

Alternative keyboards make writing easier













A touch-sensitive pad (such as a *Concept Keyboard*) was used to facilitate report writing, especially for students who experience learning difficulties or who have specific problems with writing.

When I first began using the touch-sensitive pad in the classroom, we were involved in an environmental computer competition. The students were required to research Australian native flora and fauna and use this knowledge to solve an environmental mystery. The class included several students with a mild intellectual disability (IM).

Students worked in cooperative social groups on activities that spanned the curriculum. There were seven groups completing different activities, including reading, research, map activities, writing, art, a design and make task, and a hands-on maths activity related to the mystery. Computers had been integrated into the curriculum from the beginning of the year and the students were used to working cooperatively, both on and off the computer.

In one activity students wrote a report about the animal they had researched for the competition. Group-work time-frames were often too short for students with writing difficulties. It was here that the touch-sensitive pad became useful.

A number of commercially produced, ready-made overlays are available on the market. I used one that contained a report-writing overlay that the students could use to construct a report on Australian fauna from the *Australiana K-5* pack, produced by Hands-on Concepts.

Report Writer														
My report about a...														
A _____ is a _____.		insect		bird		amphibian		arachnid		reptile				
It has _____.		 legs		 wings		 scales		 feathers		 tail				
It lives _____.		 water			 land			 air						
It can _____.		run		swim		jump		fly		slither				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	and	,	.	Shift	X
a b c d e f g h i j k l m												Return		
n o p q r s t u v w x y z												Space Bar		

Overlay on Australian fauna from a commercially available pack.

Our report about a kookaburra.
 A kookaburra is a bird.
 It has wings in feathers.
 It lives in a gum tree.
 It can fly in the air.



A report created by a group of Stage 2 students.