

Advancing Education

Summer 2016 Edition

About Advancing Education

Advancing Education' is a leading journal comprised of an eclectic mix of academic and action research papers and reports from members and sponsoring partners on innovative uses of ICT in education and beyond. As such it reflects the wide ranging interests of members and sponsors and all those passionate about ICT in all phases of education. The journal is published online twice a year.

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In this issue of Advancing Education MirandaNet offer a report on an innovative approach to professional development for early career teachers. Dr Neelam Parmar reminds us that we still have some way to go in integrating technology in the classroom while DB Primary show how they have developed this in a primary school using pupils as Digital Leaders and KRCS demonstrate enhanced learning using Apple technology. Assessment is not forgotten with Infomonitor showing how their tracking tools support a small school in a deprived area. Software and IT support are critical issues in schools. Chris Langstaff explains the cost-effective software tools that he recommends while Oded Moshe of SysAid Technologies Ltd offers an out-sourced support solution. We also have articles show-casing the use of Show My Homework and Groupcall's tools for optimising parental engagement.

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Editorial Ramblings

Has education policy in England lost its way? Since the start of the year we have increasing dissatisfaction regarding the present unnecessary and draconian testing regime, disliked by educationalists and parents alike. More recently there has come the announcement of enforced academisation and the subsequent speedy U-turn when it clearly proved unacceptable to many local politicians. Meanwhile, the curriculum debate rumbles on with yet more dictats from on high, based on dogma and dinner party gossip rather than high quality research. The result is stressed children, trained to jump through testing and examination hoops and potentially switched off from the joys of learning for learning's sake, of developing a love of literature, of art, of drama and of the history and landscapes around them.

Broad and balanced this curriculum is not, as proven by such delights as the recent KS2 grammar test. Of course, all readers of *Advancing Education* dashed through it in minutes and scored 100% . . . ! Your editor failed – miserably. It would appear that his traditional 1960's grammar school education failed to prepare him for working life. Is this really what education in general and English teaching in particular has become in 2016?

Comparing the present crowded and oppressive curriculum with that of my own school days I really cannot recall that we spent much time on an in depth study of English grammar with little more than the basic 'parts of speech' and key punctuation covered, even by Year 6. What we did have though were regular sessions where the teacher read quality children's literature to us e.g. in Class 3 (Y5/6) *Swallows and Amazons*, *Moonfleet* and similar. This was not just sit and listen either, the sessions explored the way in which the author used language to give meaning, to develop characters, to increase suspense. We developed our vocabulary and discovered new ways of using language and for many of us developed a love of literature that we followed up at home. Not a subordinating conjunction in sight, just the English language at its best.

Of course, in the late 1950's and 1960's good books were not as easy to access. The tiny school library and the monthly visit by the mobile library were the main sources, plus birthday and Christmas gifts. Yet I was able to read a wide range of genres – adventure, SciFi, westerns, Captain Marryat's wonderful *Children of the New Forest* (a book I always recommended when teaching the English Civil War) plus authors such Ransome, W.E Johns, classics such as *Treasure Island*, the *Hornblower* series and much more. Grammar school introduced Dickens, HG Wells, Conan Doyle and, of course, Shakespeare. No in depth knowledge or analysis of a subordinate clause or use of the present pluperfect required!

Today we have greater access to literature than at any time in our history through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google Books and others. All it takes is an e-reader or smart device and an internet connection, with many out of copyright works available free and new authors for a fiver or less. Yet we seem to have a curriculum designed to actively discourage a love of reading

and literature when what we should be doing is enabling children to develop their own literacy skills through exploring the use of language not by analysing its structure in fine detail.

Good writing is all about creativity, something sadly missing from a utilitarian approach to education of which computing is a part. Yet writing good code is as creative an experience as writing good prose once basic language structures have been mastered. Schools need to approach this aspect of Computing with some creativity of their own in order to ensure that students learn to write elegant code as they would elegant English. Imaginative scenarios requiring creative solutions should be the order of the day.

At the same time the wider creative aspects of ICT must not be forgotten – writing a blog, developing the class area of a school website, animation, and video production. These are not isolated activities but, as they have done for many years, support the wider curriculum. It should not be a matter of struggling to find time for these in an overcrowded, austere and over-assessed curriculum rather they need to be integrated. Writing stories and publishing them online, story-telling through animation and video are just as much a part of developing language skills as are pen and paper, and more than ever that ways in which young people communicate in the real world. Despite the best attempts of politicians we, as teachers, should still prepare young people for the real world, the one where flexibility and creativity are in high demand.

And then there is assessment. Why, in 2016, are we still focusing on pencil and paper written exams? And that is before the argument as to whether the current SATS system is even fit for purpose in any case.

Your editor has never been a fan of the assessment industry that grew out of the McKinsey mantra of, “if you can measure it you can manage it” that led to a political desire to measure ‘output’ at every possible stage regardless of whether this is beneficial in terms of improving learning. It isn’t, certainly not beyond the narrow confines of that being tested, itself the result of instruction in a narrow range of topics rather than good teaching of a broad, balanced and inter-related set of skills, knowledge and understanding.

There is a place for summative assessment, notably at the end of secondary education where employers and HE need evidence of what a student has achieved. Almost all other assessment should be formative, it’s only purpose to enable a teacher to move learning forward. At times this may require simple but informal pencil and paper tests or, more sensibly in 2016 the use of online or IT based assessment tools. The primary phase PIPS from CEM at Durham University are effective, if somewhat time consuming tools but provide massively useful information. Even last years PISA tests were computer based, the key problem for test administrators being draconian school filtering that prevented data being uploaded automatically at the end of the test. While the present tools are far from perfect a sane approach by politicians and appropriate levels of investment made from savings on expensive SATS and

their marking could actually provide an assessment methodology that actually benefits learning.

And so to the current issue of Advancing Education, one which is very much a sponsoring partners issue, it being clear that increasingly it is the providers of IT solutions to schools that are pushing innovation, along with research groups such as MirandaNet who this time offer a report on an innovative approach to professional development for early career teachers. Dr Neelam Parma reminds us that we still have some way to go in integrating technology in the classroom while DB Primary show how they have developed this in a primary school using pupils as Digital Leaders and KRCS demonstrate enhanced learning using Apple technology. Assessment is not forgotten with Infomenter showing how their tracking tools support a small school in a deprived area. Software and IT support are critical issues in schools. Chris Langstaff explains the cost-effective software tools that he recommends while Oded Moshe of SysAid Technologies Ltd offers an out-sourced support solution. We also have articles show-casing the use of Show My Homework and Groupcall's tools for optimising parental engagement.

There is still a great deal of exciting and innovative work going on in our schools that needs disseminating to a wider audience despite the tough times we are currently facing. We must never forget what we are about and that is Advancing Education.

Paul Heinrich
Editor

All opinions expressed in this editorial are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect Naace policy.

Innovations in Professional Development: real-time, in-ear coaching

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And

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Summary

IRIS Connect is a video-based professional development platform for teachers, enabling the types of learning that research has shown to support teachers and improve pupils' outcomes by improving teaching through collaborative, experiential and evidence-based professional development. MirandaNet Fellowship research suggest that coaching teachers using web-based audio and video tools offers opportunities for the profession to enhance practice.

“Human interaction is the key to professional learning. In-ear coaching is just one element in a suite of very powerful human interactions that help us move forward professionally.”

(Mike Fleetham: The Thinking Classroom)

High rates of attrition amongst early career teachers indicate that practice in the classroom is challenging and that current professional development models are not meeting their needs.

