

## School district chooses Kidspiration® to meet literacy challenge

### Helping kids connect with reading and writing

They must be doing something right in Canby, Oregon. Kindergartners there are writing their own books and taking them home to read to their parents. Sounds impossible for kids so young, but a visual learning software tool is helping the students use pictures and symbols to paraphrase the stories their teacher reads in class, so they can “read” them to their parents after school.

“To help students learn to read and write, we need to get them excited and help them make a personal connection with the story,” explains Jennifer Gingerich, district technology trainer for the Canby School District. The youngsters are getting extra reading and writing help from Kidspiration, a software program that students grades K-5 use for creative pre-writing exercises, for reading practice and a variety of other activities designed to build strong thinking skills.

### Teachers rave about feature-rich software

The school district chose Kidspiration and several other programs to help its K-5 teachers use technology to encourage reading and writing skills. It’s all part of a school-board initiative to focus on literacy, funded by a grant from the state’s Department of Education. The grant allows the district to provide technology and staff development to support reading and writing at key benchmarks.

With nearly 400 copies of Kidspiration installed in the district’s five elementary schools, all teachers have access to the program—and they love it. “Kidspiration is a wonderful program for the many features that help students learn to read and write,” says Gingerich. “As I evaluated Kidspiration for the first time, I just kept saying ‘wow!’ as I discovered all the features geared specifically to

help students learn to read and write. The SuperGrouper® tool, the picture-to-topic feature and speech support are just a few of the tools that make Kidspiration a great fit for K-5 students.”

John Gingerich, the district’s technology coordinator, says Kidspiration is a key part of encouraging teachers to integrate technology in their lessons. “Our teachers can creatively use the software throughout their curricula to create activities that provide students with a variety of ways to sharpen their skills in reading and writing,” he says. “Kidspiration is also easy to learn, which makes it a great program for our technology literacy project.”

### Technology training focuses on literacy standards

To implement the software program and align it with standards, the district held a planning day for its technology integration team, a group consisting of one teacher from each grade level in each school.

The teachers were shown how to teach using Kidspiration in their lessons. Afterward, they discussed the reading and writing benchmarks to be met during the next semester as part of the literacy challenge.

Jennifer Gingerich followed up with a visit to each classroom, providing model lessons to help the teachers gain confidence in using technology as part of their instruction. She conducted some lessons in each school’s computer lab and used wireless handheld computers, purchased with grant funds, for others.

The lesson plans created in Kidspiration for kindergarten and first-grade classes leverage the value of visual learning. Students might be asked to find pictures that start with a certain letter of the alphabet, to finish patterns or to find rhyming words. In second- and



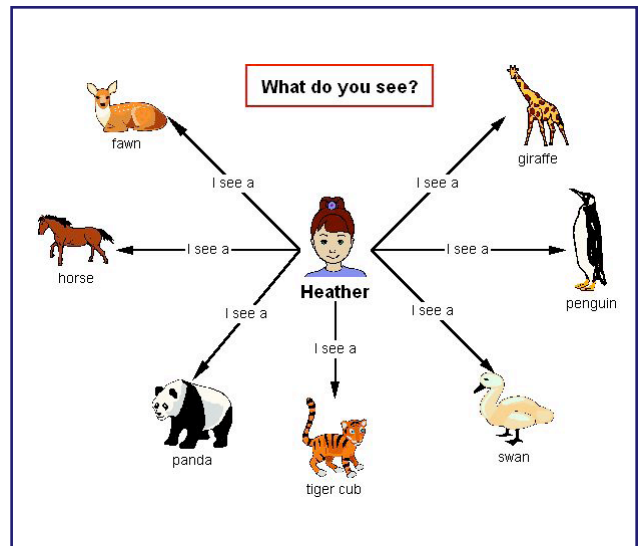
third-grade classrooms, kids may write a letter to a friend, alphabetize words or retell a story's sequence of events. Every activity is designed to help teachers integrate Kidspiration into lesson plans that align directly with literacy standards.

### Using pictures to write their own books

In Patti Monte's kindergarten classroom, the students have just listened to Monte read *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* Now Monte has the children mimic *Brown Bear*, asking them to name the animals they see, just like the bear. She then takes them to the computer lab, where each student uses Kidspiration to create a web diagram to represent animals they see.

First, the students type their names at the center of the web. Next, each selects a symbol of their favorite animal to represent themselves. Then they add pictures from the program's library of animal symbols, using the picture-to-topic options to label each animal. Finally, Monte prints the paraphrased stories so the kindergartners can take them home to "read" to their families.

Gingerich says the students love using Kidspiration to visually repeat what they've learned while adding their own special symbols. "This activity helps to reinforce what the kids have read and to bring a part of themselves into what they are reading," she says. "Making the connections between words and pictures is one of the biggest benefits to students."



*Kidspiration activity "What do you see" meets a variety of education standards and allows Kindergartners to demonstrate their learning in a creative and fun way.*

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