

## National Literacy and Numeracy Week 2009 Project Report

**Project title:**

Supporting Primary School Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Language Difficulties (Expressive and Receptive) to Plan and Complete a Recount or Information Report using supportive technology (Penfriend and Kidspiration).

**Project description:****Rationale:**

Writing is a complex task requiring the integration of prerequisite skills and knowledge to be successfully completed. These prerequisite skills and knowledge include conventions of language (spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc); imaging (visualizing, word, sentence, etc); syntax (from simple sentences to paragraphs and whole text); vocabulary; fluency (coherency of ideas); content (planning, pre existing knowledge, research skills, etc) and the mechanics of writing (*Lin Meeks, 2001*). If any or a combination of these individual skills or knowledge are impaired, students will struggle to complete writing tasks, or indeed, fail to engage in writing at all. There are available now, technology and programs that engage and support students in their writing. Two such programs are Kidspiration, an interactive mind mapping program, and Penfriend, a word prediction program.

Kidspiration allows students to begin with a central idea and then connect related ideas and other pieces of information in a mind map. This process of mind mapping assists students to organize their thoughts before writing.

Penfriend is a word prediction program that supports those students who may be slow or reluctant writers because of difficulties with spelling, the mechanics of writing or difficulty in accurately locating keys on the keyboard. Penfriend can be used with MSWord, the main word processing program used at our school.

Our project aims to introduce targeted students to both Kidspiration and Penfriend, to explore the features of each program and to use the programs to support their writing.

**Person responsible for project:**

Sue Grose, Learning Support Teacher

**School, region, diocese:**

St Martins Catholic Primary School, Davidson, NSW  
Broken Bay Diocese

**Contact person's email:**

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**Number of students, teachers, parents, other community members directly involved:**

**Targeted students:** 6 students from Years 4 – 6 who have been identified as being reluctant writers or who have a specific learning difficulty.

- Two students from each class – one student who has a specific learning difficulty and one student identified as gifted but reluctant writer.

Teachers:

- Learning Support Teacher

- classroom teachers (K – 6) – attend a morning session to explore the features of the programs and benefits to targeted and regular students.

**Intended literacy outcomes:**

The students will

- Demonstrate the ability to confidently use the features of Kidspiration to create a mind map which reflects the key ideas and related ideas and information on a given topic.
- Use the mind map as their plan to support their writing.
- Use Penfriend (word prediction) to facilitate the typing/writing of a given text.

Kidspiration and Penfriend will

- become an integral part of the writing process for students who may be slow or reluctant writers because of difficulties with spelling, the mechanics of writing or difficulty in accurately locating keys on the keyboard.

**Evidence of achievement of intended literacy and/or numeracy outcomes:**

Unfortunately the program encountered some unforeseen difficulties which delayed its commencement and impacted on the time available:

- the Penfriend licences did not arrive at the school until Week 4, Term 3
- the school computer system was plagued by a virus which meant that the computers were not reliable and needed to be rebooted regularly until the virus was eliminated from the system (Week 8).
- Two of the targeted students went on overseas trips for 6 weeks – one returned in Week 7, the other in Week 9.
- Students were to attend the program on Wednesday mornings but on two of the scheduled weeks Stage 2 and Stage 3 students were attending sporting events.

Despite these issues, we started the program and have run 3 teaching sessions for each group of students. During these sessions the students have learned how to use Kidspiration to assist with planning their writing. In **Session 1**, all students were given the opportunity to explore the features of Kidspiration and build a mind map which showed what they know about Dogs or Cats. Having made the map, they were then shown how to convert this to a writing document with the map transcribed into a list of headings. (See sample 1 attached).

In **Session 2**, the students then used Kidspiration to plan their writing for their HSIE class topic. (See sample 2 attached). The students were then able to go back to their classroom with their mind map printed out, and commence writing their assignment. Both students and teachers commented that the mind map made writing easier as it had helped to order their thoughts and was easy to follow.

