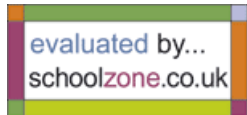# Author Plus Pro

Overview

Author Plus Pro is specifically designed to enable teachers, and potentially students, to create their own multimedia and online activities. The software has a number of generic question types that can be used to build content. It is a useful tool that will enable teachers to move many of their paper-based activities into an electronic format. The additional result manager software enables teachers to track students' progress effectively. The software is successful in delivering exactly what it sets out to do. It can be used to create different resources that can be exported and used by other teachers. The most powerful feature is that it is not subject specific, which means that it can be used as a cross-curricular resource.

The product essentially sells itself and provides an easy mechanism for teachers wanting to create electronic content; some basic examples are included as a start point for teachers. The greatest challenge facing teachers who start to use this software is identifying a time when the resources can be created. However, in the long term it is obviously time-saving in that once a teacher has created resources they can be used again and again or alternatively edited for differentiation purposes. I created simple assessment activities, which were used at both Key Stages 3 and 4 as a mechanism to support pre- and post-activity testing. The tests themselves didn't take too much time to create and provided me with a quick view of student knowledge both before and after the completion of a topic. The ability to include hints and tips for students as they completed the questions was valuable.

Author Plus Pro can be installed on individual machines or on a network. The content developed is standards compliant to SCORM 1.3 and should therefore run and integrate effectively with schools using standards compliant learning platforms.

Written by

Steve Johnson

Image

Publisher

Clarity Language Consultants Ltd

Subject

Modern Foreign Languages

Art and Design

Special Education Needs

Key Stage

Key Stage 2 / P3 - P6

Key Stage 3 / P7 - S2

Key Stage 4 / S3 - S4

Post-16 / S4 - S5

Product Code

CLAR-Authorplus

Classroom use

Context

The software was evaluated with a wide range of age groups at both Key Stages 3 and 4. It was used over a five week period primarily as a mechanism for pre- and post-topic testing in geography and ICT lessons. However, I also used the software in a slightly different way in that I asked students to create revision questions for a particular topic and then constructed the test with them using the interactive whiteboard. This proved to be a good mechanism for getting the students to work in collaboration. Other staff who used the software had a positive view of it because it didn't seem too difficult to use.

The software was run on a standard Windows network running Office 2003 and Windows XP with Service Pack 2.

Personalisation

As this software is primarily designed to allow teachers to develop content there is no specific pre-defined material developed to support users with specific needs. However, it empowers teachers to develop content that can be specifically targeted to a group of students. This is further enhanced by the fact that questions can be asked using audio or visual material. The interface when students are working through the test material is standard so students have no way of being aware that they are operating at a particular level. The students are provided with feedback once they have clicked on the marking button at the top of the page. All students can work on an individual basis through a range of activities that are primarily testing mechanisms, such as multiple choice. The software gives a very professional look and feel to resources and, as a result, there does not see to be any exclusion based on ethnicity or ability level. In fact the software language can be changed, which means the software can be used a mechanism to support inclusion.

There are no specific features aimed at SEN of Gifted and Talented students. The software does not make any claims about suitability for use with PDAs or take any account of specialist user requirements.

Student Response

Students responded well to this software especially the interface, which all of my students found easy to access. Students reacted well to the idea of quick pre- and post-topic tests. The use of ICT did not act as a barrier to student accessibility.
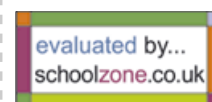
Assessment and pupil tracking opportunities

The software is very strong in this area. Once the teacher has created the tests that they want to use each student can carry out the tests and a score is given and recorded using the result manager software. Students are given feedback and they have the option to take the tests again. Through the result manager software teachers can create groups and students' results can be recording and reported on. Students are able to access their results online, although I didn't have a great deal of time to test this. The software could be used to support a range of different assessment policies and may even go some way to helping to standardise assessment across departments. The software, I believe, is best focused on tracking student progress based on a topic structure. It does not appear to export to SIMS but again I did not test this fully so it may be possible.

The software is not based on a subscription service so there are no implications for frequency of testing. I did not find any mechanism for relating data to NFER or SATs, however, it is possible to generate and print reports on student progress, which is a valuable asset for any teacher. Cross referencing of data between pupils and groups can easily be carried out. Teachers will be able to spot and identify trends from the reports that are produced.

Content and design

Curriculum coverage

Support material is provided with the software and there is also a website support mechanism. The support manual is very clear and concise and provides good guidance to get users started. The website support is outstanding; user-friendly and very intuitive, with a range of support material provided from tutorials to standard guidance documents. The software does not provide any direct curriculum coverage, however, it can be used to develop content to support all aspects of the curriculum.

Design and navigation

The software is well-designed and straightforward to use. The navigation and structure makes sense to the teacher creating the tests, but equally once the content is created the tests are presented in a way that allows students to access the test material easily. One feature that is particularly useful is that when the students are in the test window all of the relevant information is displayed on screen with no need for scrolling. The software has a clear distinction between the teacher and student.

The software provides some examples of how it can be used, however I do think the software could sell itself better with some more well developed examples. This would provide the user with a better idea of what can be achieved. The software is very simple to use and as such will not require a great deal of time for students or teachers to get up to speed. It also provides a mechanism to give feedback to students. The software can be engaging and interesting but this will largely depend on the type of content that the teacher has developed. I did not experience any installation problems with either Author Plus Pro or the results manager.

Suitable for ages

7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Planning

The software did not really require much planning. Once I had navigated around the software and worked out how I could build questions it was simply a case of using material I had already produced in a written format. The support material provided was very clear and sets out how to use the software in a clear and concise format. The software can easily be used to create differentiated material and is very user friendly in the way it is operated. There are no specific ways for students to collaborate but with a little creative thinking this can be achieved using collaborative test design.
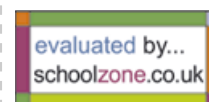
From a teacher perspective the software enables teachers to share their material easily. The main area where this software will be useful is in trying to establish pupil's knowledge and understanding before and after a major unit of work.

Publisher Information

Clarity Language Consultants Ltd

Clarity has been developing effective educational software since 1992. We specialise in MFL and ESOL and currently have four series of language programs registered for COL. Our fifth COL program, Author Plus Online, enables teachers to create interactive activities for all subjects from Year 3 to Year 13 (see www.AuthorPlus.com). We provide lots of teacher support for all our programs!

Address	**Purchasing Information**
Clarity Language Consultants Ltd	Please either send us an email directly (info@clarity.com.hk) or following the below steps:
PO Box 625	
Godalming	Step 1-
GU7 1ZR	Go to Clarity products page:
Website	http://www.clarity.com.hk/program/index.htm
http://www.clarity.com.hk/	Step 2-
	Choose your favourite products
	Step 3-
	There is a "Price enquiry" button on every page, click on it.
	Step 4-
	Fill in the form and our sale representive will send you the price list within one working day.