Getting started with Squeak Etoys

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Introductory description and overall goals

Squeak Etoys (http://www.squeakland.org) is a free, multi platform authoring tool. It is tile based programming and is available in several languages at the click of a mouse. It was developed by a small group of people under the direction and vision of Dr. Alan Kay. Since 2009, a new non-profit organisation has taken on the task to continue develop, support and maintain Etoys and it's growing community of users.

Etoys development was inspired by LOGO, the constructionist ideas of Seymour Papert, and Piaget, Bruner, and Montessori. It was developed to help student exploration and discovery in learning and thinking deeply about powerful ideas in math and science. The workshop will show a variety of projects which can be created to give participants suggestions how it can be used in the classroom. In the hands-on part of the workshop, the participants can experience the Etoys constructionist learning environment and go through a typical Etoys lesson.

Method

The workshop will start with a brief introduction of Etoys and show example projects and how these can be integrated within a school curriculum. Based on the interest and background of the participants an suitable introductory project will be chosen.

The second and larger part of the workshop will introduce the basic ideas in developing Etoys projects: creating objects, describing their behavior and producing dynamic behavior. Using the example project, the participants will walk through the basics of painting an object, exploring it's properties, scripting it, controlling it and performing simple tests. The participants will receive hand outs with a basic description, that they can take away. Knowing the Etoys basics they will be able to create their own projects and to reproduce the projects shown at the beginning of the workshop.

Finally, the participants will have a chance to ask questions and exchange ideas on how they might take Etoys into their particular learning environments.

Expected outcomes

The participants will get an introduction to Etoys and an overview of how it can be used in the classroom. They will get a short demonstration of example projects from different geographic and subject matter areas, suitable for learners of multiple ages and then will start a hands-on experience using Etoys to create their own projects.

Keywords

Squeak Etoys, media-authoring system, constructionism, constructivism, constructionist application, objects-to-think-with, Seymour Papert, Alan Kay, Squeakland, powerful ideas