with this experiment. Both teachers shared what they learnt from the small group discussion with their classes using a computer programme called "Writing With Symbols". This

had been used at the school before, for example when children feedback to the whole class after a school council meeting. It uses a range of symbols to make reading easier for less able children.

Bristi and her colleague planned to help the children to make films about 'key learning' in a series of lessons about 'The Romans'. The children were divided into groups each of which would investigate a different theme such as clothes, baths, roads and so on. The children would make their own decisions about how to record what they had discovered and then make a presentation to the whole class. This would be followed by a whole class focus on Boudicca's revolt so that the children could compare different accounts of the same event. Two children were asked to use the Digi-Blues to make short films about that they had learnt.

The Digi-Blues were then used in a variety of different lessons. These were shown to the whole class to help reinforce everyone's learning. Stills were also taken from the video films and used in story boards to support children's writing. Feedback from the pupils collected after the lessons using the visual symbols approach showed that the use of the cameras added another dimension to the learning. Another very interesting outcome became clear when the class watched a number of these film clips. Bristi asked the children to focus on what made a good speaker when speaking to camera. The children identified qualities such as speaking clearly, facing the camera, keeping still, telling the audience what they are talking about before they start and telling the audience something new. Bristi and her colleague were impressed with the way the use of the films was contributing to the development of the children's literacy.

Following this series of experiments, Bristi made a presentation to colleagues in a Staff Meeting. This identified the need to provide training for Teaching Assistants, put the software on all teachers' laptops and introduce a booking system for the cameras. They discussed the new literacy strategy and how the cameras could be used to film 'hot-seating' activities. The work was also shared with school governors. Following the showcasing of Bristis' work at a HertsCam Network Event, other teachers in the network have been inspired to embrace this technology.

References

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