Software Reviews

Practical Software

By Judi Mathis Johnson

With all the buyouts and changes, one result is clearly emerging-- software publishers are creating programs that have more educational content and substance with less glitz and fewer techno-baubles. Companies are listening to educators, responding to educational research, and trying to meet the needs of the classroom. This month's column has a few of those examples, but if NECC 2002 in San Antonio was a harbinger, this next year should yield more well-designed and useful programs for the classroom.
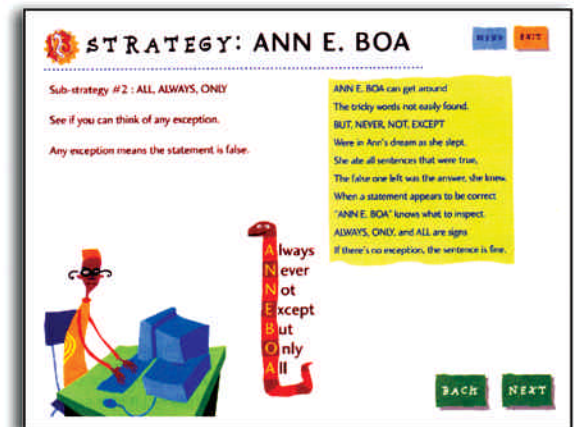

Figure 1. Use Brain Cogs to learn study skills with Ann E. Boa.

Brain Cogs

Publisher: FableVision, 44 Pleasant St., Watertown, MA 02472; 1.617.926.1231 or 1.888.240.3734; www.fablevision.com
Topic: study skills
Grade Level: 3–12 (Ages 8–18)
Cost: $149.95
Requirements: Mac/Win
Standards: *NETS•S* 3

State tests and local mandates have teachers scrambling to cover content and help students pass tests. With such an emphasis on improving test scores, now is a great time for teaching good study skills. Use Brain Cogs. Whether you use it with the whole class to teach a study method or have students work through the program over a semester, the time could be well spent.

Brain Cogs is divided into five sections: remembering, organizing, prioritizing, shifting, and checking. Each section has subsections for learning specific study methods. Students are taught strategies for improving their memory, approaches to problems, and general study skills (Figure 1).

The order is linear, so keep Izzy Sample as a student in your classes. Izzy has completed all the sections, and you can go directly to any section without completing all the preceding sections first. At the beginning, some of the talking is not closed captioned. But keep going, the content is presented on the screen with an icon to have the text read to the student.

The activities are most effective if the teacher has one or two immediate applications for each. If you are the technology teacher, have students apply each activity to homework from their other classes and have students present their efforts using other media, such as Kid Pix, PowerPoint, or HyperStudio. The Administration Tool on the CD-ROM gathers together the information for each student. You can retrieve forgotten user names and passwords and look at each student's progress.

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