

One Computer Classrooms

Thoughts About Selecting Programs and Developing Units

1. Generally pairs work well together. Only students who are very good with computers work well independently unless the program or goal is very easy. Two children can reinforce and help each other. Three students at a time tend to get a little noisy, but it still works with some programs.
2. Five students, or three groups of two, accomplishing some goal each day permits a class of twenty-five to cycle once in a week and begin a second time the next week.
3. Programs or units involving computer use should be completed in two to three weeks, cycling each student, whether individually or in groups, through the program at least once and preferably twice. Units which go longer than that tend to lose their focus.
4. Programs which work best in one computer classrooms are programs in which children can achieve some goal in a manageable amount of time. By manageable, I mean an amount of time that permits four or five children individually or two or three groups to use the computer in a days time and still get most of their work done. (Remember some allowances will have to be made with other work.)
5. Because of the above, programs like the Carmen San Diego series don't always work well in one computer classrooms, because it takes too long for a pair of students to achieve their goal. (These can be used in demonstrations or by letting a pair of students return to the computer whenever time permits for a whole day. That expands the cycle to nearly a month to play one time for each student.)
6. If possible, new programs should be introduced in a lab setting and all children taught at once. Some children will forget by the time their turn roles around, but will be able to proceed with less instruction.

Realistically, labs aren't available to all of us.

We have six Mac Classics in our building and have assembled all six in one room for special programs. A class can have a lesson with four or five students per computer and the computers can be returned to their owners on the same day.

(This gets into the lab or computers in the classroom first argument. Frankly, I don't think a lab is much good when students can't reinforce lab activities in the classroom at least a little.) (Unless students can get in the lab every day!)

A less perfect solution to no lab is to use a single computer to demonstrate to the entire class by plugging the computer into a television monitor. More about that next issue.

7. Programs need to be fairly easy to use and to teach children to use or you will constantly be interrupting your activity to reteach something to one or two students on your computer. Again, programs like the Caman Sandiego series tend not to work well because they are relatively complex.
8. Another consideration is how specific you want your goal to be. Some programs allow students to solve a problem, write or read something, answer questions and so on. Others simply allow students to work with the computer for awhile without a specific outcome.
9. Often a worksheet of some sort or a written report works nicely in conjunction with these programs.

With all that in mind we've included several programs which we think will be useful, especially in elementary and middle school situations. (Our high school doesn't address this problem. Students are not permitted to use the computers in one computer classroom settings. Seems a waste.....)

[PippinPuss](#)

Works well for younger children because, each child can create a "Mr. Applehead" in five to ten minutes. There is no written goal or worksheet. Familiarization and fun is the objective.

[ExpressLane](#)

Is good for all elementary and perhaps remedial middleschool. Can be approached in a story problems format with a worksheet. Make a worksheet with your data base and ask children to write down number of items, total cost, money given and change. Or add whatever you wish after looking at the program. Children could be asked to add up totals after ten problems.....a workable amount.

This kind of worksheet is easy to make with Microsoft Works' database at least. You can print the data bases with boxes showing and whatever size you wish by choosing a larger font size.

[WildAbacus](#)

I'm not a math teacher, but it seems like the best approach to this program would be to let students, especially middle school students, noodle around with it for ten minutes or assign problems to be solved using it.