Word Processing

Some adult computer users have never created a digital picture, completed a spreadsheet table, or designed a multimedia presentation. However, practically all adult computer users have used word processing technology to write a letter, prepare a report, or create a greeting card. Among adults, word processing is perhaps the most common use of computer technology.

Despite the many common uses of word processing applications, adults often consider word processing to be their least favorite technology area. One reason is that many adults' keyboarding skills are limited. As a result, typing lots of information into a document is often difficult and time-consuming for adults.

The word processing activities have been developed in a way that allows teachers to learn basic word processing skills without having to type lots of information. Unlike other traditional word processing classes in which teachers are provided with multi-page templated documents that they use to edit and format text, the word processing activities consist of single-page documents that teachers create from scratch. In fact, many of the word processing projects resemble documents that teachers would normally complete in a desktop publishing application. The limited amount of text and heavy use of images increases teacher interest in the technology. It also lets them learn basic text formatting and editing skills while simultaneously providing opportunities to move beyond the commonly perceived limitations of word processing technology.

General Strategies

The featured word processing activities provide opportunities for teachers to practice their mouse and keyboarding skills while they complete a range of projects related to their profession. Teachers begin by applying basic text and paragraph formatting skills to complete the required Assessment Handout activity. Afterwards, teachers who want to explore some of the graphics and desktop publishing features in the word processing software may decide to complete either the Certificate or Diagram activity. Meanwhile, teachers who are interested in more advanced word processing skills may choose to complete the Weekly Lesson Planner activity, which introduces word processing tables, or the Newsletter activity, which involves complex page layout and automated text formatting skills.

When teachers complete the word processing activities, consider the following general strategies:

- The provided samples in the manual may include more text than teachers will be able to type. Instruct teachers to do what they can. In most instances, they can complete all of the word processing skills by typing only a few sentences.

- Unless teachers are specifically instructed to create a text box before typing their text, teachers are expected to type the information in the body of the document. By providing opportunities to learn different ways of typing and formatting text, teachers develop more complete understandings of word processing technology.

- Some teachers will spend too much time experimenting with various text fonts, sizes, and styles. When completing these word processing activities, consider encouraging teachers to write first and then format their text later.

- To complete certain projects, teachers need to identify and include appropriate clip art. Because many of the options they will find in the clip art gallery/organizer or online may not be ideal for teachers, consider locating clip art in advance. Then, save the files in an easy-to-locate folder on each computer's hard disk drive or on a shared network server.

- Scanners, digital cameras, and other devices are not required to complete the word processing activities. However, teachers should feel free to use these devices if they are available.