

## Tip Sheet

# Computer Software and Assistive Technology for Lower Primary Students

## Reading and Spelling

- A good program developed by the British Dyslexia Association is *WordShark*. It focuses on the development of both reading and spelling skills using games involving phonics, onset and rime, homophones, spelling rules, common letter patterns, visual and auditory patterns and other aspects of literacy. It is suitable for home and school use.
- *Nessy* is an interactive multisensory program aimed at improving spelling, reading, vocabulary and sound discrimination. This program is primarily designed for students aged 5 – 16, but can also be used by adults.
- Hand-held spellcheckers such as the *Collins Pocket Speller* have phonetic spell correction. For example, if you type in 'nolij' the unit will return 'knowledge'. They can be of great assistance when writing essays, reports, and stories.
- Text Readers will read out any text that is stored in electronic format. Many devices now have text-to-speech software embedded into them.

## Writing

- The use of laptop computers or portable word processors such as the Alphasmart can be very useful for students who have writing difficulties. Notebooks, Mini Laptops, UltraPortables and tablets/iPads are lightweight and have a long battery life.
- *Nessy Fingers* is a touch-typing program that uses games to build up typing speed and accuracy. A free typing program for primary school students is *The BBC Dance Mat* typing program ([www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zf2f9j6/articles/z3c6tfr)). Other programs include *Easi Keysi* and *UltraKey*.

## Literacy Support Software

- Useful tools to help with reading and writing on the computer are *WordQ*, *TextHELP Read and Write*, *ClaroRead*, *WYNN Wizard and Reader*, *SOLO 6*, *Co:Writer* and *Write:OutLoud*. These programs perform a variety of functions including reading scanned text aloud, checking spelling and providing alternatives, providing frameworks for structuring written expression and using text prediction to assist with sentence writing.
- There are a range of iPad/iPhone apps available to assist with reading, spelling, and writing skills, as well as those focused more specifically on assistive technology. Below are just a sample of some that have been reviewed on-line:
  - For younger children: *ABC Pocket Phonics*, *iWrite Words*, *ZooSpelling*
  - For primary-school students: *Shake and Spell*, *Grammaropolis*, *Story Patch*, *Iceberg Kids*, *Bookster*, *Madlibs*.