

Estonian teacher promotes school-wide visual learning techniques to improve student learning and achieve success



Students at Lasnamäe Kindergarten Elementary school use Kidspiration across the curriculum, both on desktop computers and on an interactive electronic whiteboard.

At Lasnamäe Kindergarten Elementary School in Tallinn, Estonia, students are learning how to organise their thoughts and demonstrate knowledge with visual learning techniques. Their school, one of the last of its kind in Estonia, welcomes children ages 2-10, with classes split into five levels from kindergarten to grade IV. The school's computer lab is equipped with Kidspiration®, Inspiration® and an interactive electronic whiteboard. Over the past year, every teacher in the school learned how to use these technology tools to enhance teaching and learning.

Ingrid Maadvere is a teacher at Lasnamäe as well as the school's computer manager. In addition to supervising the computer lab, she trains teachers to use its technology. Maadvere discovered Kidspiration and Inspiration through computer education courses at the University of Tartu in 2002, and was excited to bring the power of visual learning to Lasnamäe. Last spring she was appointed as a trainer for an ICT project run by the state-funded Tiger Leap Foundation—Estonia's main organisation for ICT-related activities in the education system. This enabled the school to receive a grant for installation of Kidspiration and Inspiration on all lab computers. Maadvere immediately trained every teacher in the school to use the software and began creating a database of activities teachers could use in their classes.

Maadvere also taught many students to use Kidspiration and Inspiration during an after-school programme. Since many students are familiar with the software, teachers can focus class time on the curriculum, instead of training students on the technology itself. "These students can provide assistance to teachers and other students", says Maadvere.

Visual diagrams aid in assessment and comprehension

Because everyone in the school is trained on the software, teachers use it in many ways to promote student learning. Kidspiration and Inspiration are often used as assessment tools. For example, after a science lesson, students were asked to use symbols and links to create a visual map of the process of photosynthesis. This type of assessment has multiple benefits: teachers can see what the students have learned, and can pinpoint precise areas in which additional instruction is needed.

ARVUTA	LEIA ÕIGE PAARILINE	VASTUSED
12+2=		11
3+3=		15
3+12=		7
3+5=		14
7+3=		8
2+5=		3
3+4=		6
12-1=		7
5-4=		10
6-3=		12
15-3=		1

To practice basic maths concepts, students created Kidspiration worksheets, such as this matching activity, for each other.

In another type of assessment, students used Kidspiration to create maths worksheets which would help their classmates practice basic skills, such as addition and subtraction. Creating materials for one another helped to reinforce the student's own maths skills. Plus, according to Maadvere, using Kidspiration to create their own activity templates was very exciting for the students.

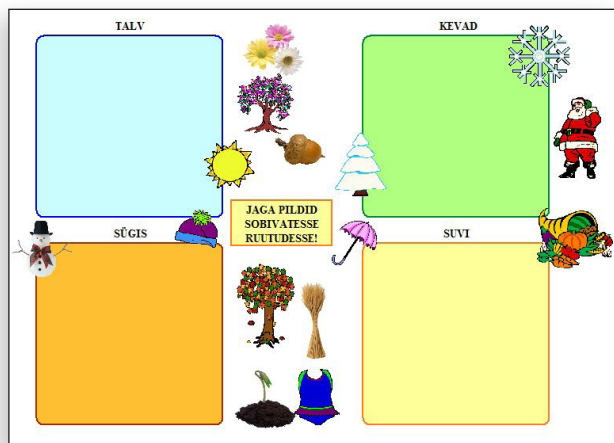
Students also use Kidspiration and Inspiration to enhance their reading comprehension during literature lessons, such as exploring Astrid Lindgren's *Karlsson-on-the-roof* series. After students read a novel, Maadvere asks questions such as "Was Karlsson a good character or a bad character?" Students work individually or in pairs on the lab's computers creating visual maps to express and analyse their thoughts about the main character. The whole class then convenes to discuss the conclusions students reached while creating their diagrams.

Visual learning enhances understanding across the curriculum

Lasnamäe teachers use Kidspiration and Inspiration across most subject areas, including Estonian, English, Nature, Human Studies, Maths and even PE. Last year, it was Maadvere's goal to bring every teacher into the computer lab at least once for a lesson. She succeeded by creating multiple activities in Kidspiration and Inspiration matched to each teacher's curriculum. Many teachers return to the lab often to use the technology tools and resources. Teachers also continuously add to the activities database on the Internet, creating resources that teachers throughout Estonia can use with their students.

Maadvere is working to create additional Kidspiration and Inspiration activities that match to Estonian curriculum standards. She wants to continue encouraging teachers to use technology and visual learning with their students whenever possible. "Kidspiration and Inspiration are some of the favourite programs in our school", says Maadvere. "Students and teachers love them!"

Ingrid was one of Inspiration Software's 2007 Inspired Teacher Scholarship recipients for her integration of visual learning in her school.



Teachers created a database of Kidspiration and Inspiration activities, such as this seasons sorting activity, to share with other educators in Estonia.

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