COMPUTERS IN THE WORKSHOP ROTATION MODEL

What Purpose Do They Serve?

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Potter's Publishing

Most likely if you mention to someone that "we have computers in our Sunday School" eyes widen, children get excited, and generally people are impressed. Your Sunday School has arrived in the technological age.

Your computer workshop probably did not come easily. You had to convince people and raise money. Now you might feel that you have to justify that expenditure. Before you go any further, you need to ask yourself this question: What educational and spiritual purpose do we want computers to serve in our Sunday School? Are your computers serving the workshop rotation model or are you serving them?

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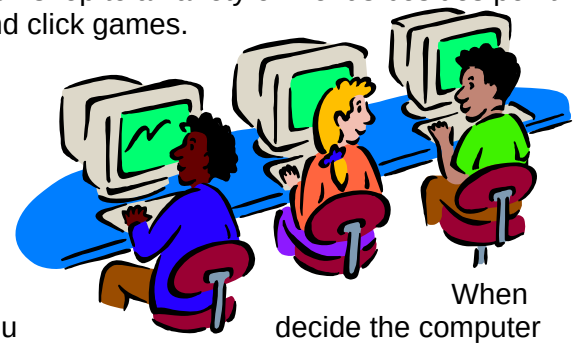
As an educator in the public schools, I was involved in the advent of computers in the classroom. Simply stated, as school districts made computer literate children a goal, budgets were realigned and computers were purchased for the classrooms. The technological monster's arrival created excitement, leeriness, and for some teachers, fear. Questions ran rampant. How could the computer serve the children along with the goals and objectives of the curriculum? How could the computer be an integral part of the learning environment?

The first years of having computers in our classrooms were floundering ones. Eventually, school districts saw the need to develop technological plans to transition the computer from a classroom addendum to an integral part of the curriculum's objectives and goals.

The same questions need to be asked in the Workshop Rotation Model. How are your computers serving the goals and objectives of your workshop rotation curriculum? Are you integrating your computer workshop with your curriculum? Are the multiple intelligences of the children evident in the variety of uses of the computer in the workshop?

The Workshop Rotation Model, if used as intended, carefully integrates specific concepts and objectives throughout the workshops of a particular unit. Educational research indicates that children do not learn as well if concepts are isolated or not connected with other learning. Therefore, carefully crafted curriculum in the model weaves concepts and objectives between workshops, thus creating bridges for optimal learning. When concepts are integrated throughout workshops and connections are made from one learning situation to another, learning is greatly enhanced.

The computer workshop should be part of this flow of learning within a curricular unit. The computer workshop should have the same goals and objectives as the other workshops in a unit. This philosophy thus drives choices for computer usage. It opens the computer workshop to a variety of menus besides point and click games.



When you decide the computer use for a unit, keep in mind what is going on in the other workshops. The computer workshop should begin with a lesson with objectives consistent with those of the whole unit. The

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computer activity should be a related outgrowth of the lesson.

Choose computer activities that engage the children in learning the lesson's objectives rather than passive mouse clicking.

As you look at the year's curriculum, make sure that you are varying the ways the children are using the computers. The computer can reach a variety of the multiple intelligences in children if its use is planned carefully throughout the year's scope. Avoid single purpose computer programs. Purchase computer programs that are open ended in nature. You can use them over and over in different creative ways.

Following is a list of a few ways that the computer can be creatively used in the model. This list does not begin to exhaust the many creative ways the computer can integrate with your curriculum. Hopefully, it will stimulate you to think of your own creative ideas. Remember, if what you choose for your computer workshop reflects the concepts and objectives of the unit, you have made a good choice. †

Note: For every program listed below there are substitutes for them that probably work as well.

Computer Programs and their uses for children in the computer workshop
Word processing combined with graphics program
❑ Create newspapers reporting from different characters' points of view on a story or describing events of the time ❑ Compose letters to missionaries, missionary children as an outgrowth of a lesson. Key pals or pen pals could be an ongoing activity. ❑ Create prayers, poems, and songs ❑ Create children's worship services ❑ Create game cards ❑ Create Bible cartoons using conversation bubbles and text boxes combined with a graphics program
Print Artist or other graphic program
❑ Create banners ❑ Create cards for senior citizens ❑ Create invitations to a unit celebration or event ❑ Design posters or advertisements relating to the topic ❑ Design covers for spiritual journals
Kid Pix Studio© by Broderbund (Hyperstudio is a similar program)
❑ Create pictures and sentences about a story or concept ❑ Children can create a sequence of pictures with text that can be compiled into a book ❑ Create a slide show on the computer with sound ❑ Create pictures depicting feelings from a story
Computer games
❑ Create your own web page game through Microsoft word or find someone in your church that is a webpage designer; tailor the game specifically to the story concepts. ❑ Potter's Publishing has many web page games as part of their curriculum. See their catalog. ❑ Good Christian commercial games are available. Preview the games first to find parts that are related to the unit and will focus the children on the concepts and objectives. A good source is Sunday Software.
Power Point
❑ Create slides that focus on the story and concepts
Internet
❑ This is not readily available for most churches but is a source for current information and research. Also, can be used to create key pals with other churches near or far.

Potter's Publishing produces Biblically based, theologically sound, kid and teacher friendly creative curriculum for the Workshop Rotation Model. Toll-free: 1-888-387-8160 or www.potters-publishing.com

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Joyce has 26 years teaching experience in public education. She has been a leader in developing integrated curriculum at the elementary school level and has taught it at the university level. Joyce brought the multiple intelligences to the Workshop Rotation Model in its early stages of development in 1989. Joyce is actively involved in developing the model along with her pastor husband, Rev. Dr. J. Robert Claus, at the First Presbyterian Church of Morris, Illinois. Previous to this, Bob and Joyce were among the initial developers of the model in 1989 at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Arlington Heights, Illinois. Joyce develops and writes curriculum for Potter's Publishing. She is also a charter member of CMA.

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