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INNOVATE MY SCHOOL GUIDE 2016/17

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Welcome

to the second edition of the Innovate My School Guide

By Michael Forshaw

This year's IMS Guide brings you more grassroots insights and ideas from 21 pedagogic pioneers shaping the future of teaching and learning in the classroom. Once again, we delve into 10 big topics in education today, each suggested to us by our diverse and loyal teacher community. Contributors include an eclectic Scottish Primary school teacher who's enlivened learning with mascots Etienne and Jorge, to a head of History in the south of France with a love of treasure hunting, to an established teacherpreneur in Connecticut with a mission to turn pupils into digital citizens.

Following on from the positive feedback surrounding last year's inaugural edition, we've decided to go bigger with everything for 2016/17. This means double the number of printed copies in circulation, and, most importantly, much more content, with particular emphasis on case studies from both practitioners and innovative education suppliers.

The 2016/17 school year is bound to be as bumpy a ride as ever. You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll likely drink several Olympic-size swimming pools worth of coffee. But throughout it all, you'll be part of a passionate, collaborative and innovative sector that's forever moving forward. With the following thoughts, resources, stories and case studies, the IMS Guide aims to reflect that. Happy reading!

66

Once again, we delve into 10 big topics in education today, each suggested to us by our diverse and loyal teacher community.



M. Forshaw

Michael Forshaw
Managing Director

Join the Innovate My School community!



We couldn't be prouder of our community - a group ranging from fresh-faced NQTs, to inspection-hardened classroom veterans, to nomadic edu-pioneers. These are the people who provide our website guest articles...



Not only is teacher / head of Science **Matthew Broderick** (@mrbroderick147) the lost Gallagher brother - he also authored '*Achieving edu-innovation by daring to "give it a go!"*' Matthew is based in Abu Dhabi.



Cumbria's **Carmel Bones** (@bones_carmel) is an edu-consultant, and wrote '*10 Takeaway tips for teaching like Ant and Dec*'. She collaborates with many educators, including...



...**Nathan Ashman!** Nathan (@Nathanashman) is lead teacher in New Technologies at St Wilfrid's Academy, Blackburn. He's the subject of '*How I embraced New Technology over the school year*'.



Philadelphia-based technology coordinator **Margaret Powers** (@mpowers3) seeks to "use technology as a tool for global collaboration". Her passion led to '*Building an IDEA Studio and becoming a gardener!*'



Manx-based Lancs lass **Rachel Smith** (@lancsclassrach) wrote the ludicrously-popular '*Revolutionising Languages learning with edtech resources*'. She's an MFL teacher and digital leader with a passion for edtech.

Want to get involved?
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Classroom Management

Learning can take place anywhere, but the majority of a child's education will happen in a classroom. Thing is, there are so many ways to run that classroom. How do you organise the space? How do you seat the pupils? What about visuals, or resources? You have to take into account behaviour, special education needs, and also where you're going to be for all of this.

With so many factors to consider and choices to make, managing a classroom can be like navigating a maze. Thankfully, it is a maze that many teachers are constantly exploring. Here, we seek the guidance of four intrepid navigators - **Kat Howard, Lisa Ashes, Judith McKerrecher** and **Alex Fairlamb** - to steer us through the perils of classroom management, into the sunlit uplands of successful learning.

“

These pupils had been at this school for years, and had gotten away with poor behaviour before. This led me to a new strategy: I was going to hand it all over to them.



Unlocking the potential of Classroom Management

Kat Howard: Classroom management is not only using the classroom environment to maximise learning within lessons, but also ensuring that teachers and pupils alike experience as little 'dead-time' as possible. There are several factors that contribute to this: Low-level disruption, ineffective use of space / resources and a lack of student involvement all devalue the time that you have to ensure that all learners develop their knowledge and understanding. Your classroom space should not only be a personalised area in which you can tailor your teaching style, but also somewhere that you can strike a happy balance between established routines and the messy chaos of curious learning. Simple, right?



Pupils need to know that the teacher is interested in them and in their learning on an individual level, and not simply as a class collectively.

Lisa Ashes: Positive learning behaviours are not naturally built into most pupils. They need to be taught what good learning looks like if you are going to unlock the potential of your lessons. Begin by asking yourself, "What would success look like for me?"

Success, for me, means students who can communicate effectively, who know the boundaries of behaviour. It means my students and I looking forward to our lessons and an atmosphere charged with purpose. This does not remain a dream scenario if you plan well to make it happen. Some groups may start as a 'nightmare' class. Some may come to you as placid angels. Every group will need you to spend time getting to know them, their needs, their challenges and their strengths so that you can plan their route to success.

Judith Mc Kerrecher: No matter how knowledgeable we are about our subject, effective classroom management is the key to unlocking the



door to productivity. It leads to and comes from good teaching and learning, and should not be seen as a separate entity.

The following should be considered essential for maintaining a supportive, inclusive learning environment:

- Good relationships.
- Being organised.
- Consideration of context and class composition.
- Assessment for Learning and different teaching strategies.
- Self-awareness.
- Flexibility.
- A commitment to seeking the best outcomes for all learners.

Alex Fairlamb: Classroom management is key to effective teaching and learning. Creating an environment where students feel enthused, confident and safe is key to avoiding unwanted disruptions. The important thing is to ensure that students enter a room knowing that they are there to learn, that they are about to be empowered with knowledge, that they know where the resources are that they need to help them to succeed, and that there is a teacher in the room who will guide them. If students enter an engaging environment, this can set the tone for their learning throughout the lesson. Additionally, it can determine how you effectively teach, as your own confidence will grow.

Classroom Management: Challenges

Lisa Ashes: It is sometimes too easy to remove a 'problem' child from learning in order to bring classroom management under control. Similarly, it is very easy to revert to "teaching the exam" to safely get students through school and keep your job. The challenges for teachers seem to be increasing termly, meaning creativity is stifled.

Our children have grown up in a culture that gives them free education whether they want it or not. Children I have been working with recently complain that education feels so far removed from real life that they see no purpose in it. A one-size-fits-all model is alienating teachers and students. Therefore, sufficiently investing time in classroom management is vital - provide pupils with the experience that they need.



It's all about creating a work space that is clearly outlined to students as yours, but is also "the place where we do the work."

Judith Mc Kerrecher: Strategic approaches are necessary, but they are only as effective as the teacher who uses them. In their dealings with learners, teachers must adopt a consistent approach but know the needs of their learners and be flexible enough to adapt to them. This involves skill, time, persistence and, sometimes, collaboration with other members of the education community. Words must be chosen and used wisely, and any consequences or promises should be followed up. Otherwise the teacher loses credibility. Learners will not thank a teacher for empty praise. They are adept at sussing out how genuine teachers are in their approach to them, and are not easily duped. **Firm, fair** and **friendly** are all positive words for establishing relationships, but it is essential to maintain respect, authority and control for the safety and learning of all pupils while creating an atmosphere of positivity and trust.

Kat Howard: In my training year, I found the concept of managing a classroom both daunting and, at times, impossible to approach in a consistent manner. It was not until my time as an NQT, where I had secured a position that meant I finally had my own classroom, that I realised this had been the centre of my anxieties. It's all about creating a workspace that is clearly outlined to students as yours, but is also "the place where we do the work". Putting down clear boundaries is paramount to running your own metaphorical ship of productivity.

However, if the elements of classroom management are left as unspoken, unmapped rules where we expect students to understand our expectations without perhaps making them explicit, then challenges can often appear.

Observations of effective teachers outline three key elements to effective classroom management: established routines, a positive and productive work space for both student and teacher and, finally, clearly signposted mutual expectations for both parties' behaviour. All too often, it is easy to assume that these key aspects have been established before your arrival. It is better to presume the opposite and instead outline to children the way in which you will work to make them successful in their achievements and motivations.

Alex Fairlamb: There are a variety of different challenges which come with classroom management. A key one can be classroom environment, eg size of your room, the layout, board location, display space. All of these can make it harder to control your teaching space. Some 'roving' teachers may find this even more difficult. Being comfortable in your own teaching environment can be key to creating the right atmosphere for effective learning. A lack of resources and funding can be an issue too, along with little time to create an effective learning environment. Some may find it hard to personalise their spaces and update them, given demands from elsewhere and the cost of materials. However, creative thinking might find some ways to escape those pitfalls.

Managing Behaviour: Will ‘What Works’ Always Work?

CASE STUDY by **Lisa Ashes**

Having enjoyed ten years in the same school, gaining respect and notoriety, I began to hear the same grumble as I delivered CPD: **“That works for you because of who you are in this school.”** This is a fair point. How could I find out if what works for me really works? That’s right... I went on supply.

This year out of my comfort zone has been one heck of a learning experience. I went from favourite to fill-in, and made many new observations along the way about managing difficult behaviour. My old classroom had a culture of learning. Pupils knew the protocols as they walked through the door. It did not matter how they behaved out there – in here, we learned well. These protocols were gained from years of experience. I knew they worked in my old classroom, but would they work out here too?



books where I wanted them. The books with the most graffiti and least work were placed away from each other and close to me. I did not know these pupils, so I took as many clues as I could find to arrange a good working space. Next, I readied a task that would be achievable while still requiring them to solve a problem. A word search might be a good settler, but it does not require much skill to identify words in a grid. I prefer riddles or discussion questions that get the children thinking. Pupils should have something to think about as they enter the lesson and this should have purpose in the lesson that is about to follow. The lesson that did follow was as well planned as it could be when you have no idea about the pupils you are going to teach. It was filled with questions, new vocabulary and opportunities to explore. This was my old way in a new setting and, most of the time, it worked.

My first placement lasted four weeks. The more I got to know the pupils the easier it was to plan lessons that suited their needs. My protocols were soon embedded for pupils and other expectations were quickly picked up too. There was only one class that wouldn’t play the game...

When it Doesn’t Work

You know that dream teachers get before term begins? The one where every member of the senior leadership (SLT) team is watching you teach and



I did not know these pupils, so I took as many clues as I could find to arrange a good working space.

My First Assignment

When I walked into my first supply job, I knew that the pupils would be looking at me, not with respect, but with expectation. They would expect a supply teacher, on supply because s/he couldn’t get another job. They would be expecting to push my buttons to see how far I would go. They would be expecting to get away with as little work as possible because I was nothing more than supply. This is the culture in many of our Secondary schools, and it’s not just the children that think this way. I prepared to unpack my usual learning protocols in this new environment. Would they still work so far from my own room?

Firstly, I ensured that I was in control of the environment. I set out the desks and placed their

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nobody will behave? You seem to have lost your voice and you have no control. That dream became my reality. It was an older year group and they had been through five supply teachers before me. They were skilled in the art of supply destruction and, no matter how well prepared I was with protocols, they didn't care. If I addressed them, they spoke louder. If I asked them to complete a task, I was ignored. One kinder girl near the front told me not to worry. She explained that they never listened and I should just sit back and wait for it to be over. What had worked in my old school, what had worked with the five other classes, was not working now. What could I do?



The students had gotten to know me, whether they wanted to or not.

After I had finished crying, I decided to reassess the situation and look at it from a new perspective - theirs. This was their room and I had come along and tried to put my own stamp on it. They had been at that school many years and, in their experience, they had gotten away with poor behaviour with supply teachers before. Supply teachers come and go; what would be the point in behaving for this one? Like all of the others, this supply will leave soon enough so let's have fun while we can. This new perspective led me to a new strategy in my planning. I was going to hand it all over to them.

The next lesson started with clear instructions on the board. An investigation had been set up, complete with differentiated questions from the simple to the more complex. Information stations had been created for the gathering of information, and my role was to sit back and observe. I did not allocate seats. When they asked me what to do, I pointed to the board. As part of the instructions, I clearly linked tasks to their purpose. The purposes ranged from improving GCSE grades to developing personal learning and thinking skills.

The first task was simple enough for anyone to get started, and soon enough they did. They talked amongst themselves but tackled the tasks. They soon began asking for my help as the tasks became more complex. My help was offered willingly until I was no longer needed. When they initiated conversation with me, I was kind and helpful. I took it as an opportunity

to get to know the individual asking for help. Soon, I knew quite a bit about most people in the class. During times when nobody needed me, I would observe relationships and listen to conversations to get to know what made them tick. The information gathered was used in the planning of lessons to come.

By week two, I was able to teach again. They had gotten to know me, whether they wanted to or not. I hadn't asserted my dominance over them. I hadn't shouted or punished them. I looked at the situation through their eyes and re-planned their learning by thinking about the experience from their point of view... It worked! Then I moved on.

Final Thoughts

Having been out of my school for over a year now, I have come across many classes like this one. Classes that are angry have no respect for their own teachers - let alone supply. Each time, I start with my own protocols. When these protocols fail, I go back to the drawing board and explore other possibilities to get them to want to learn. What works in one situation can fall flat on its face in another but what works every time is the art of re-planning from a different perspective.

When you are faced with a nightmare class, giving up and blaming systems or children will never get you to where you want to be. Having a repertoire of techniques will help you to get so far. When all else fails, what will help you move forward is your own resilience, an ability to reassess and the tenacity to keep going until you finally succeed. What works will not always work but, if at first you don't succeed, don't ever give up! There is always another way.

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Class Blogs On Your School Website

CASE STUDY by Schudio

Class blogs are one of the most fantastic ways to meet lots of needs in one fell swoop. From engaging your students in class and inspiring them to write for an audience outside the classroom, to being a key tool in effective parental engagement, using news and blogs on your website effectively is key to online success.

Stephen Boyd, deputy headteacher at Carleton Green Primary School in Lancashire, spoke with **Schudio** about how they use their website in class and day-to-day to solve lots of issues and maintain their site effectively...

The school are really innovative and saw the clear benefits of a website that could be used by staff and students regularly as a key communication tool.

THE CHALLENGE

Carleton Green came to Schudio with an ageing school website that was difficult to maintain and was

really hard to get staff and students involved day-to-day. Adding content was tricky, especially things like photo galleries and videos. There were no options that allowed different people to contribute content, and certainly no control to approve content before it goes live on the website.

Most importantly, the site wasn't responsive, and so was really difficult to use on smartphones. This was a challenge that had to be overcome if the school was going to reach their audience with their new, exciting content.

THE SOLUTION

The school leadership commissioned a new website and brand, along with stunning photos and a new app. They made sure they chose a company that had a proven track record of delivering great websites who also had a system that was easy to use, regularly updated and was provided by a company that was able to support them very well.

Q. How do you use your school website in your classroom?

We use our website primarily through blogging. I usually write a blog at the end of a lesson, along with the children and we detail what we've learnt in that class.

We don't do it after every class - that would be too much work, and I don't think you have to - but we do two or three posts a week. One of the best things we can do is accept comments from parents which means we've seen their involvement increase and improve over the last year.

Q. So how would you encourage other schools to start blogging?

Definitely keep it simple to start with! We found it worked really well to encourage staff to blog at least once a week, and get them uploading photos into the photo galleries on our website (which is really easy).

Your school website is one of the greatest windows into the life of your school, so use it to the best of your ability. If you've got a great product to help you manage it, it's so much easier.

Q. You're using the Schudio CMS for your website. Why?

There are many great features in there, but the one that's the most popular at the moment is the 'Document Groups'. It's a fab feature for easily uploading a mass collection of documents, such as policies or parent's newsletters.

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Overhauling Classroom Management For Maximum Effect

CASE STUDY by Judith McKerrecher

The focus of this case study is an S2 (Second Year, ages 12/13 - 13/14) language class of 30 mixed ability learners consisting of 18 boys and 12 girls. The school is fully comprehensive and is situated in a semi-rural area.

The key challenges for the language teacher of this class were as follows:

- The large proportion of boys in relation to girls meant that the lesson seemed to be dominated by a significant few who had influence over some other learners.
- There had been a small number of parental concerns expressed.
- The class appeared to be demotivated and was switching off from the learning process.
- The classroom was always in disorder when learners left the room.
- Some learners were coming to class with no equipment which delayed the start of the lesson and allowed even more time for disruptive behaviour.



The teacher had a bank of spare materials and equipment at the front of the room so that less fuss was made or time was lost.

Although the teacher was beginning to feel a sense of dread as she awaited this class, she wanted to maintain a solution focused approach to addressing the issues. In order to do this, she did not hide the difficulties she encountered from her colleagues, as she needed support and advice. After discussing the challenges with two colleagues in other subject areas, and with her head of department, she...

- Looked at her classroom layout and realised that the horseshoe of tables did not suit the learners in the class. She decided to change the layout of the room with a seating plan she had designed to take into consideration helpful and unhelpful combinations of learner.
- Considered the different levels of ability in her class and, whereas she usually differentiated by outcome and had extension tasks to hand, she started a new system which had clear opportunities for progression and formative assessment. This meant that learners were more responsible for their own learning, and were able to discuss their progress and help each other.
- Had a bank of spare materials and equipment at the front of the room so that less fuss was made or time was lost. She ensured learners became familiar with a system of collecting what they needed and focused all of her attention on starting the lesson as positively as she could.
- Introduced more cooperative learning strategies to the class in an attempt to build mutually supportive and interdependent teams, focusing upon a social goal over a set period of time and allocating roles to the learners.
- Invited a colleague to sit in her classroom and identify what they perceived to be the main issues in order to ascertain further support and feedback.
- Involved her learners in deciding a very simple set of class rules, and referred to them throughout the class when behaviour was unhelpful, or at the end of the class to talk about where improvements had been made. She asked the head of department to congratulate learners where deserved and appropriate, but not for the sake of praise or to be patronising. Occasionally, the head of department phoned parents to tell them about learner accomplishments and successes.
- Was able to draw up a timetable with the other

teachers in the department. This meant that a learner could work in a different classroom as a last resort, a measure usually reserved for some of the very energetic boys in an S5 or S6 class.

- Ensured that she established a very clear routine at the beginning and end of class. This set the tone for the lesson and ensured the room was less messy when the learners left.

Furthermore, any learner removed from the class was involved with a restorative meeting with the teacher at the earliest possible convenience, and definitely before the next lesson. One boy was issued with a target sheet for the class, but was fully involved in setting his own targets and a very short discussion about his progress in achieving them at the end of each lesson. After two weeks, he was ready to engage with learning in a more positive manner.



Pupils started to interact more effectively in cooperative learning tasks.

Impact upon the teacher:

The teacher was grateful for the support of her peers and was relieved to embrace the changes she wanted to implement. This made her feel more relaxed when she was with the class, and the pupils could sense that she was calm and more in control. Surprisingly, although the occasional learner still had no equipment for class, most of them started to produce their own as there was no longer attention given over to wasting time as the lesson began.

The teacher was then better able to identify and support those who persistently had nothing for class. She recognised that the class seemed to appreciate the routine, but she had found that they were reluctant to accept the new seating plan at first and often sat where they chose until the teacher moved them again. This was initially very tiring, but she persisted in her efforts. After a few weeks, she felt it was time well spent. The teacher's own observations and reflection, along with the helpful feedback from a colleague who sat in on the class, informed her planning in respect to the times of day she had the class. Together, they identified 'hot spot' times and

planned activities better suited to those. Again, the teacher felt less anxious about any issues which had arisen in the past months, gaining confidence and ideas she would develop in the future.

Impact upon learners:

Pupils were generally more motivated by being involved in their own learning. They started to interact more effectively in cooperative learning tasks, although some low-level disruption persisted from time to time, especially in the afternoons. They became familiar with a routine at the beginning of class, and most of those whom had arrived without equipment either chose to bring it or made efforts to borrow it from their peers before class. Learners enjoyed being involved in the drawing up of their own classroom rules, and were better able to understand when the teacher found some behaviours unacceptable.

Generally, none of them wanted to spend time working in another class, and the boy whom had used a target sheet indicated that the experience was a positive way of engaging with the teacher at the end of class. He enjoyed talking about his progress, although he occasionally slipped back into negative behaviour. However, having a clear idea of consequences and a say in what was not acceptable seemed to make it easier for him to dissolve issues before they escalated. The learners were more settled, and had a clearer idea of what was expected. Most of them were now glad to get on with the work, enjoy their progress and see that the teacher was tackling issues in the room. They had found this low-level disruption annoying and very demotivating before. Word spread that parents were sometimes phoned when things went well and the atmosphere was much more conducive to learning. Some learners actively sought this positive reinforcement, and liked their parents being involved. The class generally remained the most challenging on the teacher's timetable, but there was a perceivable change in atmosphere, attitude and effort.

Impact on parents:

A minority of parents had heard from their children about some of the issues in the classroom. They had been in touch with the school, fearing their children were missing out on the more apparent positive experience of their peers in other S2 classes. Gradually, the messages communicated by their children became more about the learning and the changes than about negative behaviours and barriers

to learning. Parents were very pleased to get the changes than about negative behaviours and barriers to learning. Parents were very pleased to get the occasional phone call about the improvement or successes of their child. The parental complaints ceased, and where there were minor issues, parents were more supportive in how they communicated, either via short note or a direct question via their child which the teacher followed up for them quickly and effectively.

Conclusions:

The change in atmosphere and attitude was transformational to the learning process. Although the actions taken to overcome or decrease the challenges had taken time, persistence, frustration and huge efforts from a range of colleagues, the following points were key to making improvements:

- The willingness of the teacher to be solution focused and deeply examine her practice and organisation.
- The commitment and support of other colleagues within the school.
- The development of learner / learner and learner / teacher relationships through involvement, dialogue, planned teaching strategies and the building of mutual respect.
- Positive parental engagement.
- Clear rules, responsibilities and unconditional positive regard for all.

It must be stressed that the actions taken did not suddenly eliminate the challenges and issues within the class. However, they went some way to moving a tricky situation in the right direction ensuring there was growth, learning and resilience for both teacher and learner.

Gaining Mastery Of The Classroom By Offering Stimulating Spaces

by **Alex Fairlamb**

I spent three years teaching in an all-boys school, which, as a young, female NQT, meant it was quite difficult to assert authority over streetwise teenagers who were not only taller than me, but knew the school system inside and out.

I spent the first few weeks battling through trying to gain control; shouting, attempts at consequences and threats and calling upon their head of year. This was the case until I ultimately realised that the reason why I was struggling was because I was not managing my classroom; I was surviving in it. I decided from then on to make a change. I spent the day decorating the displays with historical posters and work, created resources stations and putting books into book boxes. I reaffirmed expectations with signs and put motivational posters on the wall. I sourced ideas like a 'noise-o-meter'; fun tools that could help to calm a class. I also decided to use music to create the right environment: as students entered the room, they would have until the end of the music to get prepared for learning by getting their equipment out.

These few steps meant that I was able to gain

mastery of the classroom and become more confident. Instead of scrabbling furiously for books and resources, I could confidently point my students to where they should get them from. If the noise was too loud, a countdown or noise-o-meter would grant them the opportunity to either end conversations or reduce it to the agreed level.

Using the walls as learning spaces also worked well. Instead of being slumped in seats throughout the lesson, I could direct students to the wall to learn new information, providing more physical learners with the opportunity to expel energy. Students would also skip into the classroom during the music, singing along and get their equipment out, not wanting to miss the countdown. Classroom management comes from the confidence that you have and the atmosphere that you create by demonstrating that. Students feel reassured by a convincing presence, and are more likely to respond to routine and poised teachers. I ended the year on a high and learned many strategies as a result of it. Although, I don't think I'll be hurrying to play Indiana Jones anytime soon!

Further Reading

Lisa Ashes

Why Don't Students Like School? By Daniel T Willingham: A cognitive scientist explains learning in an interesting, readable way that is easy to apply to your planning.

There is Another Way, By Various Contributors: I am biased, but this book is fantastic! Looking at learning from a human point of view and filled with ideas for managing your classroom in 'another way'.

Blog by David Whitaker - bit.ly/LAshes1

This is a very powerful bit of writing that reminds us of the responsibility we have as teachers.

thelearninggeek.com/literacy-behaviour-and-wonder: This is one of mine that goes into more detail about some of the ideas mentioned briefly here.

Jude McKerrecher

www.whatmotivateslearning.com
www.themotivatedschool.com

The Motivated School and Motivating Every Learner by Alan McLean

The art, or craft, of effective classroom management is linked to motivation, inclusion, appropriate support & challenge and aspiration. Alan McLean was a

principal psychologist in Glasgow until May 2011. He has written several very effective staff development programmes including *Promoting Positive Behaviour in the Primary School* and *Promoting Positive Behaviour in the Secondary School*. The website links are an excellent way to explore, practically and reflectively, our learners as individuals and ourselves as teachers. His books and websites are practical and useful to educators all over the world.

Kat Howard

Mary Myatt's new book, *High Challenge, Low Threat* has a fantastic chapter entitled *Fewer Things in Greater*

Dept that discusses the importance of work space within school.

Alex Fairlamb

How to manage behaviour in the classroom
bit.ly/AFair11

This article provides some easy to implement tips that can transform your classroom management. Simple tips like the countdown can really help to de-escalate noise and prevent avoidable conflict.

Classroom Management, Teach First
bit.ly/AFair12

Equipped with case studies and articles, this website is great for exploring how classroom management can lead to effective teaching and learning. Given the context of some of the schools that these trainees

work in, it can provide valuable insight into how simple steps can ensure the learners are engaged and motivated.

Primary Resources
bit.ly/AFair13

While targeted at Primary teachers, the signs can easily be adapted to Secondary. These resources create visual reminders for expectations as well as motivational mantras. They can really help to reinforce your expectations whilst adding colour and personalisation to the classroom.

Ideas For Managing The Parts Of Your lesson

by **Lisa Ashes**

Connect

- Play calming music as your students enter, setting the scene for the lesson.
- Work together to create a simple class manifesto; have it out for students each lesson. When creating your manifesto, do not concentrate on poor behaviour and consequences. Show them that you are working *with* them by asking them about positive learning experiences too.
- Use a conch to get attention. This saves your voice and reinforces turn taking.

Learning Outcomes

Use your learning outcomes to highlight positive learning behaviours that are being practised as well as the subject specific learning. For example:

- To develop an understanding of the poem *London* through group investigation.
- To demonstrate an ability to *manage your own behaviour* and effectively take part in the lesson.

Search for Meaning

If pupils never feel a sense of satisfaction from their learning, it may become a chore for them. Try to plan learning that is like a riddle. Not too tricky and not too easy but just enough so that, once they have worked it out, learning feels good and they want to do that again!

Write a list of barriers to learning for each group you teach. Are they: unable to sit still, don't take turns when talking, don't like learning, keen but have weak literacy? The list goes on and every group is different. If you highlight their weaknesses and use this section of the lesson to become better learners, it will pay off in the long run.

Review

Make space to praise their effort and reward hard work. Highlight what they have done well so that they know what good learning looks like.

Top Tips For Classroom Management

by **Jude McKerrecher**

- Be organised and well prepared. This sets the tone for effective learning. Disorganisation can lead to a chaotic lesson where learners may take the opportunity to fill any wasted time with distractions.
- Maintain high expectations. Learners do not enjoy classes where there is no challenge and where there is no formal authority.
- Balance challenge with appropriate support,

discretely for individuals and skilfully by looking at class composition. Allow learners to develop their strengths with their peers. Cooperative learning is a very effective means of creating the conditions for learners to work effectively together and support each other through the roles they undertake. This can also support the development of social goals a teacher may identify for a given class.



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Top Tips For Classroom Management continued

- Establish good classroom routines. From seating plans to knowing how the lesson begins and ends, it is important there is a sense of safety and structure for effective learning.
- Involve learners in their own learning. Build in assessment for learning strategies. Share and co-create learning intentions and success criteria, provide varied activities which elicit evidence of understanding and allow time for feedback. Feedback between, and to, learners is important, but feedback about your own teaching via pupil voice involves learners in co-creating their own curricular experiences.
- Always help learners to find a way back from tricky situations where they may have overstepped the mark. Never hold grudges. However, have a shared understanding about what is not acceptable, and ensure restorative dialogue takes place. Follow school/departamental management procedure but consider involving learners in setting their own rules, rewards, consequences.
- Never be afraid to ask for support from colleagues. The greatest weakness in effective classroom management is to hide the challenges we encounter.
- Remember - not everything works all of the time, even when with the same pupils. We are dealing with young people who can change according to external circumstances and age. Cooperating with the teacher is a choice. We need to create the conditions where the correct choices are possible and where we acknowledge that we are all learners.

This Is How We Do Things Here

by **Kat Howard**

It is not for everyone, but I start with a housekeeping lesson. We usually make introductions, discuss our love of literature and then have a group-led discussion about their expectations for working effectively or a creative task that allows us to consider how valuable learning English / reading is for the world around us. We outline the features of effective learners, stressing the importance of applying these habits to make progress within English. We share the location of all the tools we need within a classroom (pens, books, features of a working support wall) and I explain how lessons will begin and close. I am a keen advocate of quiet before we leave the room, as it is important that the lesson closes with order (the learning allows us chaos!).

These administrative aspects may seem of

little importance, but it helps to acknowledge that they are necessary for the job at hand. After all, how can we expect to outline rules, if those rules are not given both context and reason for value? It also provides a swift approach when addressing behaviour that does not match the original expectations discussion - eg "Tom, we listen to others to show that we respect their opinion."

Finally, start with a smile! Be genuinely pleased to see each and every student, every time, no exceptions, no mentions of previous behaviour, only assumptions of the positive behaviour that is expected. Create an environment that focuses only upon the learning but also rewarding fantastic examples of learning in action as it occurs.

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Arts in SEN

Could artistic subjects be the answer to maximising the potential of many pupils with special educational needs? **Nancy Gedge, Beth Bennett** and **Aniela Zylinski** discuss their work in the field.



Bob lifted the lid of the piano and filled the hall with a one-fingered version of the first few notes of Ode to Joy. I didn't see this, but I heard it from my office. I thought it was a child with the Music teacher.



Unlocking potential with Arts in SEN

Nancy Gedge: Helping pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities embrace the Arts means that you can cater to individual pupils' needs, and avoid 'othering' anyone. Often, it can be the case that children with SEND need to follow a different programme of work. This can make it appear that the child is somehow different, someone other pupils can't have as their friend.

Learning with artistic activities is an empowering experience, allowing SEN pupils to be 'just one of the kids'. When you are always / often out of class or being helped by an adult, it is terribly easy to come to the conclusion that you can't do things for yourself, that you will always need to be helped. Finding those opportunities where children of all abilities can take part and learn, and be independent is a key part of a successful, inclusive education.



Artistic activities can be a conduit to increasing confidence, building new skills, broadening pupil life experiences and raising aspirations.

You don't need to be able to write to dance, you don't need to be able to read to sing. Your painting can be up on the wall with everyone else's no matter what level of expertise you have reached. As in a conventional orchestra, there are different parts to play, requiring different kinds of knowledge and different levels of skill.

Beth Bennett: The Arts are key to enabling SEN children to shine. Allow these learners the chance to follow the artistic path of their choosing (sometimes they are not even aware of where their abilities have come from, or that they have it). Music, visual art and Drama can be a conduit to increasing confidence, building new skills, broadening their life experiences, raising aspirations and achievement, engendering

empathy, tolerance, a sense of how they affect others around them. It also offers these young people a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. Ensure that you allow SEND children to experience all of these activities. For some, it may be one of the only ways they can communicate with the world around them.

Aniela Zylinski: My students particularly enjoy being able to access the graphic score activity on the BBC's Ten Pieces website (bit.ly/AZyII). With this, they notate their creative responses to what they hear, through using images and patterns to sketch out what the music represents - particularly useful for SEN learners. In today's lesson, there were lots of beautiful pictures of birds flying high over dense forests and mountains to represent Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending*. Middle-lower ability students often find learning to read and write notation quite a challenge, so it is refreshing and empowering for them to know that drawing pictures, symbols, and patterns to represent a composition is perfectly acceptable!

