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## Editorial Ramblings

We are all no doubt aware of the famous Chinese curses beginning with, “*May you live in interesting times*”. And indeed we do with a general election only 7 months away and policies and prejudices of the main protagonists emerging from the speech writers to be subsequently warped and twisted by the vitriolic pens of the tabloid press. Open and frank debate based on high quality research counts for nothing is quickly suppressed where it fails to support the views of arrogant politicians desperate to cling onto power by appealing to mass views twisted by opinionated journalists.

The recent government response to the Cambridge Primary Review is a classic example. Dismissed by Ed Balls in a couple of sentences as “out of date”, not only does this show political contempt for the work of outstanding and respected academics but that neither he, nor those briefing him had even read the executive summary, let alone the full report. The main opposition party are equally culpable with their false rumours that Professor Alexander was suggesting that children should not start school till the age of seven – something eagerly picked up by a certain right wing paper. But that of course is the old tabloid journalist’s maxim – never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

On a brighter note, with ministers signing off the final programmes of learning from the Rose Review we do, subject to these getting parliamentary approval, have an opportunity to modernise the primary curriculum, albeit to a more limited extent than envisaged by Alexander and his colleagues. With ICT at the core of the new curriculum we have an opportunity to develop schemes of work that properly embrace the tools that children use beyond school, to embrace visual literacy, cooperation and teamwork – the skills that industry often insists are needed but then ignores. Story telling, scripting, planning, directing, editing – real world skills and competencies that build and develop language, literacy and communication in a way that analysing sub clauses or similar will never do.

But will this change post election. Purely in the interests of research I read the Tory Education Green Paper ([http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where\\_we\\_stand/Schools.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Schools.aspx) ). Run this through Wordle as I did and you will find no mention of technology at all – and even ‘learning’ is difficult to find! And then there were the speeches at the party conference. If you believe in a progressive modern school system and curriculum based on the best research findings available then be afraid, be very afraid for as Dickens put into the mouth of Gradgrind:

*“Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them.”*

Thus would they build the future from the past. The speech referred to History teaching but would it happen, in a world where schools became academies as public assets are handed over to business ‘partners’ or religious groups all with supposed freedom to develop a curriculum free of state control. Free that is except for OFSTED, an increasingly blunt instrument and potential method of retaining state

control. With the General Teaching Council also seemingly taking powers unto itself and the possibility of the 'Licence to Teach' perhaps we should be more aware of the second Chinese curse, "*May you come to the attention of those in authority*".

In the surveillance society that some think now exists that is most of us in education already, as we have to submit to CRB checking even to do our jobs. With the ongoing abuse of the DNA database, the regular stop and search of innocent photographers and tracking of anyone who has attended a demonstration we might ask where it will end. Perhaps we need to look at much more oppressive regimes, where the power of Internet enabled communication permits dissent and discussion that "the authorities" cannot readily control. So where is this leading? Read Dr Jason Ohler's excellent paper for an answer and the concept of, "*a tEcosystem, that never sleeps and encourages us to behave as citizens within a global village.*"

This new citizenship and the technologies that power it enable levels of collaboration and sharing that were simply not possible even 10 years ago. Cut through the dross of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter and something very powerful is happening – young people are communicating, writing, creating images, videos, music and not a school or teacher in sight. All this creativity and sharing yet all adults focus on is the supposed lack of "safety". Do we not teach children to cross the road, to keep away from live rail tracks, to avoid some less salubrious parts of town? Let's just teach them to use the Internet safely and appropriately and stop blocking the tools that are so useful. Though this may not be easy. My own article on e-safety within the new OFSTED safeguarding criteria indicates the approach that we in local authorities must take, whether we agree with it or not.

So much technology that 'traditionalists' write off can engage young learners. Take portable games consoles for example. Trivial and irrelevant? Not according to Dr Steve Bunce, who shows us how they can be used in class to stimulate collaboration, enquiry and the potential for 'back channeling' – using the consoles for communication between student and teacher during a lesson.

And then there are games – the spawn of Satan to some but something many children (and adults) enjoy. So why not teach students to design and create their own games using readily available software. Claire Johnson from The Westgate School shows that this is well within the capabilities of her Year 9 pupils.

Parental engagement is another of those areas where use of online tools can be both positive and negative. The latter if it is used for surveillance e.g. webcams to spy on classes but very positive where used to enable communication and reporting. This is an area of learning platform technology that few are yet exploiting effectively (though there are many simplistic 'online reports' out there where communication is one way). Used for celebration of the child's work and achievements and with effective two way communication there is the potential to bring parents back into the learning process – and, as Fiona Aubrey-Smith explains in her article, "*making parental engagement meaningful*".

None of this will happen in schools without significant developments in teacher training, both initial and continuing. The new CPD programme from Open University and e-Skills (see [www.vital.ac.uk](http://www.vital.ac.uk)) is therefore most welcome. As members may

already know, Naace is a partner in this programme and members may well have opportunities to include their own CPD resources. The article from Debbie Forster and her team provides an overview for members not yet familiar with the project.

Which brings me to the third and most severe of the Chinese curses, “*May you find what you are looking for*”. By next June we will have a new government of one complexion or another. They will be looking for something and it may not be what we are looking for. One thing is certain – change will be constant and some will prosper, some not, some will adopt and adapt technologies that benefit learning, others will seek to return us to a Spartan diet of education basics. Thus I leave you with this thought:

*“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.” (A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens).*

Paul Heinrich  
Guest Editor

# Naace

## Can Nintendo DS consoles be used for collaboration and enquiry-based learning in schools?

Thank you for editing the entry. This is how the edited entry will appear in the database.

