Free, Fun, and EDUCATIONAL

Karen Traver, Computer Teacher

My last computer article gave information on open source programs available for free downloads. One program mentioned is compatible with Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, etc.). In case you missed the article, you can get information and the free download at www.openoffice.org.

In this article I am suggesting some websites for you to consider. These sites contain free games that are educational.

One site that I found to be impressive for math practice is www.hoodamath.com. This site provides a variety of games, tutorials, and worksheets for all ages. It provides practice in basic math skills (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), algebra, geometry, data analysis and probability, and logic. In the tutorial section, students can review whole numbers, decimals, fractions, ratio and proportion, percentages, order of operations, algebra, and geometry.

One logic game I found that first graders as well as older students enjoyed is called "Red Remover." The goal is to remove red shapes without letting any green shapes fall off the screen. As one level is completed, a next level is available. The first three levels actually teach you how to play the game. One of the nice features of the game is that if a mistake at a level is made, the student is able to attempt that level again without having to start from the beginning. If a level is particularly challenging, the game provides a "video walkthrough."

The online games section at the Fisher Price site, www.fisher-price.com, has a great variety of educational games for preschool and kindergarten students. A phonics learning game, memory games, and an asteroid game for hand-eye coordination are just a few of the many worthwhile games available.

The site "Arcademic" Skill Builders, www.arcademicskillbuilders.com, is one of my favorite sites for educational games. It is where education and arcade games meet. It has wonderful math and language arts games. The Jetski Addition game allows students to race against the computer or other students. Private games could be set up so that friends can race together. Students can also race in public games. These games are "kid-safe" as no personal information is taken, and there is no way to further contact a challenger.

Students in grades 7 and 8 are beginning to learn about programming. Microsoft provides a free download of Visual Basic Express Edition for students to learn to program in Visual Basic. The first program students created was a simple one to make an Internet browser. More information about the program can be found at Microsoft's website, www.microsoft.com, or just google "visual basic express."

Counting Down to a Great New Year

Angela Kalie, Teacher

The preschool girls and boys had such a wonderful time practicing their counting down to New Year's Eve. We discussed what New Year's Eve was in the calendar and why it is celebrated. Also, we talked about how many people want to make resolutions and we came up with great resolutions we can make that are important to us. (Although it took place at the beginning of the year, the students learned a lot about this concept before the High Holy Days.)

When we started the month of December, we counted down how many days until the New Year were left, as we do before vacations and even birthdays. As New Year's Eve came closer, we practiced counting backwards as celebrants do when the ball falls in NY, and we would yell, "Happy New Year!" The students truly enjoyed our anticipatory counting and making believe it was the New Year. Not only did we practice our celebration but we also created a New Year's Eve book that reinforced the counting. Needless to say, we used as much glitter as we possibly could!

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For GRADES 1 – 4

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