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Case study: Using animation for cross-curricular learning

Henlow Church of England Academy in Bedfordshire is a middle school with 550 pupils across Year 5 to Year 8. Over the last 18 months the school has been utilising stop frame animation software Zu3D to introduce animation into a variety of lessons across the curriculum.

Here, ICT Coordinator, Caroline Coster tells bee-it how she discovered Zu3D and the impact it has had on learning.

Caroline recalls:

“A couple of years ago, I visited the E2BN conference specifically looking for an animation kit that I could integrate across a variety of lessons. I am very keen on setting targets and I knew exactly what I needed the software to do in order for me to gain the results I was after. I had planned on using film production software at some stage in the future, but for now we needed a manageable, engaging way of teaching video production without the need for hours of editing. I saw Zu3D and was simply blown away.”

Zu3D is a comprehensive animation kit designed specifically for use in schools. The system is designed to be easy to use, requiring little to no previous animation experience in order to create a film, although for the more advanced animators, features such as green-screening, rig removal and on frame painting allows for further development.

Each year, Henlow Church of England Academy runs ‘Arts Week’, an entire week when all pupils cast off their regular timetables and are instead put into groups to undertake different arty activities each day. Most recently focussing on a particular country or continent as a topic, activities include art, music, drama, dance, production, and performance. Having struggled to give the production activity a real purpose away from the other activities, Caroline sought out Zu3D to help plug the gap.

Caroline explains:

“We have a number of challenges to overcome at Henlow. For instance, during Arts Week we will have 100 pupils of all abilities in one ICT room trying to achieve the same thing. This year, we focused on continents as our theme and had groups of 20 or so pupils creating stop-frame animations of the letters of a continent moving around. The remarkable thing is we didn’t need to teach the pupils how to use Zu3D, they simply ‘got it’.”

During a normal week, animation has now started to play a key part in a number of lessons at the school. For example, Year 7 and 8 pupils have been using Zu3D to help expand their understanding of Shakespeare and Chaucer by animating key themes and extracts of the Tempest and Canterbury Tales using Playmobil.

Away from English lessons, teachers have been getting creative with the Zu3D kit after seeing the positive impact it has had on pupils and their learning. Zu3D is now regularly being used to help

explain how to calculate averages, tell religious stories, and even how to make clay pots for Design and Technology, as well as to help learn about other countries and cultures, and to develop a better understanding in History lessons by re-enacting Victorian crimes through animation.

Zu3D has been such a hit with the pupils that Caroline has now established an animation club which runs one evening every week. Talking about the afterschool activity, Caroline shares:

“We initially set up the animation club to help our gifted and talented pupils to develop their skills however we have seen outcomes that we would never have expected. Each week we have gifted and talented pupils mixing with those from a variety of different backgrounds, many of whom have learning disabilities such as ADHD, social issues and Asperger’s Syndrome. The way the pupils interact with each other through their combined interest in animation is incredible.”

She continues:

“We have teams of all abilities working together to produce short films, recounting Bible stories through animation and have developed our own digital leaders to support the teachers. We have seen the social skills and self-esteem of our pupils shoot through the roof since using Zu3D – we had one pupil who would only whisper to teachers and never speak to other pupils, who then went off and produced a wonderful video in which she narrated in full voice!”

Concluding her experiences of Zu3D over the last 18 months, Caroline adds:

“We are so happy with Zu3D, it does everything we wanted it to and more. It is accessible to all pupils regardless of experience and is a great tool to draw upon in any lesson. For any schools considering bringing animation into their lessons, we highly recommend Zu3D.”

Henlow C of E Academy purchased a site license of Zu3D with 15 web cameras through PTA funding. The product comes with a variety of kits and license types, including an iPad app and numerous accessories. For more information about Zu3D, click [here](#).