In **Session 3**, we introduced students to the Penfriend program. They were given the opportunity to write any sentences using the prompts in the Penfriend vocabulary window as needed. The aim of this session was to familiarize the students with this form of support before requiring them to use it in more structured writing on the computer.

Because we have not completed the program as intended due to the problems outlined above, we intend to continue it in Term 4. The response from all of the students has been positive and they are eager to learn skills which might help them with their writing.

**Other information:**

Part of the program includes a teacher training session which will be held on Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> October. Teachers will be given the opportunity to explore both Kidspiration and Penfriend and become familiar with the features which might assist students with their writing.

**Feedback about making grants available for such projects:**

Because difficulties can arise and projects may get delayed, perhaps a longer time frame in which to complete the project could be considered.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

See materials below:



## Technology to Assist Writing Project

This project is supported by the NSW Government Grant for Literacy and Numeracy Week. We purchased 5 site licences for Kidspiration and 10 site licences for Penfriend (a word predicting program). These programs will be loaded onto the class computers for everyone to use. Computers will be labelled.

Aim: to introduce targeted students to both Kidspiration and Penfriend, to explore the features of each program and to use the programs to support their writing.

### Targeted students:

- 2 students from each Year 3 – 6.
- One student will be a gifted/high achiever with poor writing skills and one student who needs support with writing due to learning difficulty.

### Focus of writing:

- eLF booklet task for HSIE

### Duration

- The program will run from Week 6 to Week 8 inclusive during the Wednesday morning literacy block.
- Sue will work with each pair of students for 30 minutes (as per proposed timetable).
- It will be important for the students to practice the skills learned during the week (e.g. 20 minutes 2 x per week).