Graphic scores can also be set as homework - which indeed my Year 7s are working on currently (to listen to a short piece of music, create a timeline, and draw pictures to represent what they hear). This is perfect for SEN learners. Aside from writing down one's compositions, the use of ICT equipment such as hand-held recording devices or flip-cams is useful for students to record and then play back their work, so they can evaluate it and at the same time, demonstrate clear evidence of progress between lessons - crucial for a practical subject such as Music.

I also use well-known football chants to engage with the pupils. Each ability group tackle the piece differently. Higher-ability pupils learn notation *without* note names, while middle-lower ability / SEN students learn notation *with* note names. This way, all students are working on exactly the same piece of music and developing the same practical skills of improving co-ordination, motor skills and dexterity, as well as reading a form of notation and translating it into performing a piece of music.

Arts in SEN: Challenges

Nancy Gedge: One of the key challenges in this area is understanding the role of differentiation within a lesson, be that Music, Drama, painting or dance, so the first thing a teacher needs to do is look for those opportunities where a child can participate with minimal support. You need to think about what it is you are asking the children to do, and what skills and knowledge they will need both before and after your planned activity.

Many teachers worry that they do not have the level of skill needed in subjects such as Music and, say, painting, or that specialist equipment will be necessary. However, many everyday classroom resources can easily be used. For a child who needs to stand to paint, you could borrow an easel. If you hunt around, you should be able to find everything you need.



Many teachers worry that they do not have the level of skill needed in artistic subjects, or that specialist equipment will be necessary.

Beth Bennett: Unfortunately for many children with SEND, the curriculum narrows the older they get. They are given more and more interventions linked to the academic subjects to be 'Secondary-ready'. There are many external pressures to ensure "measurable progress" is made.

Many schools will be tempted to veer towards subjects that offer more concrete results. However,



from where will SEN pupils gain the opportunities for expressing themselves and their talents? Through the Arts, they can develop and showcase their creativity, and conceive landscapes for happiness, success and achievement.

Labelling children by their special need or disability can do them no favours, as their potential can get squashed under such labels and their voices, whether musical, dramatic or physically expressive, silenced. What underlying talents are out there waiting to be untethered? It can be difficult, but we must ensure they can fly free, enriching the world with their artistry.

Aniela Zylinski: Arts education is often differentiated by outcome, but sometimes it is just not possible to have SEN students working on the same task as the rest of the class. Also, when listening and appraising a piece of artistic work (in my case, Music) at KS3, it is important that the skills required for GCSE are introduced as early as possible, though this can often be difficult with so much on your plate. You may want to stick to what you know will work, but as a classroom teacher teaching mixed ability classes, it is crucial that you ensure that all students are able to access not only the curriculum, but to be as artistic as possible.

Charanga Musical School At Piper Hill Specialist Support School, Manchester

CASE STUDY by Charanga

It is beyond doubt that good music learning can have a profoundly positive effect on children and young people's learning capabilities. For children with language difficulties, music can provide opportunities for non-verbal expression helping them communicate mood and emotions with greater freedom. Working towards exciting music performances can increase confidence and help to develop new skills as well as providing a way for pupils to explore their creativity.

In many areas now, Music Education Hubs provide music programmes designed for children with special educational needs and disabilities. These tend to involve a music specialist visiting a school to lead the activities. The challenge for schools increasingly lies in finding ways to develop the skills of their own teachers so that the benefits of music can be embedded on a permanent and financially sustainable basis.

Charanga Musical School

Charanga's Musical School programme is now being used by over 7,000 UK Primary and Special schools to provide non-specialist teachers with the music teaching skills and digital resources to provide children and young people with high quality music learning.

Mark Burke, a music teacher and co-founder of Charanga says:

"Our Musical School concept is fairly simple. If you use modern music that pupils and teachers really like, embed it in simple interactive teaching tools that do some of the basic music skill work for you, and accompany these resources with tried and tested lesson plans, it's perfectly possible for any teacher to teach music confidently even if they're not a music specialist. It's surprising just how quickly your school can become really musical."

Piper Hill

Piper Hill Specialist Support School is an Outstanding school that caters for students aged 11–19 experiencing severe and profound learning difficulties. Some students experience significant physical disabilities and sensory impairments, and/or have difficulties in the area of social and emotional development. The proportion of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is approximately 30%.

Music at Piper Hill

Music had not been high on the agenda in the past, and had always been taught by a visiting music specialist. The teacher had been using Charanga Musical School resources for a while, and both he and the young people in his lessons had been really



enjoying it. Other teachers at Piper Hill, having watched these lessons and seen what children could achieve, decided to go for it themselves, and it was decided that the school would try to empower all teachers to deliver music on a regular basis, integrating music into the school curriculum.

Outcomes

- Rachel Hughes, lead assistant head at Piper Hill said: *"The Charanga Musical School programme is working well across the full spectrum of the school: Students are more engaged and they can see and play with more understanding behind the music"*.
- The Charanga Musical School scheme of work and elements from the more freestyle Musical School approach have been integrated into the school rolling plans for independent learners, experiential learners and structured learners in each Key Stage.
- The school's own teachers have taken ownership of delivering music and seen a dramatic change in music education in their school, by building the Charanga Musical School resources into their own learning strands. They have also adapted the Scheme to suit the needs of their school.
- *"Teachers and students' confidence has been built up and the level of concentration has been brilliant, the students are not distracted"* (Piper Hill non-specialist class teacher). There has been a huge increase in progress across the school, every student apart from one has reached their targets! *"The progression is amazing, I couldn't believe it!"* (Piper Hill non-specialist class teacher).

Next Steps

The team at Charanga pride themselves on responding to teacher and student feedback.

www.innovatemyschool.com

Joanna Mangona, Charanga's creative leader for curriculum, has visited Piper Hill and talked to teachers and young people:

"The music making going on at Piper Hill has inspired us to develop new ideas for Musical School. We will be adding a new SEND section to the programme which will help teachers working within this educational context to access the resources and ideas that work best."



The school's own teachers have taken ownership of delivering music, seeing a dramatic change in music education.

The teachers at Piper Hill will continue to use the programme and as they gain confidence will aim to personalise their approach and draw on an ever wider range of the Musical School teaching ideas.

Concert Performance

In June 2016, the young people from Piper Hill performed a Classroom Jazz Unit from Charanga Musical School at a SEND seminar run by One Education in Manchester. The performance was magnificent; everyone played an instrument and improvised! Some of the young people explained to the audience what they had learnt and what they had enjoyed.

Try Musical School for yourself

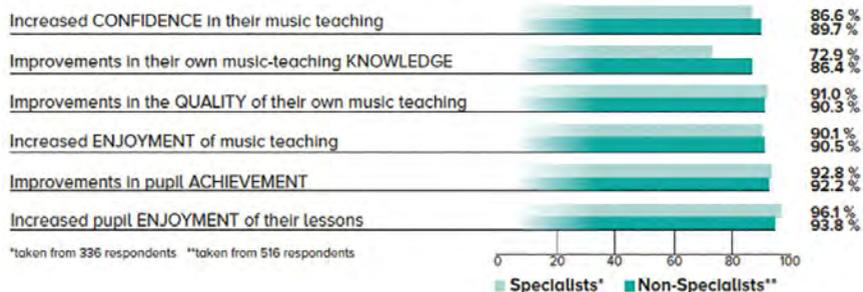
If you would like to try the Musical School approach and see whether it could be useful for your school, you can get a free, no-obligation trial from www.charanga.com.

If you have any questions about how the programme works please email info@charanga.com.

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TEACHER SURVEY "The impact of Musical School on teachers"



The Ballad Of Bob, SEN Music-Maestro

CASE STUDY by **Beth Bennett**

Bob, a six-year-old child with a diagnosis of ASD, joined us from another school part way through Reception. He has high sensory needs, for which he has a very structured sensory diet built into his day, and often removes clothing and seeks soft things to cuddle. He has a very limited echoic vocabulary, and knows what he likes and what he doesn't like:

- He likes biscuits and running through school.
- He likes computer games and horses.
- He likes bursting into rooms and watching the tropical fish.
- He likes laughing and getting his own way.
- He likes his Educational Support Assistant (ESA) and Learning Support Assistant (LSA) but he won't interact with other adults in school.
- He likes testing out others who try to work with him, just because they are not his usual ESA.
- He does not like the word "NO", and all that comes with it.



Bob plays by ear, and needs a full curriculum to bring out the music that is within him.

Bob kept sneaking into the drum room and bashing on the drums, giving himself away quickly with all the noise. His toy of choice is one that plays music. Bob does not come into assembly, except on Tuesday, when it is singing-time for the whole school, and he will stand outside listening. He stands there for up to half an hour, listening and stilling.

One day, Bob made yet another bid for freedom and made it all the way through school to the hall. He lifted the lid of the piano and filled the hall with a one-fingered version of the first few notes of *Ode*

to *Joy*. I didn't see this but I heard it from my office. I thought it was a child with the Music teacher.

Nothing was said about this until Bob did it again - this time, I saw and heard him. We added chime bars to his 'objects of reference' boxes. He played a few more notes of *Ode to Joy*.

We tried taking him to the piano and encouraging him, but he would not touch it. His rules on this one. We played a few notes to entice him, but he ignored us. He will find his way to the hall every so often and give a quick teaser.

I spoke to his parents and asked if he had a piano app on his iPad. Was he tapping keys that lit up in order to support his progress? Was it playing a few notes and then Bob copying it? No, to both. They told me he did have a small keyboard (unprogrammed with pre-recorded tunes...) and he would play recognisable bits of tunes that he listened to repeatedly.

Bob was playing by ear. This child, who is making progress in extremely small steps, with endless repetition of everything, in small chunks, needs a full curriculum to bring out the music that is within him.

Yes, we all want him to be able to communicate clearly with the people in his life. Yes, we all want him to be able to read, write and count. Yes, we all want him to be able to live his life as independently as he possibly can. But no, not at the cost of squashing this hidden talent that is inside this young boy, trying to find its way out into the world. We want to nurture and enable him in all areas of his development.

I am working with a few people who are trying to support Bob to harness this talent. We do not want to force him to do things he does not want to (although he would let us if he could in other areas of his education). We do not want to be the ones who ignore a natural gift in order to gain a couple of points of progress on a table somewhere.

We do want him to do what makes him happy, giving him a creative way of communicating and exploring the world around him.



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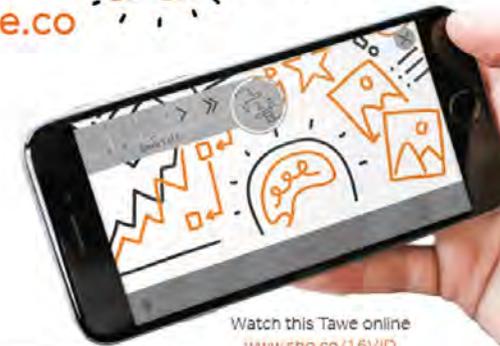
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The Power Of Sound And Echo

by Nancy Gedge

Take a Music lesson with a Primary class. One of the key skills with young children is to identify the sounds that particular instruments make, which is great for SEN pupils. A simple start to this is to place a selection of class percussion instruments in front of a screen. The teacher plays a 'mystery instrument' behind the screen, and the children must select the correct one. Listening and identifying sounds can be a challenge for some children, so a simple way to differentiate (and, if skilfully done, appear that you are not differentiating at all) is to slowly increase the number of choices from which a child can make their final selection. For a child with a considerable learning difficulty, you may want to give them a choice of two – or even one. For a child with more experience of musical instruments, you could increase the number, or the closeness in timbre (quality of sound).

An extension to this activity would be to ask the

child, once they have selected the correct instrument, to play back the rhythm you give them (I call this game 'Echo'). Many teachers use a variety of this game using clapping, but you can do it with musical instruments too. Again, varying the complexity of the rhythms you play is a simple way to vary the level of challenge experienced by your children.

The key principle in what you do to adapt your lessons to meet the needs of your particular learners is firstly to know their strengths and weaknesses well – to know them. If you don't know them, how can you match what you are asking them to do to give them just the right amount of challenge to provide them with the best learning experience possible? And the best way to do this is to teach them yourself – a spreadsheet and numerical data will only tell you so much.

And, of course, the other thing you need to know is your subject – and if you feel worried about it, ask!

Further Reading

Nancy Gedge

The books that have had a huge influence on me as a classroom Music teacher (and that's what I am – I play a couple of instruments, but I'm not what I would call a specialist or an expert) are the books on early music with children by Jan Holdstock. The *Earwiggo* series of books, listening, pitch, rhythm, notation, chords and songs are a great place to start. Written for children with SEND, they are full of simple activities that are easily used with children in KS1 and expanded from first principles to KS2. They are available here: www.lindsaymusic.co.uk/acatalog/jh.html

My book, *Inclusion for Primary Teachers* - bit.ly/NGeg1 - contains a wealth of practical ideas

for SEND differentiation in mainstream Primary schools across the curriculum, from the arts to PE.

Beth Bennett

Here are some must-reads for you:

- SEN Magazine - *Music of Note* - bit.ly/BBenn1
- The Warwick Commission - *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth* - bit.ly/BBenn2
- Friendship Circle - *The Importance of the Arts in Special Education* - bit.ly/BBenn3

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Pupil Assessment

How can teachers best determine the effect that their work is having on each individual learner? Furthermore, what are the best ways to give detailed, personalised feedback without eating up too much of the day? It's a tricky area for teachers, which is why we've turned to three educators who are savvy in this field: **Russell Stannard**, **Sonia Cooper** and **Ben Ward**.

“

I took over a small room, grabbed a camera and some biscuits and then randomly selected students from lessons to answer a few questions on feedback.



Unlocking the potential of Pupil Assessment

Ben Ward: When national curriculum levels were removed, a world of possibilities was opened up to us. It was an opportunity to create an assessment framework that was free from the weaknesses and mindsets associated with the old system and create something that was fit for purpose, and more significantly, fit for **your** context.

First of all, don't recreate levels. After all, what a missed opportunity! Levels created arbitrary granular measurements to create an illusion of progress; they revolved on rubrics and descriptors which became a driver for pedagogy and progression; and teacher/pupil or teacher/parent dialogue focused on the attainment of the next sub level rather than on genuine learning. Second, in the words of the great Tom Sherrington: "Measure what you value, don't value what you measure".



The aim should always be to find evidence of where students have made progress and where we need to support them.

Russell Stannard: One of the most misunderstood and underused technologies at our disposal is blogging. I am continually surprised at teachers' perceptions about blogging and what role it can play in our teaching and learning. In my experience, it is probably one of the most useful technologies at the disposal of a teacher.

Most blogging tools really work like websites. They allow content to be embedded into them and they can be built with a range of designs and layouts. There are different options for privacy, and users can add a whole range of plug-ins. These plug-ins are very easy to use, and can make a very simple blog look professionally produced without any technical knowledge. More recently, the ability to add additional pages to a blog means it can really be used like a website, and indeed many websites that you



see on the internet use tools like Google Blogger or WordPress.

The range of features and choices available within tools like Blogger can encourage students to develop a range of digital literacies, including layout, navigation, design, use of colour, copyright, embedding of digital content and digital content creation. Blogger can easily be used for formative assessments and can be limited to writing activities, or used in a much broader sense as a type of e-portfolio tool.

Sonia Cooper: It is impossible to truly know how effective any attempt to teach is without some form of evaluation or assessment, whether it is the teaching of a survival skill in the wild or chemical formulae in the lab. As teachers, we seek to assess and evaluate how much students have learnt, and the purpose of this should always be to find evidence of where students have made progress and where we need to support them in moving forward. After all, as Mark Twain said: "If teaching were as simple as telling, we'd all be a lot smarter than we are".

It is evident that the critical point of feedback is not the method of delivery, colour of pen or latest stamp, but how the students engage with the content and use it to move forward in their learning, in essence when "feedback becomes feedforward".

Pupil Assessment: Challenges

Sonia Cooper: The majority of teachers I know recognise and value feedback as a tool for progress and learning in the classroom. However, when workloads are rising and lessons have to be planned for the next day, written marking in particular tends to slide down the priority list. Verbal feedback for individuals in the classroom also happens less often as pressures rise and the drive to "deliver" content leads to more teacher-led input and less opportunity for discussion.



Each week, five minute focus sessions were run in the class, each focusing on different aspects of Blogger.

Another factor which many teachers find disheartening is the fact that many students do not seem to respond to their feedback. Getting students to recognise the importance of all of the feedback they receive and taking ownership of their learning and progress is often the biggest challenge we face.

Ben Ward: Identify what assessment in your context needs to do, then work on a system that



enables you to do that – start from purpose. It can sometimes be difficult to avoid basing a system entirely on measurements such as test scores, which on their own are a poor proxy for learning. Pay attention to the harder-to-quantify things such as quality of work. After all, Campbell's Law suggests that the more we focus on specific quantitative measures, the more they tend to distort and affect the practice – assessment should never drive pedagogy.

Some school leaders may not want to take the risk of enabling teachers to use professional judgement: trust them, train them, and have systems that can ensure consistency.

Russell Stannard: We wanted to bring the development of digital literacies into various subject areas of the curriculum. You really need an option that caters to a range of digital literacies and can be used for formative assessment. Thankfully, blogging offered us a one-stop solution here. We also wanted to build up an evidence-base of student development through a course, as well as to create assessments for learning. The idea is that through the process of actually doing the assessment the students would learn and develop new skills. We felt that Blogger could offer all this.

Blogging For Assessment

CASE STUDY by **Russell Stannard**

Teaching languages

On a language course, students were asked to write up a weekly reflective diary on what they had learnt in class. They were introduced to the tool Blogger and taken through the basics of using the tool in one lesson. They were also directed to a series of help videos online that showed them all the key aspects of the platform. Each week, five minute focus sessions were run in the class, each focusing on different aspects of Blogger. The first session focused on technical issues, but the rest slowly moved to issues of layout and navigation. These went on for about the first six weeks of a 12 week course.

Blogger is a free tool from Google, so students do need a Google account. Once they have an account they can set up as many blogs as they want. The wide range of settings allow for an amazing amount of flexibility. These include setting privacy levels, having blogs with more than one author (students can work in pairs or groups), adding pages to create something more like a website and choosing from an enormous range of templates and layouts.



Again, this was an ideal opportunity to make use of Blogger as the assessment tool for the course.

The reflective diary that the students had to keep included a whole range of digital artefacts. For example, some weeks students were asked to answer questions regarding what they had done in the lesson, some weeks they were asked to participate in online chats and embed the examples into their blog. Other weeks they created podcast recordings and then embedded these. Some weeks they even created videos using their phones, a webcam or, in some cases, a simple flip video camera. All of this content could be embedded

into their blogs and used as evidence of a student's progress over a period of time. The result was a reflective weekly diary with a range of digital examples that showed evidence of the students learning over a period of time.

Teachers can access the blogs and leave comments or organise periodic meetings with students to look at their blogs together. Students can also be paired up and asked to read each other's blogs and leave comments. In this way the students always know they have an audience for their blogs. Later we extended this idea, so that students were following at least two other blogs.

The initial reaction of students is often to be quite reticent. However, most quickly warm to idea, and from my own experiences I've found the following things:

1. Students take ownership of their blogs and often go way beyond what they are asked to do. They take pride in deciding on the look and feel of the setup, and think about the way that it's organised.
2. Blogging causes a lot of interest in class. Students share ideas, plug-ins they have found, settings they have come across to change the look and feel of the blog and even the free templates they have discovered. There are always a few students who



don't engage in this way, but the overwhelming majority do.

3. This seems to have a knock-on effect on other technologies that they can learn to use. Students realise they can embed videos from YouTube or even create their own videos and embed them. It clearly impacts on their digital literacies.
4. Students were encouraged to read other blogs and comment on them. We found this created a much more supportive atmosphere in the class and later we decided to include a mark for the comments they leave on other blogs.



As teachers, we seek to assess and evaluate how much students have learnt.

As well as focusing on students' formative assessment, the same idea has also been used to track progress on a technology course. Again, learners were asked to write a reflective diary and embed examples of the different technologies they had been exposed to in their course.

Teacher Training Courses

On another occasion, I ran a teacher-training course (at the University of Warwick) in the use of technology in education. Again, this was an

ideal opportunity to make use of Blogger as the assessment tool for the course. Teachers were introduced to a range of technologies, and each week were asked to write up a blog post reflecting on the technologies and how they might use them in their own teaching and learning. Teachers were given a series of questions to answer in their blog:

- What is the technology and what does it do?
- How could it be used in your teaching and learning?
- What are the advantages?
- What are the disadvantages?

In what has probably been one of the most successful experiments I have done, the idea evolved over a period of five years and is still being used as the assessment tool on the course. It combines both formative and summative assessment, as teachers keep the blog on a weekly basis and then have to write up an essay at the end of the course about their experience of working with blogs. Both the blog and the essay are marked as part of the final assessment.

The findings were similar to the blogs that had been set up with the students, but these additional points could also be made.

1. Teachers often built up quite substantial audiences for their blogs as they shared them with their work colleagues. In some cases, the teachers even decided to continue the blogs after the course had run.
2. Teachers were partnered and received a mark for leaving comments on other teachers' blogs, and in many cases these comments were very formative and inciteful.
3. The blog greatly contributed to the dynamics on the course, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the assessment method used. Many teachers commented that the form of the assessment actually encouraged them to study and learn more. A lot of them felt they would use it in their own teaching and learning.

Here is an example blog kept by one of the teachers who decided to continue keeping the blog going even after the course had ended: **jogakonga2011.blogspot.co.uk**.

Marking: Is It Really Worth It?

CASE STUDY by Sonia Cooper

My journey with this question began when I stepped into the role of Assessment for Learning coordinator. At that time, the school's official position was that formative feedback should be given regularly, with a range of approaches to this, but there was little evidence of students responding. For example, some teachers were giving lengthy formative comments, sometimes longer than anything the student had written, and yet the students did not seem to DO anything with these comments. I wondered if the time spent marking and writing lengthy comments was actually worthwhile. Did it have any impact on the students' progress?

To investigate further, I decided to ask the students about their experiences. I took over a small room, grabbed a camera and some biscuits and then randomly selected students from lessons to answer a few questions on feedback. It was the most informative few hours I have spent as a teacher. I asked the same basic questions to students of all ages and got surprisingly similar responses. One student summed up it up by saying simply: "I want to know what I've done bad, what I've done good and what I can do better". To me, this is the single clearest statement of the purpose of any assessment – to praise the students for the progress, help them identify errors and provide ways to move forward.



Some teachers were giving lengthy formative comments, sometimes longer than anything the student had written.

Further surveys between staff and students confirmed these views, although there was an interesting mismatch between the levels of feedback teachers thought they were giving and what students felt they were receiving. This needed to be addressed by raising staff and student awareness



of the importance of responding to feedback. One reason for lack of response was students seeing errors as evidence of failure and giving up rather than persevering to improve. To move forwards, students needed the opportunity to develop resilience and skills for handling disappointing results so that they were empowered to make progress.

The DIRT-y Plan

It was clear that staff and students valued feedback, and the research supports its effectiveness in driving progress. The Teaching and Learning toolkit, published by the Education Endowment Foundation, ranks feedback as one of the highest impact strategies that schools can deploy, provided that the process involves students responding to high quality feedback. The challenge was how to improve the effectiveness of the assessment and feedback without adding to the workload of teachers. Long comments on work seemed to be intensive for the teacher, so a move was required towards more succinct feedback with a greater emphasis on what students did. It was important to avoid lengthy and restrictive instructions that prevented staff from using their own professional judgement as to what mode of feedback would work for their class. The focus needed to be on consistency of quality and impact on the students,

rather than conformity to any one trick, such as www/ebi stamps or traffic lighting, many of which are useful, but become dull and constrictive if enforced across a school.

The new policy that came from this process came down to just three words:

“FAF then DIRT.”

FAF stands for **frequent, actionable feedback** – short, clear pieces of feedback that gives students a clear point of action, given frequently. Sometimes that action might be as simple as correcting a spelling or an error; and sometimes it might involve redrafting or remodelling a piece of work, but the improvement or next step would be easily identified. **DIRT**, meanwhile, refers to **directed improvement and reflection time**. This means that we dedicate class or homework time for improving work or taking next steps based on the feedback provided. The only request was that if students did make improvements to their work they used a “purple pen of progress”, helping to highlight the opportunity given to students during DIRT.



Making it Happen

The training for staff focussed very much on the idea of turning it around, giving students greater responsibility for responding and improving, while encouraging staff to keep their workload down by using smarter, more succinct approaches to marking written work. The sharing of tips and provision of resources meant that staff were equipped to put the DIRT-y plan into action.

However, in order to have maximum impact, it was essential that students were aware of how and why they needed to act on their feedback and to emphasise the fact that it was THEIR feedback to do something with, and not anyone else's. So, shortly after sharing the plans with staff we ran a school-wide tutorial. Every student participated in activities focussed around the key idea of acting on feedback using shows such as *The X Factor*, *The Great British Bake Off* and *Masterchef* as examples. The sessions were successful, as the staff delivering them were of course the staff who would in future be giving the feedback and expecting the students to act on it.



Every student participated in activities focussed around shows such as *The X Factor*, *The Great British Bake Off* and *Masterchef*.

Has it worked?

Staff have embraced a range of innovative strategies for giving students ways to move forward. At our recent collaboration evening, staff were sharing ways for both feeding back to students and getting them to respond. The purple pens are certainly evident in use across school, and the percentage of high-quality feedback seen on written work has increased over the year. Most importantly, the level of student response has improved significantly, and they greatly value the feedback they receive. As with any strategy within a school, it is not just one factor that makes a difference, and while we haven't achieved perfection, we are moving forwards. The next steps are to continue working with students and staff, developing conversations about progress over time, not just in terms of academic attainment but building students' confidence in tackling and overcoming problems and mistakes.

Is marking really worth it? The short answer is yes, BUT only if the students do something with the marking. After all, if you're going to spend the time marking, shouldn't the students be doing some of the work too?

Helping To Create A Phenomenal Learning Environment At The Heights Primary

CASE STUDY by **Learning Ladders**

Learning Ladders is helping The Heights Primary deliver an individual learning journey for every pupil.

Most heads would jump at the chance to create their own school from scratch. Karen Edwards was given that opportunity when she started The Heights Primary free school in Caversham back in September 2014.

In the last few years, Karen has taken the plans for the school from a blank sheet of paper to a fully functioning school with over 120 pupils. This process gave her the opportunity to design her school's curriculum and assessment system from the ground up.

Designing the best system

"We started by asking teachers what information would allow them to gauge whether children were progressing appropriately," says Karen. "The answers from this process then defined how often we would both record and report on progress. Research shows that children develop more quickly where there is immediate feedback, so we also decided to use this as a central pillar to our approach. We felt that we could give children more ownership of their learning if they knew exactly what their next steps and targets were.



The system feels like it has been personally developed for our school.

"This meant we should monitor a child's progress skill by skill. It would allow us to create very personalised learning plans for every child. At the same time, we definitely wanted to avoid anything that would burden staff. For that reason, we looked into software that would back our approach but keep the administration to an absolute minimum."



The right fit

Learning Ladders was chosen by the school, as it was simple to use but flexible enough to adapt however the school wanted to deliver the curriculum. It was originally designed by a still-practising headteacher, Sam Hunter, and followed the ideal of having a system that was designed by teachers rather than IT people.

"The system feels like it has been personally developed for our school. I know it hasn't, but it feels that way," says Karen.

Learning Ladders enables schools to design their curriculum, record progress and view gaps in pupils' learning. Every pupil has their own booklet in which they record their progress so far, and can see the journey they have made. Teachers can then enter this progress online and view next steps, performance and support their planning.

"As a child progresses, teachers can see with one glance how far they have to travel to reach their learning goals."

This progress is shown in a ladders booklet, which can then be shared with pupils and parents so they can see exactly what has been achieved.



The benefits

Karen says that with the new Learning Ladders system in place, every pupil has their own personalised learning journey. "Each child's paper booklet tracks their progress towards their writing or mathematics goals, for example, so they can see how far they have come and how far they must go before they can say they have 'mastered' punctuation or multiplication."

For teachers, it allows them to review assessment information quickly and easily - by pupil, group or class.

Reporting is simple as the information is all online, says Karen: "As the head, I have everything I need at my fingertips to be able to show what progress the pupils are making for parents, the governors or Ofsted."

The pupils are enthusiastic about the system too as it is easy for them to see what their next learning goals are and this has meant they take responsibility for moving themselves forward. "The engagement in the classroom is palpable. Pupils really want to achieve the next rung on the ladder."

Rose, aged 6, a Year 2 pupil at The Heights, said: "We love using Learning Ladders. They help us with our targets because they challenge us and make us confident."

In addition, parents love the fact that they know exactly what their child is aiming for, says Karen: "Parents can take a look at their child's booklet then help at home with any part of learning the child is struggling with. The result is that we can work more closely in partnership with families to raise progress, which is something that every school hopes for."

www.innovatemychool.com



Pupils can see how far they have come and how far they must go before they have 'mastered' a topic.

Next Steps

The school also recently rolled out the online version of the ladders booklets - Learning Ladders at Home - to a handful of parents to trial. "The online portal means that parents can access the information whenever they want rather than just when children bring the booklets home. The plan is to gradually introduce it to all parents to help develop this home-school partnership even more," says Karen, who also has plans to increase the school's pupil numbers to over 300 in the next few years. "Our aim is to create a fantastic learning environment and Learning Ladders is helping us do that."

www.learningladders.info
hello@learningladders.info
020 3637 0500



Why Use SISRA Observe?

CASE STUDY by SISRA

Stuart Voyce, assistant headteacher at Holy Trinity, Barnsley:

SISRA use the slogan 'Empowering Improvement', and since we began working with them over a year ago, that is exactly what they have enabled us to do. Using SISRA Observe has allowed us to become a more efficient organisation and, as a result, has created more time for us to focus on our core purpose; improving the quality of teaching and learning. Gone are the days of collating endless paperwork, reminding staff to send their documents and filing any number of different pro forma as if my life depended on it. All the time that has been saved has now been invested in our key improvement area; improving the quality of our classroom provision.



Teachers don't have to spend time analysing teaching and learning data because it is done for them.

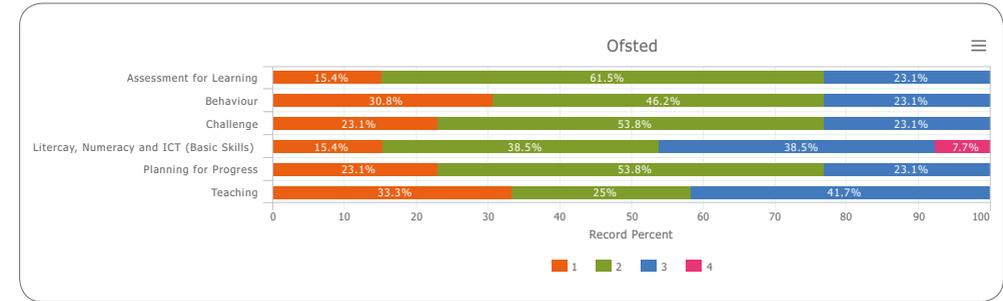
What are the benefits?

Using SISRA Observe has created greater ownership of teaching and learning at all levels of our organisation. Teachers use it to reflect on their own

practice, ensuring they have a clear understanding of the strengths and development areas in their own teaching. They use this information to engage with a range of personalised CPD opportunities within the school, either sharing their best practice or further developing their own teaching. SISRA Observe is at the heart of creating a self-improvement culture within our school, where teachers take ownership of their own professional development. SISRA Observe allows teachers to make informed choices about their own professional learning, thus making a significant contribution to our culture of 'continually learning, continually improving'.