*Author: Dr. Steve Bunce, Northumberland County Council*

### *Abstract*

*Handheld games consoles have been trialled in schools to identify their potential for collaboration and delivering an enquiry-based curriculum. The Nintendo DS consoles contain a built-in chat feature, Pictochat, which allows the users to share text and freehand written text or pictures. In a secondary school, an initial survey was completed to test the hypotheses about the use of DS consoles by the students. The consoles were compared with voting pads in Science lessons and used for collaboration in Modern Foreign Languages and English. Thinking skills activities based around the enquiry-based curriculum were explored and evaluated by teachers and students, using Costa's Habits of mind as a framework and action research methods. Other practical aspects were investigated, such as using visualisers, to capture the interactions and enable the sharing of the console screens with the whole class. Conclusions were drawn about the suitability of DS consoles to be used for collaboration and enquiry. The research aims to continue to investigate the use of 'back channelling'; using the consoles to enable communication between the students and teacher during the lesson delivery.*

*Keywords: Collaboration, Enquiry, Nintendo DS, Communication, Pictochat, Back channelling*

### Background

The federated schools of Bedlingtonshire Community High School and West Sleekburn Middle School are situated in an area of significant socio-economic deprivation. The middle school was, until very recently, in special measures and the engagement of the pupils in some of their lessons was very low. In a Knowledge Transfer Partnership with Newcastle University, the federated schools are developing a new curriculum, based around developing enquiry to re-engage the pupils and develop higher order thinking skills. The enquiry based learning model which provides the framework for this research study is based on sixteen habits of mind (Costa and Kallick, 2000), in addition to metacognitive skills and knowledge; this model has been developed by Anna Reid, Knowledge Transfer Associate and the teachers at the schools.

Habits of Mind (Costa and Callick, 2000) are persisting, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, managing impulsivity, gathering data through all senses, listening with understanding and empathy, creating, imagining, innovating, thinking flexibly, responding with wonderment and awe, thinking about thinking (metacognition), taking responsible risks, striving for accuracy, finding humour, questioning and posing problems, thinking interdependently, applying past knowledge to new situations and remaining open to continuous learning.

### Focus

The focus of the project was to investigate the use of Nintendo DS consoles in schools; can they be used to for collaboration between the students and help to develop enquiry skills? The practical aspects of using the devices needed to be investigated in conjunction with their pedagogical use; identifying the barriers and enablers. The larger project involved research into other mobile devices, such as the students' own phones; however for the purpose of this paper, we will describe the educational potential of the Nintendo DS consoles. The consoles are very popular with the students for playing games and there has been a growing interest in the use of game-based learning, exemplified by Learning and Teaching Scotland (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/ictineducation/gamesbasedlearning>). However, there is little research on the use of the chat tool, 'Pictochat' and its potential in the classroom. Other projects have researched into the

use of mobile phone (Hartnell-Young and Heym, 2008), which focussed on the emerging potential of the devices and teachers' attitudes towards them. Also, research has been carried out into using handheld PDA devices (McFarlane et al., 2007), where the devices have great potential, but a number of technical issue in the secondary phase slowing the progress of adoption. The Nintendo DS consoles are very reliable; the Pictochat tool is simple and connects wirelessly to the other devices without the need to use the school infrastructure.

Research on collaboration using technology focuses on 'Collaborative environments'; these can be simple web-based tools for collaborative work, social networking platforms, community websites, classroom management systems, multiplayer gaming environments, or even virtual worlds. The common features that unite collaborative environments are that multiple people can work within them at once; that users can leave evidence of their thoughts, and reflections on the thoughts of others; and that they can support users in any location at any time (Johnson et al, 2009). The Pictochat tool allows the simultaneous collaboration through all of the users seeing the contributions as they are submitted, however a record is not kept by the device; therefore this research has investigated into the use of visualisers to capture the interactions.

The project is progressing towards research into 'back channelling' or 'back channel interactions' which occur simultaneously with the primary instructional presentation (Yardi, 2006). This could be the students communicating with the DS consoles, while having the ability to interact directly with the content, with peer learners, and with the instructor during the instructional presentation

## Methods

Our work uses action research methods to investigate the potential of Nintendo DS consoles in schools. We utilised student questionnaires (in person and online), semi-structured interviews with staff and students and lesson observations - both in participatory and non-participatory roles.

The enquiry model of learning was also supported by a number of tools: diamond ranking, inference square, odd one out, target board, question mapping which teachers and pupils have been using since January 2008. A group of volunteer teachers from Bedlingtonshire High School trialled the Pictochat feature of the consoles with these frameworks for thinking. These were introduced during a series of staff meetings and they were given a console each to take away to familiarise themselves with the features, before use in the classroom.

## Contribution

The research formed part of a Becta sponsored Harnessing Technology project into mobile technologies in schools. Mobile phones and net books were trialled in addition to the Nintendo DS consoles; the focus was to investigate whether their chat feature could be used for collaboration and enquiry in school. Initially, we conducted a survey to test our hypotheses about the use of DS consoles by the students. We trialled the consoles as voting pads in Science lessons and used them for collaboration in Modern Foreign Languages and English. Thinking skills activities based around the enquiry-based curriculum were explored and evaluated by teachers and students, using Costa's Habits of mind as a framework. Other practical aspects were recorded, such as using visualisers to enable sharing of the console screen with the whole class. Finally, conclusions were drawn about the suitability of DS consoles to be used for collaboration and enquiry.

Nintendo DS consoles have two screens, the lower one is a touchscreen, operated using a stylus or a finger. Different game cartridges can be inserted to play. We trialled using a particular cartridge called 'DS web browser', which allows the DS to connect to the internet (extra memory was also required). The webpages were displayed using both screens; the whole page on one screen and a moveable, magnified portion of the page on the other screen. Therefore, it was possible to access the internet, however, this would involve purchasing this extra equipment with an additional cost.

A feature called 'Pictochat' is built into the device; it is a visual communication tool. Up to sixteen DS consoles can connect wirelessly. The images or typing from one users' screen is shared instantly with all of

the others in that chatroom (there are four chatrooms). Therefore, Pictochat would allow the teacher to send a message to the students and they could respond instantly (Nintendo, 2004). (A video guide created for the Handheld Learning conference 2008 can be viewed at [http://www.handheldlearning.co.uk/component/option,com\\_smf/Itemid,58/topic,1459.0](http://www.handheldlearning.co.uk/component/option,com_smf/Itemid,58/topic,1459.0) or <http://blip.tv/file/1318501> .

Prior to the research, our hypotheses of the student ownership and use of Nintendo DS consoles were:

- the majority of students owned a Nintendo DS
- the majority of students would realise the potential of Pictochat for learning and
- the majority of students would be keen to use games in lessons for learning.

In May 2009, a survey was carried out at Bedlingtonshire High School and West Sleekburn Middle School to investigate into the students' opinions towards mobile phones and game consoles (Bryman, A., 2001 and Hopkins, 2002). Inspiredata software had been recently been upgraded to include an online survey facility - Inspiration, ( <http://www.inspiration.com/InspireData> ). A representative sample of 25% of the school population completed the survey (220 students); sampled from Year 7 (aged 11) to Year 11 (aged 16).