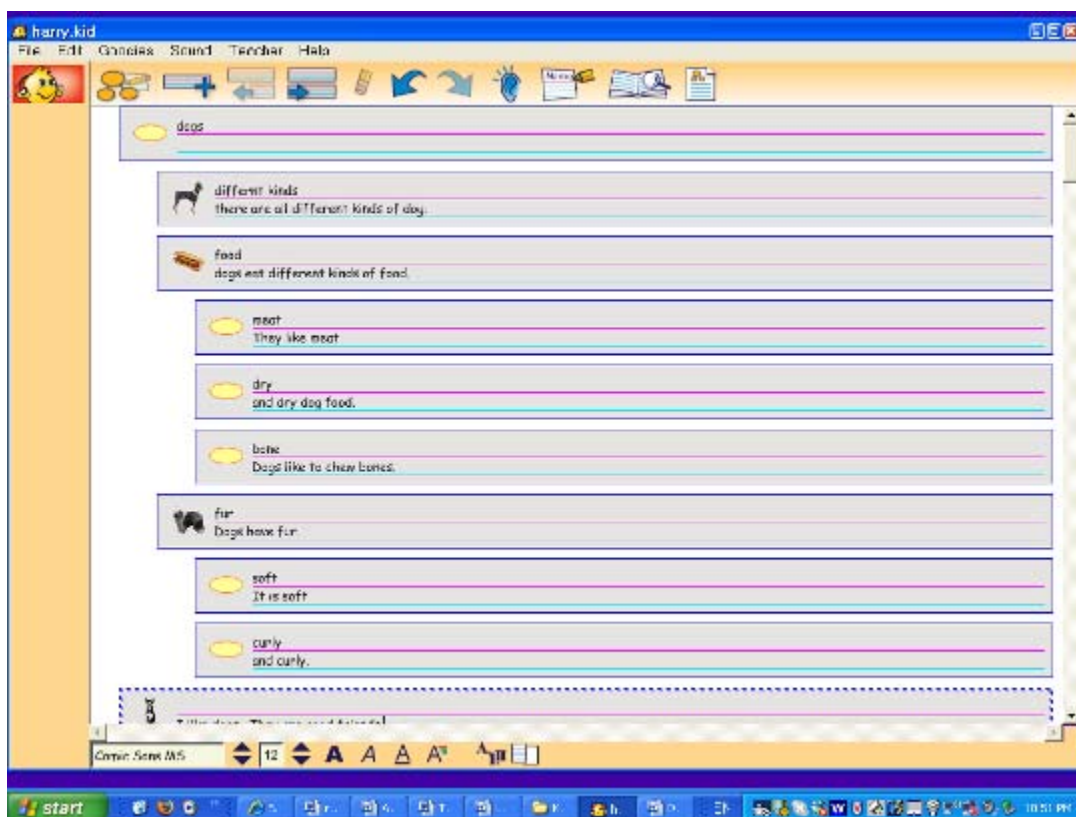
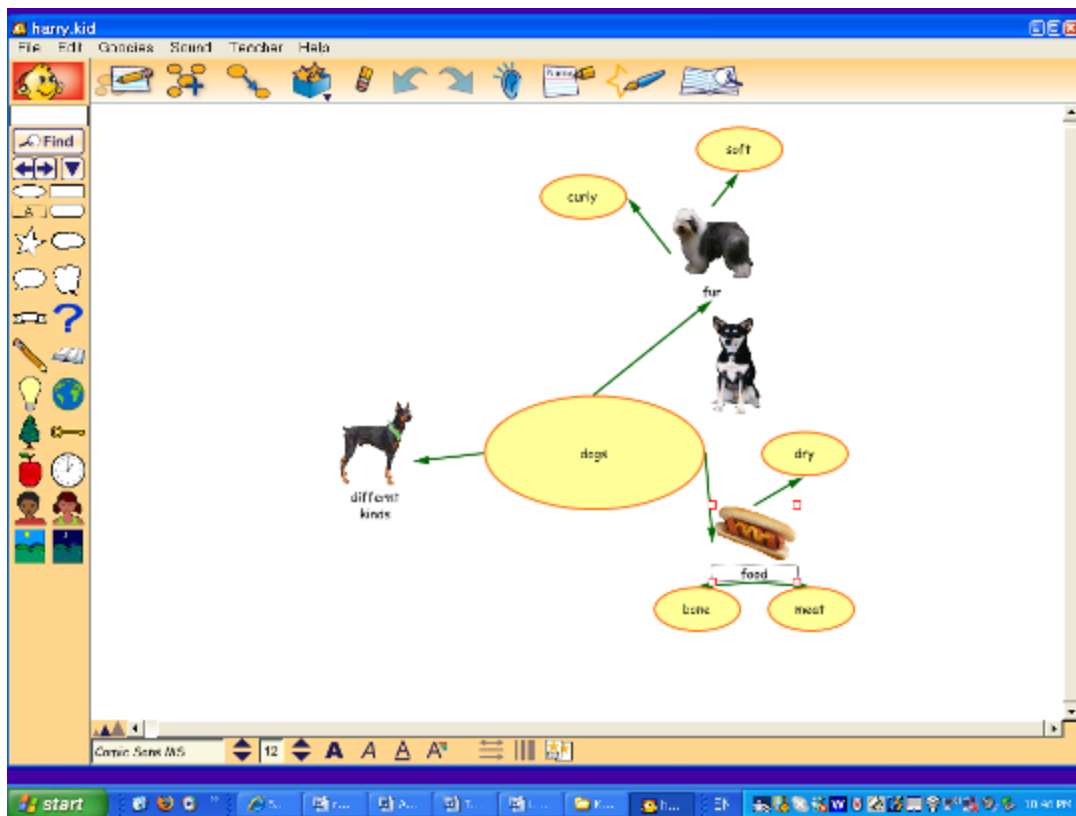
### Proposed timetable

	Time	Year	Students
Wednesdays Weeks 6, 7 & 8	9 – 9:30 am	3	J T
	9:30 – 10 am	4	Z H
	10 – 10:30am	5	C H
	10:30 – 11 am	6	L A

**Come to TECHI BRECKI on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> October in the staffroom at 8am.  
Coffee, fruit and croissants will be served as you learn about the programs.**

Sue

# Sample 1



## Sample 2

