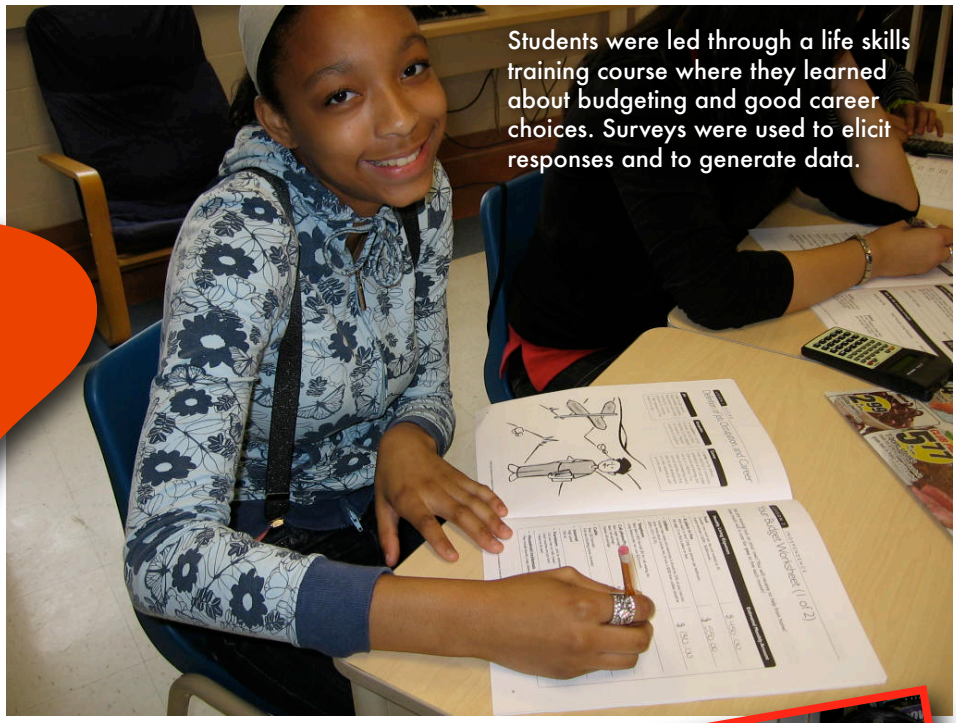
GOT DATA?



Students were led through a life skills training course where they learned about budgeting and good career choices. Surveys were used to elicit responses and to generate data.

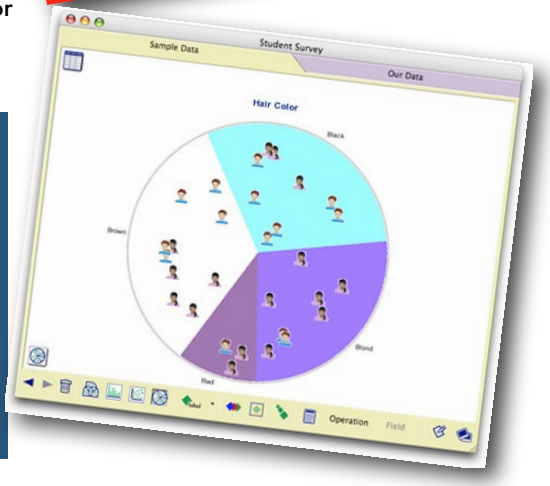
The global economy has shifted beyond the production of physical goods towards the manipulation of information. What does that mean for our students and the way we teach?

No doubt that teaching is a challenge, especially in this "information age". Students have to deal with more information including several sources of data. Unfortunately, the more data that confronts our children, the less apt they've become at determining what is important or even to make logical conclusions based upon what they see and hear. With the increasing number of web sites accessible, why are students still choosing to plagiarize? Furthermore, several students still resort to sites like Google or WikiPedia to retrieve information or to assist in research assignments.

Technology has greatly changed lifestyles in that there are systems in place that can instantly convert, store, protect and process data. How our students are able to cope with these systems may determine how successful they will become in the future.

Our calling as a educators is to train students using current technologies and software applications. Our goal should be to help foster a deeper understanding of data and how to make logical conclusions.

Software like InspireData™ is an engaging way for students to view data and to make connections. The data moves right before their eyes and can be analyzed in several forms including Venn, bar and stack.



InspireData™ allows students to..

- ☑ collect and organize data quickly
- ☑ represent data in diverse ways
- ☑ strengthen critical thinking skills

Dynamic Data-ing

"Graphing data can be fun! The best part of InspireData™ is how quickly kids can switch from bar charts to scatterplots. They can also organize their graph so that they can compare different sets of data and to make connections. It sure beats the "old school" way of doing things as the focus shifts away from the mechanics of graphing to more in depth problem solving."
M. Sarkar, Brampton, Ontario

Students use InspireData to collect and compare results from a survey published on-line.

A side note!