For Middle Leaders

Middle leadership has been strengthened significantly by the fact that Heads of Department have a clear understanding of the strengths and priority areas for their teams. Middle leaders are often stretched to capacity, and presenting information in a 'ready-to-go' format is crucial in enabling them to act on teaching and learning data in a timely and meaningful way. The accessibility of the reports available in SISRA Observe means that they do not have to spend time analysing teaching and learning data because it is done for them, so they can focus on developing the quality of provision instead. It allows them to identify and



systematically share best practice easily across their teams, and to act swiftly to strengthen practice if and when required. Heads of Department can develop CPD at department level to ensure that pupils get the best possible learning experiences when they visit their curriculum areas. As a result, SISRA Observe empowers our middle leaders to be the driving force for school improvement at Holy Trinity.

For Senior Leaders

Senior Leaders have total clarity on the quality of teaching across our school. Each and every member of the Senior Leadership Team clearly understands our strengths and priority improvement areas. SISRA Observe also creates a transparency within teaching and learning that has served to strengthen the line management process across the school, resulting in 'real-time' conversations with Middle Leaders about the quality of provision in the areas they oversee. As a result, SISRA Observe allows underperformance to be identified and challenged efficiently, whilst (more importantly) best practice can be recognised, championed and celebrated.

You can't fatten a pig by simply weighing it!

This is my favourite analogy in regards to teaching and learning. In a nutshell, it means that we do not improve the quality of teaching and learning by simply monitoring it. However, through SISRA Observe, we carefully and systematically monitor teaching and learning to identify our major strengths and key priority areas. It is what we do with the information that SISRA Observe provides that is crucial to our school on its journey of sustainable improvement.

If you strip away all the intervention strategies, revision sessions and one-to-one support, you are left with the need for the very best classroom practice. Therefore, how we develop our teachers at Holy Trinity is vital. Through analysing the reports from SISRA Observe, I can create a whole-school CPD programme to address our priority improvement areas. More importantly, it allows me to create personalised pathways for our teachers, tailored to their individual needs to maximise their professional learning. Increasing collaboration between colleagues is a key component for improving the quality of teaching and learning at Holy Trinity. We are embedding peer coaching across the school as a mechanism to create more opportunities for reflection and collaboration. SISRA Observe allows me to successfully match teachers to the right coach to ensure that they support each other's practice and maximise learning opportunities for both colleagues.

In summary, SISRA Observe has helped create something that is so rare in schools...time. Time that can be invested in ensuring the quality of our teaching is the very best it can be. Time that can be given to teachers and leaders to ensure that, above all else, high-quality teaching and learning is the cornerstone for driving school improvement. Put simply, it allows us to "keep the main thing; the main thing".

Appraisal					Export
Focus Area Name	Met	Partially Met	Not Met	N/A	Record Count
Objective 1 - Whole School	8	4	3	0	15
Objective 2	6	6	3	0	15
Objective 3	6	5	4	0	15
Total	20	15	10	0	

Further Reading

Russell Stannard

Help videos that show you how to blog -

bit.ly/RStan1

Use guide to working with blogs in education -

bit.ly/RStan2

Sonia Cooper

There is a multitude of reading available relating to the impact of marking and assessment. Some recommendations are:

1. *Feedback: The Communication of Praise, Criticism, and Advice* - Sutton, Hornsey & Douglas (2011)
2. *What makes great teaching?* - Sutton Trust (Robert Coe, Cesare Aloisi, Steve Higgins and Lee Elliot Major), October 2014
4. The EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit:
bit.ly/SCool

Redesigning Assessment Discussion Template

by **Ben Ward**

What do you need your assessment to achieve in your context/subject?

Consider the purpose and vision for assessment in your area or context
This is the 'big picture' box – why do you do assessment?

What data/assessment do you need in order to improve learning?

With a view of how you want assessment to impact on learning, and on the purpose of assessment holistically, now think practically about the types of assessment practices that would be effective in achieving that

What is needed to ensure assessment is consistently effective?

You have identified the purpose of your assessment, what it might look like, why you do what you do, what data it produces and how it impacts on learning... Now consider how you ensure it is always effective.
How do you ensure that the assessment you envision is enacted consistently?

How do you see assessment driving and improving learning?

How does the vision and purpose of assessment connect to actual learning? What is the impact of your assessment?
How do you avoid assessment that does not impact on learning?

What data does that assessment generate? How does it improve practice?

Now consider the data and tracking that your assessment may (or may not) generate – what does it look like? Is that data valid and usable?
How do teachers interact with that data?
Is it meaningful in your context?

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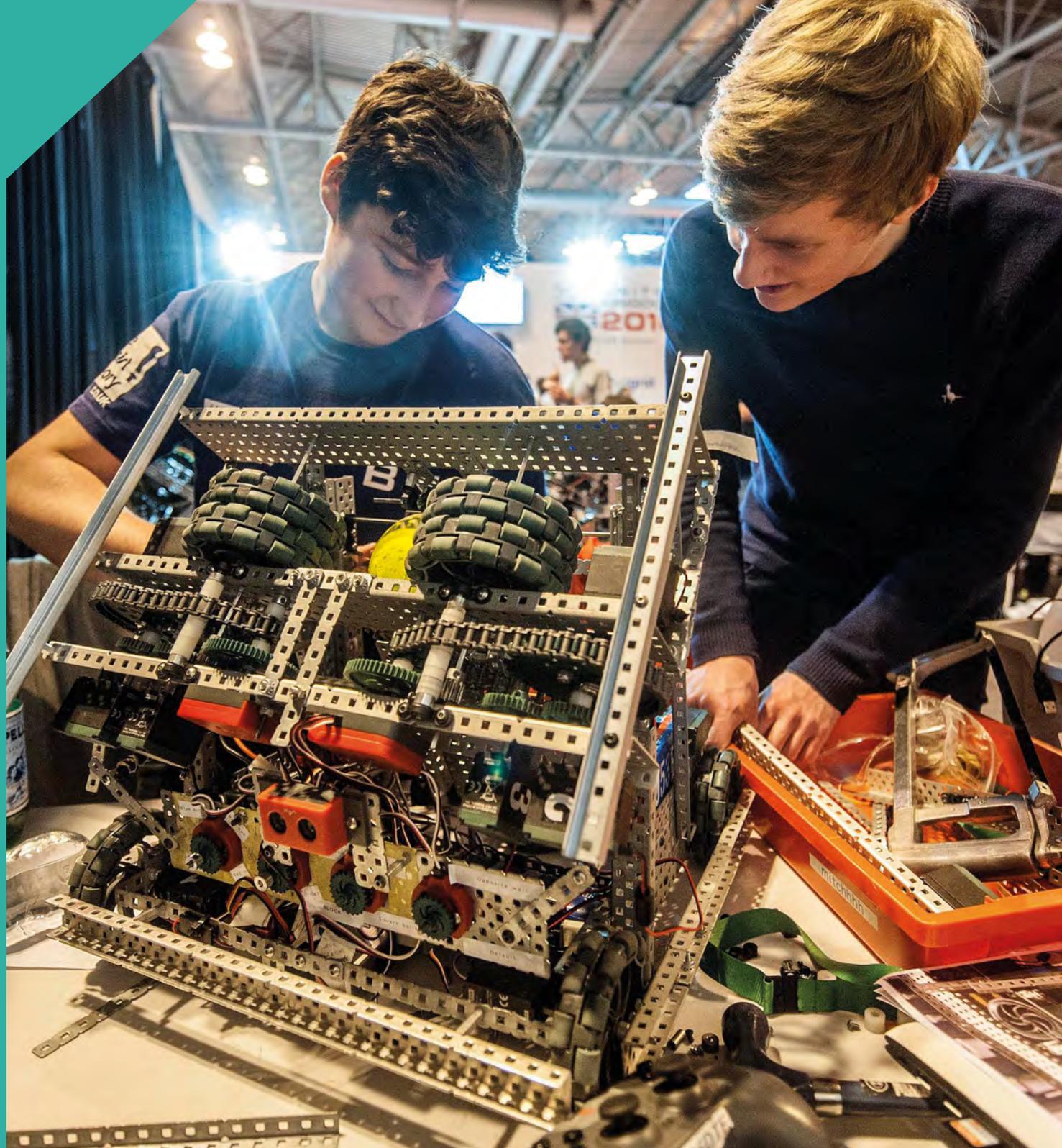
Check out eTwinning project kits www.eTwinning.net

STEM Activities

With the future beckoning, it's important to address the growing need for STEM skills in schools. Science, technology, engineering and Maths expertise is becoming increasingly valuable in an ever-more-digital world. Here, STEM-savvy educators **Sonia Cooper**, **Donna Rawling**, **Rose Russell** and **Adam Chase** weigh in on the different activities teachers can organise to get pupils enthused in this area.



Every lunch for a month, children drew out the steps of their plan, trialled their 'Rube' invention, sawed, glued, tested and retested. Failure didn't daunt them, it just spurred them on!



Maximising the potential of STEM Activities

Sonia Cooper: The Rosetta mission landing on top of a comet 300 million miles away, the possibility of space tourism and nanotechnology being employed to save lives are just a few recent STEM related news stories. In our schools, we have the opportunity to open our students' eyes to this exciting world and the possibilities for their futures.

The global pace of development means that more young people than ever are needed with STEM skills and qualifications. With many businesses employing people with STEM backgrounds, the opportunities available to students are breathtakingly broad. We need to inspire our students to engage with STEM; not just for these life-enhancing opportunities, but also because of the breadth and depth of skills that can be developed. Taking on a new challenge, exploring the possibilities, working within a team and finding and developing solutions are skills worthy of pursuing in any context.

Rose Russell: There's no doubt that an extracurricular STEM Club and its challenges allow students to develop and apply valuable STEM skills to real-life working situations. As the Ursuline Academy in Ilford is an all-girls school, I feel it's really important that STEM can help towards motivating our young girls in what is a very exciting and rewarding career. I have a particular interest in promoting engineering to our girls, and I feel it is vital that we continue to develop young people by exploring the opportunities presented to them both in school and within the industries. It's a chance to conquer fears and build confidence.

In a brief snapshot, our projects through national competitions have gone from strength to strength: a visit from then-prime minister David Cameron at the Big Bang Fair competition at Excel, a number of visits to Parliament engaging with high profile business men/women and MPs, and meeting HRH Princess Anne with the 'Grow Wild Kew' lottery funded project. In turn, this will show our girls that with the right experience and qualifications STEM extracurricular activities can help invest in their future.

Adam Chase: "For our prosperity to continue, the government believes we need high levels of skills in Science, technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), and citizens that value them." (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2015).

STEM is a hot topic in Primary schools. Here're six relevant principles for the classroom:

1. **Make it real** - the situation / problems should be believable and immerse the children.
2. **Guided by a design process** - students define problems, conduct background research, develop ideas, and then test, evaluate, and redesign.
3. **Hands-on inquiry** - learning is open-ended, within constraints. (Constraints usually are available materials).
4. **Pupils should be a productive team**
5. **Apply Maths and Science skills** - learners encouraged that Science and Maths are not standalone subjects, but part of problem-solving.
6. **Not one answer** - there should be multiple correct answers; this will develop creativity in your classroom.

Donna Rawling: With the introduction of the new Computing Curriculum in 2014, and a major shift in focus to address the increasing need to equip children with skills in Computer Science, comes the gathering pace of the STEM / STEAM movement. Maximising the potential of true cross-curricular learning, the marriage of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics, is not only a way of taking any project beyond its single-subject restrictions. It's also a way into the mystical world of computing.

I am a firm believer in children being exposed to and experimenting with as many opportunities as possible within Computing - in being made aware of the big, wide world outside of the computer screen, not just working through a prescriptive programme or bought-in scheme, and of where Computing can take them.

Collaboration of children and of adults is key for a truly integrated approach, but collaboration in all its forms is based on fostering support and a common goal: for children, the realisation of their vision. For adults, an ability to gain experience and confidence whilst helping others to do the same.

STEM Activities: Challenges

Adam Chase: When it comes to STEM, challenges arise in that: teachers might be unfamiliar teaching STEM-related lessons; national tests focus more on English, Spelling, Grammar and Maths (only the "M" of STEM); it may not be prudent to create a project-based lesson with various outcomes as the class are not ready for it at that point. This can be explained by following the STEM process. Within a STEM project, learners should research a topic, develop a plan and draw conclusions from research results. Following that, pupils will then record data accurately. Throughout the whole process learners should have skills to troubleshoot a problem as well as the knowledge to fix it. With these skills in mind, STEM lessons may lend themselves to end of unit / topic lessons, rather than weekly lessons.

Rose Russell: In 2010 I decided to set up a STEM Club. I had no idea where to begin as I had never set up a club like this before, but I did have a vision! Very often it is a vision that only you can see, but nonetheless, my main aim was to create a love of the STEM subjects and to provide a refreshing change to regular lessons and activities. I wanted fun and engaging projects that would excite and inspire the pupils. Of course, adoption of any new service / programme takes time, and changes in budget structures have caused uncertainty in many schools over recent years. So funding is another concern when setting up something new, but that in no way means that money can't be allocated to develop STEM. It's important to remember that there is no magic formula - much will depend on the school's leadership, values and vision, as well as how much everyone else gets on board with those things. While it may seem like a lot of work, the tremendous benefits of running a STEM Club are simply numerous! I found it instantly raised the profile of Design & Technology (D&T) as a subject in the school, and far outweighed the time and effort required.

Thankfully we had support from our business partners, who offered sponsorship to the club and allowed all of our projects to progress successfully.



Donna Rawling: Here comes that Fear Factor again! Two main obstacles immediately come to mind:

- Confidence within a single subject.
- An ability to see beyond the perceived constraints of that subject.

Speaking from personal experience of Primary teaching, not all subject coordinators are expert or even particularly knowledgeable or confident in their subject. Through no fault of our own, we are often performing as Jacks (or Jills) of all subjects, and we all know what that can result in.

If a teacher is not particularly confident in their allocated subject, then the thought of trying to incorporate more of the unknown, a second, equally daunting subject will be for some a step too far from their comfort zone.

Sonia Cooper: One of the things I'm always asked as a female physics teacher is, "How do you get more girls into physics?" The same question is often asked about other STEM subjects and careers. There's not an easy answer, as the reluctance of many girls to engage with STEM comes from society's expectations. Across both genders there is often a feeling that STEM subjects are too hard and only for "brainy" people.

A particular challenge for our school, and for many other schools in more rural counties, is the sense of distance, the perception that STEM careers are happening far away. Students have limited ideas about the local industries and businesses, along with a narrow view of what might constitute a career pathway in STEM.

From My Own Experience... An Opportunity Too Good To Miss!

CASE STUDY by **Donna Rawling**

I am aware that I have a fairly privileged position when it comes to teaching Computing, in that I teach the subject exclusively across the school, from EYFS to Y6. My school adopted an approach of utilising one member of staff (myself) shadowed by class teachers during lessons, resulting eventually in a role swap to teachers leading lessons as they felt more confident. However each school has its own approach to curriculum delivery.



My wonderfully messy Computing suite - a haven for Makers.

For me, this has meant an opportunity to explore as many resources and avenues as possible to propagate enthusiasm and learning.

'My' Computer Suite is a drop-in for all, every lunch time. If the children have a project they would like to work on, they drop in and work on it. Many of the children gravitate towards the suite initially for social reasons.

The perfect project recently presented itself to us all-but-gift-wrapped in the form of a competition launched by RM Education to create a Rube Goldberg-style 'Complicated Machine to do a simple task'. I had children whom this was made for - whom were made for this, right in my room

every lunchtime. Children who loved constructing with balsa wood and saws, who loved exploring mechanisms drawing, coding - all enthusiastic.

There are no doors on the maker cupboard and, for much of the time during the project, there was little distinction between cupboard and floor. Every lunch for a month, children drew out the steps of their plan, trialled their 'Rube' invention, sawed, glued, tested and retested. Failure didn't daunt them; it just spurred them on to refine, improve, debug and try again. They began their work individually but a team spirit soon developed. The engineers saw the amazing output of their finely-tuned pulley system as it lowered a dome over the Bare Conductive house, with its painted pink circuits - constructed by our coders - lit up as the sensor was covered. This chain initiated the advancement of their handmade bobbin tanks (made by engineers, decorated by artists) their required distances to be traveled calculated by our mathematician.



The children filmed and photographed their own promotional materials and their final entry portfolio.

My role in all this? Almost totally supervisory; overseeing the 'dangerous' bits - sawing, using a glue gun and occasional steering of the task with the odd question. Our only objectives were our end result, working efficiently and having as much fun as possible getting there.

As we neared submission date and their project neared completion, the promotion (via Twitter and presentations for school) became part of the process. The children filmed and photographed their own promotional materials and their final entry portfolio.

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Once the project was complete, I had expected a lull, a slump, some sort of anticlimax. Instead, I witnessed the exact opposite. New faces appeared at lunchtimes, some had projects in mind, some wanted guidance but all wanted to do something different, to explore and invent.



I have a pile of digital leader applications to read, interviews to arrange and challenges to set!

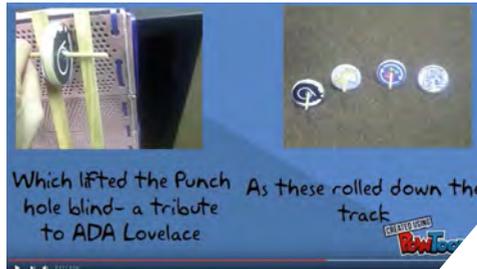
We now had application forms from a dozen children, keen to become digital leaders (waiting to join our existing, 17-strong team). All keen to work on challenges, showcase their skills or master something new. At any one time we have Sonic Pi, Scratch, Art / scribble bots, Powerpoints, knitting, sewing, animations all running side-by-side. Even more exciting is the movement of children between projects collaborating and creating hybrids of originally, their own STEM / STEAM inventions.

Now, back to our original competition entry. I was informed by email that the children's entry had won them a 3D printer which we could collect as soon as we were able. Proud would have been a definite understatement.

The children were eventually invited to present their competition entry to a whole school assembly - where the 3D printer was revealed to them for the first time to their great delight. We have proudly posted videos on YouTube of the invention and of the children's assembly presentation.



YouTube link: bit.ly/DRaw1



YouTube link: bit.ly/DRaw2

I have most definitely seen the benefits of effective STEM/STEAM ventures with my small band of pioneers, as well as the small but increasing impact on staff. I am keen to explore the Maker initiative further, both through my love of handicrafts and their integration into my teaching of Computing.

Special thanks must go to Claire Garside (@cgarside) Carl Simmons (@Activ8Thinking), CAS Manchester (@CAS_Manchester), Mr Nolan (@MrNolan5) and our small but perfectly formed #MakerEd initiative. For now though, I have a pile of digital leader applications to read, interviews to arrange and challenges to set and my own mini challenge to face - trying to fit everything back into that maker cupboard...



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How To Create The Ideal STEM Club

CASE STUDY by **Sonia Cooper**

I took on the role of STEM coordinator a few years ago with the aim of increasing involvement and opportunity for all students. When I took on the role, there was a STEM club but it only involved a small group of students, and I wanted to open up opportunities for as many students as possible, to inspire and engage them in the exciting world of STEM.

Our school doesn't always look like a centre for modern learning from the outside, but within the slightly mouldering buildings is a team of innovative teachers trying new ideas. Therefore, my first goal was to get teachers from other curriculum areas involved in the club and other STEM activities, so that we had a team across the school all supporting and promoting the club. It can be difficult in some schools to persuade staff to commit to further activities voluntarily, but I am very fortunate to work with dedicated and enthusiastic colleagues. The team now includes colleagues from DT, ICT, Maths and all Science disciplines, which means there is far more scope for varied projects, fresh ideas and expertise.



The club is there to broaden experiences, build skills and confidence and provide enriching opportunities.

Building strong links with local business and industry partners

A key aspect in building students' long term aspirations is contact with people from local businesses and organisations linked to careers in STEM. Opening students' minds to the range of possibilities that STEM careers offer keeps them engaged and raises aspirations, particularly as being tucked away in a corner of the south west can make

it difficult for students to see how they can move on to real careers locally, and how STEM subjects are relevant to them.

Some simple first steps were to take students out to visit local businesses and organisations, such as the local power station, dockyards and university. I spoke to our work experience co-ordinator and found out more about the range of STEM in use in the local area. Some students were amazed to find that real science in a proper lab was happening at the local pasta factory! I also tried to get as many people as possible to come into school, sometimes to deliver talks, but also to run workshops and activities, both in class and for the club. The various STEM websites were useful, but I also relied heavily on talking to people and finding personal links. It takes a little more time and effort to establish these links, but it is much better in terms of having a relationship over time where students can be mentored. I also find that a personal contact you have met and spoken to is much easier to make arrangements with and much more supportive of the school.

We also make good use of ex-students, from those that have left within the last couple of years, to a lecture from a student who attended the school 50 years ago and who had gone on to design the software for the Beagle 2 and Philae lander missions. Having ex-students in employment or apprenticeships locally return to help run the clubs has meant that younger students were able to relate while enjoying the activities. They could also see how choosing STEM subjects might lead to promising and interesting careers without leaving the area.

Inspiring students through a wide array of experiences

Reaching out to as many students as possible is essential. The students who already come to clubs are sufficiently interested – the club is there to broaden experiences, build skills and confidence and provide enriching opportunities. There is far more

challenge in engaging the wider school community. One of the key events for us over the past few years has been National Science and Engineering Week (now renamed British Science Week). In recent years we have had science "busking" in the hall at lunchtime, with teachers and students showing off their favourite science and engineering tricks. We even had a paddling pool full of custard to provide a non-newtonian liquid for students to run across and jump on!

This year, for the first time, we ran a science show, which was led by one of my talented colleagues. We had shows for children from local primary schools and Key Stage Three students during the day and a public show in the evening. There were plenty of bangs, flashes, smoke and special effects that all the audiences loved. This definitely got everyone talking about science in a positive way, and we look forward to repeating it on an even bigger scale next year.

There is a long list of successful events, projects and trips that have taken place over the past few years that have all contributed to a hugely positive

attitude towards STEM subjects and careers at our school. However, the key point has been the involvement of as many staff as possible to keep the ideas flowing and the activities running. The second most important factor has been the involvement of a range of organisations, from those that provide background support and grants, to the local businesses who send STEM ambassadors to help run activities in school and invite us to visit them.

Having a lively programme of STEM related events, activities and clubs in the school doesn't just bring benefits to the related subjects. Students who engage with the STEM activities build many sought after skills, such as perseverance, problem solving and teamwork, which spill over into all aspects of life. Schools should be places of learning where students' life chances are improved by building skills, experience and confidence in a way that inspires them to seek out fulfilling opportunities. My firm belief is that a strong STEM focus can be a fantastic vehicle for achieving those aims.

Our STEM Adventure: So How Did It All Start?

CASE STUDY by **Rose Russell**

In October 2010, I attended an inspirational day organised by the Institute of Civil Engineering (ICE) to launch the map of the Olympic park. The event was run alongside the Create Sport Challenge (CSC) national school competition, and had - without a doubt - a significant impact on me. I would say that this was my introduction into STEM, which at the time was just beginning to cause a bit of a stir.

It all began with our first engagement, the ICE CSC competition, which linked in with the 2012 Olympics in Stratford. During this time we were given the invaluable opportunity to engage with a high-profile STEM ambassador and the then-ICE president Peter Hansford. Peter and his team came to visit our school to see first-hand how the challenge he had initiated was progressing. This became the first of many opportunities where students were introduced to inspirational people,

role models and experts from the world of business and the industry. It gave them the chance to gain hands-on experience for the line of work scientists, technologists and civil engineers do day-to-day, highlighting the range of skills needed and the incredible career opportunities and futures that they can have if they chose an education in STEM.

Two projects were shortlisted for the London regional finals. We were pronounced the regional runner-up winners of the CSC, the prize being a tour of the Olympic Park, which was still under construction at the time. This made me think of the million and one jobs that go into preparing for the Olympics and how many of them were STEM-related. I began to take a keener interest in the STEM subjects, and thus decided to enter the winning model into the London Big Bang Fair (BBF) regional finals 2011, where we successfully achieved:

- A Crest Bronze runner-up prize (a project based award scheme run by the British Science Association).
- A place in the BBF National Finals in Birmingham 2012.

The girls found the whole experience inspirational and engaging, even though no core prizes were won. With that in mind, my eye was on the following year's final. I wanted to award that similar experience to another cohort of pupils. I felt that this time around, a project linking both the D&T and Science departments together would be a great prospect. The Practical Action (@PracticalAction) CREST global challenges fitted perfectly, and with only six weeks to produce a project for the next round of the BBF London regional finals, we carefully recruited new members to ensure we remained at the forefront to deliver on time. Participants comprised of two teams:

Team 1. The Science Angels - Their project looked at providing a solution to food shortages in Kenya by using photovoltaic glass in the construction of a new building.

Team 2. The Sus-tain-ables – Their project was to design sustainable housing for poor people in Bangladesh.



The key point has been the involvement of as many staff as possible to keep the ideas flowing.

With the support of Yewande Akinola (@YeWanDae), the winner of the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) Young Woman Engineer of the Year 2012, the girls worked solidly during lunch, after school club, even during half term. Upon completion of their Crest project they managed to steal a Silver Crest award! The projects were both stimulating and challenging, fuelling the pupil's imagination, allowing them to put what they had learned in lessons to practical use. I was significantly inspired by the uniqueness and creativity of these young girls, who quickly developed a passion for STEM.

They won the Crest Award for Creativity at the regional finals, and both teams won places to the BBF National finals 2013. At this event, the Science Angels won the Shell Prize for Sustainability, £500,

and an invitation to the Science Museum Halloween experience. Meanwhile, the Sus-tain-ables won the UKFT Textile Edge Prize, £500, and an invitation to the first Fashion Show at the House of Lords.

Such dedication and commitment clearly illustrates the impact the CREST Awards have had on our potential young female engineers. Their enthusiasm for both D&T and Science subjects was infectious. Obviously the judges at the BBF competition felt this too, which is one of the reasons we feel they were successful in achieving two major awards at the event. A YouTube video was made mapping their journey, called 'One Stem of a Journey': bit.ly/RRus1

Since then, with numerous national achievements, our students' STEM projects have gone on to receive superb recognition, such as:

- Winning the Shell award for Sustainability and a visit from the Prime Minister at the Big Bang Fair in 2012.
- Visits to Parliament, engaging with high profile businesspeople and MPs.
- Meeting HRH Princess Anne and presenting their Grow Wild Kew project, all about the depletion of the bee population, is one of our most prized moments. This was an opportunity prearranged for us by the Stemettes. The school has also been a subject of a documentary film, as we featured heavily in the Salesforce World Tour documentary film exploring the fantastic work that Stemettes are doing.

Perhaps the primary reason why our STEM club has been so successful is its connection with inspiring role models and links with local business. I think the input of employers into education is becoming increasingly critical in re-educating students and teachers about the relevance of STEM to their everyday lives, as well as the career opportunities that are available. Business is about strategic alliances, and I believe strongly in a working business meets educational partnership model.

The opportunities to be innovative and creative are everywhere you look, and so it's imperative schools work with businesses to tap into their skills base. I believe that every student deserves the opportunity to pursue an educational dream and to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for employment. The student experience and helping them take the next big step forward in their development is always high on the agenda for us. Yes, there is more that can be done to amplify the STEM message to a wider audience, but it's all about working together. It's a win/win situation for all.

innovate my school

FANCY A SPEED DATE?



"Informative and interesting session in a relaxed environment. Great idea!"
Southend Primary Heads Association

Old Hall Minecraft Mania

CASE STUDY by **Adam Chase**

A few months ago I did the unthinkable. I invited Minecraft into my lessons... and I haven't looked back. Like many teachers I had often overheard the incessant whispering of 'Steve', 'Creepers', 'Villagers' and 'Pigs', and I had decided that it was enough! I was going to sort out this Minecraft thing once and for all!

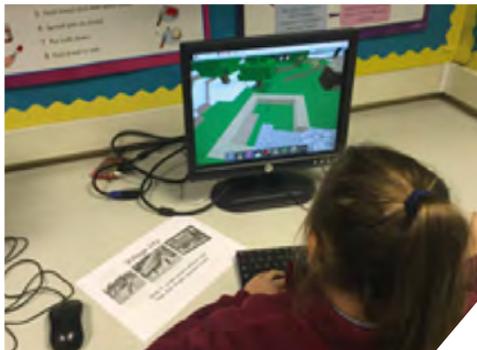
It was at this point that I looked into Minecraft on the Raspberry Pi, which comes with the 'Noobs' software (available at www.raspberrypi.org). After a few hours of getting used to the controls, I could see the potential. I thought I would test the waters a bit by exploiting the children's love of this 'sandbox game' in explanation texts. They would explain to this novice (aka me) the different features of the game, controls, how to play, getting started and even what it is. Heck, they might even make some progress! Win/win!



Saxon village. I must say, I was impressed. Within 20 minutes, every child in my class had created a house, with rooms inside and fashioned their own windows (no glass allowed). This is where Minecraft really aided me. Yet again it was a real-life scenario: the children followed a process, a hands-on inquiry where there were certain constraints that should be there in any project. They were a productive team, using perimeter and area skills (tenuous, but still there) and there were multiple correct answers. So far, so good.

I couldn't wait to continue to use more Minecraft and technology in my lessons and I was sure the children agreed with me, so I decided to exploit their weakness to Minecraft with a net-creating activity. The brief was simple: create a net for a 3D shape for a Minecraft figurine. I gave the class some measurements and away they went. Allowing them to work in pairs, I wanted each child to have a completed net by the end of the three days. They were away! I couldn't stop them; some of the time they wouldn't accept help from me in case I ruined it. Every child created a net that the figurine would fit inside. This really consolidated their learning on 3D shapes and nets in a more creative way than I could otherwise manage.

To sum up, this digital building block game has been a gift to my lessons. I have enjoyed even more engagement from my class and this has led to a deeper understanding, which they can take home and practise whilst playing on their games. More



Now strictly speaking the writing in itself was not a STEM lesson, but it was useful. This is because there was a real-life situation for my children of explaining to their Neanderthal teacher what this was all about. Furthermore the children had to develop their ideas with each other to make sure each section achieved its purpose. Within a week, I had some excellent writing from the children in my Year 5 (age 9-10) class, which they were incredibly engaged with, as they were 'the experts'.

I then decided to continue with this thread of enthusiasm by using Minecraft to design an Anglo-



importantly, the children really enjoyed this! Granted, I may not do this for every lesson, and yes, Minecraft does have some pitfalls *such as growing crops in saltwater*. However, hopefully the children will go home and switch on the goggle box and make the connection that they explained to the 'philistine' of a teacher what Minecraft is and how it is played.

Perhaps they will create a pyramid when we cover

Ancient Egypt, or a rainforest when we learn about the Amazon, or even a replica of the Indus Valley! Who knows? What I do know for certain is without creating an opportunity for these connections it definitely won't happen.

So what? What are the next steps? Well, knowing how gifted my children are at designing and building these digital models, I could write a description of an area and see if the children could recreate it using inference and deductive skills. I could use Minecraft to inspire some writing. My pupils could create a scene from their favourite book, favourite monument around the world, or even build a perimeter and area problem for their friends to solve. I must be honest, and I know it sounds somewhat cheesy-pie, but the possibilities are endless for the curriculum. The more I type the more I can think of ways this game of digital building blocks could be utilised in the classroom. Also, with the recent developments of Microsoft buying Minecraft and the educational version MinerEdu, I'm sure there will be developments over the next few months.

How Else Can STEM Skills Be Addressed?

by **Adam Chase**

An area of STEM that has not been discussed discretely is engineering. Minecraft obviously lends itself to engineering in a technological sense, but not a practical one. As engineering isn't a standalone subject in Primary schools, how it is taught will vary. But engineering projects that are commonly used include:

- Build a bridge out of drinking straws.
- Design a vehicle that could drive on land and sea.
- Make a simple electronics circuit including a bulb and a switch.
- Design and make a Christmas card with moving parts.

