

schoolzone *newsletter*

educational intelligence

message from the editor..

After years of spend, spend, spend on educational software, it seems that the good times are finally over: according to our latest survey data, only a handful of teachers rate content-rich software and interactive games as their 'top' purchasing priority for the next 12 months. By contrast, 18% of respondents said that VLEs/ Learning Platforms were their most important purchasing focus over the next year.

The big question is: have these additional resources really made a difference to teachers? How satisfied are you with the digital resources you've bought? Thirty-eight percent of respondents to our recent survey said that they have used up to half the software bought by their school for them, with only 12% reporting that they had used 90-100% of their software purchases. Bearing in mind that the average price of a CD-ROM is around £150, rising to over a £1000 for an annual subscription to 'streamed' content, this is a big chunk of school budgets that has delivered no benefit at all. More depressingly, of the content that is used, just over half our respondents gave it a value for money rating of 50% or less.

Looking forward, we were wondering whether teachers on the whole felt more confident about the software purchases they were planning for the year ahead. For the majority of our respondents, this isn't the case: when asked whether you thought you were better at deciding which software to buy now compared with this time last year, 62% of you said that you either weren't sure, or that you definitely weren't better at it.

So, if you're thinking about spending your increasingly precious budget on buying a resource that will really deliver on the supplier's promises, how do you make sure that it's the right one for you? Unsurprisingly, the most trusted form of independent advice is a personal recommendation from a colleague or peer who has bought and used this resource. Schoolzone and the TES Resource Bank are the next most widely used independent product reviews, but given the above statistics, more needs to be done to support your purchasing decisions. Some suggestions include providing sample material with product reviews, including student reviews, and including customer-based peer reviews.

We will be talking to educational publishers and suppliers to see how we can make our evaluations even more useful: it's in their interest, too, for schools to buy resources that are actually used - although there's a short-term win in making a sale, they know that in the longer term, teachers won't come back for more if they are dissatisfied.

If you've ever wanted to know more about a resource before buying it, please email me at Melissa@schoolzone.co.uk with your suggestions for supporting your educational resource purchases - not just for software, but for hardware, handhelds and other digital learning resources, too. Let's work together to make sure that every software purchase counts!

Trial our new self-evaluation tool and receive free feedback on staff satisfaction and CPD needs in your school

Schoolzone, in conjunction with the University of Gloucestershire, is currently developing a series of tools that will enable schools to monitor levels of staff satisfaction, measure the impact of CPD on staff performance, and provide data to inform your Self Evaluation Framework (SEF). The data will be analysed instantly, giving you immediate feedback benchmarked against other, similar schools.

We're looking for primary and secondary head teachers who are interested in working with us, assisting in its development. In return, you will receive a period of free access to this tool.

The project runs from mid-October to the end of December. If you would be interested please complete the short eligibility form.

<http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/surveys/2008/EligibilitySEF/>

Registered Users

We are always trying to find new ways to support you, by evaluating products and resources, reporting news in education and conducting research.

We ask all our community members to ensure their details are up-to-date. Managing your details allows you to receive mailers, access new product listings, and gives you the chance to take part in paid research. To become a registered user or update your current details, go to:

<http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/register/register.asp>



free resources & opportunities

Make the best even better.

Our webguide of 50,000 education websites is now open to registered users to add your own comments about each entry. Just follow the resource link in the results then click on the 'Add a Review' link at the top of the page.

Schoolzone's Teaching Recruitment Site!

This is an exciting opportunity for schools to advertise teaching jobs by registering with AllTeachingJobs.co.uk.

For just £40 per year plus VAT, schools can instantly add, edit and manage all school vacancies for an entire year.

Alternatively, if you are seeking employment, see our listing of current jobs, which are delineated by region, subject or sector.

In addition, Schoolzone is offering a job alert service. All you need to do is register an email address and your job search preferences to receive this updated information every day.

Take a look at Schoolzone jobs today:
<http://www.schoolzone.allteachingjobs.co.uk/>

Contact Carmen Frowd,
carmen@schoolzone.co.uk or call 01242 262906
for more information.

interact Schoolzone interact

Schoolzone Interact currently has 3162 schools as registered users. The service allows full access to publishers' educational content on a 'try before you buy' basis. There is a 'new to Interact' section for those who would like an introduction to what is on offer and there is no commitment to buy at the end of the trial period.

To access this free digital content please go to:
www.schoolzone.co.uk/community/interact/login.asp

Schoolzone has recently changed the criteria for inclusion into Interact which means a wealth of new resources will be available through the system over the autumn term. Keep your eyes peeled and take advantage of this great 'try before you buy' feature.

Interact feedback:

In a pre-launch Interact focus group teachers stated:

"This is a way to interface with bits of software that I am interested in and cut out the dross, I can find directly what I want."

Have you heard about our mobile device evaluations?

These evaluations focus on using software or a website on mobile devices in a classroom situation and contain technical data charts and a short written evaluation. This month example is a web based resource:



SuperClubsPLUS

"SuperclubsPLUS is a social networking website aimed mainly at Primary School children in KS2 but could be used at early KS3 level. There is a mediator on site at all times to ensure that language/behaviour is appropriate and that site rules are followed. The TechTeam is also present in case users get into difficulties."

<http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/resources/evaluations/mobile.asp>

Don't forget ... to have your say

Last month we asked our website users the following question...

Do you think there should be more male teachers?



Of the respondents, 57% voted YES and 43% said NO.

This month we ask:

Are you thinking of leaving teaching within the next two years?

Please go to our News pages at <http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/community/news.asp?Action=search> to cast your vote or email your comments to the Editor: melissa@schoolzone.co.uk.

Each month the Schoolzone website brings you details of events of interest to the education community:
www.schoolzone.co.uk/eventsandtraining/index.asp

For example:

Effective Leaders: Improving Communication Skills

Date: 21st November 2008

Time: 09:30 -15:30

Everyone wants to communicate and participate fully in the decisions and discussions, which affect them. However, not all of us are natural communicators, either on a one-to-one basis, or with the larger team. More details are available here: <http://www.schoolzone.co.uk/eventsandtraining/events/moredetails.asp?id=10420>

Email: admin@pbm-group.co.uk

Telephone: 01889 567014

Further details on the website.