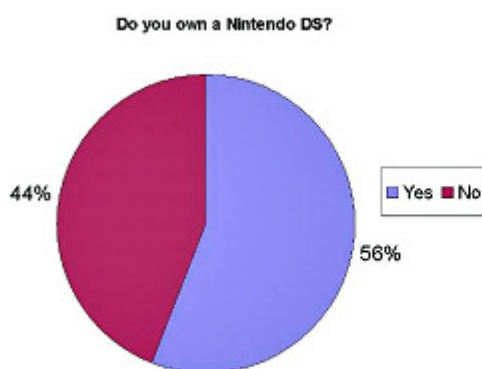


Figure 1 - Do you own a Nintendo DS?

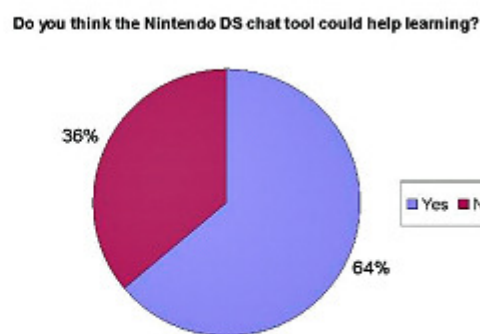


Figure 2 - Do you think the Nintendo DS chat tool could help learning?

The hypothesis that the majority of students owned a Nintendo DS console was correct, however, it was not as large as expected. This assumption was based on our trials, where virtually all the students knew how to use them, without instruction. Supplementary questions may have been 'Have you used a Nintendo DS before?' or 'Do you feel confident in using the features of a Nintendo DS?'

The majority agreed that Pictochat could be used to help learning. A further question was: 'How do you think it could be used?' Negative answers stated that it could not be used to help with the learning. However, from the positive comments included:

'It could allow teachers to give students help in lessons' and 'Give students chance to talk to teachers and others at same time.'

'As you could ask your peers about the answer to a question; before asking the teacher.'

'It can be used as an interactive learning device e.g. whiteboard.'

'Communicating with each other - but people wouldn't use it for that - they'd just talk to each other.'

'It could help people communicate without shouting out' and 'Interacting with each other privately if you do not want to say it to any one else.'

'Because you can talk to people and people can explain things better to you.'

'New ways to communicate and write down answers, makes learning more different and gets people interacting with one another' and 'By letting students have a conversation while working reducing noise in the classroom and giving them conversational skills.'

'So that if anyone is stuck and need to ask their classmates a question they can, reducing the noise level'



‘Interactive learning in classes with quizzes’ and ‘Sharing answers and developing knowledge.’

The final questions asked: ‘Could playing games on the Nintendo DS help you with your learning?’ and 83% of the students responded positively. The last question asked ‘Which games do you think would help?’ The response was varied, but 66% of the students quoted Brain training or Big brain academy. Some of their reasons were:

‘Big brain academy and Brain training, because they help you learn maths and analyze.’

‘Brain training would help for maths and things because they keep your data and tell you if you are getting better.’

‘Brain training - they would wake people up and get their brains working ready for lessons and would improve maths’ and ‘Brain training to make people more clever.’

Some of the negative responses from 17% of the students were: ‘Ones what aren't classed as educational.’, ‘It couldn't’ and ‘They make you stupid.’

In conclusion, the outcomes of the survey were that the three hypotheses were correct:

- the majority of students did own a Nintendo DS
- the majority of students would realise the potential for using Pictochat for learning and
- the majority of students would be keen to use games in lessons for learning.

However, the sizes of the majority were not as large as expected; this led to further enquiry and investigation through semi-structured interviews with the students. In summary, the students who did not have a console knew how to use them, as they had used their friends' ones. However, the negative responses to using Pictochat and games in lessons stemmed from previous experiences of teaching where mobile phones were not permitted and because the students could not conceive that they would be allowed to use games consoles in lessons.

### Using Pictochat in Science and French lessons

In previous Science lessons, the students had used voting pads to answer simple questions and gather opinions. The focus of using Pictochat was to see if the DS consoles could be more effective than the voting pads; they can be used to draw pictures and enter free text, whereas the voting pads are limited to six answer options. Therefore, the hypothesis was that the consoles could allow for more open-ended answers.

The first method used was the teacher verbally asking questions and the students responding appropriately, using text, writing or pictures. An enabler to this was the previous experience of the students being able to use the consoles and the wireless signal being shared easily. A barrier was the recording of the answers and the teacher's ability to observe the answers quickly as the responses arrived at their console. Voting pad software will collate the results and keep a record; the replies from the consoles.

Secondly, the teacher drew an object and the students could decide how to adapt the drawing to either correct it or enhance the simple diagram. This was a major advantage over the voting pads, as any drawing could be created and amended. The disadvantages were again the recording of the answers and the small screen limited the size of picture and hence, its visibility.

The Odd-one-out thinking skill was tested, the students could draw three pictures and then invent reasons why one of the pictures was the odd-one-out; this is much more flexible than the voting pads.

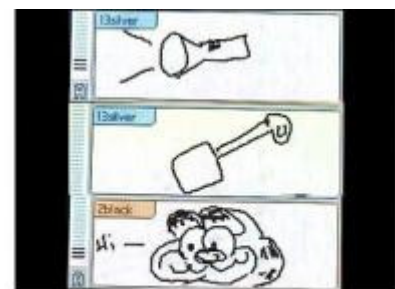


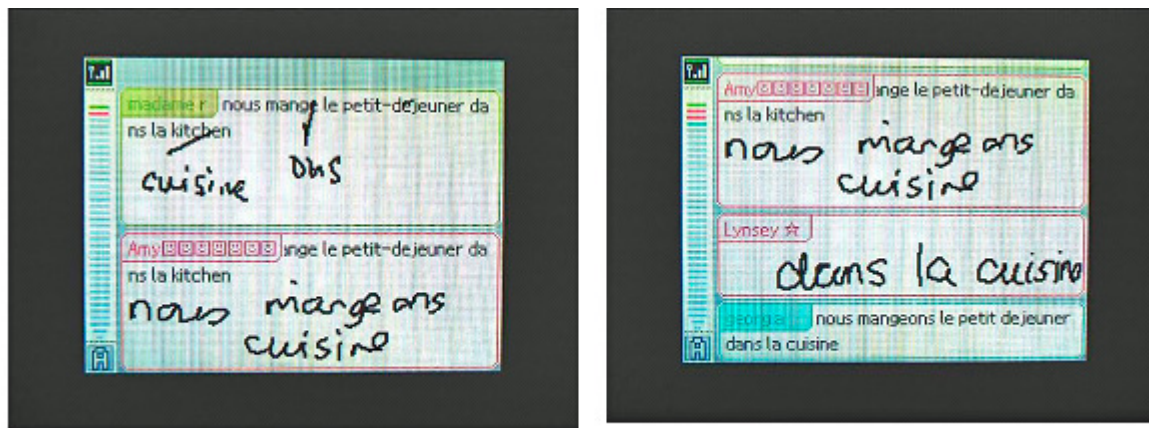
Figure 3 - Odd one out

After the lessons, the students and teacher were asked to share their advantages and disadvantages of using the consoles. In conclusion, they really enjoyed using the consoles and stated that the ability to draw pictures enabled them to add more detail to their answers. The teacher stated that they would certainly use