Ultimately engineering in Primary schools could be the gift that continues to give, as it allows children the opportunity to put Maths, Science and Design Technology theory into practice in a way that

cements their learning. Other ways that engineering could be developed are:

1. The First Lego League: An annual robotics challenge where teams of nine- to 16-year-olds compete to design a solution to a problem using Lego Mindstorms. There's a Junior League for six- to nine-year-olds.
2. Young Engineers: A school-based engineering club that also runs national competitions, including Crazy Racers – using K'Nex to create a unique passenger vehicle.
3. Imagineering: After-school clubs for eight- to 16-year-olds, where children use kits to make working engineering models.
4. Leaders Award: a competition for children aged five plus, they interview a person working in STEM and then submit a report – which could be a video, podcast or drawing – about what they have discovered.

How Schools Are Embracing The Create Education Project

CASE STUDY by Create Education Project

The **Create Education Project** provides inspiration and support to Primary and Secondary schools who wish to explore 3D printing technology. Their website, www.createeducation.com, contains a wealth of ideas and resources for embedding 3D printing across the curriculum at all levels, as well as providing case studies, professional development materials and a platform for connecting and sharing.

St. Ann's Primary School, St. Helens

Children from St Ann's Primary School have been working with University of Liverpool engineers to design and build a model of the Anfield roof truss using the Ultimaker 3D printers. The truss, a giant metal structure weighing in at 650 tonnes, is a key feature in the redesign of Liverpool FC's iconic Anfield Stadium.

The Year 5 pupils were tasked with designing and building a model of the truss using an Ultimaker 2 3D printer, provided on loan by the Create Education Project, to help fabricate the 196 individual parts of the structure. These were carefully assembled in stages until the final truss was complete.

University engineers Dr Andrew Green and Dr Diane Taktak, who undertook the project with St Ann's School, said: "It was a fantastic opportunity to introduce pupils to the latest technology and concepts in the field of engineering using the new truss at Anfield stadium as a real life example. They



all really enjoyed the project – whether they were Liverpool, Everton or Man Utd supporters."

Stacey McDowell, Year 5 teacher at St Ann's, said: "The children loved being part of the project - especially the boys! It gave each of our Design & Technology lessons a real purpose and it provided the children with hands on experiences that relate to the real world."

"The Anfield Project was a lot of fun. Not just because I am a Liverpool fan, but also because it made learning exciting." **Owen, Year 5**

"The truss was challenging to make but it showed us the importance of trial and error when it comes to making something like this." **Holly, Year 5**

"I liked that we were able to link it to Maths. Working out the correct ratio and measurements was tricky to do but I really enjoyed it." **Lucy, Year 5**

"The 3D printer was the best bit for me. It was amazing to be able to programme it and then watch it create our dies." **Ryan, Year 5**

Correlli College, Greenwich

Create Education Project have been a key partner in a research project at Correlli College, where 3D printing, Arduino and micro-processing technology have been introduced to engage and inspire students



who lacked interest in screen based programming, as well as the more academic approach to the subject.

The Code & Create Project was developed by Francesca Perona, interdisciplinary textile designer, in collaboration with Corelli College teachers and technicians. The aim is to develop new hands-on ways of learning that allow children to engage and experiment with the latest digital technologies.

Since Code & Create aims to generate work related learning outcomes, the pupils were given a professional design brief, inspired by Japanese fashion week. They were asked to respond to the brief by designing and prototyping custom wearable devices.

They were taught how to program LEDs with Arduino LilyPads, sew conductive circuits on fabrics, and design 3D printed accessories in their products, which were realised with an Ultimaker 3D printer. One group designed and 3D printed a beautiful accessory for their shoe product, which looks absolutely stunning!

"Such activities are important as they can spark our imagination and broaden our interests" - **Yoan, Year 11**

"There was a real sense of achievement, especially when the students showcased their work. They could see how something they started off with fabric, wood or metal, was incorporated in something that was 'digital'." - **Gurdip Badesha, D&T Teacher**



David Holloway OBE, a partner in the project, said: "I have been both a fan and collaborator of the Create Education Project since I first came across them. What impresses me is their selfless dedication to the objective of incorporating this technology into education. Working with educationalists, teachers and students of all ages they have both input and output ideas on how 3D printing can be used.



The Create Education Project team have been and are instrumental in making 3D printing accessible to schools and students. They have not just gone into the market with a flashy brochure. They have gone into schools and rolled up their sleeves, learned at the chalk face and given back in terms of their education interface, product and software development. They provide much more than just an Ultimaker 3D printer. From the printer itself to the software, the website and the community, it is an interactive emersion."

To find out more about the project and their 3D Printer loan scheme for schools visit www.createeducation.co.uk or contact Michelle Chatterley on 01257 276116.



Why Robotics Is The Answer To Inspired Technology Teaching:

Real-world Engineering Begins in the Primary Classroom

CASE STUDY by VEX Robotics

In an ever-connected and technologically advanced world, how do we keep learning relevant in areas like Design & Technology and Computing? VEX Robotics is increasingly becoming the answer for many teachers in schools not only nationally, but around the world.

"We use VEX Robotics for introducing our Year 4 and 5 students in Primary classes to mechanisms and coding, progressing and building upon through Key Stage 3 across computing and Design & Technology. Many students also use VEX products in their GCSE and A-Level projects. The accessibility at the younger age and the adaptability and flexibility at the upper end is really what makes VEX so suited to the classroom," explains Andy Thomson, head of Design, Technology & Engineering at Highgate School.

Students as young as 8 can utilise the intuitive and tool-less VEX IQ platform to snap together robots in minutes. Students are then able to transition to the metal-based VEX EDR system in Key Stage 3 as they become more confident. The flexibility of both platforms means they can both be used right through to Key Stage 5 and beyond. However, the key to this adoption is the high-quality, free-of-charge, UK curriculum developed in partnership with teachers – from basic mechanisms and an introduction to programming functions right through to complex CAD/CAM units or industry-linked project work. The curriculum is about using robotics to teach technology, not the other way around!



Steve Parkinson, assistant principal from Leeds UTC has seen first-hand the impact of VEX. "I taught using VEX at my previous school in York for 4 years and the level of engagement with students was like nothing I had seen before. One of my first actions in this new role was to ensure that the VEX platforms were embedded across Computing and Engineering teaching here at the new Leeds UTC."

Programming, an increasingly important focus for many schools, is brought to life using VEX Robotics. From the free Scratch-like Modkit software, through to industry-standard languages such as Python and C++, the relevancy to students is maintained throughout. While students can work on virtual models, the impact on outputting to a physical robot cannot be underestimated.

"Students need to engage with any projects they are involved in," says VEX Robotics head of operations, Paul McKnight. "The world is becoming increasingly abstract for most young people, but what VEX uniquely provides is the ability for children to turn abstract concepts such as control systems and engineering interconnections into something physical, and then test them to see if their hypotheses stand up. If it doesn't, the ability to quickly iterate their design and re-evaluate is simple, and these are real-world engineering principles and processes brought to life."

Compete on the world stage!

Involvement with VEX doesn't need to stay inside the classroom. The VEX Robotics Competition recently set a new Guinness World Record for the largest robotics competition, with 12 of the 1078 record-breaking teams of students in Louisville, Kentucky representing the UK.

Andrew Duffey, head of Technology at Henrietta Barnett School explains: "The experiences our all-girl teams have had through involvement in the VEX Competition cannot be underestimated - not just cementing some of the academic learning, but also meeting, and working alongside, students from across



the world, from countries like Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, China and Mexico. It's just been an unforgettable experience for them."

"Since starting with the after-school club, uptake for Design & Technology beyond Key Stage 3 has nearly doubled, which has been fantastic for the department!"

While VEX Worlds may be the pinnacle, each team's season starts at their school developing a unique solution to an engineering problem that changes every year. Competition support manager Bridie Gaynor comments: "The competition is essentially a game, and is presented in the form of an engineering challenge. The evolutionary process the teams go through during the season builds both academic and critical life skills, as the robot goes through several iterations of design."



It is the development of these transferable skills that has seen the competition recognised by industry partners, and is what sets the VEX competitions apart from other programmes. Jonathan Richardson, from lead UK sponsor National Grid, said: "The beauty of VEX, and why I see so much value in it, is that it takes STEM subjects out of the classroom and puts them to the test in real-life situations. Teenagers who take part build lifelong skills in teamwork, leadership and communicating."

While these programmes are typically delivered as an extracurricular activity, students and teams

can be entered for CREST Awards, submit entries to The Big Bang Fair Competition and, for the VEX Robotics Competition, VEX Robotics have linked with the exam board OCR to map involvement with the competition to the vocational Cambridge Nationals in Engineering. What does this mean? A student can compete for two years and cover all of the NEA content to gain the equivalent of two GCSEs!

Students involved with the VEX Robotics competition have gone on to study degrees at Imperial College London, Oxford, Bristol and Plymouth universities in robotics, mechatronics and design – it really has given them a career direction.



Omar Hussein, an ex-competitor, sums up his experience, "Before my involvement with the VEX Robotics Competition teams at our school I had never really considered a career focused on robotics. The experiences interested me and the skills I gained are needed by industry. Imperial College is the perfect place for me to continue this development leading to, I hope, a long career in engineering... all because of that initial spark through VEX."

For more information on how to deliver exciting and engaging curriculum, or to compete in the world's largest and fastest growing robotics competition – visit www.vexrobotics.com.

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Extracurricular Activities

The term “extracurricular” encompasses an almost limitless list of activities - from lunchtime chess clubs and debating societies to exotic after-school pursuits such as archery, skiing and even beekeeping.

But while the main curriculum is compulsory and provided at no extra cost, involving children in extracurricular activities can be more difficult. In particular, the price of equipment and trips often causes many to miss out. In this section, **Judith McKerrecher** examines these challenges and gives some invaluable tips for minimising costs and increasing inclusion levels.

Meanwhile, we’ve rounded up two extracurricular experts to offer ideas that will boost learning without breaking the bank. **Russel Tarr** describes in detail how to stage the perfect scavenger hunt, a fun, easy and memorable way to build knowledge and camaraderie, and **Paula O’Hare** shares her highly positive experiences with the less energetic but equally adventurous concept of school mascots.



Some children taught class mascots

Etienne and Jorge how to bake, how to measure or even travelled to new and exciting countries.



Unlocking the potential of Extracurricular Activities

Paula O'Hare: If you're anything like me, you might associate the word "extracurricular" with after-school clubs which, although fun and sometimes productive, don't always include every child. Some children don't want to attend the clubs on offer, some parents are too busy or find it too expensive to provide suitable equipment.

Ultimately, providing a positive inclusive ethos for all children in every school is paramount. It is important that every child, regardless of social background or attainment level, has the opportunity to improve their self-esteem, develop their social skills and to be involved in experiences beyond the normal curriculum.

In Scotland, our curriculum is underpinned by four capacities: the capacity for students to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. These capacities are, in a nutshell, the whole purpose of our curriculum, and they apply just as much to extracurricular activities.



Russel Tarr: "Scavenger Hunts" are superb team-building exercises for older students. They are perhaps particularly effective at the beginning of an IB or A-Level course, when many new students might be joining the school and where, in addition to building camaraderie, they can provide a healthy dose of much-needed local knowledge. They also have tremendous potential for cross-curricular links, cost nothing to run, and are remarkably easy to set up. I set up one for my local city without even leaving my armchair.

Jude McKeircher: As dedicated educators we are all aware of the enriching experiences extracurricular activities can provide. They give students a chance to really tap into their interests, to try new things and to spend time in a different learning environment. There's also huge potential for building self-esteem and confidence, improving social skills, learning to take calculated and considered risks, and developing bouncebackability and the resilience to persevere.

Such opportunities also allow students to see adults and young volunteers in a different role - giving them the chance to strike up positive, trusting relationships that are sometimes absent from their lives.

In the case of very vulnerable children, research into the impact of social pedagogy (common in countries such as Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, France and the Netherlands) and youth work, both of which are similar in nature to extracurricular activities, indicates that the outcomes for a child can be vastly improved by taking a holistic approach to a child's development which has at its heart the child, the child's interests, the child's social context and environment, and unconditional positive regard for the child.

It's therefore unsurprising that there are many cases where involvement in extracurricular activities has led to better attitudes to learning in the classroom, better attendance rates and healthier relationships.

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Extracurricular Activities: Challenges

Russel Tarr: One of the biggest challenges in a school curriculum is to break down the mental barriers that students and teachers set up between their various subjects. Too often, students develop the habit of treating each classroom subject in isolation instead of realizing how skills and knowledge acquired in one area are completely transferable to another.

To rectify this, our new cohort of Year 12 students, after a well-deserved relaxing summer holiday following the pressure of GCSE exams, return in the autumn term to a fast-paced induction programme involving all the subject disciplines. In less than one week, students develop their skills of investigation, research, group work, presentation and essay writing. In addition each student produces an ambitious essay that can be used as a baseline assessment.

The first part of this process is an extracurricular 'Scavenger Hunt' field trip to the city center. This is not only popular with the students, but also provides them with local knowledge which they can use in their induction essays and for which they gain explicit credit.

Paula O'Hare: The class mascot project is an extracurricular activity for younger pupils which comes with great benefits but also many challenges. It's something you, as the teacher, truly have to be passionate about. Parental engagement and support from families is also crucial.

Once a mascot - usually a stuffed animal or toy - has been chosen, pupils take turns taking him or her home with them and writing their own tale about an adventure the mascot had. Every child therefore contributes an experience that will be personal and will depend entirely upon their family input at home. Parental involvement is therefore very important, and it might be beneficial to have a taster session available for parents before the project begins, to discuss the benefits of class mascots and to give tips on how they, as parents, can help to make the

project particularly enriching for their children. To make it clear that your project is beneficial and relevant to the children's needs, it is also important to use the class mascots throughout the curriculum: allow the mascots to "experience" the curricular areas of literacy and numeracy where possible and involve them in modern languages projects or topics.

Jude McKerrecher: The cost of extracurricular activities to parents or guardians can range from nothing at all to a termly fee. Even when there are reductions offered, the cost can still rule out opportunities for some children.

Equipment for some sports clubs can be expensive and is not always supplied. Children may be asked to pay for materials. Trips abroad or even nearer home cost money that some families simply cannot find.

Families and young people are often too proud or embarrassed to seek financial support even when it's available; and children are sometimes unable to get to venues or to be collected from them at the right time.

So, what can we do to prevent extracurricular from becoming extra-exclusive?

As far as possible, keep all clubs and extracurricular activities free. Find out what funding, sponsorship and fundraising is possible to cancel out costs. Encourage as many students as possible to get involved, and allow them to give their own ideas about what activities should be offered and how. Remember, it's not as much about what we do in a club or extracurricular activity as how we do it.

Have a system that tracks every single learner and helps them to access extracurricular activities.

Use community and business links. I was quite recently in a school where the head teacher, working with learners, teachers, parents, carers and the local community, had linked extracurricular projects with the development of skills for life. In his school, every child has a series of free experiences the school facilitates.



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Getting Children Outdoors And Active

Improving physical activity and natural connections at Garfield Primary School, London.

CASE STUDY by **Playforce**

Outdoor learning and play is at the heart of everything we do at Playforce. Giving children the opportunity to discover the world around them through hands-on, interactive experiences can help them grow and develop physical, mental and social skills. We work hard to campaign for outdoor learning and children's health, and believe that through encouraging daily outdoor activities, children can develop some of the fundamental skills to set them up to become happy and healthy adults.

We've helped schools across the UK create amazing outdoor spaces in a variety of shapes and sizes. We work closely with schools to ensure that they receive the perfect playground. When we spoke to Garfield Primary School in London, Site Manager Robert Shaw told us that improving learning experiences for the younger children had always been top priority.

Regarding their latest playground development, he said, "At Garfield we recognise the importance of Early Years education. We strive to work in partnership with parents in order to ensure that children have the opportunities to fulfil their potential from their earliest educational experiences."

Garfield Primary School wanted to develop their playground into an area that was new and vibrant, one that would provide exciting and creative learning experiences for their Early Years children. They wanted the children to be able to use the new space all year round so, with the unpredictability of the English weather, we worked with them to design a playground with more sheltered areas for rain or shine.

The Playforce team stepped in to design and build an outdoor space that would allow the children of Garfield Primary School to enjoy outdoor learning and play throughout the school year. We collected ideas from the staff and pupils to ensure that



Innovate My School



the playground would be full of equipment and activities that the children wanted and loved. Headteacher Michele Thomas wanted to give the children a space that they would feel connected to, and one that would give them a sense of pride and ownership.

For Garfield Primary School, understanding and caring about nature is another high priority. We designed a playground that would enable the children to take part in daily interaction with the natural world around them. Giving them these opportunities can help them build an understanding of nature that can, in time, develop into a caring and protective attitude.

"It's fantastic to see the children getting hands-on with nature, they have developed a much bigger interest in the natural world around them. They are climbing, digging and taking part in lots of activities to aid their physical development. They are excited about going outside to play on the new equipment and have fun."

Developing the new playground at Garfield Primary School has greatly enhanced the children's outdoor learning. They are now able to enjoy their activities in the playground at a much higher level than before. According to Site Manager Robert Shaw, the pupils have more engagement and focus on the world outside and this, in turn, is inspiring them in many areas of school life. Including equipment such as mud kitchens, tipis and allotments in the playground has increased the connection between the children and the world. They are more curious regarding nature and outside subjects, they have a much better understanding of the world around them.

Jessica Scheiner, parent and PTA Chair said: "My son comes home after school each day excited about playing in the sand pit or rolling down the hill. The covered area is perfect for rainy days. I am so thankful for all the work from the Early Years staff to achieve this project for the children."

The playground development was the biggest and most exciting projects that Garfield Primary School has undertaken recently. When they launched their new outdoor space, they held a grand opening with the mayor and mayoress of Merton. The mayor said of the new playground: "This is a fantastic initiative by one of Merton's most ambitious schools. As a lifelong ambassador for education, I will be taking a close interest in Garfield School's inspiring determination to make sure all children enjoy a first-class learning experience."

When talking about working with Playforce, Site Manager Robert Shaw said: "The Playforce team overcame all obstacles that were thrown at them in a professional manner and provided a quality, value for money learning space. We had worked with Playforce before on a previous project so we were already aware of the quality of their workmanship. The initial contact we had with Playforce was very personal and the team adapted to our plans and ideas much more than other competitors did."

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How To Run A Successful Scavenger Hunt

CASE STUDY by **Russel Tarr**

The 'scavenger hunt' we have set up at the International School of Toulouse is easily transferable to other schools and places. Simply put, on the very first day of the new academic year, all Year 12 students take a coach to the center of the city. When students disembark, they are immediately divided into groups of 3-5, and then the day proceeds in the following manner:

Stage 1: Complete the first mission

Each team is initially given a mission sheet consisting of a series of questions and challenges that can be answered by visiting different places hinted at in various clues. For example, the first challenge for our students is 'Go to the gardens nearby which are named after the French Resistance leader during World War Two who later became President'.

Once they arrive there, they are asked to complete two tasks. First, they are asked to answer a factual question by looking around the place in question ('Find a monument in the gardens dedicated to a local mayor assassinated for refusing to support France's war against Germany in 1914, and write down his name here'). Secondly, they are asked to take a group photo at a particular spot nearby ('Find the sculpture of Resistance leader after whom these gardens are named, and take a group photo alongside it'). For each task completed, the team will gain a point.



Stage 2: Complete the remaining missions

From this point, the 'proceed to a place' format can be repeated indefinitely: I used Google Maps to identify 10 key places around the city within walking distance, and then created a series of questions which guides them through clues from one place to another ('Proceed through the gardens till you reach a road named after the province regained by France at the end of World War One. Head west down this until you reach a square named after England's patron saint' – and so on). It is a good idea to ensure that each question, so far as possible, works in isolation rather than requires successful location of the previous spot: this way, if students are unable to work out where they need to go, they can cut their losses and move on to the next challenge instead.



The first challenge for our students is 'Go to the gardens nearby which are named after the French Resistance leader during World War Two who later became President'.

Stage 3: Beat the clock!

One crucial ingredient of the treasure hunt is to provide a strict time limit. Teams have to hand their completed sheets back to their quizmaster at the designated location before a specified time (so that we can all get on the coach on time, as much as anything else!). Failure to do so incurs a heavy penalty or even disqualification. In this way, an element of urgency is built into the event. There is always one teacher based at a central location in case students need to locate them urgently, and we also provide each group with the school mobile phone number.

Toulouse Treasure Hunt		
Tick the final column for any tasks you achieve!		
As your first task for 5 points, take a photo of your team in front of the Mairie.		
Proceed to the gardens behind the Mairie. This square is named after the man who led the Resistance Movement in World War Two and who then became President afterwards.		
Take a photo of yourself in front of the monument to this man.		
Locate the modern sculpture of the mother and child in the same square. What is the name of the sculptor?		
Locate the monument to a Toulouse mayor assassinated in 1914 for 'non-patriotism' when he resisted the drift to war with Germany. What was his name?		
Head straight through the middle of the gardens until you reach the		

How the event was further improved

The activity has worked very well on both occasions we've used it: first with visiting teachers for the Maths conference, and then in September as the opening experience of the Year 12 Induction Event. After each event, we came up with the following ideas which will help to give your mission list an even broader appeal and effectiveness:

It is not helpful to have all the teams following each other around in one large clump. Therefore, design the route in a broadly circular format consisting of several mystery locations (eg "Location A" through to "Location F"). Then, give each team a slip of paper which gives the actual name of a different particular place in the mission, and the question that it corresponds to in their activity pack. Each team then proceeds to its nominated location and then works through the questions from that point forwards (with the final question in the mission pack directing them back to "Location A"). This way, all the students rotate through the locations independently and the chance of them following each other around is minimised. It also ensures that all of the key locations will be visited, which is important for the class debrief when students return.

Include useful bits of trivia about the places in question so that when groups arrive there they can learn additional interesting things about them. In particular, names of streets, buildings and squares are a rich and generally untapped historical source.

Although the potential for crossover between History and Geography in this activity are obvious

(especially if the clues require use of map skills), ensure that other subjects are tested too: for example art galleries, science museums, botanical gardens can be incorporated, as can questions about design and technology focused on buildings and monuments. You can also set some questions in French, German and Spanish to test and develop foreign language skills.

Use students lower down the school to design the treasure hunt for the incoming Year 12 students through a map-based activity in the classroom. With a map they can identify some of the key places in the locality, then conduct research into the origin and

development of those places to construct their own 'scavenger hunt' for the older students. In this way two groups of students are taught at once and the teacher becomes a mediator!



Design the route in a broadly circular format consisting of several mystery locations (eg "Location A" through to "Location F"), in a broadly circular format consisting of several mystery locations ("Location A" through to "Location F").

Set some 'selfie challenges': provide students with a photograph of a local landmark – complete with some interesting information about it - then ask them to take a group photograph at this spot to earn bonus points. One particularly fun task is to get students to find a statue in the area commemorating a famous figure, then use a 'face swapping' app on their phones to take a bizarre picture alongside it.

Use a closed Facebook group where students can post their photographs of the day, with points being given to each team that does so. Here at IST we have set up a 'whitelisted' Twitter feed that serves this purpose (@istlive).

Maximising The Benefits Of Class Mascots

CASE STUDY by **Paula O'Hare**

We decided that we would use class mascots who would not only be included in Primary One lessons, but would also take part in activities and create memories outside the classroom. Our two mascots were Etienne (a French elephant) and Jorge (a Spanish giraffe).

We embarked upon this extracurricular adventure in the second term of Primary One last year. The aim was to bridge the gap between 'in school' achievement and learning, and 'things we do at home'. We believed that the children felt that they were more proud of achievements they had made in school than those they made at home, and we wanted to change that.



Every Monday each child was desperate to share what they got up to ('Can you show everyone my Twitter pictures?').

It was decided that the mascots would also marry themselves to our 1 + 2 modern languages approach. The two mascots, Etienne and Jorge, represented French and Spanish and we introduced them through Circle Time, where the children were encouraged to pose questions and provide information about themselves to their two new friends.

Little did we know that these two stuffed animals would become such a hit with pupils, parents and staff and eventually become synonymous with our class at Nethermaims Primary.

Our boys, as they soon affectionately became, were accompanied by a hessian bag holding their diaries, a toothbrush, a disposable camera and some key phrases for the children to learn. Etienne and Jorge spent their days in the classroom with

the children, who were expected to include the characters in their learning journeys and explain their work to them.

Etienne and Jorge were taken home at weekends by "designated carers".

During the weekend the children who took the mascots home were encouraged to include "the boys" in their own pastimes and hobbies. Some children taught Etienne and Jorge how to bake or how to measure or even travelled to new and exciting countries. At one point Jorge even went home with one of our pupils to Vilaflor, a small village in Tenerife!

Taking the mascots home allowed for personalisation and choice for each individual. Each experience was documented in the mascot's diary and then read out to classmates on the Monday returning to school. We have also encouraged parents and carers to upload pictures and videos to our Twitter account.

Every Monday each child was desperate to share what they got up to ('Can you show everyone my Twitter pictures?'). This whole class involvement is amazing, every child is engaged because as some point they will be able to take Etienne or Jorge home.

In the fourth Term, we decided that as part of transition from nursery to primary one, we would send Etienne and Jorge on their own adventure to the nursery class. Here they would remain till the end of term. This would give children coming up from nursery into Primary One a little taster of our dynamic. Again, the children were given the bags and these were taken home. It proved to be an excellent move and already we've had positive feedback from their parents and the staff in the nursery. Having removed Etienne and Jorge from our class, we decided that we should have two new visitors for the children. Enter Celeste and Maria: glamorous female cousins of Etienne and Jorge. Celeste and Maria are sent home every night with the children to enhance their vocabulary learned over the last few terms.



Through transition with the nursery, both sets of class mascots have been reunited in the classroom and outside it. This has helped to give the children a sense of family bonding, and to socialise and interact with the local community.

Etienne and Jorge have made a massive impact on our class, not only in learning French and Spanish, but also in teaching children about caring for another individual, using common sense and logic,

consolidating learning at home, and even for engaging parents and encouraging family time. This is a project I will continue to use in Early Years and I encourage other teachers to do the same!

Parents provided positive feedback on having the class mascots:

- *'We love having all of them! Amber loves reading what they have been doing in their wee book! It has been really beneficial, as is it helps to get Amber to keep to a routine because she's doing it with the teddy; she likes to show them her house and what we do. Amber is always talking about them.'*
- *'Holly is always so excited about bringing them all home. We love it! It's a fun way for the kids to learn about responsibilities, being kind and sharing, etc. Thoroughly enjoying sharing this experience with Holly.'*
- *'The twins were very enthusiastic, they were very excited to take their "friends" outdoors to experience different types of Scottish culture. Etienne, Jorge, Celeste and Maria gained valuable knowledge of our homeland by exploring and visiting all the unique historical landmarks and the wonderful landscapes and scenery.'*
- *'Even though we have hundreds of teddies at home none of them had the same attention as Etienne, Celeste, Maria and Jorge had. They were special and they were treated like a real person.'*

Further Reading

Paula O'Hare

For further information on using class mascots as a tool for extracurricular activity see our Twitter page, @mrsCane_p4, which is always updated with examples of extracurricular fun!

We also contribute to the SCILT: Speaking Your Language blog:

www.speakingyourlang.blogspot.co.uk

This is primarily for the modern languages aspect of our practice, however it does refer to our use of the class mascots for extension of learning.

We found it useful to extend the curriculum into an outer school aspect, using the four capacities which underpin the Scottish curriculum: **bit.ly/POHaI**

We generally get lots of ideas from good practice which is shared throughout clusters, councils and beyond, so websites and social media sites such as Pinterest and Twitter are highly beneficial to us and our practice.

Russel Tarr

Another approach to the 'scavenger hunt' is a QR code hunt around the school:

www.classtools.net/blog/qr-code-treasure-hunt

This is my case study about these, along with a link to the QR Treasure Hunt Generator I developed at **www.classtools.net**.

Practice-Based Evidence - For Teachers, By Teachers

by **Christina Preston, MirandaNet**

What do teachers need to know about trends and developments in edtech? This is an area where professional knowledge changes very fast. How do teachers keep up?

This was the kind of question that prompted me, in 1992, to found the MirandaNet Fellowship - an online professional community created in response to teachers' growing need to share their practice in the use of the computers (which were just being introduced into classrooms). We use practice-based research techniques, which means that teachers and leaders collect the evidence and report on the implications of the findings themselves, with the support of fellows.

While my sources have suggested that OFSTED have noticed the impact of 'research-active teachers' overall, they have decided that it is not realistic to add this to teaching standards. Nevertheless, opportunities to share classroom evidence about edtech are important in developing a teaching

confidence and raising standards. The following three examples show how research evidence can influence practice and policy in schools.

Firstly, the staff of a Primary school in East London have been using the BrainPOP curriculum resource of games, videos and quizzes for about four years. The teachers have found the videos valuable for introducing difficult topics like levers and pulley. They've used the same video at the end of the topic for revision along with the quizzes. However, in researching the pupils' preferences, teachers have found that the children were immersed in the games when they had access. When a Year 5 class was asked to demonstrate their game-based learning, the teachers were surprised at their level of absorption and their detailed recall of facts and processes. In addition, they were articulate about the learning process. One boy boasted of helping his father to write a speech about Shakespeare because he remembered this unit so well.

As a result of their discoveries, staff resolved to make more use of the games and also to improve home access. Instead of announcing the password once a year, which the students told them gets lost, the teachers now add the password to each monthly newsletter. Many other discoveries from the research ensured that the school's investment in digital resources is now used to the full.

Secondly, a Secondary Academy school in Lincolnshire started last year's research project with challenges in staffing the Computing curriculum. This subject was introduced in 2012, replacing of Information and Communications Technology, and is heavily geared towards Computer Science.

The senior management team (SMT) asked their new IT service management company, Gaia Technologies, and the practice-based research experts from MirandaNet to help them in supplying the right digital environment and supporting in technical and professional training for the staff. The reason was that the SMT were planning an innovative venture: they had keen staff who wanted to develop a Creative Digital Media curriculum based on the *Blood Brothers* musical with Years 7 and 8. Not only was this project an opportunity to train staff and students in the use of Photoshop, Garageband and video editing / green screen tool Hitfilm - it was also an opportunity for the Academy to explore through research how working in a digital medium would enhance learning across Drama, Music, Art and Design Technology.

Now the school offers Digital Media as a GCSE choice because this proved more popular than Computing with their pupils. The leaders agree that they would not have been so confident in making this decision for the future if they had not had strong evidence backing up their decision.

The third subject that has engaged teachers is the use of web-based video for school-based professional development. Some teachers consider video to steer too near to the realms of surveillance - but with the IRIS Connect system that we researched, the teachers film themselves, own the clips and decide with whom they want to share their practice. Those who take to this method of CPD say that this is a transformational experience.

In other MirandaNet practice-based research projects, teachers have been exploring in-depth topics including: immersive environments, flipped



learning, and interactive technology (particularly in the context of severe learning difficulties). Teachers involved also agree that the pupils who participated as co-researchers benefit too, showing greater enthusiasm for learning and increased motivation, engagement, creativity and independence.

In the absence of government funding for research, these research-active schools are setting the teaching and learning agenda for the future based on credible classroom evidence. It seems to work.

Dr Christina Preston, director of innovation at MirandaNet and associate professor of education at De Montfort University.

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This practice based research in this article has been funded by some of the MirandaNet associates companies that produce education technology solutions. The full reports can be found at: mirandanet.ac.uk/about-associates/associates-research.



Digital Learning

Ever since Socrates criticised the invention of writing, the use of technology in education has raised hopes and hackles in similar measure.

These days, it's easy to see the ever-growing, ever-shinier surfeit of digital learning tools as a great blessing. Yet while many embrace the deluge of new devices, apps and innovations, others feel swept out to sea by an uncontrollable tide of technological change. And even some who are scudding breezily across the waves may be a little unsure of their direction and destination.