The MirandaNet Fellowship has been conducting research into classroom practice in Edtech since 1992 when this e-community of practice was founded by Professor Christina Preston. The members, more than 1,000 educators in 80 countries, elect to share their professional knowledge with each other in informal professional development opportunities that they create themselves. Some members elect to join MirandaNet projects as co-researchers in a more formal practice-based programme called iCatalyst that is accredited. Naace are now partnering this professional development initiative.

Because companies fund this research that provides professional development opportunities for members, UNESCO calls MirandaNet the Robin Hood of CPD. The most recent research and development has been with IRIS Connect, a video-based professional development platform for teachers which enables the types of learning that research has shown to support teachers and improve pupils' outcomes by improving teaching through collaborative, experiential and evidence-based professional development.

The system has been built with ease of use, security and permissioning at the heart, placing the teacher in control. It was the first system in the world to:

- Be fully cloud based
- Use time-linked notes (meta-tagging)
- Provide tools for analysis and review.

MirandaNet undertook this work because the teacher is in full control of the video that goes into a personal space on the platform under a password. By wearing a special necklace the teacher can take their own videos remotely as there is no camera-person in the room. The TES (26.02.16) picked up the potential for surveillance using for example some of the US systems where the senior staff have access to all the cuttings, but they agreed that in the case of IRIS footage the video cannot even be copied and passed on .

The findings of this MirandaNet Fellowship research suggest that in a positive, reflective and learning culture coaching teachers using web-based audio and video tools offers an opportunity for the profession to enhance practice. The process involves sharing detailed strategies that teachers are developing and adapting continuously in the classroom context. Crucially, the school, teacher and coach work in partnership to develop and define best practice in a 'live' environment.

The initial quantitative MirandaNet study concentrated on 100 teachers who had been receiving e-coaching using the IRIS Connect web-based video for at least 4 months. In brief, the results of the survey were that:

- 94% of teachers using the system said their teaching had improved;
- 88% said their confidence had risen;
- 88% felt there had been a positive impact on collaboration;
- 96% felt they were willing to take more risks;
- 99% felt there were more conversations between teachers about teaching in their school.

(Preston 2014: Preston and Belogaska 2015)

The second phase research announced in May 2016 concentrates on a particular aspect of web-based video coaching called 'in-ear' coaching. In this mode the teacher wears an ear-piece so that the coach who is not in the classroom (or even from some more remote location) but observing through a video link can make suggestions about the teacher's performance in real time. The pupils cannot hear the suggestions although they have usually been told that this process is taking place. Video and audio is recorded and stored on the IRIS Connect servers where it can be annotated, commented and edited for later review, reflection and sharing.

Research into in-ear coaching has already reported positive impact in Australia, the Netherlands and the United States.

This qualitative UK study begins to set a European standard by outlining contexts in which in-ear coaching is effective and presents observations and commentary from a small sample of early career teachers:

- Coachees report that pupils are cooperative and that the experience can also prompt pupils to be more reflective about their own learning and behaviour.
- Alongside the study of subject specialist knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, teachers are reporting that this focus on classroom practice in real-time strengthens not just the confidence and capability of early career teachers but of any teacher keen to be active in improving their performance.
- Using the platform to promote sharing across the school and between schools ensures that the deep learning that is emerging from in-ear coaching becomes replicable and sustainable over time.
- Sustainability can be a concern if those who set up and run the programme leave the school without training others to make use of the investment.
- This innovation that can be disruptive if its introduction is not managed with sensitivity. Teachers need to know at the outset that the system cannot be used as means of surveillance and that systems that put the teacher in control of who can view the video are important.
- All the interviewees agreed that the contextualised feedback enables the teacher to act upon and see an immediate impact on their classroom practice resulting in deep learning that is replicable and sustainable over time.

What MirandaNet Fellows have found is that those teachers who enjoy learning in this way are very keen to share and much is being learnt about the link between a teacher's performance and improving pupil achievement. Often a coach is also involved to support the teachers in their quest for effective practice. Evidence about the intervention from this small sample indicates that in-ear coaching in particular may have the potential for transforming practice where the teacher is comfortable with the process and keen to learn.

You can find the report here <http://mirandanet.ac.uk/about-associates/associates-research/> .

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Integrating Technology in the Classroom: Pedagogic Workflow

Author: Dr Neelam Parmar, Ashford School

Summary

There is no doubt that technology integration in the classroom is the way forward for 21st century teaching and learning. However, the reliance on technology can also prevent learning development, as turning to technology for every query or problem does not develop certain key skills. In order to create great teaching where the use of technology can amplify learning and development, an appropriate pedagogic workflow, incorporating all traditional elements of teaching practices, a blended learning approach and current educational apps, becomes necessary. Teachers are still the catalyst that will facilitate the instructional processes in an educational technology environment.

There is no doubt that technology integration in the classroom is the way forward for 21st century teaching and learning. Indeed, to visit a school that does not use technology in education seems strange. A collection of recent studies by researchers from the National Endowment of Science, Technology and Arts (Nesta 2012 - 2014) show that technology can boost learning, but much too often the technology is used without a strong understanding of the power to transform education and many institutions are still using technology to support 20th century teaching methods and learning objectives.

About three years ago, there was much hype about what type of technological device to buy, ranging from Google Nexus to Samsung to iPads or Surface tablets. Educational technology was a risky game then and required much investment in a short period of time. The big question for schools was which device would be the better investment for long term strategy given the growth of educational apps in the educational sphere. As it turns out, it makes no difference, which one is the bigger or better player in the market place. Within Education, all three technological leaders, Apple, Android and Windows have over 100,000 educational apps in their store. These apps are found to appeal to the children and add variety to teaching and learning. They have emerged in classrooms where teachers use them to enhance and enrich their lessons in subject specialist areas, such as, in one's times table practice, phonics, learning or spelling lessons.

While the introduction of subject related educational apps is often the common use of EdTech in classrooms, its use as a playful learning tool with little or no pedagogic instruction makes it limiting. Many schools still find themselves in situation where the technology is used as an add-on effect and

not integrated seamlessly into the lessons. Although there is evidence to show that educational apps are productive in encouraging engagement and motivation, the killer app is still the teacher and pedagogic interactions that take place between the two (Parmar 2014).

There are interpretations that in order to build deep, conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking with the children, technology based lessons still require intensive teacher-student interactions. There are observations to suggest that schools have not yet become good enough at the kind of technological pedagogies required to make the most of the technology use in their classrooms. According to the OECD programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), schools have yet to take advantage of the potential of technology in the classroom to tackle the growing digital divide and give every student the skills they need.

“School systems need to find more effective ways to integrate technology into teaching and learning to provide educators with learning environments that support 21st century pedagogies and provide children with the 21st century skills they need to succeed in tomorrow’s world,” said Andreas Schleicher, OECD Director for Education and Skills.

With the growing use of the internet and advanced digital tools, there is great potential for technology to dramatically expand access to knowledge. However, to deliver on the promise that technology holds, educators and educational institutions need to invest more effectively and ensure that teachers are at the forefront of designing and implementing this change.

The technology is constantly developing and increasingly used in our daily routines. Students should be taught how to use technology to their benefit and they should also be exposed to the new developments that can complement their learning. Admittedly, excessive use of technology can easily cause it to become a tool for procrastination, which is the least of its disadvantages. The reliance on technology can also prevent learning development, as turning to technology for every query or problem does not develop certain key skills. However, when used in moderation, technology can be a means to improve a student’s learning experience rather than hinder it.

Then, how do we adapt using educational technology in 21st century education? In order to create great teaching where the use of technology can amplify learning and development, an appropriate pedagogic workflow, incorporating all traditional elements of teaching practices and the current educational apps, becomes necessary.

