Commentary
Technology Talk With a Grade Two Student

Samuel Bradshaw-Truesdale

ABSTRACT

In this interview, elementary grade level student Samuel Bradshaw-Truesdale discusses how he uses technology—ranging from Smart tables and Smart boards to computers and the Internet—both at home and in the classroom. He talks about how technology helps him solve word and mathematic problems as well as build LEGO robots.

What kind of technology do you use in your school?

*M*ostly, I'd say, touch screen.

Can you say a little bit about that?

We sometimes do math with it. We do games and we use the markers sometimes. We use it as a calendar in French class… I like the interactive games on the Smart table. I haven't used it a lot… All I can say is that those games have a lot to do with clothing for some reason. There's somewhere you have to subtract numbers and say which one is bigger—that's what I remember. And there was this one where you had to put socks in a washing machine. If you had the most points you'd win but there's also another way you have to win by doing this. You have to add up your numbers, and if you get it wrong, the person with the second does it until one person gets them right.

What's the favourite technology in school for you?

The Smart board. We look up pictures of things when we don't know what they look like and need to draw them or something. We use it to learn lessons…math worksheets, things that we've already done in math but keep practising them, sometimes very rare but ELA once or twice.

I've heard some really interesting things about robotics that you've done. Can you talk about that?

I'm really good at building them. I built robots, machines, and machines that actually work—ones with wheels that work. I've been trying to make one that can fly…I've stopped doing that for a long time. But I think because of this conversation I'm going to try to do that again!

Tell us how you go about making a robot?

I'd say it is fun, and the programming part for the robots we did in class last year in grade one, was, they really just let you on your own. They didn't give you instructions on how to program it. There was no words to program it, but pictures that I couldn't really understand, but it worked after. You can also do cool stuff on your own. They come with sensors…you can program it for when it senses a thing that you made it sense. It will do something that you made it do, that you programmed it to do, and it senses it. I made a crumpled paper ball—this is actually a game you can play based on something else from the instructions. You make two posts out of anything…you make a person, it can be anything, then you play in the goals—it's like soccer! I made it so that when it senses the ball it will kick it.

You talked about games systems. Can you talk about Pixel People?
I have it!

If you're a really good player, how do you win?
What do you mean, "win"?

Do you create people? Is that the idea?

Yes, except you don't get people every single second—you have to wait. Sometimes you need to build more houses to get more genes. Do you know what I'm stuck with now? I need more houses to make genes—this is a program I used to be stuck with—but, and this is another part of the game, in order to have enough land to make them, there is this land law that whenever you build something, let's say I'm a house that's one square or land long, it would take up one land. And then you can expand with a certain amount of money. Then you get 10 more lands plus one new token. And now I haven't gotten into *utopium* yet!

It sounds like it's not a game you can play in one day

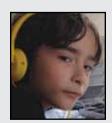And there's no finishing the game.

Fig. 1: Samuel's LEGO robot

When you want to create something, come up with something really exciting, what is the best learning environment for you?

There are two or three ways I do that. First, it's kind of like staring at the wall and playing with LEGO, this and browsing at the computer. First, when I want to make something up—sometimes I do this, sometimes I don't—sometimes I look at the Internet for things that are similar. Then, I draw what it's supposed to look like and what it does. Usually it's made of LEGO so I take my LEGO and I build it. But then, I take it apart and make the actual thing. I take the LEGO that does stuff; I don't actually always use the robotic one…I usually use the LEGO that moves.

I heard something about a dinosaur project that you did when you were a little bit younger.

It was just filming with flip cameras. I haven't used them in so long that…all I know is that you stop motion animation on them, that's all I remember. That was in kindergarten!

Sam Bradshaw-Truesdale is a Grade 2 student at a rural Elementary school in Quebec. He enjoys playing video games, reading, building, playing on the computer, and badminton. He is looking forward to being in Grade 3 next year.