Fortunately we've recruited four doyens of digital learning - **Nicole Ponsford, Russell Stannard, Russel Tarr** and **Mark Anderson** - to steady the good ship Innovation and steer us towards the educational treasures that technology can unlock.

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During the 'Renaissance Day' (which has actually grown to three days as time has gone by), Year 8 students are placed in groups and carousel between different subject teachers over several hours.



Unlocking the potential of Digital Learning

Nicole Ponsford: Always think of the objectives first. Consider what you want to achieve. This may mean starting small - working to 'unlock the potential' for a small group of staff or students - but it will enable you to tailor and personalise your approach, and to select technology that works best for those involved rather than just throwing devices at them (never a good idea - literally or otherwise).

However, starting small does not mean you need to think small. Arrange a meeting with a school leader to propose your idea, see how it can fit into your school's development plan and if there are any funds and time available that can help. Have a clear timeline and a range of desired outcomes, and know what support you need beforehand. Negotiate if you have to. By doing this, you not only show that you have a plan, but help to ensure you have support on standby.

Russell Stannard: A lot of learning now takes place in the digital domain. However, despite the wide range of technology used in education, most feedback given to students is still text, usually in the form of handwritten notes throughout their written work or in a summary at the end. How much use students make of this feedback is questionable and research suggests that they often ignore it. Fortunately, as more work becomes digital, opportunities for new and more effective forms of feedback arise.



Russel Tarr: Though something of a technophile myself, I admit to having divided feelings about the whole circus that surrounds e-Learning. On the one hand, I find it quite exciting that there is an endless parade of new applications and gadgets to try out in the classroom. On the other, it is easy to get carried away with fads and fashions and to make the mistake of believing that new technology must automatically be educationally effective for our "21st Century Students" with their penchant for "Flipped Learning". For me, after almost twenty years in teaching, what works always trumps what's new. I've found Google's wide range of free tools to be particularly effective and easy to use in the classroom, even if technology is something you normally shy away from.

Mark Anderson: Learning digitally is all about making sure you get a good learning return on your investment in hardware, software and time spent helping staff to embed digital learning into the curriculum. Always keep pedagogy at the forefront of your mind: technology should enhance, not dictate learning. Try the following:

1. Create a Google account and consider using their collaborative tools in school.
2. Use a simple web tool in your class such as Padlet.
3. Run a quiz in your class using Kahoot, or try a different type of quizzing tool such as Socrative.
4. Use the camera on your mobile to take a photo of an example of great work in your class. Share this with your class and unpick what makes it great.
5. Use the microphone on your mobile to record some audio feedback to give to a child rather than handwriting your response.
6. Break down your classroom walls - not literally but, try Skyping with another class or getting an expert to join your class over Skype to share ideas.
7. Get on Twitter and say hi to @ICTEvangelist.

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Digital Learning: Challenges

Nicole Ponsford: Is it for the class teacher to teach using technology, or primarily for the students to learn using it? As everyone has different experiences and perspectives when it comes to digital learning, getting the best out of a mixed group of staff can be difficult.

When it comes to assessing the abilities and mindset of teachers, the main challenge can be their attitude to technology. If they are more TechnoNO than TechnoYES, show them how technology will make their life easier. Retraining staff on things the basics (from email to that ridiculously long Excel spreadsheet the DH has just emailed to everyone again) is a good way to do this, and it will increase their confidence with technology.

Sometimes a skills audit for all staff in the autumn term (including an option to be part of in-house training) can save a lot of headaches at the end of the year and convert TechnoMaybes into Yeses in the blink of an eye.

When it comes to a TechnoYES teacher, challenge them to choose technology that their students know more about. Use Innovate My School articles for inspiration if you are unsure where to begin!

All groups need to be willing to make mistakes in order to learn. School leaders looking to implement digital learning programmes across the whole school need to allow time for practice and experimentation - either in classrooms or as extracurricular projects. Your school's website and online presence can be useful. Sharing your 'news' online with your school community can both engage and inspire people. It could also lead to more parental engagement and opportunities for digital family workshops - which are a whole new learning adventure!

Russell Stannard: Teacher-student feedback is an essential part of the learning cycle. One challenge for digital learning programmes is to use technology to make that feedback more engaging. Screencast technology (SCT) is a good and easy way of doing this. It enables teachers to record the screen of their computer as if a video camera was pointing at it. The teacher simply opens a student's work on the computer screen and turns on the SCT. Anything the teacher then does on the computer - highlighting, writing, underlining, etc - will be recorded (audio comments can be recorded too). The resulting video can then be sent to the student as feedback on their work.



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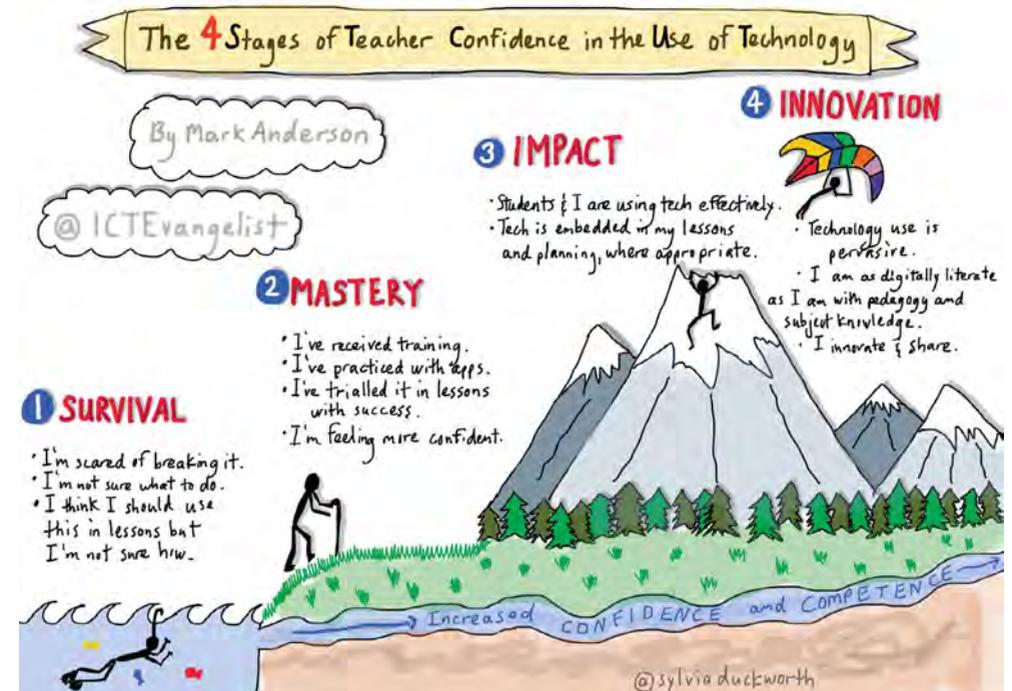
Russel Tarr: Adopting Google tools in the classroom comes with two main challenges. First, even if you limit yourself to Google applications, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. I recommend you start by trying the tools outlined in my case study (overleaf) and then move on to explore others. Secondly, although access to technology is less of an issue than it once was, make sure that you choose tools your students can access. It's also important to recognise that different tools suit different approaches. Some are suited to teacher-led activities, some to homework research, others to whole-class use.

Mark Anderson: As noted in Knoster's work on managing complex change, a successful project, irrespective of whether it is technology related, requires five key areas of thinking: vision, skills, resources, incentives and action planning. Remove any of these key-areas and you will most likely see false starts, frustration, resistance, anxiety and confusion.



Although access to technology is less of an issue than it once was, make sure that you choose tools your students can access.

This is one of the biggest challenges when it comes to adopting digital learning throughout a school or even just in your own classroom. In a high-stakes profession such as teaching, adopting digital learning can seem like a daunting prospect. But the opportunities it provides to help make a curriculum modern, relevant and balanced are huge. Take baby steps one at a time to help build your confidence and abilities. Don't let the challenge scare you. Think about the drawing below and see how you might soar with digital learning in your classroom.



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From Feedback To Feedforward

CASE STUDY by **Russell Stannard**

Case one

Students had given presentations in groups during class, and the teacher had taken notes on general problems and things they needed to consider, such as not adding too much text to the PowerPoint slides, not turning their backs on the audience, and not continually looking at their notes. The teacher went home, wrote out the key points in Microsoft Word and then used screencast technology to produce a video where he talked about each of the points and went into detail about things the students needed to consider. The video was then shared on Youtube for the students to watch.

The teacher was able to go into much more detail (most people speak at about 140 words a minute, so a 5-minute video can contain about 700 words of feedback) than he could have in traditional forms of written feedback. He was able to describe clearly some of the challenges and problems the students were facing. Students' reaction to the feedback was very positive: they felt that it was very detailed, and clear and easy to follow; they pointed out that they could rewatch the video before they did their next presentation (an approach often referred to as feedforward); and they felt it was more engaging as it included both the teacher's voice and some use of the cursor to highlight relevant points on the screen.

From the teacher's point of view, this was a very useful and quick way of providing detailed feedback to the students, which they would be able to make use of time and time again.

Case two

A group of 15 Chinese students were studying a foundation course for university entry. The teacher asked the students to write an essay introducing themselves. The students submitted the essays as Microsoft Word documents. The teacher then opened the students' work on his computer screen, marked the grammar and language problems in the

written work, turned on the SCT and went through the student's work, commenting and focusing on the problems. The teacher didn't give any direct feedback. Rather, he explained the problems and what the students needed to think about. The video created was then sent to the students, who were asked to re-write their essays based on the teacher's feedback.

This method encouraged the students to engage with the feedback and use it to re-draft their work. The teacher was able to elaborate on problems and provide a lot of detail. However, the teacher didn't actually give any direct corrections: the students had to use the information to make the corrections themselves.

Students were asked about this method of giving feedback via a questionnaire. Their responses indicated that they felt the feedback was more personal, like having the teacher sitting next to them as they corrected their work. They also thought the feedback was clearer and easier to follow. Most of the students played the feedback video several times, which helped the points to stick in. Students also liked the idea that it was both visual and oral: they felt they were getting much more information.

There were a few disadvantages. Some students struggled because the teacher had not directly corrected their work but given them pointers to correct it themselves. Students also said that jumping to specific points in the video was not always easy. Overall, however, the experiment was very positively received.

Conclusion

Screen recorders can be used to give feedback in a range of innovative ways. They can be used to provide general group feedback (one video for the whole class) or individual videos can be created for each student or group of students. Videos for each individual can be used in formative feedback, whereby the students use the information to redraft their work. It is this approach that makes this idea especially innovative.

Four Easy Ways To Use Google Apps To Improve Learning

CASE STUDY by **Russel Tarr**

Google Hangouts – for academic outreach

The video-conferencing facility provided by Google is a superb tool for bringing fresh voices into the classroom. Technically, it's very simple to set up: all that is needed is for the person at each end of the conversation to have a webcam, a microphone and a Google login. It's then as simple as sending an invite by email which, when opened, starts up the video call. Best of all – and this is where it beats similar applications like FaceTime or Skype – the video is recorded onto your YouTube channel so it can be viewed again later.

It's also possible to set up questions in advance, then click on these as the interview reaches that point. The idea of this is that they are then added as 'bookmarks' in the video so that during a repeat viewing it is possible to skip to particular questions and answers.

I have used Google Hangouts to enable my International Baccalaureate students to discuss the Russian Revolution with Professor Orlando Figes (@orlandofiges), to connect my Year 7 students to Alan Parkinson (@geoblogs) to talk about Otzi the Iceman and to a former student now working for the Israeli government to discuss his perspective on the Middle East Crisis.

Google Books – for effective research

For extended essays, internal assessments and personal projects, Google Books (www.books.google.com) is fast becoming an indispensable research resource for both teachers and students.

A few years ago, it was only possible to get very short extracts from a narrow range of sources, but when I was recently producing fresh chapters for a new edition of a textbook of mine. I was bowled over

by how fantastically comprehensive Google Books had become.

Simply search for a key term as you would in a normal search engine, and you'll be shown not a list of web pages, but of published books, many of which can then be viewed online. You can then save the link to these online books using the "add to shelf" feature for later viewing. Although Google often prevents you from reading a large number of consecutive pages in one book, this problem can be circumvented by searching for a particular term. You'll be presented with a quick list of pages that include the search term, and given the ability to view each of these pages individually.

Google Presentations – for group work

Collaborative web tools are superb for group work tasks. Google Presentations is just like an online version of PowerPoint, with the added advantage that several students can all log on and collaborate simultaneously on one presentation. I use this for the special off-timetable events we conduct at the International School of Toulouse for various year groups: for example, during the "Renaissance Day" (which has actually grown to three days as time has gone by), Year 8 students are placed in groups and carousel between different subject teachers over several hours.

In each subject-based session, the teacher outlines how the Renaissance affected and depended upon their specialist subject. Each group then has to produce a joint presentation establishing connections between the subjects and reaching a conclusion on "What was the most important development of the Renaissance?".

The great thing about using Google Presentations for this is that not only does each team have to divide the task effectively between its members



(different students might focus on different slides - one might be specifically responsible for locating and adding images, for example) but the teacher can simply open each presentation up in a different tab on their web browser, monitor what the students are doing and even give them advice using the 'chat' feature in the corner.

Google Forms – for peer assessment

Another excellent tool is Google Forms, which allow you to conduct quick surveys based on multiple choice and short-answer questions, with the results saved into a Google Spreadsheet that can be viewed online or downloaded as an Excel file.

Although these can be a quick and easy way to set up self-marking quizzes, I prefer to use them for peer-assessment exercises. For example, in Year

8 my historians design their own board games to consolidate their knowledge of the causes, symptoms and impact of the Black Death. Small groups of students are given ten minutes to play a game, and then they provide feedback and comments using a Google Form on a laptop set up next to the game. They score the game according to such things as entertainment value, educational value and presentation, and then proceed to play another game, with the format repeated for the rest of the lesson. By the end of the exercise, the Google Spreadsheet which has been generated has multiple scores for each game, and the role of the teacher is merely to download the file, do a little judicious moderation, and then return the scores and comments to the creator of each game.

The Benefits Of Working With Digital Leaders

CASE STUDY by Mark Anderson

As part of my work over the past decade, I have been heavily involved in the student digital leader movement in the UK. Student digital leaders are children who, following a successful application to the role, work with teachers in schools to help them improve their use of technology. This can significantly increase the success of digital learning projects.

One such school that I have been working with is Layton Primary School in Blackpool. Layton's student digital leaders are fronted by Assistant Head Teacher Claire Jones (@Claire_N_Jones). Shortlisted for the NAACE Impact Awards in 2016 in the Early Years and Primary category, the Digital Leaders at Layton Primary School have had a huge impact on the use of technology in the school.

The children at Layton Primary run lunchtime clubs and a 'genius bar' where staff and parents who have questions about technology can go and get support from their digital leaders. The children have

also led staff meetings, run coding clubs and held 'Appy Mondays' where they test out new apps for learning and write about them on their blog, which can be read by staff.

Assistant headteacher Claire Jones said: "I simply love our digital leaders. They have such an impact on supporting and developing digital learning in the school. We definitely wouldn't be where we are with our use of technology in our school if it wasn't for their hard work and input."

Of course another big issue facing schools that are looking to develop digital learning is teacher confidence. According to Claire, "Having a digital leader in the lessons really helps teachers to feel confident that they have someone who can help in their lessons, should they need it."

For further information on Claire's digital leaders, please visit their blog here:
mrsjones.laytonblogs.net/tag/digital-leaders

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Discovery Education At Grangehurst Primary, Coventry

CASE STUDY by **Discovery Education**

Discovery Education are lucky enough to work with almost 50% of Primary schools in the UK. Schools are a bit like children - no two are alike. Therefore, we wanted to find out a little bit more about one school's unique vision and aspirations.

We asked Gemma Clarke, Assistant Head of Grangehurst Primary in Coventry how she has found working with Discovery Education.

1. What was the vision for your school around digital learning?

Our headteacher had a vision to make our school a more technology-friendly environment, so we invested in a bank of iPads for each classroom. Our initial goal was to increase independent learning amongst pupils through the use of these devices in every classroom.



2. What made you choose Discovery Education as the company to work with?

We were looking for a resource to support teachers with their planning which included engaging digital content to enhance children's learning, which ideally could be accessed on our iPads too and help us develop their use simultaneously. We talked through some different suppliers and Discovery Education's Espresso product came out on top for two main reasons: some teachers in our school had great



success with it in prior schools, so it was tried and tested, and secondly because of its heritage and knowing it had been around so long it felt like a product we could trust. We never imagined the possibilities it would start to open up for both teachers and pupils.

3. How has Espresso changed teaching and learning in the classroom when it comes to digital learning?

It became so much easier for us to find the right digital media for our different lessons. What was even more interesting, however, was the way we began using the digital content. We became a lot more creative in the way we used videos, you wouldn't see teachers just pressing play on a video – we began to use the content in much more clever and innovative ways. It was thanks to your SOS strategies and events like Day of Discovery that we could really leverage the Espresso service in the classroom. There was instant impact after the day of Discovery that we held at our school our staff were changing lesson plans immediately after and it has snow-balled from there.

4. What were the specific impacts on your staff?

I had always been a big advocate of digital learning and creative technologies so I didn't need that much convincing however working with Discovery Education enabled me to spread the word and promote this change across the whole school and increase the adoption of digital learning.

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5. What was the specific impact on pupils?

Working with Discovery Education really improved the pupil's confidence with digital media but, more importantly, it has given the staff the confidence to allow the pupils to lead the way and let them become the teachers. Historically, the staff had been nervous to use these tools; they are now confident with them and have passed that confidence on to their pupils. We are now looking to develop even further with a digital leader's programme, where our pupils take responsibility for learning about new apps or Web 2.0 tools and teaching others how to use them. Another big impact has been that digital learning has broadened their horizons. We learned about mystery Skyping whilst attending a Day of Discovery, and this has helped to show the pupils of Grangehurst Primary that there is a world outside of Coventry.



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6. What do you think is the biggest differentiator between Discovery Education and other education companies out there?

It's hard to put it into words – usually when it comes to education suppliers we think “What's the catch?” However, with Discovery you quickly realise there is no catch and that they have the same goal as us – to improve pupil outcomes. The things Discovery have offered us are things that we never would have imagined any company would offer us.



Grangehurst Primary school are based in Coventry in the West Midlands. They have 405 pupils, and have been Espresso subscribers since 2013. They have attended two of our free Discovery Education Community events, known as Days of Discovery, in London and Birmingham. In 2016, Gemma Clarke was also the lucky winner of a week-long professional development experience at Discovery Educator Network Summer Institute (DENSI) in Chicago, with schools attending from all over the globe to share, connect and inspire one another. Grangehurst Primary participated in the virtual field trip Discovery Education produced this year for the Queen's birthday and joined us live for one of our free Coding webinars in November 2015. We are delighted to work with schools like Grangehurst to help in their digital transformation, and we look forward to continue to work closely with them and help them in any way we can.

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Further Reading

Nicole Ponsford

TechnoTeaching: Taking Practice to the Next Level in a Digital World by Nicole Ponsford and Dr. Julie M. Wood

Aimed at helping teachers at all levels, this guide explains not only how to not only integrate technology into your teaching but also how to have a positive impact on those around you.

mashable.com - A fantastic website for the tech-minded, full of up-to-the-minute tech inspiration and news.

Creative Skillset (creativeskillset.org/about_us) is the industry skills body for the Creative Industries (film, television, radio, fashion and textiles, animation, games, visual effects, publishing, advertising and marketing communications). "It works with and for the Creative Industries to develop skills and talent, supporting productivity and employability."

Russell Stannard

Research in Canada on using the SCT feedback idea - bit.ly/RStan5
 Research in Norway over a range of subject areas - bit.ly/RStan6
 Recent article about its use in the UK - bit.ly/RStan7
 An excellent tool for creating video feedback - bit.ly/RStan8

Russel Tarr

50 Things You Can Do with Google Classroom by Alice Keeler and Libbi Miller gives a comprehensive breakdown of many brilliant ways you can use Google Apps for Education in your classroom.

A detailed case study of how I used Google Hangouts to conduct a seminar with Professor Orlando Figes can be found on my ActiveHistory website here: bit.ly/rtar1

Further ideas about how I have used other Google Apps in my classroom can be found on my ClassTools blog here: www.classtools.net/blog

Mark Anderson

Digital Leaders: Transforming Learning with Students in the Lead by Mark Anderson: bit.ly/MAnd3

If you're looking to start digital leaders in your school, this free book on iBooks can help.

Learning with E's, by Steve Wheeler: amzn.to/28JORBI

Do you want to start unpicking digital learning in the information age? If so, this book is for you. Highly recommended, it's packed full of sage advice.

Digital Leader Network: digitalleadernetwork.co.uk

If you're interested in getting digital leaders for your school, this website is a great place to start.

ICTEvangelist: ictevangelist.com

If you're interested in developing digital learning in your school, my website is a place to find lots of ideas.



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Homework and Independent Learning

From rote-learning lists of Latin verbs to touring the Louvre in augmented reality, homework has assumed countless forms and served numerous purposes throughout history. But as technology continues to inspire ever more creative and controversial approaches to education, what, in this age of high innovation, is the proper role of homework? What purpose should it serve? How should it be structured? Is it even worth setting at all?

Indeed, with the “flipped classroom” becoming more common, is homework even homework any more?

Here to answer these questions and share their perspectives on this controversial yet crucial subject are four innovative luminaries of home learning: **Russel Tarr, Kat Howard, Russell Stannard** and **Mark Anderson**.



We created a TripAdvisor review of each place coveted by Hitler from his perspective, complete with a rating to indicate its importance.



Unlocking the potential of Homework and Independent Learning

Russel Tarr: Allowing students to choose the content and/or the outcome of their homework assignments is a good way to increase engagement and promote independent learning. Giving them the scope to reflect on what they need and want study, and then letting them choose how to demonstrate their learning, enables them to take ownership of their studies and helps teachers to cover a more diverse range of material. Another great thing about this approach is its flexibility. It doesn't have to be adopted wholesale for all year groups and all homework assignments: it can be used to different degrees and at the most suitable times.

Kat Howard: I have seen and shared a variety of approaches to homework and independent learning, and been pulled into feisty discussions on Twitter and in the real world with many in the profession who do not believe that homework is warranted at all. I still maintain that, with an approach that conveys the highest expectations and a genuine curiosity for what has not yet been learned, homework can open pupils' eyes not only to the possibility of better knowledge of a subject, but also to the improvement of their own capabilities - in and outside school.

Russell Stannard: One of the biggest changes caused by developments in educational technology has been a vast increase in the variety of activities and tasks we can set our students for homework. 20 years ago, as a language teacher (for example) I might have asked students to do some exercises from their workbook, write an essay or learn vocabulary. Today there are a multitude of possibilities for individual or collaborate homework assignments. For example, I could ask my students to record themselves using a podcast, to complete an online questionnaire, or to work together on a Google Doc.

The recent interest in the "flipped classroom"

has had a lot to do with unlocking the potential of homework to improve independent learning. The idea is to organise the homework part so that students focus on the lower-order thinking skills at home (such as learning the material) and the higher-order thinking skills in the classroom (applying what they have learned with the teacher there to guide them).

Mark Anderson: Homework is something that we all remember from our time at school. What is its true purpose though? Many see it as a means by which we can test students' knowledge by asking them to create reports, write essays, answer questions, revise for tests, etc, in order to demonstrate what they learnt in lessons.

But who likes homework? I certainly didn't as a child and my experience of working with children for more than twenty years suggests that they don't like it much either. Parents certainly expect it to be set, however, and woe betide the teacher who sets a homework and forgets to mark it! Additionally, the pressure to keep setting homework can lead to homework being set for homework's sake, which may have a negative effect - both on children and teachers. And that isn't good for learning.

If we want to release the potential of homework and the independent learning associated with it we need to ensure that it's relevant. How can we do that? Here are some ideas.

- Try asking children to create their own home learning activities with an exemplar included as part of their completed work.
- Get parents involved in home learning by asking them to help, particularly at Primary level. An easy way to do this is simply to ask children to involve their parents.
- Following the ideas of metacognition (thinking about thinking), co-construct challenges with

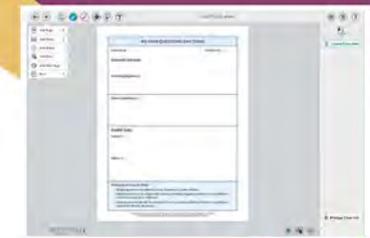
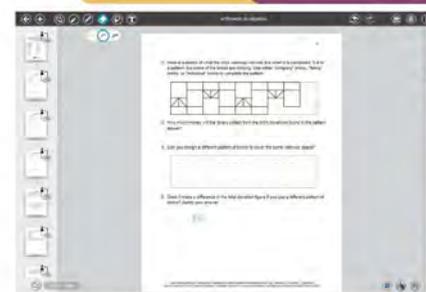
Looking For Technology To Enhance The Learning Experience?

Classroom is an application available on iPad, Android, Windows 8 and Windows 10. It enables teachers to create or import lesson materials and then manage their delivery to students. Documents can be collected when required. PDF and office document formats can be imported into the software from a variety of sources such as Dropbox. Students can read lesson content on their devices and use the rich editing tools to add drawings, text, photos and more to pages. They can work in teams or even as entire classes to complete work, which can then be submitted electronically. Educators can monitor all students activity in real-time - even remote learners - and assist individuals through the app. Advanced features such as handwriting recognition tools, templates and shapes are available.

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students. This will get them thinking about their learning processes as well as the content of what they're learning.

- Try ditching the homework diary and using a knowledge organiser for each topic.
- Children often make the most effort when they know that the work they produce will be public.

Why not set up a class blog and ask children to post their homework to it? You could even add a vlog and include other online content such as explanatory videos using the free tool Adobe Spark Video found at spark.adobe.com.

Homework and Independent Learning: Challenges

Kat Howard: To create a culture of high expectations, it's important to make the purpose of every piece of homework explicitly clear to both pupils and parents. There are three fundamental questions to consider:

Is the task to recap or revise the core knowledge of the course: the things that students need to know in order to make progress?

Is it to extend a higher attainment group? This might be a flipped learning task, for example, that they will use as a basis for the following lesson.

Is it to engage the students that are struggling to enjoy a particular topic because it doesn't seem to fit in with their interests?

In answering these, you should consider what you want the students to gain: what the priority is for your group. By moving away from the 'setting homework for setting's sake' mindset, you can meet the needs of your pupils while ensuring that they understand how the homework will benefit them.

Ideally, you should set a rotation of homework activities that cater to all of the above points succinctly. The higher-attaining pupils could be capable yet disengaged with a topic; other pupils may need a balance of engagement and core knowledge.

Finally, are you teaching not only the value of homework, but the value of instilling long-term habits? Homework is not only an opportunity to gauge the extent to which students understand a topic. It is also a fantastic way of instilling the good habits of staying motivated or managing time over



a long period. Project-based homework, whilst sometimes more challenging to set, really prepares students for the rigorous requirements of GCSEs and A Levels.

Russel Tarr: The challenge for teachers using the "choose your own homework" approach is twofold. First, students will need to be given a framework that guides them towards the most appropriate task without being so constrictive that the spirit of the approach is compromised. Secondly, the process of feedback and assessment will need to be flexible: an open-ended choice of topics and outcomes means the work produced will more clearly reflect the interests and talents of the individual students; feedback therefore needs to be individualised to some extent.

Russell Stannard: During the varied consultancy roles I've had both in Higher Education and in schools, one of the biggest problems I've encountered is in organisation. When students create digital content as part of their homework, a central location is required to save and organise all the learning evidence - documents, files, etc. Many schools do not have VLE or places for students to store digital content, and as a result it becomes scattered and hard to organise.

Here, **Edmodo** is a very useful tool. It's like a cut down version of Moodle and offers all the basic features of a virtual learning environment for free. Edmodo allows the teacher to set up discussions, polls, quizzes and assignments and to track all the responses of the students. The teacher can also share videos, articles and links, so homework can be highly interactive and engaging. There is excellent security, with each group being password controlled and no requirement for students to provide any data beyond their name. Teachers can even moderate posts before publication. However, the most impressive feature is the tracking: all marks for assignments and quizzes are stored in a database and the individual activity of

each student on the system is tracked by Edmodo.

Mark Anderson: One of the big challenges facing the promotion of independent learning is the existence of a spoon-feeding culture in the classroom. I understand where it comes from. The massive pressures of targets, performance management, large class sizes and huge curricula to work through can mean that the expectation of high levels of support and lack of resilience in your learners have been deeply embedded over many years of their schooling. Breaking away from this mindset takes time, training and role modelling of that resilience from you. The work of Carol Dweck around developing a growth mindset is rightly popular in education at the moment and very much worth looking at.

Supporting children with their work at home is difficult too. Sometimes you'll want to set homework that requires technology that some of your learners don't have, and some pupils won't engage with that home learning even if they do have the required technology. Involving parents in home learning is a great way to counter this and make children more engaged. The points above should help too.

Home Learning With Edmodo

CASE STUDY by **Russell Stannard**

Background

In 2015, I ran a series of experiments with Edmodo, working with groups of Italian Secondary school students learning English. We used Edmodo as the central repository and all homework was done online. This meant I had a complete record of all the work the students did: in one central location and all the marks and feedback I produced were also recorded. Students had access to computers in the class, though in practice most of the online work was done at home and Edmodo was rarely used in class.

Introducing Edmodo

I introduced Edmodo in the lesson. I already had an account, so I simply created a new group and then

wrote the passcode on the board. The students then logged into Edmodo using the passcode. I had set a couple of simple tasks on the opening screen for the students to answer, so they could quickly engage with the tool and see how it worked. Edmodo has an intuitive interface very similar to Facebook, so the students picked it up very quickly.

The first tasks the students did:

- Task one was to get the students to write a few things about themselves. I did an example, so that they could follow and had a model to work from.
- The second task was to answer a quick poll I had set up on Edmodo.
- The third task was to complete a quiz I had created.

- Finally they were asked to share a picture of a place they liked visiting and write about it. This helped them to learn about sharing files, and we also looked at searching for images on the internet. I showed them how to search for images of a specific size and for copyright-free images.

I finished by taking them on a quick tour of Edmodo and explaining how I was going to use the system. I also locked the room, so that only the students who were already registered could come into that class - no one else could now join.

Working with Edmodo

I could now blend my learning and set tasks for my students to do at home. For example perhaps I wanted them to watch a specific video for homework and comment on it, or read an article and then complete a quiz, or complete a writing task after listening to a podcast. The variety of activities I could set and the way I could link what I was doing in class with the work I asked my students to do at home created an engaging blended-learning course with all the content and activities accessible via Edmodo. I could comment, correct, provide feedback and track the students' work all in one place.



Many students don't know how to type, and this is a skill we should be teaching all students.

I rarely used Edmodo in the lesson with the students. From time to time I did open it up on the projected screen to point out things that students had done for homework or to show them exactly where they could find the homework, but this didn't require the students to log in.

The one exception was when I sometimes used Edmodo for classroom discussions. I put students into groups and in each group only one student needed to be logged in. I could set up questions on Edmodo, the students would discuss them and then one member of each group would write in the answer. This was a nice way of collecting the ideas of the class in one place.



Challenges

The first challenge is of course internet access. Some students didn't always have access to the internet at home, so it was important that they could either access it in school or elsewhere (in one case the student went to the local library).

Digital skills were a second challenge. Many students don't know how to type and this is a skill we should be teaching all students. Along with this, some students are unfamiliar with the search tools in Google that enable you to search for images that are a specific size or copyright free. It is essential that students can do this, and working with Edmodo helps to make the need clear.

One big tip is to continually refer to Edmodo in the class. You don't have to use it in lessons but it is vital that students see it as part of the lesson. For instance, I would often summarise any discussions that took place in Edmodo and talk about them in the lesson, or show interesting posts and replies that had been shared on the wall.

