

Inspiration Software® Case Study  
An Excerpt From:

# PICTURES of Personalisation

A global view of the  
personalisation of learning

# Picture 5: Argentina

## Lincoln International School, Buenos Aires

The Middle School English as a Second Language (ESL) department at Lincoln is faced with a particularly challenging task. In just two 45-minute blocks, they welcome a group of eight to ten students, each with different cultural backgrounds and language skills. This reality requires a variety of personalised learning approaches to cater to all their needs.

### Aims

- **To develop the students' ability to understand the main ideas in a novel.**
- **To organize ideas visually to improve students' reading strategies.**
- **To increase students' vocabulary at different stages in the reading process: before reading, during reading and after reading.**
- **To provide a personalised learning approach so students can work at their own pace according to their own skills level.**

### ICT used

- **Computers, school e-mail accounts, Inspiration 8.0, Kidspiration 2.1, pen-drives, image files, audio files, on-line and electronic monolingual dictionary.**

### Context

Lincoln International, in Buenos Aires, is a student-centered community. Its goal is to ensure the academic excellence and personal success of the individual. Drawing students from over 40 countries, Lincoln is a truly international school with a distinctly American approach to education. These two realities enrich programmes, encourage debate, and promote independent thinking, which prepares students to enter other schools around the world and to take their places as contributing members in the best universities in the global community.

I head the ESL department and am charged with all students between 11 and 13 whose first language is not English. Our objective is to help learners at a beginner level reach the required academic standard to successfully re-join mainstream, English-language education in all of the core subjects, in no more than two years. To this end, I design different personalised programmes that focus on learning strategies the students will need throughout their lives.

### Case study

The Middle School ESL department at Lincoln is faced with a particularly challenging task, which differs from the usual classroom where the teacher instructs in a single content area, develops a lesson plan and plans some variations for the minority group with different needs. In fact, in just two 45-minute blocks, we usually welcome a group of eight to ten students, each with different cultural backgrounds and language skills, eager for knowledge and action. This reality requires a variety of teaching skills to cater to all their needs.

With only two years for each student to acquire the necessary skills and language proficiency in order to join the regular classes, I saw the need to design personalised materials in addition to existing resources to boost the students'

performance. ICT has given me the ability to design material at different levels which allows students to work at their own pace as they improve their skills and language ability.

Among the different tools I use to design and develop material for my students, I have found Inspiration 8.0 and Kidspiration 2.1 to be an endless resource for generating and supporting work on visual learning, and one that really helps me to support a personalised approach to the learning undertaken by each student. When reading a book, like *Dar and the Spear Thrower*, students create semantic webs to explore word meaning and create literary webs to help them visualise characters, their qualities, and their relationships to other characters and to the events in the story. In this respect, visual learning has been a great advantage to ESL learners as they not only use this type of learning to develop their reading and thinking skills but also to speed up their progress into the mainstream courses. For instance, students use Inspiration in their science classes and benefit from the diagrams and mind maps we create to clarify ideas and concepts, when the subject is rather difficult to grasp. Obviously, to do this students will need access to computers during our class time and Inspiration, Kidspiration and Word should be installed on all computers.

Although it may be true that becoming familiarised with a book, computer skills and software might be more time-consuming at first, results have proven to outweigh initial drawbacks. On the one hand, teachers have the chance to include tasks for all of the intelligences found in any ordinary class, personalising the learning for each student and thus adding motivation and variety. On the other hand, students get a first-hand experience in whole language and whole education, as they are not just focusing on language learning, but on other thinking skills (like organising or comparing and contrasting) that will become very useful in their future lives. Furthermore, Inspiration and Kidspiration diagrams can be created individually or as a group, emphasising the Zone of

Proximal Development as a pedagogical tool that ICT offers in education. Diagrams or mind maps can also be revised, shared and improved as students better understand the context of what they are learning.

In the end, I know these techniques work because the ESL students do leave my classes to join the mainstream – many in under the two years allotted. When they leave, they take with them the skills for comprehension that we taught them and apply them in classrooms throughout our school and around the world. Students are progressing into mainstream faster and are learning content in their second language, English, and they understand it.

This work supports the needs of special learners because:

- Students can work at their own pace and are given feedback as they progress.
- Teachers act as facilitators in the students' learning process, not always as the leaders and 'experts in knowledge.'
- Because the class is student-centred, teachers can personalise learning for their students' differing intelligences and needs in each case.

## What was learned

- **ICT is an extremely useful aid to personalise students' learning, e.g. the ability to design material at different levels allowing students to work at their own pace as they improve language ability.**
- **Collaboration with colleagues is also enhanced by ICT, as teachers can work together even if they live in different countries and face different realities.**
- **ICT has a place in everyday life, so there is no option to leave it out of education.**
- **Teachers should understand the benefits of ICT and become familiarised with it to make the most of it.**
- **Software and computer training can be done within regular class time.**

- [www.lincoln.edu.ar](http://www.lincoln.edu.ar)
- [www.taglearning.com](http://www.taglearning.com)