the consoles again, but the lack of record keeping was a potential disadvantage when compared to the voting pads. They identified 'Managing Impulsivity' and 'Questioning and posing questions' from Costa's Habits of mind.

The trials continued into Modern Foreign Language lessons, French. The teacher wanted to encourage the students to collaborate and peer-review their grammatical answers to questions. Pictochat has the ability to adjust a previous post. If one student draws a picture or writes a word, another student can 'pull down' the image on to their screen and then modify it. The teacher posted a sentence in French and the students corrected her deliberate grammatical mistakes (see Figures 4 and 5).



Figures 4 and 5 – communicating in French

After the lessons, the teacher was interviewed to comment on the effectiveness of using the consoles for collaboration and peer-review. She commented, "I thoroughly enjoyed using the Nintendo DS with my class, as did they! They were totally engaged in the lesson; they all contributed 100% and they felt that they were more secure in the work they had covered during the lesson. It was great to see them correcting each others' work." She stated, "One student in particular, who lacks confidence in French, seemed to blossom in her learning, as she realised that she is by no means the only one to make mistakes and that she knew how to correct others. I can't wait to use them again!" The students commented that they enjoyed using them and that it helped them by allowing them to see each others' answers and correct them in a non-threatening manner. They identified 'Questioning and posing questions' and 'Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision' (Costa, 2000).

### Use of Pictochat for collaboration in English

The focus was: could the Pictochat tool enable collaboration to plan a story? The Year 5 students had studied a story start and were tasked with continuing the action. To recap on the start, we arranged them in pairs, taking turns to use the DS. This had the advantage that they needed to moderate and agree their answers before posting them. Another advantage was that sixteen DS consoles were required and not more; more than this can be used, but then the teacher would need two DS consoles to monitor the posts in more than one chatroom (see figure 6). The students were asked to remember the facts about the characters, setting and back story. When asked for the answers for each area, the students posted them and they were added to a mindmap on the interactive whiteboard (figure 7). The students could review the answers already given on their screens, before suggesting new ones.

Interviews with the students after the lessons showed they had enjoyed the activity and the consoles had helped them to consider previous answers before submitting their own. The teacher agreed the students had enjoyed it and been engaged. Without the technology, the teacher would select students to volunteer answers, either by raised hands or by selection at random. The Nintendo DS gave every pair the opportunity to contribute. They identified 'Thinking Interdependently' and 'Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision' (Costa, 2000).



Figure 6 - Using more than sixteen DS consoles requires that the teacher has two consoles to monitor two chatrooms



Figure 7 - collaborative mindmap created from story start in English

### Enquiry with students using a Fish Bowl discussion

A Fish bowl discussion is a way of enquiring into an issue. The focus of using the consoles with this technique was to investigate giving silent feedback to the teacher and still allow the conversations to continue. This is similar to 'back channeling' where communication can occur while a speaker is delivering a message.

A group of 15 students were arranged in an inner circle and they discussed 'should mobile phones be allowed in school?' An outer concentric circle of students observed their partners during the discussion. Before it began, the class decided upon criteria for good discussion, for example, 'looks at person speaking', 'doesn't interrupt', 'starts a response with 'I agree with...because or I disagree with... because...' We used the Nintendo DS consoles by allowing the outer circle to send the messages to the group when their partner displayed one of the criteria (see Figure 8 for comments made by the students).

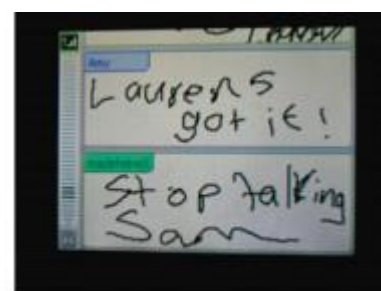


Figure 8 - Fishbowl discussion feedback

The teacher was interviewed after the lesson; they stated that the technology really enabled the students to all be engaged during the discussion. She commented that some students who do not normally contribute to class discussions were involved and did offer responses. The technology enabled the partner students to communicate quickly and without disturbing the conversations in the inner circle. 'Thinking Interdependently' was identified as the students worked cooperatively as a group (Costa, 2000).

### Barriers and enablers

Using the Nintendo DS consoles, the group of volunteer teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured approach. Figures 9 and 10 display some of the thinking skills techniques utilising to gather the information.

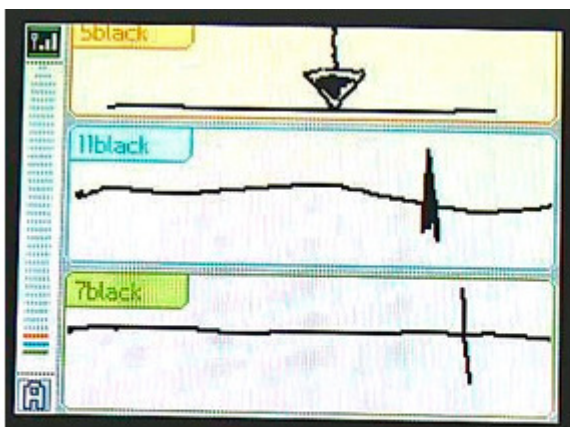


Figure 9 - Opinion lines, for example, mark on a line your confidence using a Nintendo DS with a class.

