



The Birdhouse Trail
A Palm Education Pioneers Grant
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Brief Project Summary

Students with learning challenges in grades 4 and 5 participated in researching and planning a birdhouse trail on the school grounds. The students shared their collective knowledge through a website: <http://www.dcbooces.org/sufsd/nassau/vitek/btrail/index.html>. Data was collected from each nesting box using Palm handhelds. This data was then sent electronically to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birdhouse Network to assist scientists studying bird populations.

Learning Goals

✘ New York State Math, Science and Technology Standard 1: Students will use mathematical analysis, scientific inquiry, and engineering designs, as appropriate, to pose questions, seek answers, and develop solutions.

✘ New York State Math, Science and Technology Standard 4: Students will understand and apply scientific concepts, principles, and theories pertaining to the physical setting and living environment and recognize the historical development of ideas in science.

Why Palms?

- Motivating for students
- Each student can use one
- Ease of entering data
- Very portable

Where did we start?

- Daily Palm Moments for basic operation of the Palm
- Navigating the menus
- Using soft keys and hot keys
- Entering text with graffiti and the on-screen keyboard
- Beaming

Software used:

YdbNow: A great database program that is easy to use by both teachers and students. Easily exports data into Excel to make graphs. From Pocket Express.

Tip: Carefully plan out how you will synchronize when having multiple students add data to the main database.

WordSmith: A great word processing program that offers a thesaurus and a spell checker. Easily exports to Word through the hotsync process. From Blue Nomad.

Tip: When you first install the program you can map the memo button to WordSmith.

Peripherals used:

External keyboards —very useful for entering lengthy amounts of text

Kodak PalmPix cameras —students enjoyed using cameras but it was difficult to use in the bright sunlight and to take close-up pictures

ImagiProbe Interfaces — a great way to collect data. Practicing indoors is essential - especially in naming investigations and trials.

Next steps:

The students will be working in pairs. Each pair of students will be keeping data on an assigned set of three nest boxes.

Additional Palms and ImagiProbe interfaces have been purchased so that each pair of students has the equipment they need.

Additional Software

Quizzler from Pocket Mobility
<http://www.quizzlerpro.com>
QuizApp from PDA Verticals
<http://www.quizapp.com>
PrintBoy from Bachmann Software
<http://www.bachmannsoftware.com>
IrPrint from IS/Complete
<http://www.iscomplete.com>
Go n Tell & Bubble Blasters from HiCe
<http://www.handheld.hice-dev.org>

Top 10 Considerations before Using Palms in the Classroom

1. Determine how you will assign the Palms to students and how you will name each one. Will more than one student use each Palm? Will they use them only in class or will they take them with them?
2. How will you store the Palms?
3. How will you set up your class to charge each Palm and hotsync each one?

4. Determine how you will teach basic Palm skills to students. Remember that daily practice will yield better results.
5. What additional software will you need to install to each Palm for the project you have in mind?
6. What additional peripherals will you need for your project?
7. How will you fund additional software and peripherals?
8. Determine where you stand as far as letting students use games on the Palm.
9. Determine how you will reset your Palms for the start of a new semester or school year. (Consider using PDA Manage from <http://www.grantstreetsoftware.com>)
10. Most importantly determine how much time you are willing to devote to learning how to use the Palm, related software and peripherals.