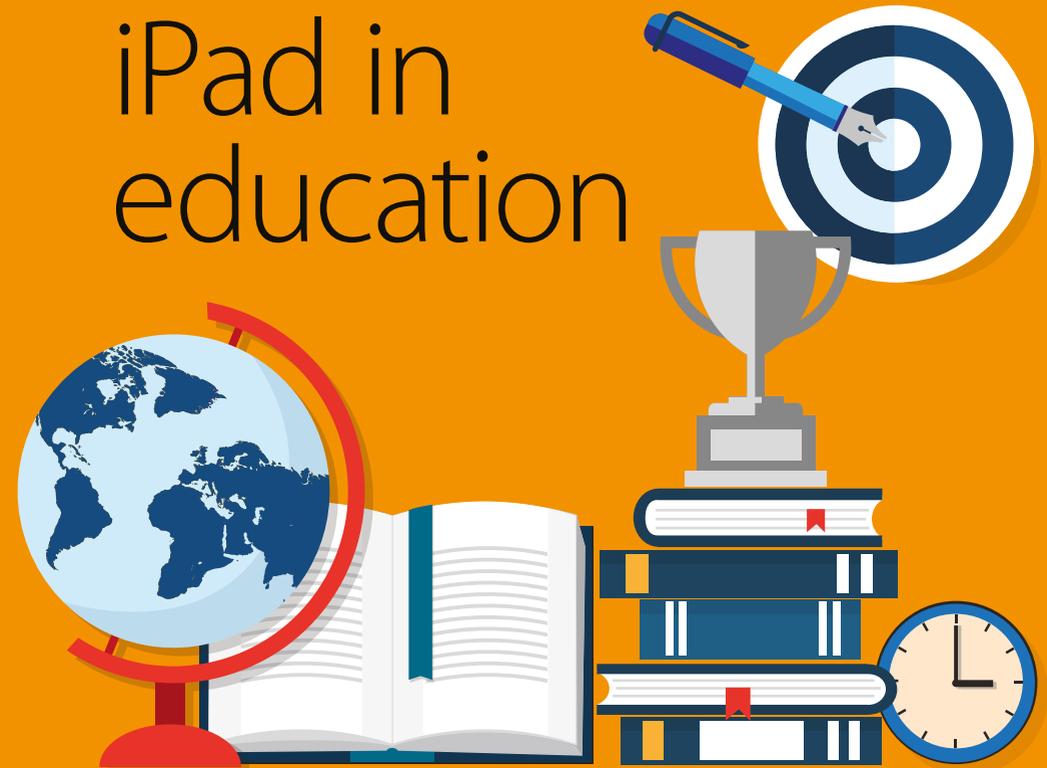
It's possible to involve parents too, via a code that allows a student's parents to access their child's work. This is not something I've used, but I am aware of teachers who have.

I didn't have any issues with students using Edmodo inappropriately, though at the start I did moderate any posts they added to the wall. Since the students need to log in, you know exactly who has written what anyway, so students tend not to misuse the system. Only content shared on the wall is available publicly; activity in the quizzes and assessments is not.

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Letting Students Choose Their Homework

CASE STUDY by **Russell Tarr**

Over the course of this year I have tried various approaches to the “choose your own homework” strategy. What follows is a short summary of several of the more successful approaches, each of which involves a slightly different method.

Year 12: Choose your own content

The simplest way to get started with a “choose your own homework” approach is to allow students to choose their topic of study, with the teacher specifying the required outcome. In this way there is flexibility in terms of content, but the teacher will be able to measure some distinct skills in the work produced. I use this approach with my Year 12 students at the end of the first half term, when I set them a holiday homework designed to get them thinking about the possible focus of their Internal Assessment (a 2000-word independent study that has to be completed as part of the IB History course). The way I go about this is to give students a list of recommended podcasts (eg *Great Lives*, *In our Time*, *Witness and The Moral Maze*, all of which are freely available from the BBC). Their job is to listen to one hour’s worth of podcast material, and then use this to deliver a classroom presentation on one or more key questions raised by what they have learned. Example presentations that resulted ranged from “What are the main causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict?” to “How has game theory informed international decision making since World War Two?” This podcast-based approach is easily adaptable to other subjects: the brilliant *Infinite Monkey Cage* podcast with Robert Ince and Brian Cox, for example, could give science students a broad range of inspiration.

Year 10: Choose your own outcome

My IGCSE History students reached the end of a heavily detailed and methodical study of Hitler’s foreign policy in the 1930s with a desperate need for some creative, independent work. I therefore set them the homework task of producing their own

revision aid for demonstrating their understanding of the key questions relating to Hitler’s foreign policy. I made it plain that I didn’t mind what the nature of the revision aid was, so long as it clearly demonstrated thought and effort and would prove useful as preparation for the final exam. I then gave the class some time in groups to list some possible revision aids, which we shared as a class. The range of proposals was immense, including: a **Google Earth** Tour of the key locations of conferences and clashes relating to Hitler’s foreign policy; a “*Diary of a Wimpy Fuhrer*” outlining the main steps towards World War Two in the form of an illustrated children’s book; a TripAdvisor review of each place coveted by Hitler from his perspective, complete with a rating to indicate its importance; a photo-album scrapbook of a German soldier from the 1930s charting the progress of German foreign policy; and changing the lyrics of a song to cover the topic essentials in a memorable way. I took photographs of the best projects to provide inspiration for next year.

Year 9 – Choose both the content and the outcome

The most open-ended method of all, of course, is to give students the flexibility to choose both the topic and the end product of their homework rather than merely one or the other. I tried this approach recently with my Year 9 students. The broad theme I provided was the growth of the British Empire. I then provided them with a summary grid, with the main periods of growth forming the columns, and the main countries and products involved forming the rows. Their job was to produce a homework based on one cell of the table (a particular event), one row (which focused on one of the key countries involved) or one column (which focused on one particular period). In this way they had a great deal of flexibility to choose a task corresponding to their interests and abilities.

For example, the students who tended to focus on a single cell (event) in the table either did so because they wanted to keep the task more manageable or

because it addressed a key issue that stimulated their interest (a Dutch student investigated in more depth the occasion when the Netherlands sailed its ships up the Thames in a daring raid in 1667, for example). In terms of outcomes, one student decided to produce an image of what the dining room of an English middle-class family would have looked like

before the impact of Empire and a second labelled image showing what it would look like, complete with all the goods and produce, at the end of the period. Another student produced a rapid stop-motion animation in which she shaded each territory as it entered the Empire, and then rubbed it out as the Empire dissolved, with captions explaining each step of the process.

Flipping Homework

CASE STUDY by **Mark Anderson**

Many will have heard of Mark Creasy’s popular book *UnHomework*, which suggests ways to develop a different approach to homework. You may also be familiar with “takeaway homework”, whereby children pick homework assignments from a “menu” of options. The menu has a sliding scale of difficulty, with each item worth a certain number of points. Children have to achieve a certain total number of points in a term by completing enough homeworks from the options.

One way of turning homework completely on its head, however, and really encouraging independent learning, is to use a flipped classroom.

Crucially, flipped learning isn’t just about getting pupils to watch videos for homework.

As I’ve written previously:

“The term ‘flipped classroom’ came about following an article in 2010 by Daniel Pink in which he wrote about how edtech guru Karl Fisch was giving pupils screencasts for them to work on from home. In the article, Daniel Pink called this the ‘Fisch flip’ and thus the name was born. Karl Fisch credits his inspiration to Aaron Sams and Jon Bergman. Flipped learning has been brought even more into the consciousness of the public by the work of Sal Khan whose ‘Khan Academy’ has tens of thousands of pupils and teachers using his videos every week.”

The project-based approaches promoted by Creasy and the choice provided by takeaway homework are great, but the flipped classroom can completely revolutionise not only your approach to homework but how you interact and work with children in class - all while promoting independent learning.

Kirsty Tonks from Shireland Collegiate Academy and Project Leader at ‘Math Flip’, has been researching the flipped classroom for some time. You can see a presentation on her work there with children and colleagues here: bit.ly/MAnd2

One of the key findings was that it led to much more effective feedback for pupils.

A crucial thing to remember with flipped learning is that it isn’t just about getting pupils to watch videos for homework. Videos may be involved, but you could also ask pupils to read a chapter of a book and take notes, or to discuss a topic with other classmates and record the key elements.

If you are using video, one very helpful free tool is **EdPuzzle**. With EdPuzzle, not only can you add videos you’ve made but you can bring through videos from National Geographic, Kahn Academy, YouTube and many more. Additionally you can record your own audio track, add your own notes and trim videos down to just the part you want your students to watch. More importantly though, you can add questions at key points in the video to test students and inform your planning for their next lesson. You can also see which students have watched the video and which haven’t. Check out EdPuzzle at edpuzzle.com.

Further Reading

Kat Howard

Don't grade homework, by Greg Ashman:
bit.ly/KHowa1

An excellent go-to guide for setting homework with purpose and intent rather than to meet policy requirements.

Make Sense Not War, by Paul A. Kirschner & Mirjam Neelen: bit.ly/KHowa2

Paul offers a concise guide to getting student (and parent) buy-in when it comes to completing homework.

Russel Tarr

Mark Creasy's *Unhomework: How to get the most out of homework without really setting it* (Independent Thinking Press, 2014) is essential reading for anyone interested in trying out various "choose your own homework" strategies. Mark can be followed on Twitter at [@EP3577](https://twitter.com/EP3577).

Ross Morrison McGill (@TeacherToolkit) has written a great blogpost: "#TakeAwayHmk is #UnHomework" (bit.ly/RTarr1). This also analyses the latest research about the importance of homework.

I have gathered loads of possible homework outcomes on my blog: www.classtools.net/blog.

As part of the process of deciding what outcome to work towards, I initially direct students to this to provide some inspiration, and when they come up with fresh ideas themselves I add them to the blog for the benefit of the next round of students using the "choose your own homework" approach.

Russell Stannard

Edmodo has been slightly updated since this PDF article was written, but it is still a really useful guide to working with Edmodo: bit.ly/RStan3

Here is a useful set of training videos that take you through using Edmodo: bit.ly/RStan4

Mark Anderson

Perfect ICT Every Lesson, by Mark Anderson:
bit.ly/perfectict

This book contains information, case studies and ideas on how you can use technology to flip your class and innovate in lots of different ways.

Flipped Learning: Gateway to Student Engagement, by John Bergman & Aaron Sams:
amzn.to/290KH7h

Looking to flip your classroom? Learn from two of the world's leading experts on the flipped classroom in this highly popular book from the godfathers of the flipped classroom.

How Does This Homework Work?

by **Kat Howard**

My homework is outlined at the start of the term to all classes, with homework menus available via the shared online space. I use a mix of project-based homework tasks that give pupils choice, but also create a weekly online quiz via Quizlet.com or

Vocabulary.com (both free!). This is a quick, easy way to either test knowledge covered that week in lesson time or to develop topic-specific vocabulary. Those pupils that regularly apply themselves will always match the group of pupils that demonstrate a clear, consistent understanding of the topic.

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CPD

Developing your own professional standards is vital in the ever-evolving sector of teaching. Policy, edtech, pupil needs, parents' requirements... Bruce Lee's advice of "be water, my friend" may as well have been directed specifically at teachers. Here, **Mat Galvin**, **Russel Stannard** and **Mark Anderson** share their CPD experiences so that you can adapt at a moment's notice.

“

It's easy to forget to build in time for yourself, as well. A popular hashtag that supports this is #teacher5aday, which aims to help get you thinking about your work/life balance.



Unlocking Potential in CPD

Mat Galvin: Professional development, in whatever sphere, is absolutely key to maximising the potential of your colleagues and staff team. Be sure to challenge and question your colleagues, always consider how you might expand your role, and work with colleagues to validate and improve working practice. This way, we keep a fresh and ever-adapting skills set to allow us to give our students the very best education available.

Professional development is crucial to keeping your more experienced staff innovating and improving. Make sure that you keep open lines of communication that encourage new and inexperienced staff to grow, develop and succeed in their early career. Equally, for senior and middle leaders, it's key to stay on the front foot. Ask yourself, how can you remain efficient, effective and have an awareness of what your very best practice is, both in this country and beyond?

“

The best method I have found for developing myself within my profession has been by taking my CPD bull by the horns and steering it myself.

Russel Stannard: When it comes to resources for CPD, my favourite is screen capture technology (SCT). The likes of **Techsmith Camtasia** and **Adobe Captivate** allow training material to be quickly produced and distributed over the internet or on an intranet system, and SCT allows you to record the screen of your computer as if you had a camera pointing at it. Everything that the user does on the screen, including anything the user opens or closes on the screen, as well as anything the user says, writes or highlights, will simply come out in the recording.

This technology is already used extensively in universities in the UK as a way of providing

quick, cheap and easy accessible CPD material to teachers. It is especially relevant when thinking about technology training, but plenty of universities also use it for communicating educational policy and the like. Remember, you can open up anything onto your screen (PowerPoint, Word Document, picture, chart, table, graph etc) then turn on the screen capture technology and record your talking over whatever is up there. You can move through the pages of a PowerPoint or jump from one picture to another, it will all come out in the recording.

Mark Anderson: The face of CPD has changed a number of times since I first started teaching. Back then, CPD wasn't something that was talked about, not even in my NQT year. It wasn't discussed on my degree prior to starting teaching either. I've always had to turn to myself for my professional development. That's not to say I haven't attended moderation meetings or had link meetings to discuss curriculum developments. The best method I have found for developing myself within my profession has been by taking my PD bull by the horns and steering it myself.

I started blogging back in 2009, joined Twitter in 2010 and, in 2011, I attended my first TeachMeet. Organised by Sally Thorne (@mrsthorne) I presented an idea about using displays around my school to promote my subject; it was rubbish... (not the idea, but my presentation), as were my presentation skills. I vowed there and then that I would never present so poorly again. So what did I do? I started my own TeachMeet at my school.

I can honestly say that if it wasn't for the sharing (both ways) with teachers via social media, blogging and at events such as TeachMeets, I wouldn't be where I am now in my career.

If you're looking to maximise your CPD, then take what I call your PPD (personal professional development) or CSPD (continuing self-professional development) by the horns and steer it yourself too. Attend TeachMeets. Learn from other educators on Twitter. Ask advice and share your learning and professional development too.



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CPD: Challenges

Mat Galvin: As we all know, CPD can equally be a turgid experience, characterised by sleepy afternoon sessions in a dark assembly hall, listening to a well meaning speaker deliver their message after a mediocre lunch. Will your experienced teachers want to sit through another three hours of AfL training? Probably not! Equally, NQTs may be interested in strategic planning for SLT, but how much impact will it have on their day to day practice?

The key to making CPD useful, exciting and stimulating is to personalise the provision, just as you would for your students. Differentiated sessions, CPD pathways and collaborative enquiry are just some of the resources available in your armoury.



Russel Stannard: There is a continual need to provide quality CPD to teachers at all levels of education. For example, many schools are now introducing Moodle into their institutions. SCT could be used to create training videos on how to use this resource. It's not always easy to train staff on how such technology works, but if you have one member of staff who is good with the Moodle technology, they can use SCT to record a series of videos that take the rest of the staff through the tool and the key features it offers. The resulting videos can then be shared on the school intranet site. This means the teachers can access the material in their own time, combating the challenge of that ever-packed teacher workload. They can play work back as often as they want to, before trying out the ideas.

Keep in mind that this technology is not just limited to technology changes. Many institutions use

it to relay policy changes, organisational changes etc. During one teacher-training project at the University of Westminster, that SCT was used to communicate changes in the organisation of your department and information about recruitment. SCT even records the highlights or marking that you make. So if you opened up a PowerPoint presentation, turned on the SCT and then began recording, anything you highlighted on the screen, anything you wrote would also come out in the video.



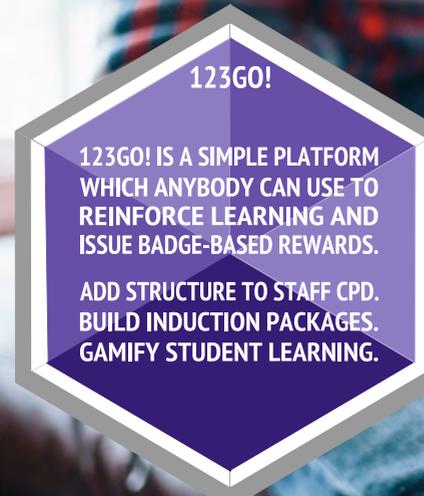
The key to making CPD useful, exciting and stimulating is to personalise the provision, just as you would for your students.

Mark Anderson: Finding time to engage with all of the CPD opportunities that are out there can be difficult to navigate. Certainly Twitter, while a fantastic tool, can be something that can eat into your personal downtime. I suggest that you build in specific times when you look at the different opportunities that are there for you. Rather than skim Twitter for blog posts to read from your PLN, why not get the **FlipBoard** app and curate content and blogs around the areas that are of interest to you in there? That way you can 'read' your blog posts at a time that suits you, just like a virtual newspaper.

It's easy to forget to build in time for yourself as well. A popular hashtag that supports this is #teacher5aday, which aims to help get you thinking about your work/life balance. I've seen many a teacher tweeting and talking about education issues on Christmas Day, New Year's Eve and other times when perhaps they should actually be turning off from work. Why not give yourself a cut-off point in the evenings or give yourself a digital detox during holidays?

Attending your first TeachMeet might be a bit daunting too. Lots of teachers, people you don't know, asking yourself the question, "why am I here?". I'm sure you'll enjoy the experience, but it can be a bit scary.

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Our Academy's Ever-Evolving CPD Programme

CASE STUDY by **Mat Galvin**

At Firth Park Academy in Sheffield, we have a rich and varied CPD programme, which has been well received by staff, through formal feedback, anecdotally and through staff voice.

The whole programme is designed to improve teaching and learning for our students through personalised CPD pathways, delivered to each member of staff. Alongside several 'drop in' CPD sessions each week, we have clear CPD groups for staff to join at the beginning of the year.



All schools include a learning walk to showcase the very best teachers and learning in their schools, with the chance to discuss what has been seen.

NQT, RQT and new staff

All staff, on joining the Academy at whatever level, go through a process we call 'Firth Park Good'. This is essentially a series of five minute, low-stakes drop ins by a variety of leaders and teachers, who then feedback a very brief lesson judgement ('Firth Park Good' or 'Working Towards FPA Good'). This has helped us spot barriers very early, eg SIMS access, logistical issues, clarity over basic classroom expectations, which has then led into very personalised CPD to bring all staff onto the same footing in their first month. The judgments are recorded on SIMS to allow the CPD lead to highlight areas for development, and the SLT works with teachers to address these issues collaboratively. This then feeds into an excellent NQT and RQT programme, covering the basics of great pedagogy and teaching in Term 1 (eg assessment for learning, behaviour for learning, making marking manageable etc). In Term 2, the teams work on collaborative projects and engage in coaching trios with more

experienced staff. This allows them to rapidly make ground in establishing good order and routines in all of their lessons. In Term 3, all NQTs and RQTs are involved with the 'professional enquiry groups'.

Leading Outstanding Learning - inter-school collaboration

Firth Park Academy works with partner schools Newfield, High Storrs, Sheffield High School and Horizon Academy to offer the 'leading outstanding learning' programme. This is a free course, run by senior leaders in each of the schools, to nurture and challenge the very best teachers in our schools to have deeper and wider impact in their workplace. The sessions rotate between the schools, with a half day spent at each over the year. The work focusses on the cornerstones of world-class teaching, with high-quality and innovative practice shared by outstanding professionals.

In addition, all schools include a learning walk to showcase the very best teachers and learning in their schools, with the chance to discuss what has been seen. The host schools are varied in their context, from a fee-paying, private single-sex school to an inner-city comprehensive serving an economically deprived ward. Through this variety, colleagues can experience the challenges and opportunities of working in different types of schools, further widening their experiences. The course has been very well received by participants, and has often led to promotions or further collaboration.

Taking Learning Forwards - developing teachers

At the other end of the career journey scale, the Taking Learning Forwards (TLF) programme is designed to assist newer teachers or those who need to reinvigorate their practice to deliver good or better teaching, day in, day out. The sessions are run by three senior colleagues within the school, including the principal. They focus on the key components of great teaching, such as Assessment

For Learning (AFL), behaviour management and student engagement. Staff are given time off to work with their session leader on what great practice looks like, and talk through 'grab and go' strategies, to deliver in lessons. A learning walk follows, with participants having the chance to see the very best practice in the school. This is crucially with the very same students they teach, to allow the chance for teachers to see just how great challenging students can be and so raise their expectations.

Some staff opt into this programme or are guided towards it following an RI observation in quality assurance. Again, the formal feedback after the course has been very positive, with the strategies shared being used in subsequent successful observations.

Leadership Development Cohort

A programme designed for aspirant or substantive middle leaders, the leadership development sessions deliver the basics in Term 1, with a focus on such areas as the effective use of data, having challenging conversations and curriculum planning. In Term 2, the participants are asked to pick a specific and measurable area for their '10% challenge'. Taking its name from the successful 'London Challenge', leaders must drive improvement in their area, such as closing the gap between the attainment or progress of SEND students and non-SEND. Leaders present at the midway point of their projects to the Senior Leadership Team and then to each other at the end, with reflections on what went well and areas for improvement in their leadership and impact. The course ends with talks from experienced senior leaders or heads on the rewards and challenges of school leadership.



The formal feedback after the course has been very positive, with the strategies shared being used in subsequent successful observations.

Professional Enquiry Groups - research-based innovations

In Term 3, all staff collaborate on a professional enquiry group project of their choice. This could be looking at: SEND strategies, closing the gap, engagement for hard-to-reach boys or using innovative practice to promote independent learning.

Over the course of four formal meetings, the cross-departmental teams innovate and collaborate to trial new strategies. These are discussed, reviewed and finally presented by the group at the end of year showcase. Staff are encouraged to use our links with the Universities to use their resources, such as libraries and expertise through staff links.

Each group has in it a member of the SLT to check attendance and engagement, plus a group leader to push the learning forwards. The findings from each group are then woven into the final teaching and learning development plan for the following year, allowing classroom teachers to directly influence strategic direction and plans.



Next steps

No CPD programme is ever perfect, and ours is no exception. We'll be asking staff for anonymous feedback over the final weeks and seeking ways to respond to demand and improve our provision once again for next year. Using the headings explained by Colmers School head Barry Doherty on my recent CPD course (we're all learning, me included!), evaluation headings will ask staff to list what they want to keep, change or lose.

Outward facing strategies- get involved in CPD networks and organisations

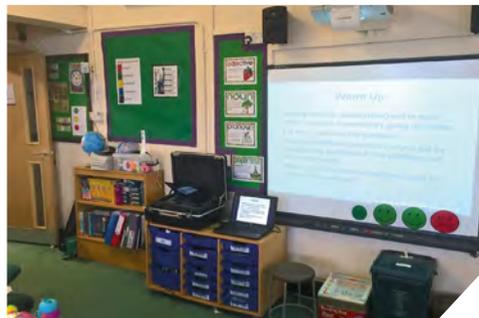
At Firth Park, we pride ourselves on being very outward-facing. Our CPD programme reflects this, with us being involved in regional exam board events, hosting TeachMeets and sending staff on courses (eg aspirant heads and research Masters units with the University of Sheffield and Hallam University). Our links with other schools through the SSAT has also meant staff visiting excellent schools such as Pimlico Academy in London, bringing back ways to constantly improve our provision.

How Recording Lessons Has Transformed Our CPD

CASE STUDY by Lessonbox

Matthew Goulding, assistant headteacher at Pentrehafod School, Swansea:

At Pentrehafod School we have been part of the Schools Challenge Cymru programme that was set-up with the aim of improving pupil outcomes, with one focus being teaching and learning. From 2012-2014, all staff had the opportunity to engage in either an action research project or lesson study. During the summer term of 2014, we piloted the use of the **Lessonbox Mobile Recording System** with a number of key staff across the school. This led to us expanding our professional learning programme from September 2014 to focus on developing reflective practice across the whole school.



Qualitative benefits for using the system include:

- Developing teacher confidence.
- Improving the quality of interventions provided eg literacy support, TA.
- Strengthening peer-to-peer working.
- Created cost-effective opportunities for sharing best practice.
- Improvements in teaching and learning through greater personal reflection by colleagues.
- Development of best practice within departments that focuses on subject specific pedagogy.

The Lessonbox Mobile system is exceptionally versatile, and can be set-up absolutely anywhere in the school... including the sports hall! As a school, we have made it available as a bookable resource, whereby either the IT technician will deliver it to the class teacher or the class teacher can collect and set-up in a very short space of time. The whole system is contained in a portable briefcase, which adds to ease of use. The high-quality cameras and microphones allow for the class teacher to gain multiple outlooks of their classroom. As a school we decided to export the footage to an encrypted USB, which enables the member of staff to watch the recording through VLC player whilst still maintaining all features of the original recording. This is one of the best features of the Lessonbox Mobile.



The Lessonbox Mobile system is exceptionally versatile and can be set-up absolutely anywhere in the school....including the sports hall!

The Lessonbox Mobile System was introduced as one of the optional professional learning opportunities that staff can opt into over the course of the year. This approach allows them to personalise their professional development programme. After the success of this, we decided to extend the Lessonbox Mobile System to our cluster schools.

Some of the ways that the system is being used include:

- Peer observations within "trust partners".
- Lesson study.
- Evaluate teaching assistant intervention with pupils.
- Analyse the quality of pedagogy eg focus on introductions, questioning.
- Personal reflection.
- Share best practice across the school.
- Vehicle for coaching staff.

As a school, we have to ensure that we have value for money for all investments, and that these play a pivotal role in supporting improvements in teaching and learning. You certainly don't want to spend thousands of pounds on something that is going to sit on a shelf and never be used. The Lessonbox Mobile Recording System has most definitely supported our ambition to enable all staff to engage in a personalised, professional learning programme leading to improvements in teaching and learning.



One of the unexpected benefits is that we've had real enthusiasm from those you may not have expected

We had real enthusiasm in places we least expected it. It's been these staff members who have benefited most, as video gives them self-awareness and they've been able to make real changes. Our staff are happy to testament to this...

"The use of the Lessonbox Mobile system has helped me to gain greater insight into my own practice. This has allowed me to make small, incremental changes to my practice."

"At first I did not want to video myself as I was concerned that senior management would see it. As soon as I realised this was not the case, I had a go and was really surprised. The system allows me to reflect through features such as pause, rewind and seeing the classroom from two perspectives. This has helped me to engage in deeper self-reflection."



"Over the course of the last 7 months I have been part of the in-house teacher coaching programme. The video technology has facilitated the coaching dialogue between the coach and I. It enabled me to secure improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and pupil outcomes."

As a school we believe that this system has been one of the best professional development investments in recent years.

MATTHEW GOULDING



Matthew Goulding is an assistant headteacher at Pentrehafod School, Swansea, with responsibilities including teaching and learning and staff development. Prior to this role he has worked as both a pastoral leader and more recently as head of Mathematics.
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ABOUT LESSONBOX

The Lessonbox Mobile Recording system is a unique product that delivers high-definition audio visual quality results in an easily portable case. The discreet equipment helps capture natural reactions in the classroom, creating a really valuable record of events.

www.lessonbox.co.uk
info@lessonbox.co.uk
0845 519 3660



Great Examples Of Embracing CPD

CASE STUDY by **Russell Stannard**

What works for Higher Education can often be replicated for Primary or Secondary schools, so here are a couple of great activities to try in your school!

Example one

At the University of Warwick, the staff in the Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL) needed to be introduced to the workings of Moodle. They had taken the decision to introduce Moodle as the virtual learning environment (VLE) across the whole university, and CAL took the initiative of creating online learning screencasts using screen capture technology, which staff could access at any time. These could either be watched as a complete course or accessed on a need-to-know basis (ie teachers can jump to a specific video or a part of a video). They included quiz questions to check understanding, and successfully helped to introduce Moodle to the department. The idea was later extended across the university.



SCT can be used to very cheaply and quickly produce a range of training materials across a range of tools.

What staff particularly liked about the content was that it was accessible at all times, enabling staff to work at their own terms and at their own pace. They found it especially useful that they could play and re-play the videos time and time again.

The videos are very much based around practical examples how staff could use the software, and they actually built up and guided staff through creating all the key elements they might want to do with Moodle to blend their classes.

Example two

Meanwhile, at the University of Westminster, a team of teachers and I produced a complete collection of SCT videos to help students on our multimedia courses. This included training with a variety of tools that we wanted them to learn, both in preparation for the course. The students were expected to keep a blog while they did their dissertation, and so a set of training videos that showed the students how to blog was created. This saved time, as it meant that valuable class time wasn't taken up by blogging; it meant we could actually send this learning material to the students before the course started, and students had access to this material at any time. The idea was later extended to actual content from the course.

Usually universities hide their training and support material behind intranets, but the University of Westminster made their learning material public as part of an open resources project. You can see them at multimediatrainingvideos.com.

This same approach is being used by a whole range of universities and schools for staff. SCT can be used to very cheaply and quickly to produce a range of training materials across a range of tools, including Turnitin, Moodle, Google Docs, Google Forms etc. This material can be organised in one location, making it easily accessible to members of staff.

One important thing to consider is how you encourage school staff to actually make use of the material. One possibility is to set small pieces of coursework at the end of each set of videos that the staff have to complete. This then provides evidence that they have worked through the material and understood it. The coursework would normally be a practical, tangible outcome like the production of a Google Doc, a Moodle site or a blog. This does require some use of staff time as teachers will want feedback on their outcomes, but this does not have to be time-consuming. A member of training team / staff support can simply verify that the outcome has been produced or provide guidance on changes that need to be made. Some schools have even

experimented with self-check questionnaires, where the teacher simply answers a series of questions to check they have understood and completed the task.

Example of Blogging questionnaire:

1. Can you create a new post?
2. Can you add a picture to your post?
3. Can you add a link?
4. Can you add a new page?

Many institutions are talking about introducing a badging system. Staff work through the material at their own pace and, on completing various stages, are given badges to show recognition of their development.

Further Reading

Mat Galvin

CPD gurus you should follow on Twitter:

Stephen Tierney - @leadinglearner
 Jill Berry - @jillberry102
 Tom Sherrington - @headguruteacher
 Ross Morrison McGill - @teachertoolkit
 Gaynor Black - @BlackGaynor
 Beci Easton - @RjjEaston

Books (some CPD based and some to get you thinking):

Good to Great by Jim Collins,
Making every Lesson Count and The Perfect Teacher-Led CPD by Shaun Allison
Gung Ho! Turn On the People in Any Organization by Ken Blanchard
The Restless School by Roy Blatchford
Educational Excellence Everywhere, DfE: Read the White Paper from start to end. What could or should it mean for your school? How will you use the agendas to improve the quality of teaching and learning in your teams?

Mark Anderson

Twitter for Teachers, a resource - Mark Anderson
bit.ly/MAndI

One thing to keep in mind is that the SCT videos can be used to compliment face-to-face training, and this is actually my favourite use for them. One problem with a lot of CPD is that during the training everything is positive, but then afterwards the teacher has to work on their own, and it's during this period that confidence can fade. SCT videos can be used to support CPD training days, which helps to combat this issue. Teachers and CPD providers can provide SCT videos that support their training sessions, providing backup to the face-to-face sessions.

A resource which helps teachers new to Twitter discover the hows of hashtags and much more in this brilliant social media tool.

The Teacher's Guide to Twitter

www.edudemic.com/guides/guide-to-twitter
 Another resource to help teachers find their way through the Twittersphere.

Perfect Teacher-Led CPD - Shaun Allison
amzn.to/28YICoe

A fantastic read and development tool for anyone wishing to either organise great CPD for their school or someone looking to push their own professional learning forward.

Why Teachers Should Tweet

ictevangelist.com/why-teachers-should-tweet
 If you were looking for more reasons why you should tweet as a modern educator in charge of their own professional learning, then this post should help with that.