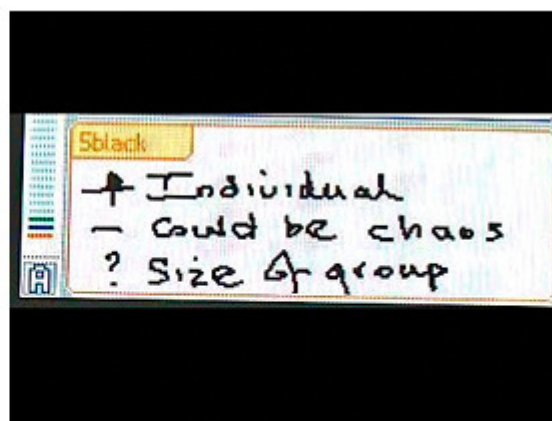


Figure 10 - Plus, minus, interesting, for example, thinking about using Nintendo DS consoles with difficult students

The teachers identified the following barriers and enablers to using the DS consoles:

Barriers	Enablers
How do you stop inappropriate messages?	Students' motivation to use the consoles meant they would abide by 'rules of communication' created by class.
Only sixteen Nintendo DS consoles in one chatroom	Students needed to communicate with their partners, moderating answers before posting.
Distribution - do you hand them out, have them on the desks ready or allow the students to collect them?	Students' motivation and engagement ensured the consoles were distributed safely or they closed the lids when instructed to.
Charging - how do you charge them? How long does the charge last? Who will be responsible for charging?	One charge would last the duration of five hours and so enable use in many lessons.
Students who already own DS consoles - should we allow the students to bring in their own consoles?	Trial with one class enabled the students to bring in their own consoles; this proved to staff and students that it may be possible in the future for this to happen regularly in lessons.
Sharing the screen - how can the students see what is on the teacher's screen?	Use of visualisers (see below).

### Sharing the Nintendo DS screen to enable collaboration

Teachers can share information with the whole class using the digital projector. In addition, they can use an interactive whiteboard to instruct and demonstrate how to perform a task. When using the Nintendo DS, the teachers were keen to be able to share their screens with the class or allow a student to demonstrate how to use them. The consoles do not have the ability to connect to a projector; therefore, this led to two potential solutions: using software or using a form of video camera.

Pictosniff, was reported as a piece of software for capturing the Pictochat messages using a computer, which could be attached to a projector. It was downloaded from <http://lekernel.net/blog/?p=22> and investigated. It ran under an operating system called Free BSD (<http://www.freebsd.org/>). Attempts were made to use this on an ASUS EEEPC netbook. Further attempts and technical support from Gateshead CLC, were made to run the program under a Linux operating system. However, it was not possible, in our experience to use.

A video camera system would enable the Pictochat screens and game screens to be shared, in real time. Webcams and digital video cameras were trialled and found to display the screen to a suitable quality, in order to view the main features. However, when using Pictochat, the text was not readable. Therefore,



further trials were carried out using visualisers. Two visualisers were trialled:

- AVerVision 300AF ( <http://www.avervision.eu/UK/Product/ProductDetail.aspx?id=14> )
- AVerVision 150CP ( <http://www.avervision.eu/UK/Product/ProductDetail.aspx?id=87> ).

The 300AF model was slightly larger and had an auto focus feature; however, this model was more expensive. The hardware and software enabled the user to zoom in on the screen and use a backlight to illuminate the object, if required. The software was intuitive to use and the actions on screen could be captured as still photos or as video.

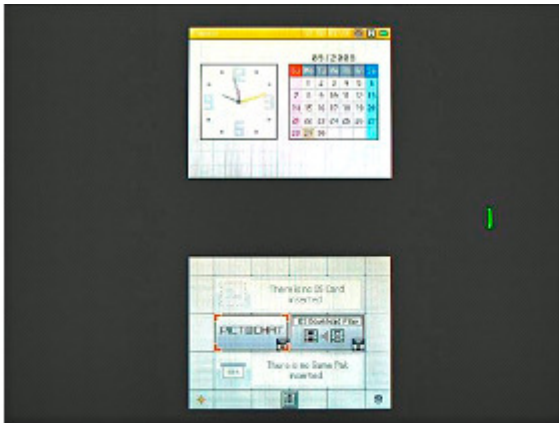


Figure 11 - viewing both screens using the visualiser



Figure 12 - zoom facility as part of visualiser hardware and software



Figure 13 - image captured of the Pictochat screen to choose the chatroom

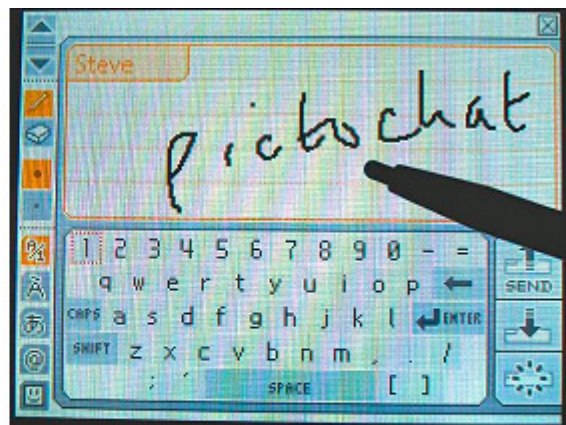


Figure 14 - the visualiser enabled the hand-drawn writing and images to be captured. The text was also readable.

*Figures 13 and 14*

The outcomes of using the visualiser were:

- the screens could be easily shared with the class
- evidence could be captured during the lesson as videos or as still photos
- a short time was required to set up the visualiser and ensure that the DS was placed in the best position and lighting
- they are very expensive when compared to a webcam, however, the quality of the images and the additional features make them worth considering for purchase.

### Evaluation - Can Nintendo DS consoles be used for collaboration and enquiry?

The Nintendo DS consoles were trialled to support the delivery of an enquiry-based curriculum. The lessons can be delivered using presentation technology and also by paper-based methods. The focus of the research was: Can Nintendo DS consoles be used for collaboration and enquiry? In summary,

- The Pictochat feature has the ability to share information instantly between the students;
- The students are familiar with the technology and the consoles are very intuitive to use;
- The teachers are able to use the technology and can identify the potential uses for collaboration;
- There are not the technical issues of other mobile devices as the wireless connection is reliable without a need for pairing, such as Bluetooth on mobile phones or using the school wireless network;
- The students can identify their use of Costa's Habits of mind within the enquiry-based lessons, where the console has facilitated collaboration.

There was an initial barrier of not being able to share the screens with the class by directly connecting the console to a digital projector; however a visualiser or webcam can be used to display the screen adequately.

