

TEEM Education

Classroom Evaluation



Product **Wordshark 4**
Publisher **Whitespace**
Evaluator **Angela Jones**
Used with **Year 2, Year 6 and FE**

How I Used the Product in My Classroom

Used by individuals	√	Used as a lesson starter	√
Used with the whole class	√	Used for revision purposes	√
Used with interactive whiteboards	√	Used with headphones	√

Wordshark 4 was used during the Letters and Sounds sessions with a year 2 class and as an individual aid to support literacy work with two Year 6 pupils. It was also used as a teaching support with Basic Skills adults.

During the Year 2 sessions I used the program to introduce and consolidate learning across phase four of Letters and Sounds. The program was used on an interactive whiteboard and used as a class activity. In this way I was able to use it as a starter and as a plenary. Following Letters and Sounds weekly planning the relevant work to be studied was selected and the games were immediately available. Through observation and placing of children to undertake different tasks it was easy to use as a monitoring aid throughout the sessions.

When working with the Year 6 children I worked individually with them using a laptop. This provided me with the chance to closely work one to one and again to assess them as we worked through the Alpha to Omega lists.

Using ICT in this situation was very beneficial although the ICT element was in the background, without it the teaching would not have been so effective. The ability to support the children in their work, to provide a vast array of games that they were able to choose to play and to provide immediate feedback ensured that the children remained motivated throughout and actively wanted to continue using the program.

It was easy to locate the specific word lists required as the Letters and Sounds course is held on the programs tree and phases 2 to 6 are then available. The Alpha to Omega lists are also held clearly on the program and selecting the wordlists is easy and quick. I have never had any trouble locating, selecting or playing any of the games on Wordshark 4.

The program was used weekly for both revision of or for teaching specific sounds. This approach worked well and the children were then able to use it for revision of sounds and sight words. I allowed the children to select which games they wanted to play within the section held on the program.

Ease of Use

Easy to use independently	√	Logical progression of content	√
On-screen help is useful	√	Easy to save elements and export	√
Search facilities operate logically	√		

The children were able to use the program with the minimum of help and quickly logged in. I used Wordshark 4 with the Year 2 children on an interactive whiteboard and logged on as myself. In this manner I was in control of which lists and which games we were going to play although they were very quick to suggest which games they thought would be appropriate!

Using the whiteboard with the whole group ensured that all children were able to view the activities and to join in. I operated a 'do it yourself if you can' and 'phone a friend' approach and the children were comfortable asking their talking partners or other members of the group for support if they felt that this was the right approach.

When using the program with Year 6 children they were able to log themselves. They had support to be able to locate which wordlist to use initially but quickly became confident in navigating their way through the program. This was later overcome by preparing specific work programs for them as detailed in the comprehensive manual that accompanies the disk.

The Year 6 children were able to work with increasing confidence and quickly learned how to search for a particular word if needed. Once the children had located their wordlist they very quickly started to play the games. Although the children were aware that there was onscreen help they tended to ask for teacher support although they were able to work independently for the majority of the time. It tended to be the final reward games that the children found difficult to work through but again they quickly managed to overcome this and enjoy them!

Context of Use

The preparatory work in Year 2 was carried out in a whole class approach so that all the children were aware of the program and how to access it. We used it in our Letters and Sounds group several times together as a plenary to practise using the different games so that by the time that the children were asked to use it they would be able to start work with confidence. The ICT element of these lessons worked well with the literacy learning. By providing support and instant recognition of their achievements the children were able to instantly tell how they had worked.

The key teaching objectives of each lesson was to introduce and/or consolidate specific sounds or sight vocabulary. Using the program it is easy to locate and utilise wordlists with

sounds and sight vocabulary. I think that this adds value to the children's experience as they are able to start work quickly without unnecessary delay.

Followup work after the sessions took the place of oral practise and wirtten recording. This allowed the children to recall what they had learned in different formats.

Using Wordshark 4 in Year 6 I worked with two children individually using laptop machines. but following a similar format to that of the use in Year 2. Working one to one in Year 6 I was able to move the learning along at a faster pace but still found that using the games to support the learning increased motivation to want to learn. Again the program was used to introduce and/or consolidate learning of specific sounds and to use the wordlists to support the planning that I was using. The children enjoyed the use of the variety of games whilst using them to develop their learning. They enjoyed returning to their stock favourites even though the sounds and words changed!

Monitoring and Assessment

At first I scrutinised the Year 2 children's work that they had produced at earlier Letters and Sounds sessions to monitor the stage that they had reached. From this I could then look at the various wordlists that are held on the Letters and Sounds program on the CD. I was then able to select the wordlist that I wanted them to work on.

With Year 6 I was able to tell the children which list to acess and worked with them as they worked through the various games and encouraged them throughout in their activities.

The children very quickly became adept at using Wordshark 4 and the use of ICT in this way did not become an onerous part of each lesson.

At Key Stage 2 (Year 6) I used the program to support a child who had been having support for SPLD. In this case I used the Alpha to Omega lists and supported the child's work using activities from the Dyslexia Institute. The wordlists were easy to choose and the structured framework that the wordlists follow ensures that an appropriate level of support and challenge is offered each time.

For both year groups that I used the Add and Manage Students screen to view what activity has taken place. This is a very helpful area within the program and using it it is possible to add/delete students, name or rename groups and change their settings. This is very valuable as the ability to change font and background colour have proved very beneficial to my Year 6 child as I have been able to adjust the settings to best suit them.

Using this approach I have been able to closely monitor the individual's progress and forward plan effectively.

Feedback

The children that I have worked with intensively using this program thoroughly enjoy it. They are always keen to participate and enjoy the games activities. They are keen to use the games as a motivational aid and are very enthusiastic about its use.

Summary

Wordshark 4 is a very comprehensive support to a busy teacher in developing reading and spelling. The variety of wordlists held ensure that there is a structured program that can be worked through systematically.

Its ease of use and the enthusiasm with which it is enjoyed by children and adult users ensures that it is a motivational aid with enduring appeal. The fifty five games that it uses to run are applicable to children and adults and there is a wide variety of choice that helps to keep the learning fresh.

The use of ICT ensures that the support is immediate and that additional support is available on screen throughout its use.