Getting the most of your first TeachMeet

ictevangelist.com/getting-teachmeet
 This short article will give you hints and tips on how to get the most out of your first TeachMeet.

CPD Top Tips

by **Mark Anderson**

If you really want to push your professional development, try the following challenges and see if you can achieve more by doing it yourself:

- Sign up to Twitter and follow some great teachers - the lists on the Innovate My School site will prove helpful in this regard.
- Check out some of the blogs on the Innovate My School website or those that you find on Twitter.
- Check out the TeachMeet wiki and find a TeachMeet near to you and attend.
- Feeling brave? Then why not take it up a notch by attending a TeachMeet and offering to share an idea from your own classroom?

- Start your own blog, and reflect and share on your own practice. A great place to start with this is the Staffrm (staffrm.io) website. It's free, doesn't require any set up and there's a community of great educators there already for you to learn with and from.
- Share one great thing that happened in your classroom each week on the #PedagooFriday hashtag. The hashtag is a powerful and positive way to gather new ideas but to also share some positivity from your classroom with other teachers from around the world.



#High5aTeacherDay

Friday 7th July 2017
Friday 6th July 2018
Friday 5th July 2019

The first Friday of July is now High 5 a Teacher Day, a worldwide event celebrating top teaching practices! A Twitter-held holiday, #High5aTeacherDay will ask teachers, school staff, pupils and parents to high-five a teacher(s), and record it via photo or video.

Remember to tweet your high-fives on the next **#High5aTeacherDay!**



Parental Engagement

As IMS Guide contributor **Mark Anderson** put it: *“The link between home, school and child is one of the most important elements in the relationship to support the child and their learning. I know that finding out what a child has been getting up to in school is a daily struggle. If I’m able to find out what my child has had for lunch then I count myself lucky.”*

Here, he’s joined by **Nicole Ponsford** and **Marialice BFX Curran** to discuss the importance and power of engaging with the parent community...



Education should not just happen in a classroom setting - it should continue at home. Giving parents a perspective into the learning going on in the classroom is easily done through social media tools which can break down classroom walls and help us learn about the world, *with* the world.



Unlocking the potential of Parental Engagement

Mark Anderson: There are a magnitude of easy ways you can leverage technology to increase parental engagement. Newsletters, learning diaries, reading diaries, 'meet the tutor' evenings and so on help to keep the relationship between school, home and child more closely linked. With this being an Innovate My School publication, it would be remiss of me to not look at innovative ways in which you can increase parental engagement.

This is a brilliant way of sharing lots of different bits of information about school life. Facebook pages and Twitter accounts are something that many parents simply expect from schools nowadays. If you don't start one as a school, then parents will most likely create one themselves. Parent Facebook groups are often private too. Is it not better that you are in charge of the messages that are sent out about your school?



Mill around while they are in the playground. Hold a social event like a BBQ after school.

ClassDojo includes the opportunity to open the software up to parents so that they can see how their children are engaging positively in their learning. **Show My Homework** gives parents access to their child's homework and many more features besides. **Adobe Spark Page** gives schools the opportunity to create jaw-droppingly beautiful but easy to create newsletters.

Nicole Ponsford: Ultimately, your staff team holds the key to great parental engagement. Structure in termly sessions for staff members to share information and make parent/teacher conferences both frequent and long enough. Make sure all events are advertised well in advance and that start/end times are kept to.

There are three key rules to follow as a representative of your school when it comes to parents: Be accessible, listen and be accountable.

Invite parents in *for when they can come in*. Do not think that standing guard at the school gates means that parents want to have a chat then and there. Mill around while they are in the playground. Hold a social event like a BBQ after school. Keep your community up-to-date online. Use social media to let them know about building work and changes to the school menu. Ask parents to TRY the school menu (especially good for Reception parents and those new to the school). You could even ask them what they want to see on the menu!

Listen to what is happening at home and how you can help. There will be some parents who have different concerns through the year (a change in family circumstances, anxieties they want to share with you about their children).

After you have listened, respond. See what you can do to help, and then check back in a few days / weeks. Respond within a few days to an email. Offer parents a chance to meet with you before they ask!

Marialice BFX Curran: Teachers can certainly use a variety of social media tools to engage parents. However, having our students take the lead in developing their digital footprint allows parents to see what connected learning looks like, as well as provide conversation starters that will continue the learning at home. We need teachers to be willing to learn alongside them and to embed digital citizenship into every grade, lesson and content area.

Have students become part of digital citizenship programmes. Start a classroom blog and allow students to write for an authentic audience. Build upon that by asking your students to use social media tools to each build a digital portfolio. Students who own their learning and focus on building a digital portfolio will also be attracting the attention of internships, colleges and future employers. Parents, of course, love this.

Parental Engagement: Challenges

Nicole Ponsford: There are some school leaders who feel that any communication with parents constitutes as being engaging. Not true.

The headteacher who invites parents in for termly Q&A sessions, rather than telling off parents weekly in the school newsletter; puts forth an open and professional image. The leadership member who wouldn't take no for an answer, went to the pub on THAT estate four weeks in a row and got the dads over the threshold of the school gate instead of giving up and walking away showed the school a real 'can do attitude'.

With Primary parents, just because they're outside your class twice a day, don't assume that they want to be called to one side (in front of the other parents) to have that conversation then and there about little Johnny. If you are hosting a school event, please do it straight after/before the school pick up. No parent wants to hang about for 30 minutes while you send the children out to the playground to play. That 30 minutes would be much better spent doing other things than enforced small talk with the other mummies.



The concern of 'helicopter parents' occupying more of your time with constant access through social media channels could present a challenge, but know that this is another teachable moment.

Often, a parent can't get to the evening meeting - why not offer a Skype session? Go beyond Facebook and there are plenty of social media apps to engage parents in dialogues around attainment and attendance, such as **ParentHub** and **ClassDojo**. Parents are just as busy as teachers and vice versa, so it can be worth looking into what could help you all.

Marialice BFX Curran: Some challenges might include parents not having access to social media, which confirms that nothing is more important than actual face-to-face time. If digital access is a concern, write a note home, print out blog posts and keep inviting parents into the classroom.

Blocking and banning certain sites and apps would certainly help eliminate potential drama, but in the long run, we are not helping our students practice what it means to make safe, savvy and ethical choices online if they are not provided ample opportunities to practice in the classroom.

The concern of 'helicopter parents' occupying more of your time with constant access through social media channels could also present a challenge, but know that this is another teachable moment. Helicopter parents need support on how to mentor, not monitor, their child/teen. This is the perfect opportunity to introduce digital citizenship workshops for parents and the community at large. The expression "it takes a village" applies to a global community, and we need all stakeholders involved in this critical conversation.

Mark Anderson: One big problem is access to technology. For example, you may have a school Facebook page but a group of parents in your community don't use that platform, and so do not have access to that information.

The key thing to remember is that your parental communities are active in lots of different spaces. Find out what they are and provide for those. This could be via a different social media network. Automation services such as **ifttt.com** can make it so that when you post to one social media network, it will automatically post the same content to others. There's no need to make extra work for yourself!

If you find that the your parental community is one which is technologically savvy but do not have accounts on the social media you are using, why not run training sessions for those parents on how to use them and use them safely? These could form part of your regular digital parenting support evenings, for example.

The Community Created By Hilary MacMeekin

CASE STUDY by **Nicole Ponsford**

Many schools struggle with hard to reach parents - those who won't even step inside the school gates. For this case study, I spent some time with Hilary MacMeekin, the headteacher of St Nicholas Church of England Primary in Bromham, near Devizes. She has worked in a number of schools, including those in deprived areas, which meant she had to go the extra mile to engage with her community of parents. She knew that one way was to bring the community into the school itself, to meet the people teaching their children. Hilary encouraged "a key parent with incredibly low self-esteem to come in and volunteer in school. This parent initially thought she had nothing to offer, but I convinced her to come in then to do the basic skills courses and to bring her friends. Eventually, she volunteered every day and helped in class. When a TA position came up she applied and got it. She shares experiences and language with some of the most deprived families, so just having her on staff makes us more accessible to other parents".



Another idea which is growing popularity at St Nicholas Primary is the running of Breakfast Clubs. This not only invites students to be in school before the morning bell, as well as helping parents who need to drop off their children before work (especially when school drop off time is very close to 9am); it can also offer food to those children that are not offered it at home. Hilary "worked with a different TA to establish and run a breakfast club for just 20p, which parents came to with their children. We chatted informally with them, and over time I introduced story sharing

and Maths activities, which I initially led. Eventually, the parents were confident enough to lead themselves. The club was brilliant at getting parents in and building relationships with the adults who find school hard. But I think the key was just talking and listening - often. Being interested. It takes time, but it's really worth it!" You can also 'invite' staff to attend by offering them some toast and a cuppa. Many students enjoy seeing (some of) their teachers in a more informal setting, and will set the morning alarm to do so.



Hilary has worked in a number of schools, including those in deprived areas, which meant she had to go the extra mile to engage with her community of parents.

Time is really key. Being 'on duty' outside means taking the time to talk to all 'parents' (including grandparents, the older sister and the childminder), not just being present. Taking the time to find out if a child has an ill relative, that they are playing up at home or a new sibling is on their way can make a real difference. This relates to teachers as well as school leaders. One St Nicholas Church of England Primary parent I spoke with praised how their class teacher supported her son when she was pregnant: "She gave me some ideas about getting him excited, and included my pregnancy in discussions with him at school to help him get more involved. The daily feedback was positive, and she approached me quietly, rather than in front of other parents, which was nice." By being thoughtful and making an effort, we can have a real 360 degree understanding of our students.

Hilary says, "Basically, I don't think there is a right answer, or a simple answer. I don't think it is the same answer for all schools or all parents, but I do think nothing beats taking the time to talk, being interested and genuinely having an open door policy - lots of schools play at that, but only at times that suit them!" So, reader: are you playing, or are you maximising the potential?

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The 'Essential App' For Parental Engagement, Payments And Communications

CASE STUDY by eeZeeTrip

St Martin's Academy in Chester, part of the Northwest Academies Trust, has revolutionised their parental engagement and home-school payment communications with the introduction of eeZeeTrip in June 2016. This proved so popular that, within a month of the launch, all parents had signed up to the eeZeeTrip service.

Alongside their enriched curriculum, St Martin's offers an extended school day which runs from 8.30am to 4pm (8am to 6pm including extended day provision), open in school holidays as well as within the academic calendar to provide extended provision for working families. St Martin's Academy has been recognised by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' in all areas, meeting the vision of the Trust where: "All children should have access to a fully inclusive school that excites, challenges and stimulates their individual expression, whilst ensuring they achieve to their maximum potential."

Extended hours offer greater flexibility for enriching the curriculum. Activities include invited guests leading learning in school and a range of learning outside the classroom opportunities, within the community and beyond. The pupils at St Martin's



regularly visit museums, castles and galleries to bring their learning alive, as well as trips to the theatre and residential. And, of course, the extended hours help busy working parents manage their time and childcare requirements.



Pupils regularly visit museums, castles and galleries to bring their learning alive.

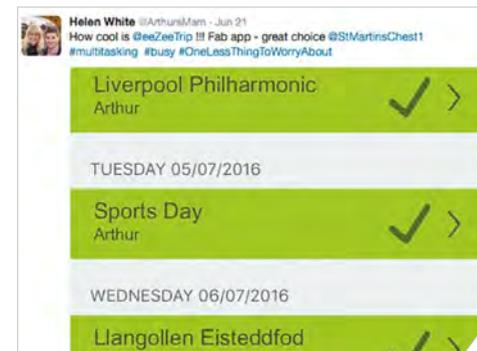
One of the challenges the Academy faced was allowing parents visibility of these enrichment activities. Before the introduction of eeZeeTrip, many of these activities were a paper-based exercise with many letters, permission slips and ad hoc payments flowing between school and home. This process was inefficient for the school, with teacher and administration staff spending time on logistics and chasing busy parents.

The time consuming 'paper chase' was immediately solved by the introduction of eeZeeTrip. Parents



instantly saw the benefits of having all the information about school activities sent to them directly via the eeZeeTrip App. They could sign up and pay for activities within a few seconds, without having to wait for the end of the school day to rummage through bags looking for letters and sending money into school.

This direct engagement between the school and parents has proven very popular, with one parent, Helen White, even taking to Twitter:



Other feedback the school has received from parents includes:

"I love the eeZeeTrip app!"

"I just wanted to say how fantastic the new payment system is and has made everything so much easier to manage. Thanks for setting it up!"

"I will transfer money now, sorry it's late! I'm loving the eeZeeTrip app though!"

"They are not wrong about it being "eeZee" are they!"

The eeZeeTrip App also enables parents to keep their emergency contact details and children's medical information right up-to-date. And with



100% parent uptake, the Academy has lowered text messaging costs by using eeZeeTrip messaging, which allows unlimited communications to parents for free.



Schools are using eeZeeTrip to manage sports fixtures, swimming galas and music lessons.

It's not just the parents that are benefiting. Sarah Leese, St Martin's office manager, notes:

"The time taken to check parent payments was always considerable, to ensure all parents were paying on time and following up late payments was laborious and time consuming. These tasks can now be accomplished in less time with less effort."

"With a few clicks payments and consents can be requested from school and completed by parents. The eeZeeTrip App allows for real time information exchange. Parents can see what they have to pay and no invoices are misplaced as they are held within the App until completed."

As well as streamlining educational visits and wrap around care activities, other schools are using eeZeeTrip to manage sports fixtures, swimming galas and music lessons. Free eeZeeTrip messaging is being used to inform parents of unauthorised absences and payments are being taken for dinners, milk and school play tickets, raising money for PTAs.

Many studies have shown the importance of parental engagement on pupils' achievement and progress. With eeZeeTrip, schools can deliver an innovative solution that meets the demands of busy parents.

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Breaking Down The Barriers To Parental Involvement...

CASE STUDY by Interactive Learning Diary

Research has shown over the years that children achieve more and have higher attainment levels where there is parent/family involvement. When parents become involved in their child's education, they gain a more in-depth understanding of the education system and their child's knowledge and abilities.

There are many challenges for schools and nurseries to overcome when trying to achieve active parent participation. These include, but are not limited to: time constraints, communication difficulties, parental work patterns and perhaps a fear that parents feel that their knowledge of the curriculum subjects is not adequate to support their child's learning.

With the ever-increasing volume of paperwork which schools are now required to complete, we were tasked with finding a solution to these challenges; by teachers!

The **Interactive Learning Diary** was initially developed to support teachers with educational reporting and tracking children's learning development. However, it became apparent very quickly that teachers, practitioners, children and parents required our assistance with parental participation. Suddenly we were on a mission to create additional functionality for the ever-changing



world that is education. We surveyed our teachers and practitioners on this important topic, which resulted in hundreds of emails, letters and calls with feedback, comments, ideas and suggestions.

"Our experience working with the ILD team has been nothing short of outstanding for both the product and their amazing support. We have strong policies in place to support our ethos of working in partnership with parents' and the ILD has really underpinned this for us. Working in partnership with our parents opens the lines of communication between staff and parents, putting the child at the centre of everything we do. Sharing observations and development milestones in real time with parents creates a very real partnership, allowing parents to upload observations and comments from home and 'share' their child's home experiences. Children have ownership of their learning journals and are supported to choose their next steps in their own development with support from staff and parents." - Vicki Cartney, General Manager, Great Western Pre-Schools.

With comprehensive reporting formats in place together with data analysis tools, the focus was now on improving and finding ways to encourage parental participation. Our parent portal has always offered parents the ability to login and view their child's observations, developments, learning achievements and reports and contribute to these from home.



Although well received by teachers and parents, we felt we could improve parent participation even further if we could engage busy parents actively in a fast and effective way.

Studies have shown that over 95% of parents now own smartphones, and this provided us with the perfect solution. A dedicated mobile app for parents was developed, and is similar in design to the apps currently used by our teachers and practitioners. This gives parents instant access in real time from their smartphones or tablets to the ILD Parent Portal where they can view their child's progress, observations, assessments, photographs, video and audio clips. Schools and nurseries can publish a wide range of documentation through the portal and parents receive notifications of these via the mobile app. Parents can also choose to opt in or out of the notification process if they wish to do so.

This new application also allows parents to record their child observations with photo and video evidence instantly from home or virtually anywhere outdoors during hobbies, sports or other family activities. One of the many unique features of these parent apps, teacher apps and the ILD system is that it allows all users to record observations including media without a Wi-Fi or mobile network connection. A connection is only required when you wish to transfer data from your device into the ILD system. This is an invaluable asset to schools and nurseries which experience Wi-Fi network issues as it ensures that all staff members can perform their educational reporting simultaneously without any downtime.

"The ILD has helped us to engage parents in a unique and exciting way with their child's learning and development. We are committed to providing an enabling



environment in which each child has the opportunity to become a happy, confident and independent learner. Active parent participation is important to ensure children receive the support and encouragement at home in addition to nursery. Sharing development achievements, photographs and videos in real time with parents offers a real working partnership between parents, children and staff." Natalie Chrystie, Operations Manager, Childcare & Learning Group.

We fully understand that choosing the perfect solution for educational reporting requirements can be a daunting task. Educators are extremely busy people and occasionally it can be very difficult to distinguish the highly important differences between reporting systems. From their own personal experience with other systems, our ILD members have discovered there is actually a whole world of difference with the numerous benefits and features which they enjoy with the ILD system.

Discover the unique benefits and features of the ILD today...

Email: enquiries@interactivelearningdiary.co.uk
 Facebook: www.facebook.com/interactivelearningdiary
 Twitter: @ILDteam
 Website: www.interactivelearningdiary.co.uk



Change The Game By Mixing Edtech And Parental Engagement

CASE STUDY by **Marialice BFX Curran**

As both an educator and a parent, I know the importance of parental involvement and engagement. The success of every student depends on the communication and collaboration between school and home. Communicating with parents today should involve a learning component, too. Education should not just happen in a classroom setting - it should continue at home. Giving parents a perspective into the learning going on in the classroom is easily done through social media tools, which can break down classroom walls and help us learn about the world, *with* the world.

One of my favourite tools for this is **Buncee** (www.edu.buncee.com), a digital literacy tool that can be used to support digital storytelling, as well as digital citizenship. It also is a tool that can create announcements, postcards, scrapbooks, research projects and visually stunning creations. Buncee allows learners to create multimedia presentations that are viewable by teachers and parents alike. It is fun and easy to use, yet is a powerful tool which can add artwork, text, videos,

drawings, audio and links. Each Buncee can be shared through email or social media including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Google Classroom. What makes this platform unique is the fact it is a tool that students can use at an early age, as well as the tool that they will continue to use throughout their education.



Giving parents a perspective into the learning going on in the classroom is easily.

For further enhancement of the school community, it is a tool with which teachers send announcements and flyers to parents. Furthermore, students share creations with both their teacher and parents and parents can also create and send a Buncee back to their child. Need a quick invitation to a classroom event? Buncee has an easy built in RSVP option that makes communicating with parents a win/win tool for everyone.

Other communication options include creating classroom social media accounts like a classroom Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook account. Just like being the line leader or door opener, students can be assigned to classroom jobs that include capturing and posting information on the classroom accounts. First, this is the best way to embed digital citizenship into your everyday curriculum and instruction. Students will be provided an opportunity to practice using social media in positive and practical ways. Additionally, communicating with parents this way models the power of social media as learning tools.

Renowned Fargo-based Elementary teacher Kayla Delzer (@TopDogTeaching) is a perfect example



of how teachers can harness technology to engage with parents. Her third graders (8–9 years old) utilise classroom Twitter and Instagram accounts to capture authentic moments of learning to share, as well as connect with the world. Kayla's students participated in a 12 hour Google Hangout focused particularly on students going beyond just reading and writing about digital citizenship, but actually doing it. Her Edsurge post from June 2015 (bit.ly/MCurran1) highlights the need for teachers to embed social media into their everyday routines. In the article, Delzer shares, "As teachers, it is now part of our responsibility to lead by example when it comes to sound digital citizenship practices. As soon as children have devices in their hands, they should be educated about digital citizenship and their digital footprint." Not only are teachers providing opportunities for students to practice being a model digital citizen, but by sharing those moments through a variety of social media outlets, teachers are also engaging parents to join and continue the conversation at home. The typical "What did you learn at school today?" question turns into, "Tell me more about that Maths literacy project. Looked like you were rotating in learning stations from the Instagram post."

This is a game-changer. The days of weekly or monthly newsletters or email updates are a thing of the past. Teachers who embrace social media as a powerful learning tool are creating learning opportunities for their students, as well as engaging parents into the learning process both with content



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and social media use. For example, high school teacher and mobile learning coach Jennifer Scheffer (@jlscheffer) engages her students in authentic and meaningful ways by using a variety of social media tools to continue embedding digital citizenship lessons into her curriculum. She runs the Burlington High School Student Help Desk (@BHShelpdesk) where students were most recently highlighted during George Couros' ISTE keynote, *From Digital Citizenship to Digital Leadership, Empowering Learners Through Social Media* (bit.ly/MCurran2, based on bit.ly/MCurran3). These ideas takes engagement to an entirely other level. Not only are the parents involved with the learning that is taking place at school, the world is too.



Our students deserve authentic learning opportunities with tools that they can connect, communicate, collaborate and learn, both in and out of the classroom.

How can you start? Where can you begin? Simple. Start a classroom blog, try Buncee, create classroom social media accounts or use tools like **Remind** (www.remind.com) to engage your parents. Start with small steps, and continue to add to your communication toolbox. The bottom line is that we need to use tools that our students are using because they need to practice what it means to be socially responsible online, and parents must be a big part of this. It's like a driver's licence: before we hand over the keys to the car, young drivers take classes and log road time as they practice for the day when they drive an automobile alone for the first time.

As a parent of a nine year old, I'm "road testing" social media tools at home for the same exact reasons. Unfortunately, his school blocks social media, and he does not have teachers like Kayla or Jennifer helping him or his classmates navigate today's interconnected and networked world. Our students deserve authentic learning opportunities with tools that they can connect, communicate, collaborate and learn both in and out of the classroom. Ensure that parents and guardians are part of this form of education.

Parental Engagement Top Tips

by **Mark Anderson**

If you want to get impact with parental engagement, why not try some of these activities to really drive learning home:

- Hold a 'meet the tutor' evening at the end of the summer term for new Year 6 parents to meet their child's new tutor in Secondary school.
- Set up a Facebook page for the school and share it with parents. Ask teachers to simply add one thing a day to the page about learning in the classroom. It will take just a few moments to do, but will increase parental engagement. Set up a class / department / year group / school Twitter account and post something on there every day. Check out my articles on **InnovateMySchool.com** for help with these.

- Try 'phone home Friday'. Every Friday, pick a child or two from your classes who have been working really hard that week and ring home to let their parents know.
- Get a **ClassDojo** account and trial the app with one of your classes. After you've been running it a few weeks, set up the parent access and see how it increases engagement both with children in the classroom and from parents too.
- Link up your Facebook and Twitter social media accounts to ensure coverage over the two platforms and save yourself some time in the process.
- Try a simple free tool such as **Adobe Spark Page** or **Smore** to create a termly newsletter for your classroom.

Apps And Resources To Get You Started

by **Nicole Ponsford**

- **PTAsocial** - www.ptasocial.com - the app you can start a whole community for your PTA for free. Allows you to plan events, message and liaise with community members and do whatever you need to without having to spend an evening in the school hall.
- **ParentHub** - www.parenthub.co.uk - a free quick way of messaging your parents, creating a working online community for classes and whole schools.
- **ClassDojo** - www.classdojo.com - The popular app that creates 'happier communities' of parents and teachers. If you haven't seen how it could work for you, try it now.
- **Remind** - www.remind.com - The way to message parents and students without using phone numbers.
- **Achievement for All** - afaeducation.org/programme_schools - This charity runs a

programme that has now benefitted more than 2000 schools in the UK. One of the four main elements that your assigned coach supports you with is Parental Engagement.

- Government Report into **Best Practice of Parental Engagement** - bit.ly/NPonsf1
- **Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit** Strand for Parental Involvement - bit.ly/nponsf2 - Lots of research to share - not only case studies, but new ideas.
- **Breakfast Clubs:**
 - Not sure where to start? bit.ly/nponsf3 - Did you know that Kellogg's offer free cereals and money to help you set up your club?
 - Your school has 35%+ FSM or 50% Ever6+, check out the Magic Breakfast charity: www.magicbreakfast.com/what-the-charity-does.

Innovate My School



Fully Integrated Solutions

Designed to enhance student performance, simplify administration, enhance safeguarding and save valuable staff time, idXtra has developed an innovative range of solutions including integrated smart card systems, access control, electronic registration and cashless catering systems. Satisfying the needs of a variety of schools, academies and colleges as well as local authorities



Backed by years of experience in card systems and biometrics, the company was established in 2002 and has grown significantly over the years. The dedicated team work closely with customers to design solutions that meet their exact specifications.

We aim to provide the most advanced solutions for all of our customers' needs, along with excellent value for money. We have skills in-house to piece together the best hardware with software that we write ourselves meaning our products are fully integrated and scalable.

An idXtra solution will enhance security for your staff, students and visitors, whilst providing 100% accurate management information.

To improve monitoring of those who are at risk of disengagement, idXtra has developed EventMarker - an advanced solution that monitors and improves students' attendance and punctuality.

With 100% accurate real-time attendance monitoring and integrated reports, senior management can now for the first time see who is present, late and absent in real time. The intelligent system allows teachers to spot reoccurring behaviour and discuss any issues with the students promptly. If a student is unhappy or feels they are on the wrong course, the school or college can take immediate action and make any required changes. As well as getting students back on track, the system also has a beneficial effect on funding.

idXtra's cashless catering solution - EventPOS, offers a fast and easy solution to busy lunch times. Each student simply uses their smart ID card to pay for lunch time meals and snacks. Cards can be topped up as and when required and the system deals easily and discreetly with free school/college meals as well as daily, weekly and monthly bursaries. The system is extremely flexible and

adaptable, saving time and improving the student experience. Cards can also be used to pay for extra curriculum activities within the school/college so there is no need for students to carry cash.

An excellent feature is that these two solutions (attendance monitoring and Point of Sale) can be used in conjunction to offer benefits to students. Good or improved attendance and punctuality can be rewarded with free coffees, cakes or reward points to provide an incentive for students.

We are all about improving personal development and helping education organisations run as smoothly and efficiently as possible. Our systems are designed and manufactured to the highest of standards, from leading names in the access control and smart payments industry, including ACT, Posiflex, Gemini 2K, Aures, Zebra and many more.

Many schools and colleges around the UK have already benefitted from these renowned services. One being Stoke Sixth Form College who required a simple solution to record learner attendance at each lesson using their existing Mifare ID smart cards.

Having grown substantially over the years, idXtra is constantly updating its offering and introducing new functionality. They have recently integrated to World Pay Contactless PDQ terminals and have just launched a new portable tablet PC with full EPOS functionality. This means that EPOS sales can be made on the move both indoors and outdoors.



The company welcomes suggestions from customers for new functionality and is constantly innovating. If you have a smart card or biometric based requirement of any kind please get in touch.

idXtra offers a wide range of ID accessories including cards, badge holders, printed lanyards, card printing software, card printers and ribbons as well as offering very competitive rates for printed cards through the bureau service.

With combined experience within the business idXtra's employees have in excess of 100 years experience in providing intelligent card solutions to education and corporations. idXtra are experienced and accredited installer / maintainers of PLAN, Paxton and ACT Access Control Systems and technical partners to CAPITA, Scientia, WorldPay, WisePay, CMIS, UNIT-e, ProSolution and many more.



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City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College

The EventMarker system was installed in March 2012 and was customised to City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College's management and administration needs.

"EventMarker is an 'evolved' register system, one which finally embraces modern technology rather than trying to replicate a 19th century paper-based solution," commented Mike Burns, Funding and Information Manager.

"The product has an intuitive interface which colleagues of all technical abilities find easy to use. It manages registration in a very mature and visually impressive way, and one which teachers have really embraced. It saves attendance data to MIS in real time. Like most MIS Managers, I am a difficult customer to please, yet I found idXtra to be a pleasure to work with, responsive to support issues and development ideas alike. I would not hesitate to recommend them to other colleges in need of a true 21st century registration system."



Literacy Across the Curriculum

Computing skills are fast proving themselves to be a vital part of education, but a pupil's ability to read and write is still paramount. In this chapter, three of the UK's leading voices on the subject - **Hywel Roberts**, **Lisa Ashes** and **Natalie Scott** - discuss the opportunities afforded by literacy across the curriculum.

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One of the boys I taught proudly held up his coursework and said, 'Look miss, no full stops! We don't use them in PE.' You can just imagine my horror!



Maximising the potential of Literacy Across the Curriculum

Natalie Scott: The minute you write the words 'literacy across the curriculum', your head is above the parapet. Words are likely to be discharged like bullets. It's a sure-fire way to see the power of spoken or written language.

It's a can of beautifully written cursive worms, with so much stuff out there that it is hard to say something new. There are so many different approaches, from embedded reading strategies such as DEAR ("Drop Everything and Read!"), to every lesson having 30 minutes of written work in it, to calendared SALAD (Speaking And Listening Activity Development) days with a big push on oracy. There are many well informed experts too...

In many of the schools that I have been privileged to work in, the role of literacy coordinator is still seen as something of a poisoned chalice; conversations can still be punctuated by comments such as "that is the English department's job", "that isn't how we do it", "but I teach Maths" or similar. It seems to me that effective teaching of literacy across subject areas can be maximised through both prescriptive policies or through simple tweaks; that there is no one best approach, but that many of the schools who are praised for their effective approaches have similar characteristic. We need leaders who practise what

they preach, staff who all invest in and understand the importance of literacy (and what it is) regardless of their role in the school, and absolute consistency with a few clear priorities. One thing I am certain of is that literacy is a key area of Teaching and Learning; it should be embedded, underpinning all classroom practice, rather than standing alone or being added as an afterthought, to tick a box.

Lisa Ashes: We all know that pupils with high levels of literacy have a better chance of success in life. Collaboration across the curriculum is key to maximising the potential of literacy. The Manglish model allows teachers of English to take the lead, while teachers of other subjects support pupils in practising their skill.

Imagine a teacher of English teaches the topic of persuasion explicitly: how to plan, what language to use and how to deliver. They have collaboratively planned with History and Science. The teacher of Science (topic for the term genetic modification) asks them, "Is it right to grow genetically modified food?" The teacher of History (topic for the term Nazi Germany) asks them, "Were England right to go to war?" In both lessons, persuasion is practised, showing pupils that literacy skills can be used beyond their English classroom walls.

Hywel Roberts: Here is so much that I could write when thinking about this area of schooling. I taught Secondary English for sixteen years. Over that time agendas, like governments, changed, but the importance of literacy has always been valued. By that, I mean the stuff we write down. Unfortunately it appears that, particularly recently, the emphasis on just the written stuff has detracted from other literacy aspects such as speaking and listening. If writing is the close up, maybe we could pull the camera out and see the other forms of literacy we can ask our students to engage in: musical, numeracy, scientific, cultural (Google "Jon Grover Kinds Of Literacy" for a comprehensive list). Taking into account these various forms can help us get a grip on how the concept of literacy manifests itself in our different settings.



Literacy Across the Curriculum: Challenges

Lisa Ashes: Teachers are busy! In a culture of fear, where exam results could cost you your job, it is not always easy to find time to collaborate. Although literacy is in everything, teachers can be blinded by their own subject content. However, cognitive overload does not lead to good learning outcomes.

If teachers are given time (a commodity not widely available in most schools) and space to collaborate, they can look at the content of all examinations and ask, "Where's the literacy in that?" They will see that the literacy skills taught by English teachers are the very skills that pupils need to pass every exam (yes... even Mathematics). They could collaboratively plan programmes of study to support all pupils in mastering these skills so that exams were passed, because pupils have become highly literate and are able to access any subject more easily.