This research has contributed to the knowledge base by identifying the use of collaborative chat tools in enquiry-based lessons and furthered the current understanding of the students' attitudes towards using games consoles in the classroom.

## Reflection

This small-scale project has found that the Nintendo DS consoles had great potential for collaboration and enquiry. There are implications for staff training and support as they learn about using the technology and the practical issues surrounding using it in the classroom. The students are enthused by using the consoles and phrases were heard, such as, 'I can't believe we're using DSes in our lessons.'

The next phase of research will identify the advantages, disadvantages and opportunities of 'Back channelling' using the Nintendo DS consoles. Back channelling has become more wide-spread at conferences, where the audience may use blogs or Twitter to comment on and communicate between themselves about the content of the session. These comments can help to clarify the speaker's points and support the learning (Yardi, 2006). Our research will focus on whether this model has a place in the current classroom. Initial investigations using the Nintendo DS consoles to communicate have identified issues, such as a need for a student constructed 'rules of talk' to enable the communication to be on task. The handheld devices offer the potential to move our research forward and engage the students to self-support their peers and their own learning.

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# Naace

## Education in a changing world: teachers and technology

*Author: The Open University and e-skills UK*

*This article provides information on the teacher CPD programme being implemented by the Open University and e-skills UK on behalf of the DCSF.*

### Changing demands

Today's young people face careers and lives in a rapidly changing, increasingly technology-enabled world. Education has a vital role to play in preparing them for this, both laying the foundations for the nation's future technology professionals and helping all students to develop the skills to use technology effectively.

Technology also has a great deal to offer education itself. The use of ICT in the classroom can enrich every subject at every level, inspiring and motivating students through new types of experiences and resources.

Prensky (2001) suggested that young people today are 'Digital Natives', growing up surrounded by technology. Many of them are avid users of digital technology, from mobile phones to the internet and social media. Every year they arrive at school with more advanced technology skills. Their education needs to cater for a wide range of prior experience, stretching students with very different existing expertise. It needs to provide the depth of knowledge and understanding to turn informal, ad hoc skills in the use of technology into a solid basis for future study and careers in the digital economy.

There are also changes to the curriculum in schools. ICT (competence in the use of information and communications technology) is already a statutory part of the National Curriculum for students aged 5 to 16 (Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4). Recent government reports (e.g. Rose 2009, OFSTED 2009) have set out a series of changes to the primary and secondary curriculum, including a greater focus on the use of ICT in all subjects and recognition of its growing importance as a core competence alongside literacy and numeracy. The new Diploma in IT for 14 to 19 year olds has recently been introduced, and there is continued evolution of other technology-related qualifications for students in this age group, in particular the GCSEs and A-levels in ICT and Computing.

All of these factors have far reaching implications for the way in which technology is taught and used in education, placing new demands on the professional skills and knowledge required of teachers. In recognition of these new demands, a new programme of professional development is being established for primary and secondary school teachers across England.

### Professional development

Led by The Open University, working in partnership with e-skills UK, the £5.6million programme will provide development opportunities both for those teaching technology (IT / Computing / ICT) as a subject, and for those wanting to use ICT more effectively in the teaching of other subjects. Funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the purpose is to help teachers improve the learning experience for young people. The Programme brings together the world leading, virtual learning environment of The Open University with e-skills UK's extensive employer reach. As the Sector Skills Council for Business and Information Technology, e-skills UK has a track record of creating employer-backed resources for education that reflect latest industry thinking and practice.

The Programme recognises that across the teaching profession there is a huge range of experience, expertise and confidence when it comes to technology, resulting in a wide range of development needs. This will be reflected in the range of professional development opportunities to be offered. The Programme will identify and build on the best of what is currently available, developing new provision where required, and making it

easier for teachers and their schools to find the courses and learning opportunities that best meet their needs.

### New opportunities

The Programme recognises that, to succeed, the opportunities provided need to be practical and realistic. They must address real needs, relate to actual classroom contexts, recognise the expertise that teachers already have - and the constraints they have to work under - and provide inspirational new ideas and resources.

The Programme will therefore combine a range of flexible, state-of-the-art online learning opportunities with whole day and 'twilight' face-to-face sessions, enabling teachers to choose options that best meets their needs and schedules.

It will also encourage the development of dynamic online communities, both for specialists in technology subjects and teachers of other subjects wanting to better exploit new technologies in their lessons. The online communities will enable teachers to share with and learn from each other, training providers, and others engaged in the field.

### Support for specialists

Professional development for teachers specialising in technology subjects - for example the IT Diploma and Computing qualifications - will include firsthand experience of ways in which technology is used in business and to drive innovation. It will make use of resources designed by employers, and some of the learning will take place at employer venues.

### Support for teachers of all subjects

For teachers of all subjects, there will be the opportunity to build skills in the use of ICT, helping them to stay up to date with the latest developments and meet the needs of an increasingly technology-literate generation of young people. It will help teachers to understand the potential of ICT as valuable pedagogical tool and how to help their students build their own capabilities in the use of ICT.

### Timing

The development phase of the Programme will be completed by the end of 2009. This includes identifying suitable existing provision, developing new courses as required and establishing a regional presence to support teaching staff. The Programme will launch formally in January 2010. It will be subject to ongoing review and evaluation to ensure it continues to meet the needs of teachers and the changing curriculum.

### In summary

The UK already has many excellent technology teachers as well as teachers who are inspirational in their use of ICT in lessons in other subjects. This Programme aims to raise the overall standard to that of the very best. It will give education professionals, whatever their current level of expertise and skills, the confidence to make choices about how to teach technology as a subject and how to use new technologies in all subjects, enhancing and enriching education for all young people and their teachers. It's about helping teachers to do what they do best.

Teachers and schools can register their interest in the Programme by emailing [ICTCPD@open.ac.uk](mailto:ICTCPD@open.ac.uk)

Employers and organisations interested in offering training for teachers through the Programme can contact Debbie Forster at e-skills UK: [Debbie.forster@e-skills.com](mailto:Debbie.forster@e-skills.com).

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## e-Safety and the Revised OFSTED Inspection Schedule from September 2009

*Author: Paul Heinrich, ICT Adviser, Portsmouth City Council*

*Ofsted's evaluation schedule of judgements for schools inspected under section five of the Education Act 2005, from September 2009 includes a new judgement on "The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures". Judgements in this area will involve an evaluation of e-safety policies and procedures, including those relating to e.g. cyber-bullying, use of personal communications devices in schools, staff use of ICT for learning, teaching and communication with pupils and the curriculum for teaching e-safety and responsible use of ICTs both in school and beyond.*

Schools should take particular note that if the school is judged to be inadequate in this strand of the evaluation schedule its overall effectiveness is likely to be judged to be inadequate. While weaknesses in e-safety policies and practice may not, in themselves, result in a judgement of inadequate they may be a contributing factor.