This so called pedagogic workflow is the disappearance of walls and enclosed structure of the classroom, where both the teacher and student can communicate seamlessly through various means of digital channels. It is the use of a blended learning approach where the technology becomes transparent. It is the pencil case design incorporating teaching strategies, where the student and teacher can flip between working on paper, capturing data digitally and producing an end result in the cloud. It includes the seamless and effective option of feedback and assessment, which can take

place in real time or within a few days of submission of homework. It is the curation of all materials in one location, highlighting areas of metacognition and differentiation, sewing together various teaching resources of videos, images, worksheets, quizzes and content to external applications such as YouTube, e-books, and subject specific apps which are both transferable and available to the students anywhere, anytime and in any place. To be clear, it is the facilitation and instruction of learning processes rather than the more directive methods of teaching.

This shift of mindset in understanding 'teaching' vs. 'instruction' is the beginnings of creating an appropriate EdTech pedagogical workflow. The term teaching can be quite misleading and often takes a top-down teaching method, as seen in most schools still today. When teachers come to understand that through technology, they are offering independent instructional processes, or facilitated by a teacher, a digital workflow can be better understood and created.

Whether this is conducted via an iTunes U course in collating posts and assignments together, or the Office 365 environment using the various Microsoft products to submit and/or exchange discussions of homework, or even the Google Classroom where student's access shared documents and teachers provide feedback via the Google apps, it makes no difference. The key message is that it should enable both the teacher and students to access learning and collaboration at a developmental pace, sharing direct instruction and collaborative learning between themselves and peers.

It is worth noting that while there are three leading virtual learning platforms which are suited to specific devices, there are also new and more sophisticated online learning environments that are steadily being developed to fulfill the needs of more remote based learning. These platforms are designed to cater to economies in more under privileged areas, sustaining both online and offline activities for continuous teaching and learning.

We have long passed the debate of what type of technology to purchase. We have also passed the time to match apps to curriculum needs. There are plenty of websites that promote this use. We have, however, arrived at a time where creating a pedagogical workflow in classrooms (and eventually into school culture) is necessary in order to utilise educational technology at its best. Although, technology has the potential to amplify great teaching and is there to help teachers to do their job more efficiently, it is important to remember, it is not there to replace them. Teachers are still the catalyst that will facilitate the instructional processes in an educational technology environment.

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Five Elms Primary School-Dagenham - Digital Leaders Case Study

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Dagenham*



Summary

Online learning environments have been in use in schools for over ten years but have yet to be embraced by all teachers, even in schools where many staff make regular use of them. So how can schools encourage more reluctant staff to become fully engaged with the tools? The answer at Five Elms Primary School has been to use children as Digital Leaders. DB Primary and the school show how effective this approach can be.

Digital Leaders Case Study

In September 2014 the Deputy Head Teacher at Five Elms Primary, Mrs Butt, decided to call DB Primary to discuss ways to improve the usage of the platform. Although DB Primary was being widely used in school, it was established that whilst many teachers were using the platform daily in their teaching some remained reluctant to use it regularly. When asked, these teachers gave a variety of reasons why they wanted to steer clear: perception of the time involved, lack of confidence in technology and preferring the traditional 'chalk and talk' method of teaching.

Teachers at Five Elms were aware that the majority of children in the school were accessing the internet independently at home; on phones, tablets, games consoles and desktops. Mrs Butt wanted all pupils to learn the fundamentals of staying safe online and to assure parents that this learning was taking place in a secure and educational environment within DB Primary. However, how was the school going to get DB Primary used consistently in all classes?

The solution was to turn pupils into Digital Leaders. The Digital Leaders are responsible in supporting their peers in safe and appropriate communication online and they also help with any queries or questions that arise in class.

At the outset the pupils were asked to apply for the positions by way of an application form using four simple queries:

- Why they wanted to be a Digital Leader?
- What was their favourite ICT thing?
- Example of a responsibility both inside and outside school
- What skills they had to become a Digital Leader.

Based on the responses two Digital Leaders were appointed per KS2 class: one girl, one boy. The scheme was so successful that by the start of the new school year in September 2016 teachers requested that a further two children from Year 2 be trained as Digital Leaders.

The Digital Leaders, on a voluntary basis, meet Mrs Butt every Friday at lunchtime for collaborative training and are given time to update their DB Primary class pages. Digital Leaders come armed to their weekly meeting with pictures, videos, links and ideas which they'd like published on their class communities. Each week a different feature is focused on in the training session, this term the digital leaders worked on creating tasks and activities for their class peers to respond to. Digital Leaders then return to their classes to update their peers on the latest training and encourage their class to view and feedback on the updated class pages.

The Digital Leaders are responsible for:

- Encouraging safe and secure class communication.
- Designing and editing their class pages.
- Keeping the class pages up to date on a weekly basis.
- Creating forum topics.
- Creating blog posts.
- Assigning curriculum tasks and activities.
- Updating images and links.
- Uploading photos of trips and assemblies.
- Maintaining class calendars.
- Considering online page layout.
- Supporting their class teacher with giving out login information.
- Working with teachers to generate ideas and materials.
- Helping to organise competitions and surveys.

Pupils benefitted by:

- Taking part in extra training.
- Taking ownership of their class page.
- Learning about web design.
- Developing presentation skills.
- Sharing their talents and knowledge with the rest of the school.
- Learning to problem solve and work collaboratively.
- All classes have an up-to-date page with new activities to complete.
- Learning how to add text to web pages and modify it using simple formatting tools.
- Learning how to add pictures to web pages.
- They learn to add slideshows, content and links.

- They learn to use and combine a variety of software (including internet services) to design and create web pages which they use to collect, analyse, evaluate and present information.
- Supporting each other in using technology safely, respectfully and responsibly.
- Developed collaboration skills and critical thinking about digital technology.

The Teachers benefitted by:

- Giving responsibility of their class' webpage to their Digital Leaders.
- Saving time by allowing the pupils make updates and maintain the page.
- Encouraging an environment for pupil-led and personalised learning.
- Encouraging pupils to develop their literacy skills by blogging and taking part in contributions.
- Sharing and celebrating the work children produce in class.
- Knowing that DB Primary comes with e-safety and monitoring features that acted as a safety net for independent pupil work.
- Encouraging pupils' creativity, enjoyment and motivation through assigning positions of responsibility.
- Perceiving a positive impact on behaviour.
- Enhancing the accessibility, quality, relevance and range of learning.
- Allowing for easy setting of digital resources and activities.
- Building a sense of school identity and community.
- Providing organic situations for children to ask questions and communicate. concerns about sensitive online issues such as online safety and bullying.
- Supporting ongoing communication between teachers and learners.
- Organising pupil's views and opinions in ways that are not manageable in a classroom such as through the use of surveys, digital feedback on classes, or digital 'show and tell' sessions.

If you would like to find out more about DB Primary or the Digital Leader scheme please get in touch.

DB Primary can be contacted by email at info@neweraed.co.uk or see the website at www.neweraed.co.uk .

Apple Technologies at Holme Valley Primary School - A Case Study by KRCS (Digital Solutions) Ltd

Author: *KRCS (Digital Solutions) Ltd*

Summary

Holme Valley Primary School is benefiting from 'enhanced learning' since the integration of Apple technology, including iPads, iPods, and Apple TV opened up a world of opportunity for pupils and teachers at the school. Every child is now benefiting, not just in computing lessons, but across all subjects on the curriculum. Peer to peer learning is encouraging knowledge sharing and even teachers are more confident and creative about using the technology to plan and deliver their lessons

The Case Study

Holme Valley Primary School is benefiting from 'enhanced learning' since the integration of Apple technology opened up a world of opportunity for pupils and teachers at the school.

