

## Virtual Learning Objects

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Project Title	Virtual Learning Objects in Remote Tasmanian Schools
Project Team	Dr Andrew Fluck, Dr Natalie Brown (SiMERR Tasmania), Karen Wilson (Faculty of Education, UTAS), Howard Reeves
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Funding Agency	SiMERR
Organisational Base	SiMERR Tasmania

### Description

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Learning Objects, created by The Le@rning Federation, are resources of specially designed interactive media that aim to develop key ideas in many different disciplines. This project assisted in the implementation of Learning Objects in 10 remote and very remote schools in Tasmania. Because these schools are relatively isolated from professional learning activities for teachers and hands-on experiences for students (e.g., trips to museums or science centres in Hobart, Launceston or Devonport), it was anticipated that they would gain from a concerted effort to introduce Learning Objects into their schools. The stimulating and interactive environments of the objects supplemented aspects of the usual classroom curriculum.

The project provided the services of a consultant to visit each school for up to three days, working with teachers and demonstrating the use of the Learning Objects with students. In addition, the consultant integrated a portable interactive whiteboard into staff demonstrations and classroom-based student learning.

Access to the Learning Objects in each school could be through using a CD or DVD-ROM, or online using the school internet connection. Initially it was thought that the latter would be difficult, but apart from slow access at the first school visited, the implementation of local caches and good connections provided by the Department of Education more than adequately handled the reticulation of these resources.

The following research questions were addressed by the project:

- Were the remote and very remote schools able to access the online Learning Objects on a consistent and reliable basis?
- Did the teachers believe online Learning Objects made a useful contribution to student learning in science and mathematics?
- Over time, what impact did online Learning Objects make on student achievements of mathematics and science learning objectives?
- What are good strategies for teachers to integrate online Learning Objects successfully into classroom practice?

### Participants

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10 schools, Department of Education

### Findings

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Eight percent of schools accessed the online learning objects using CD-ROM and online; 88% accessed them wholly online, using a Learning Management System such as the centrally provided systemic Student Freeway or digital resource repository.

In the follow up survey with 25 respondents 76% of teachers said it was easy to access the Learning Objects while 12% said it was difficult. 44% said they would use this frequently in the future with 28% thinking weekly. 75% felt that Learning Objects were very helpful in supporting teaching and learning.

During the professional learning, a portable interactive whiteboard was used to demonstrate the Learning Objects. In the follow up survey, 44% of teachers said they had continued to demonstrate the online learning objects using a data projector, and 48% said they had not.

At one school, the four teachers were very enthusiastic about the Learning Objects. They all thought that it would help their

students in mathematics and science. They are hoping to buy a portable interactive white board. The Grade 6 students have offered to help fund-raise for one. They have already applied for a grant that includes purchasing more data projectors.

## Outcomes

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- Brown, N., Fluck, A., Wilson, K., Fitzallen, N. (2007, November) Meeting the Challenge: Professional Learning for Integrating ICT into Science and Mathematics Classes. Paper presented at annual conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Fremantle, WA.

## Impact

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Some of the schools have purchased interactive white-boards and projectors. Teachers are using Learning Objects as part of their teaching.

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