It should already be obvious that e-safety is a child safety (not an ICT) issue, and should not be managed primarily by the ICT team. It should be an extension of general safeguarding and led by the same people, so that, for instance, cyber bullying is considered alongside real-world bullying. National guidance suggests that it is essential for schools to take a leading role in e-safety. Becta in its "Safeguarding Children in a Digital World" suggested:

*"That schools support parents in understanding the issues and risks associated with children's use of digital technologies. Furthermore, Becta recommends that all schools have acceptable use policies, and ensure that parents are aware of the procedures for e-safety within the school. Recognising the growing trend for home-school links and extended school activities, Becta recommends that schools take an active role in providing information and guidance for parents on promoting e-safety messages in home use of ICT, too."*

The Byron Review "Safer Children in a Digital World" stressed the role of schools:

*"One of the strongest messages I have received during my Review was about the role that schools and other services for children and families have to play in equipping children and their parents to stay safe online. To empower children and raise the skills of parents, I make recommendations to Government in the following areas: delivering e-safety through the curriculum, providing teachers and the wider children's workforce with the skills and knowledge they need, reaching children and families through Extended Schools and taking steps to ensure that Ofsted holds the system to account on the quality of delivery in this area."*

### What might an inspection of e-safety issues look like?

In the development stage of the new evaluation schedule OFSTED conducted a number of trial inspections. These were typically treated as subject inspections and included for example:

- 15 minute interview with the headteacher;
- 1 hour interview with e-safety coordinator & network manager (together);
- Tour of the school with students. Students asked to log onto the system to check what they can/cannot access on the web, and look at content of their areas;
- Interview with several groups of students including a student who enrolled at the school outside of normal start dates;

- Interview with a cross-section of staff;
- Speaking to several different students over lunch;
- Review of documentation including e-safety policy, linked policies, action plan, AUPs (Acceptable Use Policies), information to parents, governors' reports, evidence of curriculum related activities, SEF, evidence of e-safety incident management process and linkages with pastoral procedures, evidence of staff training (e.g. presentations and information in ICT handbook).

Typically these trial inspections were more to do with policies and training (specifically focussed on students) and less about the technical infrastructure.

## What policies, documentation and evidence of practice are required?

### Core documents

- Safeguarding policy - which should contain reference to the e-safety policy, cyber bullying policy, AUPs for pupils and staff, web filtering, the data protection policy and e-safety curriculum etc;
- Staff handbook - which should contain either full copies or summaries of the above policies, appropriate guidance on staff use of personal ICT equipment in school or for school purposes outside school and a summary of the relevant legislation.

### Policies in detail

Schools should ensure that the following policies are in place, have been recently updated, approved by governors and shared with staff.

**E-Safety policy** - this is the overarching policy and should include:

- Roles and responsibilities of governors, headteacher and senior management, e-safety coordinator/officer, network manager and technical support staff, teaching and support staff, Child Protection Officer, e-Safety Committee, students/pupils, parents/carers, community users;

Key policy statements including:

- Education - students/pupils, parents/carers, extended schools
- Education & training - staff
- Training - governors
- Technical - infrastructure/equipment, filtering, monitoring;
- Curriculum
- Use of digital and video images - photographic, video;
- Data protection
- Communications
- Unsuitable/inappropriate activities
- Responding to incidents of misuse.

Policy templates for the above may be downloaded from:

<http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/Content/News-Articles/Creating-an-e-safety-policy--Where-do-you-start->

The SWGfL resources also include useful checklists regarding use of communications tools, unsuitable/inappropriate activities and responding to incidents of misuse;

[http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/kcn/e-safety\\_home.cfm](http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/kcn/e-safety_home.cfm)

This site contains the latest versions of the Kent templates that are widely used both in Portsmouth and in other LAs.

Other key documents include:

- Student/Pupil Acceptable Use Policy - in versions that should be age appropriate. Suitable examples are available as above;
- Staff (and Volunteer) Acceptable Use Policy;
- Parent/carer Acceptable Use Policy - a summary document to be signed by parents and accompanied by the student/pupil AUP;
- Parent/carer agreement for use of digital and video images;
- school filtering policy.
- School password security policy;
- School personal data handling policy;

A summary of relevant legislation:

- Computer Misuse Act 1990
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Communications Act 2003
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- Trade marks Act 1994
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988
- Telecommunications Act 1994
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Protection of Children Act 1978
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986
- Obscene Publications Act 1959 and 1964
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The SWGfL template noted earlier contains appropriate summaries of the above and is available as a Word file.

## Learning and Teaching

Schools should ensure that appropriate learning and teaching of e-safety and data security issues is in place through a carefully planned curriculum. This will include activities within PSHE and Citizenship as well as in discrete ICT lessons. Whenever ICT based activities of any description are undertaken, regardless of subject, reference should be made to e-safety issues as appropriate.

As a minimum, schools should ensure that:

- The ICT scheme of work includes units covering e-safety, data security, copyright and digital rights management;
- Basic rules for safe use are posted beside each workstation and pupils referred to these on a regular basis;
- The PSHE and Citizenship scheme of work includes units on cyber bullying and improper use of ICTs.

Resources to support the above can be found at:

[http://www.teach-ict.com/ks3/year7/esafety/e\\_safety.htm](http://www.teach-ict.com/ks3/year7/esafety/e_safety.htm) (Suitable for Y7)

<http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> (Materials suitable for all age groups available). <http://kenttrustweb.org.uk/CS/community/esafety/archive/2006/10/10/2149.aspx> (Lesson plans and resources for KS2 and KS3).