Challenge

Coping with an ageing and cramped PC suite which doubled as a busy thoroughfare to other rooms, the school was finding the use of technology in lessons both difficult and distracting. Staff were eager to move away from the confines of the PC suite and integrate learning into the classroom in order to both enhance the curriculum and improve pupil engagement through more creative learning.

Solution

The school has invested in 94 iPad, 8 iPad mini, 5 Mac, 2 Apple TV and 40 iPod Touch. Working alongside Apple Solutions Expert in Education KRCS, who also provided advice, installation and training, staff at Holme Valley have ensured pupils now have access to the best and latest resources available.

Results

Every child is now benefiting, not just in computing lessons, but across all subjects on the curriculum. Pupils are better engaged in lessons and have become more confident through collaborative working. Peer to peer learning is encouraging knowledge sharing and even teachers are more confident and creative about using the technology to plan and deliver their lessons.

"We needed to make sure we were offering our children the very best and latest resources available."

Claire Robinson, Higher Level Teaching Assistant, Holme Valley Primary School

Enhance learning

Holme Valley Primary School in Scunthorpe had been struggling with a dated PC suite which was too small to accommodate a whole class of pupils. This meant lessons had to be split between two groups, resulting in a loss of



also meant children were getting bored. The school was eager to integrate technology around other areas of the school in order to engage pupils in new technologies whilst encouraging creative thinking. Claire Barrow, Headteacher, and Anna Barrow, along with Higher Education, began to look into newer, more flexible technologies and to give them the flexibility they needed. Claire said, "We had to make sure we were offering our pupils the best of what was available. The majority of our pupils are from disadvantaged areas, so it's only fair they should be able to use Apple technology to enjoy and enhance their learning in the classroom."

Working with KRCS

By chance, a member of the computing staff had come across KRCS at a workshop and, following further investigation and a visit to BETT - the world's leading learning technology event - the school saw the potential to totally change the way it created, presented, investigated and used technology in the classroom. *"Watching how easy it was to get approximately 30 Apple novices to confidently use three different Apps in a 25 minute KRCS workshop made us realise just how much the technology could benefit our school."* said Claire.

The school carried out some research into other technologies but Apple was a clear winner. She explains: *"We felt Apple was such a trusted name and the quality and reliability of its products were second to none and we definitely made the right decision. Everything has gone extremely smoothly with no problems or faulty equipment at all. Plus we have a fantastic range of educational apps to choose from."* KRCS met with the school a number of times to talk them through the process of purchasing the iPad. At the time, staff had only personal experience of the technology through their own iPod or iPhone so initial training was delivered by Apple Distinguished Educators who worked alongside KRCS to deliver curriculum-led, classroom-focused training, helping teachers to discover apps and develop simple lesson plans aimed to trial every feature of the iPad.



"We did talk to some other Apple educational suppliers," said Anna, *"but having seen the KRCS workshop we were keen to work with the company as it was apparent its people were very knowledgeable about how the technology could be deployed to improve education. We wanted a company we could build a long-standing relationship with and KRCS has certainly met that criterion."*

“Using iPad in the classroom means less downtime. No more waiting for slow PCs to fire up while children lose interest before they’ve even started. Access is instant and everything they need to get on with their task is there at their fingertips.”

*Anna Barrow, Assistant Head & Computing Subject Leader,
Holme Valley Primary School.*

iPad integration

Less than six months after the iPad integration, the school gained the prestigious NAACE 3rd Millennium Award that recognised it was providing 21st century skills and learning. “The difference the technology made to learning was almost instant.” said Claire. “It was astonishing to see how quickly both pupils and staff became confident users. There were very early examples of peer-to-peer learning seen across the school and we appointed some of the more gifted children as ‘digital leaders’. These mini experts helped both fellow pupils and teachers alike to get to grips with the technology and the numerous apps which were being used.” Such was the success of the iPad integration, the school quickly realised the advantage of having a 1:1 device for older children in Years 5 and 6. “We chose iPods due to cost implications.” said Anna. “The lower cost of the iPod meant we could purchase enough iPods for all our older KS2 children. Being smaller, it also saves on storage space, however, our children have an ‘always there’ technology with them in their lessons? Whether they need a calculator, dictionary, note book or need to research particular websites, the tools are instantly available to them. We also installed Apple TV and that’s been a great benefit by taking away the ‘teaching from the front’ approach and putting the shared learning into the hands of our children.”

Learning outside the classroom

Younger pupils are also enjoying using their iPad outside the classroom. Mini gardening club members are learning how to grow particular fruits and vegetables by scanning QR codes placed next to the relevant plant out in the school allotment. This then leads them to a pre-programmed website containing all the information they need. Claire is particularly enthusiastic about some of the more physical aspects



of the apps available such as Dot and Dash Robots and Bee Bot. “The younger children in particular need something physical to really capture their interest and imagination.” she said. “These fun and colourful tools are enabling hands-on play which I believe is the key to understanding the concepts of coding. They are definitely helping to unlock creativity and bring their imagination to life.” Popular apps in use across the school include Explain Everything, iMovie, Garageband and the programming apps; Bee Bot and Dot & Dash Robots. Book Creator is also widely used across the curriculum.

“Everything is so much quicker and the work produced is of a really high quality. For example, we would previously have to wade through Word, teaching the fundamentals before the children could even begin to do ‘actual’ work on it. Now, with Book Creator, it’s so easy the children simply teach themselves. They are instantly using it to produce their work on, not just learning how to use it. Being able to produce their own creation which can be printed out or projected to the class on Apple TV has given the children an audience which has inspired them to be creative and to want to show off their achievements.”

Anna Barrow, Assistant Head & Computing Subject Leader, Holme Valley Primary School

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Developing a new approach to assessment

Author: InfoMentor



All pupils should reach their full potential

Summary:

Solutions to curriculum planning and assessment in primary schools are many and varied so having everything in one place and easily accessible can save considerable time and effort, leaving teachers free to focus on learning. InfoMentor is just such a tool and this case study demonstrates the benefits it has brought to one small primary school.

St Bartholomew's is a small, single form entry Church of England primary school located in North Tyneside. Although the area rates as one of the most deprived in the country, families from a range of locations choose to send their children to the school because of its Christian ethos and high expectations.

Teachers at St Bartholomew's School encourage their pupils to be citizens of independent thought. It is this quality that led them to embrace the changes in assessment and curriculum in 2014, and to really focus on developing a framework that was right for their school. It is also the quality that led them to use InfoMentor, when they discovered that more traditional tracking and analysing systems failed to meet the needs of the changing educational landscape.



Richard Restall, Headteacher at St Bartholomew's C of E Primary, explains how they started on their journey: *"For a number of years we had used a detailed tracking system which allowed for analysis to be quickly accessed and acted upon, but we often felt, like many schools did, that this was distinct from the curriculum itself."*

Embracing Change

When the Government announced a new National Curriculum and that Levels were to be scrapped, we took the opportunity to consider what our curriculum would look like, how it would be planned, taught and evaluated and, of course, what assessment should be involved to move all children on appropriately.

Taking Action

We began by planning for, and implementing the new National Curriculum ready for September 2014. Alongside this we worked on a new approach to assessment and, as we had also recently moved to a new building, there was a great deal to organise and get right. We therefore took our time, continuing to run with levels whilst trialling alternative approaches and so it wasn't until the end of Spring 2015 that we were happy with how things looked.

Bringing it all together with InfoMentor



Bringing everything we had been doing together, we came to consider InfoMentor it for our curriculum, as it was simple and it gave us the opportunity to do what we wished. We were also able to reach – in a way that made all our work more efficient and the best way to do it.