Hywel Roberts: There are a number of challenges for schools promoting literacy, not least the current static that surrounds testing, assessment and technical coverage that, for me, diminishes a love and appreciation of text every teacher wishes to equip their children with. Laminated keywords displayed on a classroom wall will be nodded at by someone on a learning walk, but they will no doubt blend into the background for many children. If we go with the idea of there being multiple literacies, we can perhaps consider the idea of *context* a little deeper. Primary classrooms have long adopted topic work (Tudors, Victorians, Gothic, Titanic and so on), but what of Key Stage 3? And how can we use topic-based approaches at KS4 and 5? As an English GCSE teacher I would often use educational Drama (as opposed to 'look at me' glee-club Drama antics) to offer depth to the negotiation and understanding of a text. If we're teaching Siegfried Sassoon's war poetry, then perhaps we also need to teach about WWI. Placing the coverage inside a context can support literacy, having the children place themselves within the context, can help it all make sense.

Natalie Scott: Literacy isn't just about spellings and reading ages. It is about proficiency and a range of skills required to function effectively, skills we know improve our life expectancy, whether they are utilised in a paid job role or in a GCSE maths exam where the phrasing of a question is crafted to challenge.

For me, literacy can be grouped into four main components; **reading, writing, speaking & listening** and **IT / digital literacy**. It is without doubt linked to self-esteem and motivation.

Learners will read sources and extracts in History, need to access the materials in English, and will understand some of the most challenging and complex vocabulary in PE. They will then write descriptions in English which are a totally different form to the descriptions that they are asked to write in Science. How confusing! For the first time, more marks are now awarded in the PE GCSE for the written exam than for the practical element. Whether we like it or not, there is a significant shift happening in the current examinations system and literacy is being promoted.

Students will debate, discuss, present and role play in RE, Drama and MFL (Modern Foreign Languages). Oracy is also nurtured and taught through lessons, debating clubs or in school council meetings, where purposeful presentations and talks are adapted for audience and topic.

Digital literacy is an area of increasing importance. Children need to be internet savvy and safe now more than ever before, to know how to react to cyberbullying, be knowledgeable about e-safety, understand plagiarism and be familiar with copyright laws. No longer do we reach for the encyclopedia, instead we grab our phone and Google it. Therefore, the teaching of research skills, be them through whole-school adoption of the PLUS model or the use of department webquests, caters to structured online enquiry skills. Without careful teaching, research for the Art GCSE preparation will be conducted in a similar way to my friend who looks up Johnny Depp's marital status in the pub; without thought.

Getting To Know Thunder The Lion

CASE STUDY by **Hywel Roberts**

So we're in Year 2. They've been doing a circus-themed topic called THE BIG TOP (kids in Primary schools do stuff). I'm in the school modelling some creative approaches that the teacher feels they'd like to see. For 'creative approaches', read 'stuff to get the class wanting to write'. Therein lies the challenge for all of us as teachers: how do we get the class to want to do what we are asking them to do? Some children need the nettles holding back and some need easing in to the whole idea of sitting and writing.

So here are my questions that will develop investment into an idea and build the *botheredness* (my word, but you know what it means) of the children: Their *investment*. Here are some of them:

- What do **we** know about circuses?
- What jobs need doing if **we** are working behind the scenes in a circus?
- Are **we** all happy that there are animals in our circus?
- What animals do **we** have? Are they happy? How do we know?
- How do **we** look after an animal that could eat us?
- What do **we** need to think about in order to keep everyone safe?

I'm sure you get the drift with all the highlighted '**we**' words, but this is a really easy way for us to induct the children into the context – the context being the topic. How could you alter these questions for the topic/project/scheme of work you are planning for? This questioning approach can be prolific throughout the Key Stages and settings.

Moving on with Year 2, after seeing the electricians at work, the trapeze artists psyching up and the clowns applying their makeup (all using non glee-club drama conventions of tableau and thought-tracking), we move to thinking about the lions. Community concerns about the welfare of the lions leads us to writing brief statements on post-it notes outlining our policy:



We love our lions.
Our lions are important.
The lions are big and have manes.
We can stroke the lions because they are safe.

I then ask this question: **Are our lions happy?**
 There is a firm consensus in the class that they are happy.

How do we know?
 Interestingly, the team glance at one another. This is a difficult question. A genuine challenge within the context of BIG TOP. How do we know our lions are happy?

I then throw this into the mix:
Would you like to hear what the lion actually thinks?
 Of course, being Year 2, they want to hear from the lion. We even give him a name: THUNDER. There is another lion, and I'm sure you can guess its name!
 Alongside the inductive questioning to promote writing, we're now promoting the emotional investment: because we've talked about loving and respecting the lions, because we've stated it all in writing, listening to the lion is a powerful next step.

So it's teacher-in-role time. I don't dress up. I don't mimic Bert Lahr in *The Wizard of Oz* and turn myself into a pantomime... I simply speak. Thunder, the lion, speaks, and what he says is a revelation.

The rug of expectation the children have been metaphorically standing on has been pulled out from underneath them. The lion hates the circus. Want to know what happens?

I'll leave it there with Year 2 and their Big Top. Suffice to say, it's dripping with healthy learning tension. So let's sit and write down the escape plan we are planning to share later tonight with Thunder.

The children write quietly. And none of them ask the date.

How To Take Literacy Beyond English Lessons

CASE STUDY by **Lisa Ashes**

Can We Remove Cognitive Overload as a Barrier to Learning Through Literacy?

When children cross over from Primary to Secondary, they are faced with a myriad of subjects, all working hard in their separate section of the curriculum. We know that cognitive overload does not lead to good learning outcomes, yet we structure our school days to achieve just that. With the best will in the world, a child cannot easily retain information fed to them in the six subjects that they experienced that day.

The Problem with English, Geography and Writing

When working with a Geography teacher, we decided to do a little experiment. I taught a class of Year 9 pupils how to write to persuade. I took them explicitly through structuring, punctuation, language use, audience and purpose. They then sat a test and came out with, on average, level seven for their writing skill. Apologies for talking in levels, but that was what they achieved. If you can't remember life when levels were around, know that level eight was the highest and level one the lowest.

The pupils then went over to Geography. The teacher taught them about life in a favela. To review their learning, they were asked to write a persuasive letter from a child in a favela asking for help. When we marked this work for writing skill, the pupils (the same pupils from my lesson) achieved on average a level four. When questioned about this, the pupils explained that writing at a high level was something they did to pass an English exam and not something that they would think of using in Geography. When in Geography, they were marked on the content of their writing, showing they had understood the topic, not using semi-colons and perfect paragraphing. I was quite stunned.

Can They Pass Your Subject Without Literacy?

Literacy is something that we need in life, not to pass an exam. The pupils were clearly highly literate,

but they did not transfer these skills outside of the English lesson. Another confirmation of this happened when I was supporting in a GCSE PE theory lesson. One of the boys I taught proudly held up his coursework and said, "Look miss, no full stops! We don't use them in PE." You can just imagine my horror! The teachers in both cases explained that, although they knew how to read and write, they were not confident as teachers of literacy so they tended to ignore it when they weren't being watched.



When we assessed the quality of the work this time, it matched the quality that they had produced in their English lessons.

If you look at any GCSE examination, you will see that high levels of literacy are required in order for pupils to access it and gain high marks. One PE examination that I looked at had more reading sources than the English exam. The way that pupils were expected to write their responses was in the same analytical style expected in the English Language reading paper. The pupils were being taught these techniques already in English but, as with the Geography example, they did not see the link.

Literacy across the curriculum is so much more than having a word of the week. Pupils need to be able to read, write and communicate at high levels in every subject across the curriculum. Their English teachers are already teaching this explicitly, but quite often the transfer of skills is lost in a messy curriculum.

What We Did Next

The Geography teacher and I got our heads together.

We conducted another experiment with a similar

group. This time, I used the GAP SPLITT planning mat (thelearninggeek.com/tlt13-manglish) when teaching pupils about structure and content. Again, the pupils scored highly in their test. The Geography teacher taught the same lesson as before. The difference this time was that they asked pupils to take out their literacy mats (see link above) The teacher explained that they were going to practice the skill of persuasion learned in their English lessons and off pupils went with their writing. When we assessed the quality of the work this time, it matched the quality that they had produced in their English lessons. A simple mat and reminder from the teacher was enough to help them make the link. They were practising a writing skill as well as reviewing knowledge from Geography. Their learning from English was practised in a new context.

Final Thoughts

When pupils are faced with six (sometimes more) different subjects a day, literacy can be the link that

ties them all together. Through planning together across two subjects, we created a simple link that allowed students to transfer their writing skills. The same link could be created in any subject that uses longer writing as part of what they do. In Mathematics, longer writing is not naturally part of lessons, but reading is. Connections should be made that allow pupils to practice their skills where it is happening already. Bolting on literacy in every subject without thinking carefully about the process may accidentally lead to good learning outcomes. Collaboratively planning to remove cognitive overload through literacy links is much more likely to help them achieve.

If teachers collaborate, question their subject for literacy and make simple links between what is happening in English and what they are doing in their own lessons, pupils will not leave their learning behind, but will take it forward, use it and improve it.

Further Reading

Natalie Scott

'Reading. It's so flipping important' - bit.ly/NScott1

A post I wrote about why reading is so important and how different schools have approached it.

'The Matthew Effect – why literacy is so important' by David Didau -

bit.ly/NScott2

Simple and practical, a must read.

www.literacytrust.org.uk/policy - A website for evaluating how well literacy is taught, including some examples of policies.

<http://bit.ly/NScott3> - A brilliant resource for speed reading, great as a starter in any subject area

Lisa Ashes

My own book, *Manglish*, details how to build a collaborative curriculum from start to finish and provides example lessons from around the curriculum.

Chris Curtis' blog - bit.ly/LAshes2 - details some excellent ideas to develop literacy across the curriculum. He is a practising lead on this topic and is always coming up with new ideas for his school.

Hywel Roberts

FIVE GREAT TEACHER BOOKS:

1. *The Little Book of Big Stuff about the Brain* by Dr Andrew Curran
2. *The Book of Thanks* by Ian Gilbert
3. *Sherbet Lemons* by Nina Jackson
4. *The Second Book of Independent Thinking* Various writers, ed. Ian Gilbert
5. *Notes from the Frontline* by Dr Debra Kidd

(...and OOPS! *Helping Children Learn Accidentally* by me!)

I also recommend @literacyshed as a great resource.



Mathletics is a digital resource used by more than 5,000 schools across the UK. It is proven to increase levels of pupil engagement, confidence and motivation and improve results in maths.

Mathletics contains 1,200 curriculum aligned activities along with courses, eBooks and videos to develop mathematical fluency, problem solving and reasoning skills. It also offers in-built assessment and diagnostic reporting tools for teachers and can be accessed on PCs and tablet devices.

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International Digital Education Resource

"The great thing about Mathletics is that it will support teachers as they follow and deliver the curriculum."

Claire Randall, Brunswick House

"The new curriculum is more demanding at problem solving. Mathletics has given pupils the confidence to find the answer to a question."

Rosemary Dymond, Head Teacher, Riverview

"Our pupils thoroughly enjoy it. We have already seen an improvement in numeracy fluency particularly with faster maths calculations."

Maths Teacher, Thomas Reade Primary



Spellodrome is a digital resource that helps children to develop their spelling, writing and communication skills, to support them in the 'GPS' elements of the new English curriculum.

It offers pre-populated 2014 curriculum-aligned word lists for KS1 and KS2, word lists that can be customised (from more than 10,000 words) to your own specific needs; extensive printable worksheets focusing on spelling practice, grammar and punctuation; fun and engaging activities based on your word lists; tools to develop writing skills and online standard benchmarking tests.

"We've got children in year 6 who started using Spellodrome in year 3 and we can see the progression they have made over those three years that we definitely don't think they would have made without it!"
Snowfields Primary

"With the help of Spellodrome we have seen a lot of our students jump up dramatically in their spelling ages. In some cases we have seen students move up 3 or 4 years!"
Brandeston Hall



Reading Eggs is a digital resource for literacy, designed to help teach children how to read and to develop a love of reading.

With 120 phonics and 200 comprehension lessons; 2000 eBooks with comprehension tests; creative writing areas; a teacher toolkit with lesson plans, comprehensive reporting and 'big books', plus online spelling, punctuation and grammar games, Reading Eggs provides you with all the tools you need to raise the profile of reading and nurture high literacy standards.



For more information or to register for a free trial please visit www.3plearning.com,
phone 0117 370 1990 or email info@3plearning.co.uk

Using Night Zookeeper To Enhance Literacy Skills

Langham Village Primary School, Norfolk

CASE STUDY by **Night Zookeeper**

Langham Village Primary is a small school in North Norfolk. They have a wonderful staff team that strive to ensure that all students are inspired to work hard and enjoy their time at the school. They have been working with us at **Night Zookeeper** for three years now. During that time they have developed some wonderful ideas for how to use nightzookeeper.com across the curriculum to enhance the literacy skills of all their students.

"I find it easy to link Night Zookeeper in with other topics in school. We recently followed a Science-based project, yet could still use the Night Zoo as a place to draft our completed science reports..." Emma Cotton, Jet Class Teacher, Langham Village Primary

Here are just ten practical ways that they have taught literacy across the curriculum this year:

1. Creativity - Magical animals

What animals could live in a magical zoo? There was no shortage of creativity expressed and practiced by the students of Langham Primary when answering this question. They created a great many unique characters and stories that will now always have a place in the Night Zoo.



2. Physical Education - The 'Orblympics'

Sports day is always a very exciting time of year, but at Langham they took it one step further. The children wrote instructions for their own 'Orblympic' sports, which were then performed by the whole school. Children competed against one another and enjoyed learning about how to write clear and concise instructions.

3. Scientific Reports - Blood flow around the body

Sam the Spying Giraffe is one of our core characters in the world of the Night Zoo. On this occasion, he was used as inspiration for scientific enquiry. Children studied the blood flow around the body and then wrote pieces imagining they were inside the giraffe's body, placing themselves in the role of Sam's blood cells.

4. Design technology - The Night Zoo theme park

Langham Village Primary created the world's very first Night Zoo theme park. They designed the rides for the park and then created them out of Lego Technic. They held an official opening of the theme park, where students all got to experiment with one another's creations. They also recorded their experiences on their blog along the way.



5. Speaking Skills - The Mayoral Elections

Students at Langham took part in our mayoral elections to find an animal that could lead the Night Zoo. They created their mayoral candidate, wrote their manifesto and held rallies where students spoke on behalf of their creations to encourage others at the school to vote for them.

6. Science - Learning about space travel

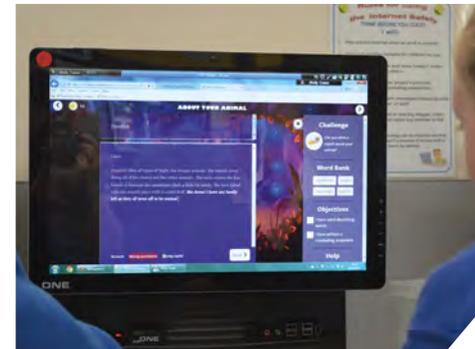
Tim Peake was an inspiration to a great many people this year, as his incredible achievements were recognised internationally. This learning opportunity wasn't missed by students and teachers of Langham, as they researched and wrote poems about his experiences whilst living and working at the ISS.

7. Outdoor learning - Recounts from a school trip

Never miss an opportunity to develop your writing skills! Students were encouraged to write a blog post on each of their trips outside of school this year.

8. Art and design - Creating a clay elephant temple

Children designed and created their own Time Travelling Elephant temple. They were able to create these from clay in art class and then shared their experiences on



their class blog. Once again, it was a great chance to practice those instructional writing skills that they have been developing throughout the year.

9. Health and wellbeing - A balanced diet

The Penguin Professor famously enjoys a warm cup of hot chocolate, which provided the inspiration for this next series of lessons. Children researched and wrote a balanced diet for the Penguin Professor, informing him of the best way to get his five a-day.

10. Experimenting with new technology - Writing in virtual reality

Students were given the opportunity to explore our VR Writing Adventures app, which takes you into the Waterfly Woods. Children were able to wear a VR headset and experience immersion into the World of Night, which then produced some of the most beautiful descriptive writing imaginable!



All of the above has had a wonderful impact on student literacy levels, with some children making a year's worth of writing progress in just one term. I am also proud to say that this is not an isolated case study, and we have been able to spread our message around the world. Last year we helped over 300,000 children do the same as the cohort at Langham Primary.

If you would like try some of these ideas and the Night Zookeeper platform for free, then simply visit nightzookeeper.com/teachers.

paul@nightzookeeper.com
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At Shakespeare Schools Festival We Use The Unique Power Of Performance To Transform Lives

CASE STUDY by Shakespeare Schools Festival

Teachers and young people are at the core of Shakespeare Schools Festival (SSF). We use a rigorous and supportive process to train teachers to give young people confidence and ambition in tackling Shakespeare. Months of preparation culminate in exhilarating performances in professional theatres - hundreds of nights across the country, every autumn.

This year will be our very best Festival, as we unite with celebrations worldwide marking 400 years since Shakespeare's death. 30,000 young people will perform on stages throughout the autumn term from Aberdeen to Aberdare, Plymouth to Portsmouth and Carlisle to Clacton. We have trained over 1000 teachers, giving them new workshops where they could tailor the day to suit their own personal development needs.

All learning improves with confidence and ambition, but we believe that the Festival process itself has the power to transform academic attainment. In 2015, 63% of teachers agreed - saying that they believed that SSF had positively impacted their students' attainment and literacy levels.

80% of teachers said that their students have become more ambitious, and 75% of students have become more confident speaking in front of adults.



Here is one school's story about what SSF means to them.

CASE STUDY: STEBON PRIMARY SCHOOL, LONDON

Stebon Primary is in the heart of a Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets, London. 96% of pupils have English as an Additional Language (EAL), and 67% are in receipt of pupil premium. For the majority of Year 5s who made up the cast of Julius Caesar, their performance day with SSF was the first time they have ever set foot inside a theatre.

When beginning their festival journey, teacher Ruth was initially nervous that being an EAL student was a disadvantage when you're learning Shakespeare. What she, and her pupils, quickly discovered however was learning a new word is just learning a new word - they did it all the time in the language-rich environment the school provides.

Pupils took complex metaphors and similes and could spot personification a mile off; all because they were doing Shakespeare on their feet. As they undertook the SSF journey the cast truly embodied the truth that Shakespeare isn't meant to be read, it's meant to be said.

They delighted in crafting rhetoric by doing something that older children and adults find difficult.



Two of the children, aged between nine and ten said: "Now that I've been in SSF I can be a doctor."

"Now I've been in the Shakespeare Schools Festival I'm not shy anymore."

And from a third, who's clearly absorbed everything they learnt about dramatic rhetoric and metaphor:

"Before we did the SSF project I thought we were going to do an epic failure, but when I saw everyone giving us a standing ovation I was drowned in tears. The best thing about being in Shakespeare Schools Festival is that it feels like I've been elected Prime Minister."

And finally, one of the children whom Ruth didn't think had gained as much as the others said:

"SSF is the best thing that has ever happened to me."

They innately understood the themes of conflict, racial division and war. Uniting the key themes of the play through rehearsal room based exercises helped the pupils relate their experiences of conspiracy, friendship, betrayal and hatred. They understood ambition and now, because of their journey with SSF, they understand success.

Across the board their teacher Ruth found that Speaking and Listening levels went up. Many of the previously lowest-attaining children made more progress in a half term than you'd expect in a year. The most behaviourally difficult child struggled to make progress in literacy in Year 3 and Year 4 but made above national-average progress for a year in the weeks that followed their SSF experience.

One of the lowest attaining, and thought-to-be least confident children in the class said, "In the future SSF will help me to achieve more." They made more progress in reading in the twenty next weeks, than in the previous two years.



My heart was beating really fast until I said all my lines and my bit was over. Then I felt like I wanted to do it all again... It has changed my life.

Jacob - SSF performer featured in Hairy Bikers

Old School on BBC1.

We hope that SSF will reach more schools than ever in 2017. If you have been inspired by this SSF story, please visit www.ssf.uk.com or email: enquiries@ssf.uk.com for more information.

SSF WORKSHOPS

Our approach to Shakespeare makes our in-school workshops stand out. We lead whole-year groups to perform A Play in a Day; give Year 7 pupils an exciting, active Introduction to Shakespeare and help GCSE and A-Level students gain new insights and understanding of Set-Text Shakespeare plays: *Macbeth*, *Romeo & Juliet* and *King Lear*. By training groups of teachers in how to work with Shakespeare and how to use our active and enriching approach across the curriculum, we leave an inbuilt legacy behind us.

If you are tackling Shakespeare this academic year, would like to introduce a specific text to a year group or are interested in an additional workshops for pupils in your school contact: workshops@ssf.uk.com

Fun Activities For Spreading Literacy

by **Natalie Scott**

I put out a shout on Twitter and these were the responses that I was given. Thanks to those who shared ideas.

- A deliberate 'mistakes day', where staff make errors and students must keep an eye out.
- Communal reading in form time, of blogs, papers or reviews.
- A focus on literacy strategies built into observation or appraisal paperwork.
- Agreed whole-school connectives posters, which all staff use in lessons.
- Subject-specific word banks and spelling tests.
- Skimming and scanning activities in all subjects.
- Silent debates (more info at www.pedagoo.org/silent-debating).
- Explicit teaching of self-regulating and proofreading skills.
- Reading as a settling activity.
- Reading through the use of DEAR ("Drop Everything and Read!").
- Reading clubs.
- 'I am reading...' posters on every door in the school, be it a classroom teacher, the site teams or headteachers.
- Correcting celebrity tweets for SPAG.

Literacy Mat(ters)

by **Lisa Ashes**

One of the ways that we created links across the curriculum was to have a collaboratively-created writing mat for each writing purpose. We asked teachers of all subjects what topics they ask pupils to write for. We found that they wrote to describe, analyse, review, persuade and inform (among others). The English teachers decided upon a mat that they could use to teach and one was created for each writing purpose. The teachers of other subjects were shown how the mat

would be used during CPD. The mat was then put into student planners for easy access across the curriculum.

English teachers would teach the pupils how to use the mats during their writing lessons. Teachers of other subjects would simply ask them to open their writing mats to remind them of what they had learned in English. Cognitive links were created across the curriculum and pupils were able to purposefully practice their writing skills anywhere.

Five Question To Ask Pupils

by **Hywel Roberts**

1. Is reading a book in a bookshop technically stealing?
2. Is it okay to be a bystander?
3. What would the world be like without numbers?
4. If we met aliens, what should we say to them first?
5. Can you ever stand on the same beach twice?

4. IF WE ARE GOING TO WHAT DO WE NEED TO TAKE WITH US?
5. WHAT IS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD?
6. IS OUR THINKING CHANGING ABOUT?
7. WHAT RULES DO WE NEED TO HAVE IF WE ARE GOING TO SUCCESSFULLY?
8. WHEN DEALING WITH WHAT SHOULDN'T WE DO?
9. WHAT'S THE WORST THING WE COULD SAY WHEN?
10. HOW ARE WE GOING TO MAKE SURE THAT?

Ten questions to get kids talking

(you'll need to fill in the blanks):

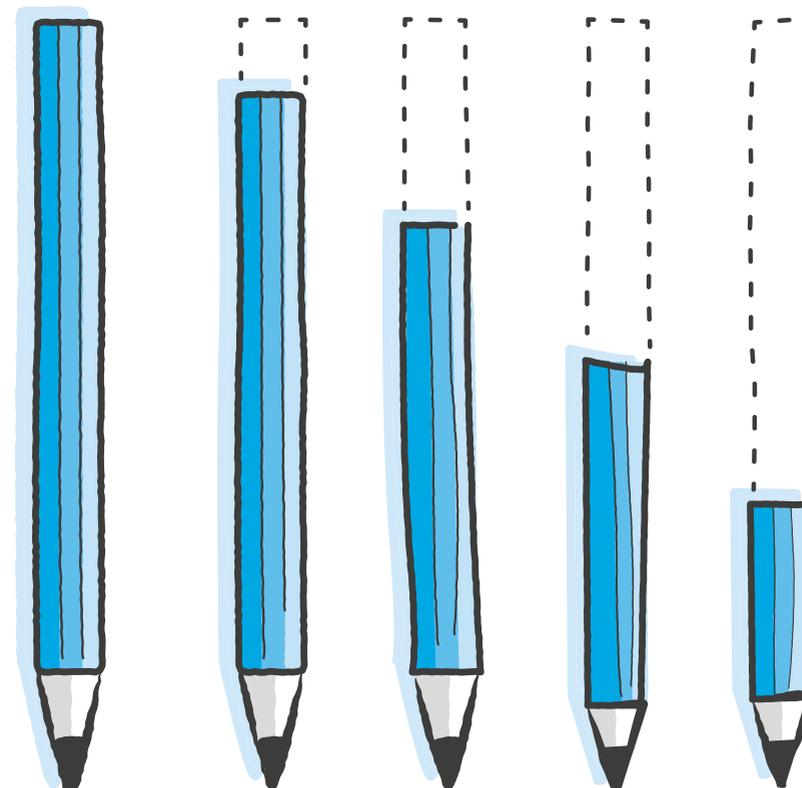
1. IF WE ARE GOING TO WHAT'S THE FIRST THING WE NEED TO DO?
2. BEFORE WE WHAT JOBS NEED TO BE DONE?
3. WHAT WORDS SHOULD WE USE TO GET OUR POINT ACROSS?

Day 1

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3



You might need to buy some more pencils (sorry)

Tens of thousands of teachers use Pobble to inspire their pupils to pick up their pencils and write.

Find out how your school can improve learning outcomes by visiting:

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Getting Involved With The Education Scene

by James Cain, editor at Innovate My School

Education is a profession that's not without its stressful moments, so it makes sense for teachers to embrace their community for support. Given that our approach is all about engaging with teachers at the grassroots level, we're fortunate to be collaborating with some spectacularly passionate people and organisations. Here, we'd like to share just a few initiatives with you.

#Teacher5aDay

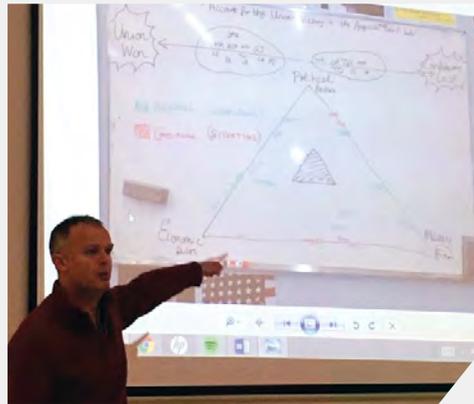
Twitter movement #Teacher5aDay is a great way to embrace your own wellbeing. Created by Geography teacher and deputy head Martyn Reah (@MartynReah), this allows teachers to share the best things in life (eg #teacher5adayBreakfast with @MissVicki_V, #teacher5adaySketch with @JennaLucas81). Starting in December 2014, #Teacher5aDay has picked up more steam than a kettle shop, with something new almost every day (it was even the inspiration for our own #High5aTeacherDay...).



To get the full brief on #Teacher5aDay, visit martynreah.wordpress.com/the-development-of-teacher5aday.

TeachMeets

One of the best ways that the working teacher can hone their skills, TeachMeets are free events where various educators share best practices during timed presentations. Created by teacher Ewan McIntosh (@ewanmcintosh) in an Edinburgh pub back in 2006, these gatherings are now held across the UK, helping all kinds of teachers to grab ace ideas for their classrooms.



Russel Tarr presenting at the excellent #TMHistorycons, 5th March 2016 (Photo by Natalie '@historicalsando' Sanderson).

As mentioned elsewhere in this publication, anyone can present at a TeachMeet! To find the right event for you, visit: teachmeet.pbworks.com.

Primary Rocks

Another Twitter-based operation, #PrimaryRocks began in September 2014 when hard-rocking teachers Gaz Needle (@gazneedle) and Rob Smith (@redgierob) "decided to start a new edchat focusing on Primary education, as many of the chats we had participated in were very Secondary-focused".

Since then, the UK's Primary teachers have enjoyed a new #PrimaryRocks chat every Monday between 8 - 9pm, as well as the birth of Primary Rocks Live (with both so far being hosted at Medlock Primary School in Manchester).

To get involved, visit @PrimaryRocks1 and www.PrimaryRocks.com.



Graham '@grahamandre' Andre runs his workshop at the first Primary Rocks Live event, 19th March 2016.

WomenEd

This group of passionate educators (including our very own Guide writer Natalie Scott) aim to promote equality in the sector, particularly at senior leadership level. As well as frequently contributing articles for our audience, the team shares conversations, articles, podcasts and news for their events via the #WomenEd hashtag. WomenEd are a

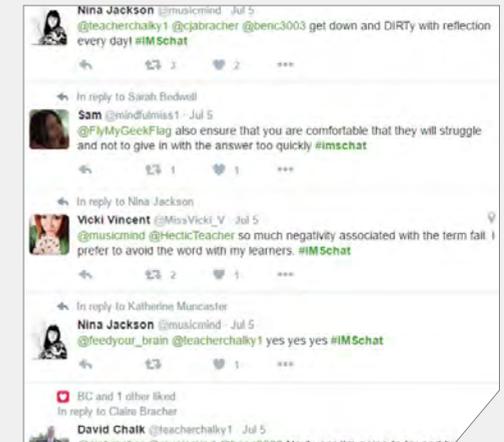
www.innovatemyschool.com



Bukky '@rondelle10_b' Yusuf presents at the WomenEd London #LeadMeet, 30th June 2016 (Photo by WomenEd).

hugely enthusiastic, collaborative bunch, so be sure to say hello!

To get involved with the WomenEd movement, visit www.womened.org and @WomenEd.



Nina '@musicmind' Jackson hosts an #IMSchat.

And finally... Twitter!

By now, you may have gotten the impression that Twitter is an amazing tool for teachers. It's by far our number one tool for engaging with the community, and we encourage all educators to create an account if they haven't already. Be sure to follow us on @InnovateMySchl to see whom else you ought to be following!

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Get started!

Read about a selection of products and services that can assist you in your school.

HUE HD PRO



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engagement in competition can be measured, assessed and analysed. The Primary PE Passport provides everything schools need to evidence the impact of the sports premium and provide accurate data to inform future decision making.

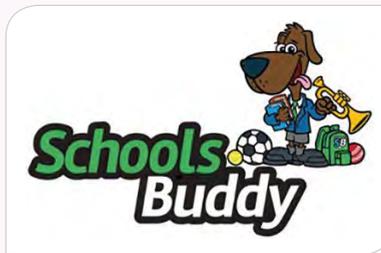
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to a truly innovative mobile experience where they can learn more about 3D Printing, Robotics, RaspberryPi and the Internet of Things (IoT).



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- Electronic compilation of children's learning diaries provides numerous educational, time and cost benefits.



Key Features

- In-depth reporting & data analysis
- Child Identity Protection (CIP)
- Multi-lingual parent apps
- Automated Multimedia Library

From September 2016...

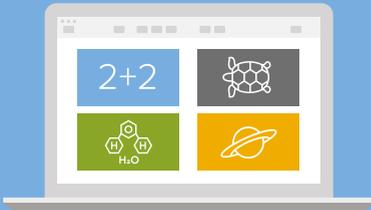
New Digital Flipbook – enables parents to download a complete record of their child's learning journey, including photographs, video and audio.

Enjoy the numerous educational, time and cost benefits of the Interactive Learning Diary!

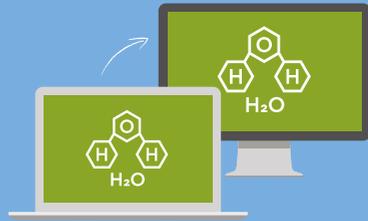


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