We recently used Inspire-Data™ to help our school tabulate results for our own "Idol" vocal competition.

Student Talk

"What scares me the most about the future is being able to make the right decision at the right time". S. Briscoe

"My fear is that I won't be good enough to meet the challenges I will face tomorrow." A. Supaul

"It's the unsurety of my future that troubles me. Not knowing what I will do when I get older concerns me." S. Madray

"I think my future will be bright because I've learned to become focused on my goals and to set realistic expectations." K. Tran.

Making Connections

Over the course of a month, a group of students set out to determine how their fellow peers travel to school. The team brainstormed a series of questions that could be used to build a good survey. Once the questions were fleshed out using an Inspiration™ template, the team used InspireData™ to post a survey on-line. Students liked the fact that they no longer needed to travel from class to class gathering results for their survey. Rather, a simple e-mail was sent to classes via their teachers with the special code generated by InspireData™. Teachers either performed the survey with their class on one computer or permitted their students to complete the

survey in the computer lab or at home. Results were almost instantaneous!

Once the data was downloaded to a master copy of the InspireData™ survey, the students were then faced with the task of making sense of what they downloaded. By representing the data in different ways and making comparisons based upon gender, distance to school and even by core class, the team was exposed to richer subsets of data. The task of organizing/representing the data could be performed quickly. It painted a much clearer picture of the students' travel choices (e.g, bike vs. car vs. foot). You can take their on-line survey by visiting the link below and entering the special code:

http://esurvey.inspiredata.com

Code: 166155

For more information e-mail:
info@strategictransitions.com

Important Skills For Students for the World of Work.

1. Inferencing

While reading and decoding are important, being able to foster the ability to "read between the lines" builds critical thinking skills, problem-solving and makes our students more active learners rather than passive receptors of data. A good resource for teaching inferencing is as follows: www.kimskorner4teachertalk.com

2. Assertiveness and Communication

Being able to make logical conclusions based on an analysis of data AND conveying them clearly, may open more career doors for our young people. Plagiarism has been rampant in schools, colleges and even in some universities. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that our students don't know how to communicate effectively on their own.

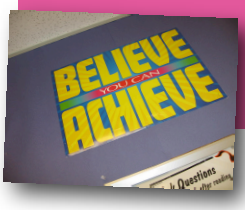
3. Effective Use of Technology

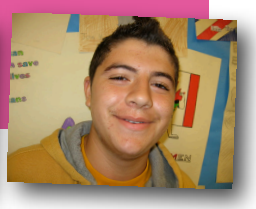
How many of your students really feel confident using technology to communicate and to problem solve? What about to develop higher thinking skills? Students need to be able to incorporate a wider range of media and technology when communicating for a specific purpose. The age where students pop out PowerPoint™ presentations with a littering of graphics, sounds and text is over.

Martin Sarkar is a teacher with the Peel Board in Ontario, Canada.
http://ilab.learn.to

A thought to ponder:

Young people today are faced with the daunting task of disseminating tons of information everyday. Information is presented in highly diverse fashions (e.g., audio, video, print). Our goal as educators is to teach our students how to infer, deduce, summarize and to classify. Choosing the appropriate software is important too!





Thinking Beyond

Resources

www.career-connections.info

http://www.kartoo.com/

www.mywebspiration.com

www.searchme.com

http://inspiration.com/Examples/Inspiration

http://www.1q4all.com/thoughtq/index2.html

www.neufeldmath.com

http://vizlab.nytimes.com

http://www.khanacademy.org

What will it take to make a difference?

The need to actively engage our students must remain at the forefront on any curriculum plan.

Several credible resources speak of the demise of education as we know it. Some have been so bold as to state that current methods of teaching are obsolete and if not changed, will result in the increase of disengaged students and subsequent fuel the drop-out rate at the secondary level. What would say to those kinds of statements? When taking a look at our teaching programs, what do our students spend more time upon? According to studies in the US and Canada, the average student spends more time sitting at a desk working through scripted paperwork rather than activity engaged in the learning process. Computer technology are not a means to end, but rather used as a way to support the current pencil and paper-based tasks. In light of the breakthroughs in educational technology, it's tragic that the numbers of students "buying out" are on the rise.

Several regions have taken aggressive action to curb this ominous trend. Ways to engage students in school have included the following:

"Strategies" included (but not limited to):

- *Activities/Special Events for students and families, and communities*
- *Best practices (evidence-based and researched-based)*
- *Incentives*
- *Instructional and/or curricular innovations*
- *Professional development for educators and program providers*
- *School policies*
- *School-wide programs*

The Global Thinker.

The web site "The Art of Teaching" was designed to link students and teachers together as one learning force. It is a place to exchange ideas and to challenge thinking.

Some questions:

- ☑ What defines your models of delivery?
- ☑ How much time do your students spend at a desk working to produce paper based responses to questions?

Notes/Comments: