



•THEBIGTHING•

Playing games in school

Children get to build 3-D games in competition. By CHUANG BING HAN

WRITING computer games is too difficult for children. Wrong.

Fifty teams of primary school pupils took part in a competition to build 3-D educational games that had them designing inter-dimensional prisons and storm troopers.

"I've been playing games designed by other people. So I wanted to create my own game," said Jonathan Tham, 11, who jumped at the chance when his teacher asked if he would like to take part.

Although it was their first time writing a computer program, Jonathan and two of his schoolmates from Maris Stella High School took first runner up in the primary school category of the competition.

It was organised by Ngee Ann Secondary School, Tanjong Katong Secondary School, Fuhua Primary School and infocomm company Vertical Miles, to promote educational gaming.

The games were designed on MissionMaker, which was a hit with the children.

"It's quite easy to use," said Li Bai Lin, a Primary 5 pupil from Concord Primary School. "You don't have to know a lot about programming."

Bai Lin and his team clinched the top spot in



Teachers and students hard at work designing 3-D educational games in the competition at Ngee Ann Secondary School. Fifty teams of primary school pupils took part. PHOTO: VERTICAL MILES



A screenshot from Concord Primary School's futuristic prison-break game. The team from Concord clinched top spot in the primary school category. PHOTO: CONCORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

the primary school category with their futuristic prison-break game.

The category winners will get their trophies and certificates at a prize presentation ceremony to be held on Thursday at Fuhua Primary School.

Teachers say that writing games is a good and educational way to engage young pupils.

"It's really something to explore because the students show an interest in it," said Ms Matthea Seow, the teacher in charge of the infocomm club at Maris Stella High.

But this comes with a hefty price tag. It would cost a school \$8,000 to purchase MissionMaker.

"It's quite good software. And the kids can learn through it. But I think it might be too costly," said Mr Kua Choon Tat, 31, the IT club teacher at Concord Primary School.

Other alternatives include the 2-D Game Maker and Klick&Play which can be downloaded for free.

"It's not as graphic intensive. But it still engages the students," said Mr Kua, who uses the 2-D Game Maker for his IT club.