

Judi Regan – Kinectimals

The Consolarium have had quite a long history in using games such as Nintendogs and Eyepet to try and use that in an early years setting an early years context and developing learning in a nurturing and caring attitude to digital creatures. We had a lot of success with that and one of the new pieces of kit that we are trying is Kinectimals for the X-Box, Microsoft's X-Box. A wonderful little game that allows you to reach out and touch a virtual tiger cub or a lion cub. We are working with the professional people up at Menzieshill Nursery School in Dundee and I am delighted to be joined by Judi Regan. Hello Judi.

Hi Derek! How are you getting on? I'm very well thanks. Good, good good!

Now you met us at an event in Dundee recently, was it a Games based Learning event? Although we knew you through Twitter etc you've done things in the past, you expressed an interest in wanting to use Kinectimals. Can you tell us what it is, or what it is, about this resource that has kind of interested you?

It was the Early Years conference in Glasgow that we had a wee chat about Kinectimals. Was it the LTS one? Yes it was and previously in the nursery we have used the Wii and we've used the Eyepet and when I was at the conference you were talking about Kinectimals on the X-Box and it thought, fantastic, this is the obvious way to take our learning forward with another console, test it out, see what the children think about it and I think the best thing about the Kinect is there is not a controller so there's no buttons for the children to push, there's nothing confusing, it is just using your hands and reaching out to touch the screen, but not, really.

We are in the very early stages of it and you have managed, but you had some technical problems. What were some of the challenges that you faced?

We had a few problems with the sound initially and that was really just getting the right connectors and the right cables and getting them all fixed up together. We did overcome that. We have had to make a good amount of space in the nursery for the children to play Kinectimal because it does require a fairly decent amount of space and because the camera is focussing on the player it needs to be able to do that so we've actually put in a large floor mat just in front of the camera that the child who is playing with Kinectimal will stand on and this is to signify to the other children that this is the playing stage and when it is your turn, you are on the mat and when you are waiting for your turn you have not to be on the mat. So we have a clear sign for them.

I think that is common practice because a couple of years back in a nursery school in Falkirk we had the Playstation2 with the Eyetoy and they had a red mat and this is a similar kind of idea when someone was on the red mat it was their turn and you had to wait until it was your turn on the red mat.

It's official clues and that it is what young children of this age need and I think that because they are such visual learners that is what makes Kinectimal the perfect learning tool for them.

You are going to be speaking about this at Learning and Teaching Scotland's Game to Learn Take 2 Conference in the middle of March. What do you hope to be able to share with the delegates and

those interested in what we are doing with Kinectimals? What do you think might happen in terms of impact on teaching and learning?

Well, I am certainly going to be very honest about it and I will share some of the pitfalls we've had and that we've overcome.

It is important though!

I think that as a practitioner you actually need to know what the problems can be, but I am also going to share the sheer delight in the children's' faces as they are using it.

Did you see it today with one of the young boys? He was throwing the little piggies at the skittles.

It is incredible isn't it? The engagement in their faces, their eyes light up, they are totally focussed.

But even things like see the opportunities that could be measured today like when we were throwing the ball, can you imagine the kids going outside throwing the ball and counting how many steps it is until they can get to the ball.

I think this has got really good scope for not just using it within the nursery but actually taking some of the skills that the children are learning outside, so for example, as you said there are the throwing skills, there are also balls skills, there is physical jumping, star jumping, spinning there's all sorts.

So there is physical activity involved in this.

Absolutely!

So the more you play it the more you can see opportunities to dive into other aspects of the curriculum.

Yes. We are in the very early stages of using this with the children so with a bit luck the next time you come and we have a chat like this I'll be able to tell you so much more because the children will have taken it on further.

In the meantime you are volunteering to take this home just for extra practice, is this right?

Maybe – ha ha!

Listen Judy, thanks very much for your time it has been a great start and I think that some of the technical problems you have faced are maybe what other people will find as well so to be open and honest about these thing in the initial instances is really important.

They are overcomable, it is just a case of persevering and really wanting to do it.

I know. Great stuff. Thanks very much. Be back in touch.