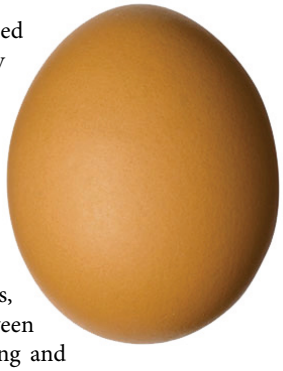
Website teaches primary students where their food comes from



The Australian Egg Corporation has launched an interactive website to educate primary school children about the importance of Australian farmers and how food arrives from the farm to their plate.

The site has been developed to address the results of the 2011 ACER national survey, which discovered large gaps in the food and fibre knowledge of primary school children.

Using interactive curriculum linked games, the site teaches primary school children between the ages of five and 12 years about egg farming and consumption, enabling them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills while deepening their knowledge about healthy food choices.

Designed for use on classroom interactive whiteboards, the *All About Eggs* website incorporates engaging learning experiences through the use of interactive games, detailed lesson plans, video, music and pre- and post-learning activities.

Comprehensively linked to the National Curriculum the site offers seven interactive lessons, one per year group from Foundation to Year 6, with accompanying teacher lesson plans. The website is a free resource.

www.allabouteggs.com.au

Time for changerous thinking

The 2014 ELH SchoolTech Conference program, now online at www2.computelec.com.au promises three busy days for delegates to the annual event, to be held in Lorne Victoria from 17th–19th August.

New this year is the $5000 Award For Innovation, which aims to recognise and honour schools that are at the forefront of ICT integration.

The Award will be presented by Bruce Dixon, founder of ideasLAB on the first day of the meeting.

The keynote presentation speaker is author Will Richardson, who will also present in a critical conversation with Bruce Dixon. Over the three days, more than 60 presenters will speak on topics grouped under themes: Case studies, TIM Talks, Discovery, ELH Institutes, Critical conversation and Technical forum.

A feature of the conference will be a display of all the technology components of a 'real-life' digital classroom together in one room to demonstrate how technology can be used in the education environment to deliver improved 21st century learning. The classroom will showcase product innovations in server infrastructure, racks, networking, storage, virtual development infrastructure, devices, learning management systems and audio visual systems.

www2.computelec.com.au

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MWorld digital education platform launched by Monash

Monash University will launch MWorld worldwide in August, after demonstrating the product at the EduTech Conference in June.

MWorld is the product of a team of Monash University academics and innovators, led by Justin Bokor, the University's Director of Innovation. The initiative has brought together talent from across Monash: pedagogy experts from the Faculty of Education; academic experts from faculties including Science, Arts and Medicine; actors, musicians, 3D designers, animators and many others.

MWorld is an interactive world of learning, the developers claim. Delivered as a tablet app, it unites multimedia presentations, gameplay and engaging peer-reviewed content.

Designed for children aged 8–12, MWorld divides the world into 10 broad categories: animals, art and music, space, the modern world, early civilisations, and so on. There are 50 titles in the first release, five in each category, with many more in production. Each title opens up into a multimedia journey of discovery containing a narrated story, music, videos, hidden games and quizzes. Titles range from topics such as *Volcanoes* and *Early Australians* to *How to Write a Song*.

Justin Bokor, the creator of the MWorld concept says: "Too many publishers' digital products are essentially electronic textbooks – all dry facts and minimal interactivity. We hope to change that and raise the bar for a generation of kids. Children are fascinated by the amazing world we live in. We want to fuel their natural desire to learn and explore."

MWorld will be available in August for iPads, with the Android version to be released later in the year. MWorld will be free to download, with five free titles and other titles available for purchase at prices ranging from $1 to $2 per title.

All titles are mapped to the Australian curriculum and each includes a teacher guide. MWorld will be available to schools on a subscription basis. The MWorld team is also developing case studies with a number of schools across Australia. For more information, contact the MWorld team.

www.discovermworld.com
email team@discovermworld.com

Grammatikus adventure teaches English

Five years back, teachers Sarah Sharp and Michèle Fitz-Gerald identified a need to improve students' communications skills. They conceptualised an educational tool with a difference, choosing game-based learning to motivate children to learn, while navigating their way through the fictional Kingdom of Gramadach.

"It was a steep learning curve involving many hours, months and years, of research," explains Sharp.

"Everything was a challenge", Fitz-Gerald adds, "From deciding on a business model, to protecting our IP. Developing the concept was a gargantuan task. We gave up our social life and a very big chunk of our family life for our vision."

The result is Grammatikus, a web-based game with RPG elements, built around the eight parts of speech and structural concepts of English. It engages students with incentives, rewards, and a narrative based on the conflict between good and evil.

The story unfolds in Gramadach, where life is harmonious, guided by a spiritual book of ultimate knowledge. But when one of the two authors of the book becomes corrupted by pride, wreaking havoc on the realm, a hero is called to sort it out. Enter Grammatikus; he recruits a band of heroes from the real world to embark on a quest to repair the damage. Here, students are drawn into the story and, equipped with a customisable avatar, they join as Determiners, to set the world to rights.

"We chose game-based learning because it is a powerful tool. It not only allows for individualised learning and teaching, it also blends engagement and motivation, which are all key factors contributing to effective learning." Fitz-Gerald explains, "We chose the digital platform, because it is today's reality. The skills that students will be required to master when then enter the workforce will not be based on rote memorisation, but on their ability to navigate the online world."