All of our paper-based materials for Reading, Writing and Mathematics were brought together and our 'grids' and assessment principles were handed to the InfoMentor team to work on over the Summer break. Checks were made and an October training day set aside for teachers. As we worked up to the training, issues and questions were discussed and worked on to ensure things were correct and ready to use. As the staff were already beginning to use the planning format and assessment principles, they were keen to put it all together with the promise that workload would eventually be reduced.

Staff quickly picked up the basics and responded positively to the system. We began slowly, first with the English curriculum, then Maths. With clear expectations, all worked well, but any new system takes time to get used to. The initial assessment data was very labour intensive but, as working patterns changed – moving away from 'assessment weeks' to much more formative assessment – things improved.

As we understood how important it was to get the implementation right, we aimed to set realistic targets for teachers to get used to the system. In the Spring term we trialled and then introduced handheld tablet devices in the classroom which were extremely useful for the teachers. Lessons and Units of Learning could be assessed in real time.

Positive Impact

Teachers have already seen the usefulness of knowing where the children are at and where to take them next. They regularly comment on the ease of use of the system, and it is accessible to all staff, on all internet enabled devices, which means that teachers have ownership of the curriculum and their assessments are meaningful.

Sharing with Parents

It is hoped that, once staff are more confident with our new language and with InfoMentor, we will start to share more details with families using InfoMentor Home. We have already assembled a small group of parents to try out some of the newer language and the feedback we received following our Spring Parents' evenings was overwhelmingly positive.

What next?

It is, and has been a challenge moving away from something that has been with us for many years, but everyone can see the future benefits. We also

need to bear in mind the current national changes in assessment but, as our framework and InfoMentor are based on sound principles, any developments will be accommodated with little problem.'

InfoMentor

InfoMentor is a unique system, designed to support schools in delivering their own bespoke curriculum and assessment package. InfoMentor allows teachers to plan and assess against any curriculum, and our parent/pupil portal, InfoMentor Home, makes it easy to communicate ongoing progress.

If you would like to find out more about how St Bartholomew's C of E Primary changed their approach to assessment and the new curriculum, then please contact us:

For further information email enquiries@infomentor.co.uk, visit: www.infomentor.co.uk or call: 0845 680 3681



Top software for schools – A breakdown of educational software for schools

Author: *Chris Langstaff – Holmfirth High School & North Huddersfield Trust School*

Summary

How to ensure value for money and effective use of core tools for both curriculum and management functions is a problem facing many schools. However, off the shelf solutions are readily at hand at low cost, providing that appropriate investment is made in a planned roll-out and staff training. Chris Langstaff offers his thoughts and experiences.

Working in IT within a number of different secondary schools, I have come across one consistent issue all schools seem to face – “Where do we invest when it comes to IT software?”

There are thousands of software providers with many overlaps between different products and budgets are tighter than ever. In this article we will look at a few tried and tested products, offering great value for both time and for the money invested.

‘The big questions’ - So what considerations need to be made prior to making an investment in any IT software?

What are you trying to achieve? Having clear goals gives purpose to your project and means success can be measured. Is the new product really going to add value to the school and most importantly your students learning?

Time and time again new software is introduced to a school which has an existing product that can do the same job. The best advice I can give when it comes to technology in schools is to keep things simple and focus on a few key products until they are well established and really adding value within the school.

Does the school have somebody willing to lead on the rollout of a new product?

A consistent and organized rollout is key to generating and keeping up usage to get the most out of a new product. You need at least one person in school who people can turn to for support.

Is the product compatible with your schools network?

New products often require further or unforeseen initial investments due to limitations on the current network. Make sure you plan ahead and check that everything is going to work for your school.

New software will involve staff and student training. How can this be included in the schools CPD plan?

This training is essential. Without the training and ongoing support many staff simply won't have the time or confidence to introduce a new product in to their teaching.

Some practical examples

Office 365 – www.products.office.com/en-gb/student/office-in-education



Everybody has heard of Office 365 and with a recent, huge, focus on education Microsoft's Office 365 platform can offer huge benefits for a very small investment.

To start with it is completely free to set-up an Office 365 environment for public sector schools and by purchasing a domain name (approx £5-10 per annum) you can very easily personalize your platform with your school name and branding.

To date Office 365 has been able to fulfill all our needs and requirements. The platform offers a whole realm of customization including flexible limitation on content or functionality for student accounts.

Although with any large business, it can be a little difficult getting through to the right person to help with your particular issue, generally speaking Microsoft's Office 365 support team are prompt and effective. From personal experience I would suggest initially submitting an online support request and waiting for a call back from their team.

What can I instantly benefit from?

- A flexible and familiar email and calendar system for a professional environment
- Plenty of personal and collaborative cloud storage for your establishment
- Access to Microsoft web software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Sway and OneNote) from any device with an internet connection
- Highly robust security throughout the whole platform

Top tip for Office 365 if your school has an OVS (open value subscription) agreement for Microsoft Office in school you will be entitled to 'ProPlus' licensing within Office 365.

ProPlus licensing for your Office 365 users gives you two main huge benefits.

FREE Microsoft Office software on up to 5 devices per user meaning all students and staff can easily download Microsoft Office at home on a number of devices. This will remain active as long as their Office 365 account is active.

Ability to edit, create and manage Microsoft documents on iPad apps. As standard iPad users do not have the ability to edit and create Microsoft documents using the Microsoft apps (Word, Excel PowerPoint) however, by logging in to the apps on a ProPlus Office 365 account users gain the ability to fully utilize these apps.

What challenges can a school face when launching Office 365?

One of the biggest challenges when launching new software is the time it can take to set-up and administrate a new platform especially if you are to include all students within the set-up.

For Office 365 to have a big impact on our school environment we had a number of requirements including:

- A safe and robust platform suitable for the educational environment
- A unique login account for all staff and students
- All the schools MIS (Management Information System) student class groups and form groups included as both email and cloud storage groups

Now that already sounds like a mammoth task and that's where 'Ruler Connect' comes in!

Ruler Connect - www.ruler.co.uk



Ruler Connect is an easy to use and flexible data extraction tool that works with Capita Sims MIS (Management Information System). For a fairly nominal annual fee of between £495 and £995 per annum Ruler can automate the

creation of all Office 365 users, the groups they are linked to in the Sims MIS and their lesson and timetable data.

Ruler Connect is an affordable and effective solution to an unmanageable task. It has been a huge step forward for us enabling students and teachers to work together in exciting new ways improving communication and collaboration in school.

The initial set-up of Ruler Connect for us was a simple and systematic process. The first step would be to make sure you have the required information in your MIS system. Once this has been achieved the technical set-up is a quick and easy one that once completed can instantly begin to import your data to Office 365.

The Ruler team are forward thinking and have been prompt and efficient with their customer service.

Ruler also has some additional functionality with the option to automatically populate the schools Active Directory using the data that already exists in the schools MIS. This feature has the potential to save our school technicians

hours and hours of manual work which currently takes place over the school holidays.

GCSEPod - www.gcsepod.com

GCSEPod is an award winning, powerful and easy to use revision/learning tool for students. There are 1000's of short and relevant podcast videos available, all filtered by exam boards, meaning that students can take lead on their learning and improve their results. In terms of value for money GCSEPod is a tough one to beat.



With a full roll out both staff and students can quickly benefit from GCSEPod. Consistent student usage in just 10 minute chunks has proven to boost results for students. The podcast videos can be streamed online or even downloaded and watched without an internet connection on the move.

The self-marking assignments and huge stock of up to date content also helps teachers to save time and focus on their teaching. The videos have proven to be useful as lesson starters, quick assignments or and even for in-depth homework's requiring written responses from the students.

