

# Inspiring education

## *Inspiration: The best visual mapping tool around*

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Do you remember when white boards came in and how much easier they were to work with than chalkboards? No more dust clogging up the fingernails; no scratches down the board; no more dusters setting off the hay fever; no more great tricks played on fellow classmates with the duster all full of chalk dust!

What about a white board on the computer? Well, now we have it! This is not the type of white board that produces a paper fax-like copy- rather, it is an amazing little programme called Inspiration.

Inspiration is a programme that allows you to quickly and easily record your ideas. The great advantage of them being on the screen is that you can manipulate them, refine them, add notes or other ideas, make connections between ideas and even incorporate them into your web site!

As part of our ICT project, we have found all sorts of uses for this amazing programme! Our approach to teacher professional development incorporates an intensive two-term practicum where teachers from each of our schools come together for 9 day-long sessions. Our first group of teachers came up with this brainstorm that shows how they think a classroom that uses Information and Communication Technology effectively should look:

This is their vision statement and is what they are striving towards. Another use we commonly apply Inspiration for is to de-construct our professional readings. This helps us to understand and develop our ideas about the main concepts, so staff can apply these to their own beliefs, and eventually to their classroom practise. Another really good example of how this tool can help people was constructed at Richmond School, where one teacher made a flow diagram

showing staff how and where to save their work. This was then laminated and put on the wall next to the workroom computer. Now she finds that her staff are becoming more independent at saving, with far fewer hassles of lost work!!!!

When you give this programme to children, you really find the world of possibilities opening up! The classroom applications for this tool are limitless. A child at Fendalton School used Inspiration to create a character relationship diagram, so she could see how each person in a story inter-related. This diagram can then be used to understand how to construct other stories, or understand a character, or the plot.

As Jamie McKenzie puts it:

“...the most powerful technology is the human question...”  
[www.fno.org](http://www.fno.org)

So - I guess while this tool is a very powerful one, it will never replace the talented educator (or child) who facilitates the development of thinking through careful questioning. Couple good teaching and learning with Inspiration to help you plan, mind map, or simply get your ideas down in a list- and you have the potential to make the learning even better than it already was!  
If you want to trial Inspiration for free- just go to [www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)