"A recent study shows that on average, teachers dedicate 78% of non-teaching time to research, planning, preparation and assessment. For full-time teachers, this equates to over 23 hours a week," Sharp says. "Grammatikus can dramatically reduce this because it provides content, marks worksheets and tests online, allows for homework tasks and generates progress reports indicating where students are excelling and areas that need attention."

"It provides teachers with video tutorials so they don't need to be experts in grammar; ready-made activities that are based on contemporary learning theories, aligned with the national curriculum and can easily tie in with any school's learning objectives."

Fits-Gerald adds: "the real power of Grammatikus is that students work at their own pace; the game adjusts content and delivers it at each student's individual level of achievement. Also, students don't fear any judgment if they answer incorrectly. In fact they get rewarded with a new opportunity to earn more points…"

www.grammatikus.com

Harlequin high visibility schoolbags for dark days

The 40 kph speed limit on roads fronting schools during school hours has slowed drivers down but the sad fact it that very year in Australia, approximately 2000 school-aged children are injured in road accidents and 50 children are killed. In 2012, 20 of these deaths occurred in Victoria and New South Wales alone.

While roadwork crews, postal workers, emergency crews and 'Lollypop' men and women are legally required to wear Hi-Viz clothing to enhance their safety and visibility, the majority of primary school students arrive at school wearing dark coloured backpacks and uniforms.

Now, with dark mornings and earlier winter sunset times making it harder for

motorists to see small figures, Harlequin Schoolbags is reminding schools and P&Cs that a high visibility fluoro school bag can add a significant margin of safety.

Introduced at the end of 2013 with the approval of the Department of Education and the backing of the Department of Transport for NSW, since the start of this year more than 6000 Hi-Viz Kids schoolbags have been in daily use across the country.

The schoolbags are available in six styles: Kindy Tuff-Pack, Mighty Tuff-Pack, Ergo Tuff-Pack, Excursion Bag and Safety Library Bag. Prices range from $37.94 plus gst for the Ergo-Tuff bag down to $8.95 plus gst for the Excursion and Safety Library bags.

A free sample bag can be ordered from Harlequin.

mob 0413 117 030
email: shirley@harlequingroup.com.au
www.schoolbags.com.au

How to find out what's really happening in school

If you want to know what your staff is thinking, or how your school is functioning, ask the right questions. That's the message of Voice Project, based on campus at Macquarie University, which specialises in surveying organisations to explore the impact of employee and client 'voice' on engagement, leadership and service quality.

The fundamental philosophy is that 'voice' generates more information and better decisions, and inspires greater ownership and engagement among staff and clients.

In the school setting, swap 'teacher' for 'employee' and 'student' for 'client' and Voice Project's survey techniques can be used to establish, for example: is the school community happy, productive and generally successful; can do better; or perhaps – isn't functioning at all well.

With survey data as the baseline, a program can be designed and implemented to achieve important outcomes e.g. 'reduce staff turnover from 10 per cent annually to less than 5 per cent' or 'increase average teacher employment at the school from 36 months to 48 months'.

Voice Project provides 'Engagement', 'Leadership 360' and 'Service Quality' surveys.

The Engagement survey is designed to measure employees' commitment to their work and active contribution to organisational performance. It is an objective measurement of staff behaviours, perceptions, and satisfaction with their work in order to assess their level of engagement.

Effective and inspirational leaders are critical to an organisation's success, and so it is important to develop leadership capacity. A Leadership 360 survey helps achieve this by assessing leader behaviours and effectiveness based on feedback from those 'all around' them, including peers, subordinates and managers.

A Service Quality survey assesses your client's [students'] level of satisfaction with your organisation [school] and the services/products you provide. By customising the survey, the drivers of satisfaction can be identified.

Voice Project surveys can be 'self service' or 'tailored'. A self-service survey involves using Voice's online technology to be self-sufficient in the delivery of a Voice standard survey. These surveys are easy to implement as the questions are pre-set, the reports are generated automatically by the system, and response rate updates are available online and via email. To start a survey, the organiser can set-up the project within minutes.

The tailored service provides a high level of flexibility in the survey design combined with access to full consultancy support. This flexibility relates to the survey questions, the delivery method, organisational branding of surveys, and customised reporting. Voice consultants provide support on suggested communication strategies, project planning, feedback sessions and action planning.

Tel 1800 866 423 www.voiceproject.com

Canvas Catalog for online course publishing and registration launched

Instructure, the technology company serving the academic market through its Canvas learning management system, has launched Canvas Catalog, a white-label platform that enables any institution, government entity, university or K–12 school to create a branded index of online courses.

Whereas MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) have traditionally been housed on common platforms that span multiple institutions, Canvas Catalog shifts the emphasis back to the institutional level.

It empowers the institute to produce and market online courses with their own look and feel. With Canvas Catalog, custom-branded websites can be built that allow content creators to build a marketplace or storefront for their course offerings. This gives students and learners a one-stop shop where they can register, enrol, pay and begin taking courses. It also eliminates the need for institutions to build their own front-end course information, which is a time-consuming, complicated and expensive process.

The platform can be customised for higher education, professional development and a variety of other online learning contexts, including K–12 schools.

Through Canvas Catalog, administrators can:

- Create public course offerings and custom course landing pages
- Identify collections of courses to create specialisations or programs
- Effectively market courses and course information
- Issue discounts or promotion codes
- Automatically distribute certificates and other recognitions of completion
- Accept payment for courses.

The robust platform solves many of the issues administrators and students are faced with. It keeps course information all in one place, providing a simple, central location for all who need to access an institution's course offerings. It also allows for straightforward registration and payment for courses.

www.instructure.com