It was incredibly easy to set up, including integration with our MIS (SIMS) and SSO for our VLE and any technical issues are quickly diagnosed and resolved. The subscription also includes support and resources for launch and roll out.

What does this mean for me?

By carefully assessing any potential investment in terms of both value and manageability we have been confident that the product really works for us before making any real commitments. We have managed to cut back on poor investments which weren't offering us value for money and use that money elsewhere.

Now we have a few key platforms that are easily and consistently managed by the schools' IT staff, with a little magic from Ruler and other extraction tools. This in turn makes life easier for staff and students; users can rely on their accounts being set-up and working whenever they need them. There is also a clear reporting processes in the event of an issue so if there is a problem it can be resolved promptly by a variety of people.

Staff and students have received, and will continue to receive, annual training and support. Everyone has different requirements and confidence levels, especially when it comes to learning how to use new technology. We do our best to accommodate every individual's needs and give a little extra time to those who need it. And of course those who want to stride ahead and try new things are encouraged to innovate. Both staff and students are developing their IT skills at their own pace and enjoying using the technology rather than

being forced to do so. Even the technophobes are getting on board – and they can be a real asset for an IT project once they are convinced!

As a result of sound project planning using the principles above, we are seeing the results in classrooms across the schools.

It is also worth looking at the www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools for some great advice on how to plan and run an efficient procurement process to buy goods, works or services for your school.

Chris Langstaff can be contacted at c.langstaff@holmfirthhigh.co.uk

How Educational Institutions Can Improve Their IT Support

Author: *Oded Moshe, VP Product at SysAid Technologies Ltd.*

Summary

A high standard of IT support is an imperative if schools are to meet their obligations. So how can the large range of devices and systems in use today be managed effectively and within tight budgetary constraints? SysAid Technologies Ltd., a Naace Partner, offers their solution to this perennial problem.

Like most IT organizations in any sector, private or public, educational institutions are having to provide IT support to end users – students, faculty members, and other employees – in what is a classic “doing more with less” scenario.

On the downside, the likes of BYOD, with the myriad of mobile devices and apps, and personal cloud services, potentially make IT support trickier. On the upside, the use of cloud service providers is a potential opportunity to both improve service and reduce costs – as long as cloud services can be easily managed and integrated into the existing IT ecosystem.

Modern IT Can Be a Challenge

However, it’s not just the new technology and its support that provides educational institutions with an IT support and service delivery challenge. The majority of end users are tech-savvy students, or staff members, who are potentially not only using the latest in personal technology but also:

- Use different ways of contacting and receiving services and support in their personal lives. For example: self-service and self-help, chat, social support including communities, and support via remote control.
- Have higher, consumer-world-driven expectations around IT services, IT support, and the overall service or customer experience. If they don’t like the services and/or service from a given supplier they just move to another.

So the challenge of delivering IT today relates to so much more than the technology itself. More importantly, what can under-pressure education-IT organizations do to stay relevant, and to cope, in such a consumer-driven IT landscape?

Employing a Fit-for-Purpose IT Solution

You might already have help desk technology. If you do, please bear with me. However, if you are still using email, spreadsheets, and a lot of manual effort to manage IT support, then fit-for-purpose technology can improve the

efficiency and effectiveness of IT operations – raising end-user satisfaction and potentially reducing costs.

Various options apply to *technology adoption*; these include:

- Operating your own help desk (and therefore invest in your own help desk software) vs. outsourcing the capability and thus the need for such technology. Both have their pros and cons – with the latter often cited as a cheaper option, but sadly “cheap” can be at the expense of the end-user experience. After all, how is a third party ever really going to understand your organization’s operations and your end users’ needs and wants?
- Using on-premise software vs. migrating your help desk to the cloud – the latter taking away the need to manage and host the application locally (so you can concentrate on supporting your end users), getting new capabilities more quickly (due to a more rapid software release cycle), securely accessing the solution from anywhere, and potentially reducing the total cost of ownership, including the ability to grow and shrink user number as needs and demand change.
- Operating a help desk vs. using ITIL to move to a service desk and possible other ITSM capabilities such as change management.
- Using the technology purely for IT vs. extending the help desk or ITSM solution to outside IT – the latter taking a campus-use approach to your technology investment and service provision, and supporting processes and people.

Beyond the technology, and the process-based workflow and automation benefits, there are benefits to be reaped through a number of other ITSM best practices. I offer four below.

4 Ways to Improve Your IT Support

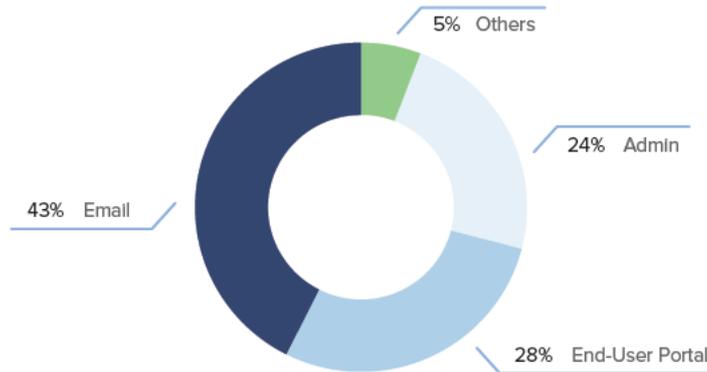
1. Moving from contact via telephone calls to a self-service capability

There’s a lot of interest and investment in end-user self-service right now, across all industry sectors. If done correctly it can be a win-win for both IT and end users:

- End users can use a [self-service portal](#) to log issues and service requests, reset passwords, or they can access a knowledge base (including FAQs) for self-help. It saves them time and gives them a better, consumer-like experience. Plus, of course, they can check on the progress of incident resolution or service request fulfillment without needing to call the service desk.
- From an IT perspective, it takes some of the volume burden from the service desk – in terms of physically logging tickets, as well as the fact that many service desk tickets are avoided due to end-user self-help.

Consequently, self-service should save IT money – especially when the adopted ITSM solution offers unlimited end users, thereby saving additional licensing costs.

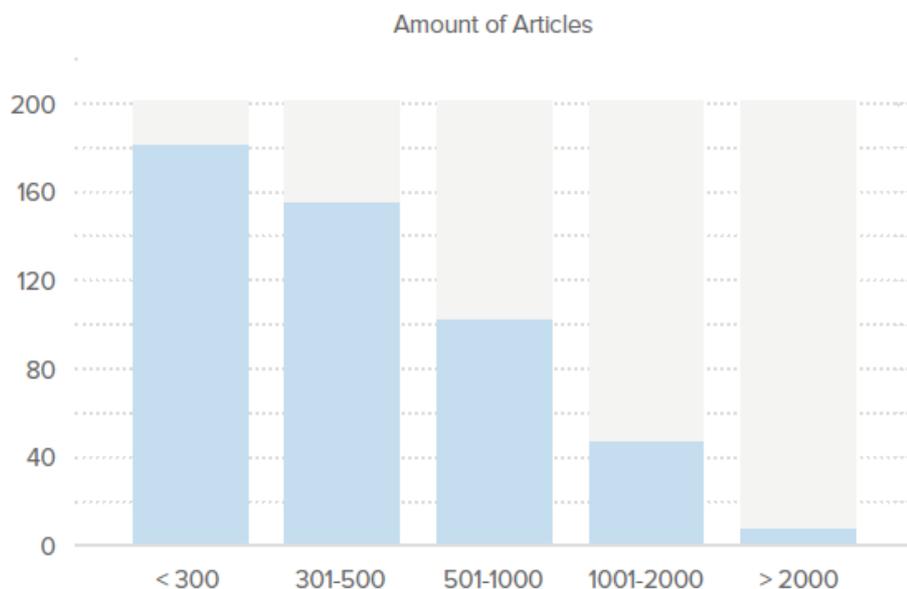
The proof is in [SysAid's](#) customers' successes, or more specifically a sample of them who elect to anonymously share their performance statistics with other customers, globally, via a facility we offer called [IT Benchmark](#).



