

EagleEyes in Ireland

Written by Maureen Gates, Boston College Campus School, EagleEyes Teacher

Boston College and the Republic of Ireland have had a long term relationship sharing educational innovations, through the Irish Institute at Boston College. It was through this relationship that the Republic of Ireland's Education Department was introduced to the newest technologies developed at Boston College. In 2007, while on a tour at the BC Campus School, educators had the opportunity to witness first-hand the Camera Mouse and EagleEyes technologies being used.

Camera Mouse utilizes a webcam and is designed to help individuals who cannot use their hands to control the mouse but can voluntarily move their heads. Camera Mouse can be downloaded for free at www.cameramouse.org

EagleEyes is an innovative eye controlled technology that helps children and adults with profound physical disabilities interact and communicate with other people by using the computer. Electrodes are placed above and below the dominant eye and on both temples to magnify the electrical signal of the eye and convert it into the mouse cursor. EagleEyes is designed for individuals who have little or no facial movement. The less facial movement the individual has the better he or she can master EagleEyes.

From this brief encounter it was decided that both Camera Mouse and EagleEyes would be extremely beneficial in the Republic of Ireland school system. I was extended an invitation to implement these technologies in the "School of the Divine Child" in Cork, Ireland. The first visit in fall of 2007 was centered around the Camera Mouse as EagleEyes was in the process of being re-engineered and re-designed.

Since the first visit the Camera Mouse system has been placed in every classroom in the "School of the Divine Child" and the teachers are using it with many of their students to achieve educational goals.

My most recent visit in June of this year was to implement the EagleEyes technology into their academic curriculum. After witnessing the success of several students with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) using EagleEyes in the State of Utah, the decision was made to reach out to the same demographic in Ireland.

John was the first child with CVI we tested. Our initial expectation was that he would be able to shoot down at least 2 out of 10 aliens in the EE Aliens Game. We also hoped that he would be able to find a comfort level with the electrodes on his face. The results were far better than expected. John was not only able to tolerate the use of the electrodes but he successfully shot down 7 out of 10 aliens using his eyes as the cursor. To everyone's delight he then requested to have the electrodes put back on so he could play again. His second trial the next day was witnessed by his mother who was overjoyed with his accomplishments.

The remainder of my time spent in Ireland was focused on the evaluation of students and staff training on the use of the technology. In the future there will be on-going collaboration as to how EagleEyes can best be utilized by the students to achieve communication, recreational and educational goals that would have been impossible before.



Maureen Gates and Joan Crowley O'Sullivan (left) and Maureen facilitating EagleEyes training for teachers at the School of the Divine Child in Cork (right)



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