Source: SysAid IT Benchmark

In terms of our customers' use of self-service, and knowledge management in particular:

- 28%, so just over a quarter, of tickets now come in via self-service. This of course doesn't show how many potential tickets have been avoided by the use of the self-help capabilities.
- The top 500 customers (in terms of knowledge base use) have between 200 and 8000 knowledge articles, with an average of 500 articles per customer. Customers can also share knowledge articles via our customer [community](#).



How do our customers check the value of their FAQ knowledge articles to their end users? They can of course assess the number of views but they can also see the number of end-user votes just like with YouTube and other consumer technology – either thumbs up or thumbs down based on the article’s usefulness.

Reducing the number of telephone contacts not only saves the service desk time, it also allows it greater flexibility to deal with incidents based on priority rather than in a first-come, first-served basis. Don’t forget though, modern IT support should cater for choice of access and communication across self-service, email, telephone, chat, and other social channels.

2. Benefitting from automation

Most service desks are under-resourced and overworked, especially as we continue to see a greater reliance on technology, and thus they experience more IT issues. Education-IT teams are definitely not alone in this. The use of a fit-for-purpose service desk or ITSM solution can help through process workflows, notifications, and knowledge reuse.

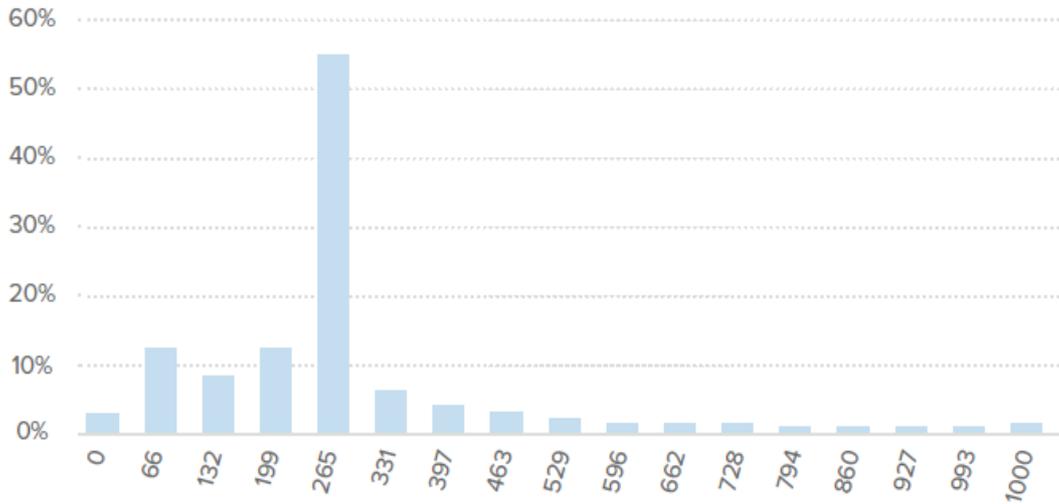
However, IT pros can go beyond this with the use of automatic routing rules that do specific things within the ITSM solution, “automagically,” based on the scenario and given variables. For example, our top 100 SysAid customers, with an average of 160 service desk agents and other IT users, have an average number of 150 routing rules each. Customers that have 10 to 20 IT staff members have an average of 13 routing rules.

Also, don’t forget that automation, and the associated benefits, doesn’t need to stay within the ITSM solution – third-party technologies can be called up and executed to extend the power of automation.

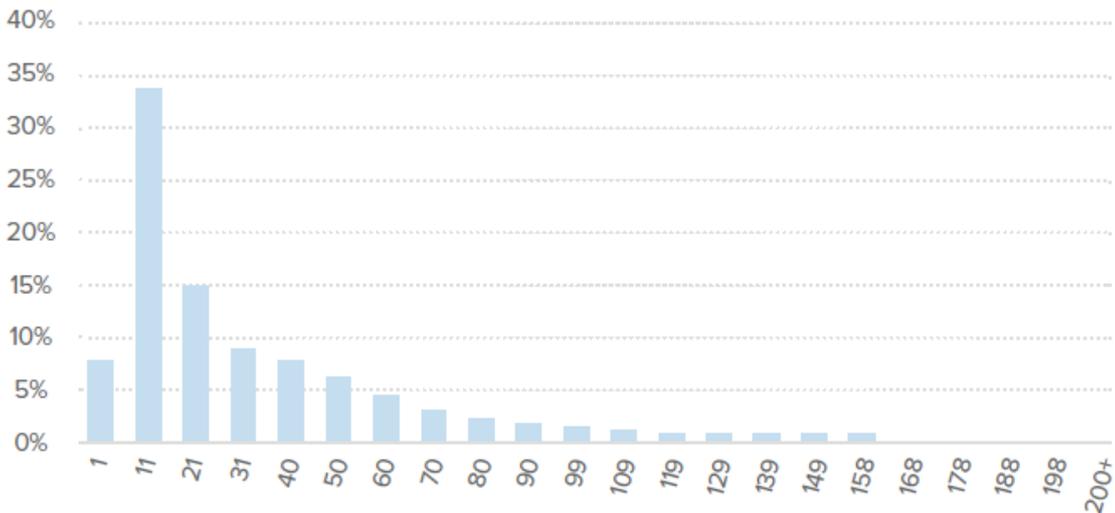
3. Simplification

ITSM can get overly complicated, often through the best of intentions. Overly complex ticket classification hierarchies is a great example – our customers, on average, have a total of 205 categories, defined across three levels but, again on average, only 34 categories are actually in use. The rationalization of ticket categories can save time during ticket logging and make management reporting easier.

On average, customers have a total of 205 categories defined in three levels:



BUT, on average, only 34 categories were actually in use for the past 30 days:



IT asset management can be difficult at the best of times. So look to use a [barcode asset management app](#) to make the logging of asset details, including asset moves, and the auditing of asset data easier. Plus it doesn't have to just be for IT assets – you can use the same technology for facilities' assets, such as tables, chairs, or portable electronic whiteboards.

4. Outside IT

While ITSM solutions were originally created to support IT pros in the delivery and support of IT services, many customers – especially educational institutions – now use them outside of IT. Example campus non-IT use cases include, but are not limited to, managing the services of:

- The admissions office
- The alumni office
- Faculty services

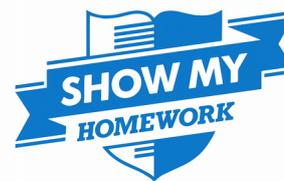
- Legal
- Libraries
- Medical centers
- Research departments
- Shared services such as facilities, finance, and HR

Why shouldn't all internal service providers benefit from a fit-for-purpose service management solution and best practice processes for handling issues, requests, and changes?

So how could you improve both IT and non-IT support and service delivery?

To find out how SysAid can help, contact Reuben Solomon at reuben.solomon@SysAid.com or +44-200-222-7769 Ext. 664 or visit www.SysAid.com.

The Homework Software Breaking down Barriers And how it helped Chelsea Academy to save lesson time

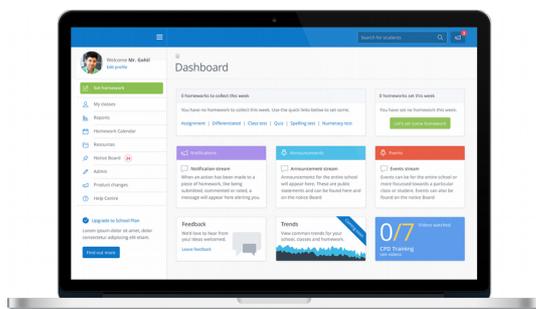


Author: Tom Cragg, Chelsea Academy and Show My Homework

Tom Cragg, Vice Principal at 'Outstanding' school Chelsea Academy explores why Show My Homework was introduced and the value they've seen since its implementation.

What were your reasons for introducing Show My Homework (SMHW)?

1. To ensure that all students have an accurate record of work set
2. To closely monitor the frequency and quality of work set by staff
3. To enhance communication with parents and make their lives easier in terms of supporting their child's home-learning



What impact has the ability to track homework had in your school?

SMHW has definitely made sure that homework is firmly on all agendas. There is increasingly greater consistency across faculties in terms of work set, but there's still room for

more to be done, but the fact that we now know exactly which areas need to improve is in itself a huge step forward. Slowly, the expectations on students to complete more homework more regularly are increasing.

What value have you experienced from SMHW?

We have cut down our lessons from 60 to 55 minutes this year which meant we could reduce the entire school day by 25 minutes! SMHW has allowed us to retain the same level of lesson content. This has worked particularly well with the Sixth Form, where writing down homework tasks would take a long time.

What other benefits have you experienced with SMHW?

It has been very effective where students have had periods of lengthy absence as students are still able to see the homework that has been set and complete it from home. We recently had to close the school for 10 days due to a power failure, and SMHW was invaluable in being able to set work for all students.



Would you recommend SMHW to another school?

Without hesitation. We think it is a brilliant product. Thank you!

For further information see <http://hubs.ly/H036Y4yo>

Groupcall Ltd

Using technology to optimise parental engagement, improve teaching efficiency, prioritise child safety, consider the environment and save money in schools.



Author: *Groupcall*

Groupcall Ltd have been leading the way in school communication systems since 2001 and have always prioritised engaging parents, improving the safety of children and making the tasks of teachers and other staff members easier.

Effective parental engagement is proven to improve attainment in school children. It works to ensure that parents know what their children are doing, when they're doing it and where they may or may not be at a given time. This in turn facilitates improved child safety.

Parental Engagement & Child Safety with Messenger Xpressions

Groupcall Messenger is the parental communication system of choice for over 5,000 schools throughout the UK. The web-based system enables schools to send text, voice or email messages in up to 64 different languages to parents' mobile phones or landlines, providing a whole array of information. This can include but is not limited to unauthorised absence alerts, details about school trips, reminders about school events and questionnaires regarding dinner choices.

Messenger pulls the details directly from the school's MIS anytime and anywhere and is an excellent example of schools using ICT to improve child safety; if a child is marked absent and a reason has not been communicated to the school by the parent, the system will alert them by SMS text. This means that parents are made aware extremely quickly if their child has not arrived at school as expected, and therefore allows for instant action to be taken. This is particularly important for secondary schools where many students travel alone each morning. Indeed, this was the reason that Sir Bob Geldof, one of Groupcall's co-founders, initially wanted to get involved with the company. Sir Bob says: *"When the Groupcall concept was first explained to me, my daughters were still crossing London by bus to go to school. My main concern was for their safety. I wanted to know that my kid had arrived at school safely and this system fulfils everything that I was looking for."*

Xpressions is Groupcall's newest product. It is an app for parents that allows them to view information about the child(ren) sent from their school(s) on their Smartphone's or tablets in the form of a timeline. Schools can choose exactly what they wish to share with parents and this can include achievements, behavioural notes, exam results and information about the school calendar. Xpressions notifications appear on the device in the form of a push message, meaning that it appears on the screen without the parent having to open or select anything. This allows for instantaneous engagement between the



school and the parent with minimal effort, particularly as messages sent via the Xpressions app are free for the school to send. The technology within Xpressions also facilitates parents responding to the notifications, so communication is two-way and engagement is optimised.

Improving Efficiency & Safety in Schools with Emerge

Emerge is Groupcall's award-winning app that gives teacher and other staff members their school's MIS in the palm of their hand, anytime, anywhere and on any device. This technology has an array of benefits for students and teachers alike. A popular use of Emerge is to take the register at the start of the day and

before lessons begin. With a paper register this often takes up to eight minutes, whereas with Emerge it's proven that this can be reduced to as little as 30 seconds. By utilising technology for this task significant time is saved over the course of the week, freeing up opportunities for students to learn and teachers to teach. This is further optimised because Emerge accesses the data that reveals which class individual teachers have and when, meaning that when the time arrives, they are automatically presented with the correct register and information for that class.

Emerge is now compatible with desktop computers, Smartphones and tablets, and as long as it is connected to the Internet it will provide an up-to-the-minute copy of the school's MIS across all of them. This ensures that teachers can access the MIS information wherever they are, be it in the classroom, on the field during a PE lesson, in France on a school trip or even on their sofa at home. This is vital for child safety as it means there is no longer a need for files full of paper with parental contact details and medical issues to be remembered and relied upon. If a child suffers an injury or has an allergic reaction, the teacher can access the required information on their device in just a few clicks. This is available even in the absence of an Internet connection; Emerge will show the most recently updated version of the data and will update automatically when back in range of the school's Wi-Fi.



Emerge also allows teachers to write back information to the MIS. This can be in the form of notes, assessment results, photographs and even videos. Whether it's to document evidence of graffiti, show a student scoring a fantastic goal or report a behavioural incident, with Emerge this can be done quickly and easily.

Protecting the Environment

Using Groupcall Messenger, Emerge and Xpressions means that schools can utilise far less paper than they were previously. With Messenger, any information that originally had to be printed and posted to parents in the form of letters, or sent home in children's book bags in the form of slips or forms, can be sent digitally. Xpressions means that the school calendar, exam results and behavioural notes no longer have to be produced physically. Emerge diminishes the need for teachers to print out registers, student information and parental contact details to take out to the school field or on trips.

Saving Money

Groupcall's products ultimately allow schools to make significant cost savings in multiple areas. Emerge has recently gained a new feature that allows teachers to take the dinner register at the same time as the attendance register in the morning, and then automatically send children's lunch choices to the relevant staff to process and prepare for. Mike Barnes, former Headteacher of Flakefleet School said that with the Emerge dinner register feature the school saves a lot of money. "If the parent or child has not informed us of a change to a school meal, the school would pay for a meal that wasn't taken. If this happened for just one child in each class per day the school would make a saving per day of £24.50, over the year this would equate to £4,655". The convenience aspect of Emerge is also saving schools money; Gary Holder, from Stoke Damerel Community College said that, "with ten staff saving half an hour per week alone just by looking up SIMS data I estimate Emerge would save us around £5,700 per year".

Similarly, Messenger reduces time-consuming tasks such as ringing parents about unexplained absences each morning or letting each parent who has a child on a sports team know that a game has been cancelled. Messenger lets staff create groups of children, such as "Netball club", all of whose parents can then be contacted with one message simultaneously. This frees up the time of administrative staff, and to quote Steven Twiss from Dinnington Comprehensive School, "as the old saying goes, time is money!"

In Summary

Groupcall Ltd has been creating ICT-based solutions to improve child safety, optimise parental communication and save schools money for 15 years now. Over 17,000 schools use their products across the UK and Europe, and a by-product of an increase in technology is inevitably a decrease in the amount of paper wastage each school generates.

For further information please see <http://www.groupcall.com/> .



Published by Naace.

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