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## Game Authoring in Pairs

*Author: Claire Johnson, Head of ICT, The Westgate School, Winchester*

*In this example of paired working a mixed ability group of Year 9 pupils designed and developed a computer game, over a 16 hour unit of work, using Game Maker software. This program is accessible to beginners, while allowing more able pupils to create complex games. Users create graphic objects and add events and drag and drop actions to control them. A set of standard action libraries is available for movement, control structures, drawing, scoring and so on and a scripting language (GML) allows users to write code to extend the functionality of their games.*

The work took place as part of a case study research project by the teacher/researcher, in a high achieving (84% A\* - C 2009) medium sized, city secondary school. The aim of the project was to introduce a new unit of work to extend the control and programming element of the secondary KS3 ICT curriculum and to give the pupils an opportunity to engage in an extended, creative project. The research was carried out in the summer term of 2009; pupils knew each other well and had a positive relationship with their class teacher, who they had known for 2 terms, at the start of the project. They were very enthusiastic about being part of a research project and about the idea of creating a computer game for the first time as part of their formal, timetabled ICT lessons.

The group researched several online games before they began to plan their own. They played computer games which had been constructed in the software they were to use, so that they could gain an idea of the potential and limitations of the program. They followed a series of screen-based video tutorials to build skills in the game authoring software before they began to design their own games.

The teacher had previously trialled the unit with two other similar groups, working individually and in pairs. The aim of the project was to give pupils an opportunity to 'program' in a different medium, and to generate a purposeful end product aimed at a real audience. This is a good example of introducing an activity where pupils use ICT and follow the systems development life cycle to create an interactive end product, where the focus is on usability and 'game play'. The game authoring process involves developing skills in constructing game narratives and understanding game mechanics, creating and manipulating graphics and sound assets, and programming the game itself. It is an engaging, immersive, creative activity. It also allows pupils to make use of their prior learning in out of school contexts, since many young people play computer games at home.

Pupils had had no prior experience in game authoring or in working in a pair on an extended project. They worked in pairs to research, plan, design, implement and test a computer game, suitable for a Year 6 audience. Pupils agreed that working as a pair was a predominantly positive experience - each viewed the other as a supportive and significant learning partner. Pupils were asked to record their learning conversations, using digital voice recorders, but found this a challenging task and resisted recording the 'messy' talk that is involved with working in this way. Most preferred to record their talk after some forethought. In practise, they often paused the recorder while they were working things out, since they did not perceive this 'learning talk' to be of any value. They wanted to 'get things ready' and then record a 'finished' version. Towards the end of the project there was a feeling that 'we've already recorded this lesson' or 'we've recorded loads already', i.e. they didn't really want to have to record voice data - they just wanted to be able to develop their game.

Some pupils were self conscious about recording their talk - certainly at the beginning of the project. Boys in particular found the presence of the voice recorders distracting - they were concerned about recording and pausing it, 'Shall I press stop?', and how many recordings they would generate. They thought the teacher

'wouldn't want to hear everything', and they censored their own recorded talk quite heavily. Early voice recordings featured laughter and giggling and self-conscious, self-referential talk e.g. '3, 2, 1 action'. There was a feeling that it was not always possible to record what they thought, and that it was difficult to put their thoughts into words, coherently, sometimes. Another interesting outcome of the paired work was that some pairs tended to split tasks and work individually on different aspects of the game, so that they were not working together and not generating any voice data. They considered that it was more efficient and 'quicker' to split tasks in this way, and although they claimed that they were working together, what they meant was that they were working on a common product - the actual instances when both partners were engaged in solving the same problem together on the same computer occurred mainly with the programming elements, and not as frequently as envisaged.

Pupils were also asked to reflect on their learning and the game authoring process in journal format. This was their weekly homework for the duration of the project - but responses were fragmentary and lacked detail, suggesting that pupils do not find it easy to articulate their experiences in learning new concepts or to identify what they have learned or have found difficult.

A scheme of work had been prepared, to focus pupils on key aspects of the game authoring process (e.g. the use of sound, scoring, game mechanics, levels, interactivity etc) but in practise pupils, once immersed in the creative practical activity of authoring a game, were reluctant to have their learning prescribed in this way - indeed the idea that they were free to develop the game independently was one of the features of the project that pupils most enthused about in post study interviews. At the start of each lesson the teacher delivered input on an element of game design, for example, how to animate a sprite, but pupils tended to ignore this input and continued to develop their game according to their own schedule. The notion of 'ownership' was quite strongly felt by some pairs - it was 'their game' and they did not like the teacher imposing restrictions, such as 'there should be no violence' and 'characters and game narratives should be 'politically correct''. Some pairs viewed teacher intervention as an unwelcome 'interruption'; such was their immersion in the activity.

Pupils were supported in their work by means of a 'work booklet', tutorials and sample games. The teacher's input involved responding to queries, troubleshooting, focussing pupils, redirecting and giving formative feedback. The teacher had hoped to develop a web-based resource which would have given pupils access to information at the point of need- but this had not been finished by the time the project commenced. In follow up interviews, pupils agreed that such a resource would have been useful, since the tutorials and sample games available were too specific and not open ended enough to give them the generic support they needed to develop their particular, individual games.

Although the unit of work had been designed to give pupils an alternative experience of 'control and programming', in fact pupils did not focus explicitly on this aspect of their work in their recorded talk, journals, or interviews. The game mechanics and programming didn't seem to be the most important consideration - graphics and the visual aspects of game authoring were far more interesting to them - and they spent longer on these elements than they did on programming the game objects. Perhaps this is because this aspect of their work was more accessible to them; the programming was more difficult and resources to support this area of the work were less accessible (help menus, textbooks, printed tutorials) and involved a lot of reading.

In some cases pupils were unable to transfer their prior learning in graphics, or the software skills they had covered at the start of the unit, to the task in hand.

The idea that they had to spend time planning the events and actions of the game before implementing it was frustrating to some pupils, who thought that 'they could do all this in Game Maker'. Understanding what type of control events were needed and what actions would create the desired effects were the most challenging aspects of the game making process. The idea that they had to create a 'room' where all the action would

take place, was also difficult for some pupils to grasp initially - they are accustomed to working with software where 'what you see is what you get', so the notion that a playable space needed to be created, into which you placed programmable objects, which responded to each other and to keyboard and mouse inputs, was a new learning experience for pupils. Pupils had to run the game to see the effects of their efforts - and although some more able pupils ran the game in debug mode to isolate errors, this was not the norm. It would have been more helpful to pupils if the game authoring interface had allowed them to view the 'programming' panel adjacent to the rendered game, as in the Scratch environment, for example.

Although all pupils expressed enthusiasm for the project and were pleased with the games they had developed, no games were completed in the time allocated. Nevertheless the project was considered to be a success because pupils had negotiated a long term project and had learned about the game authoring process. The iterative nature of much of the learning was important - pupils spent more time testing and refining their work than would normally be the case. They also expressed great pride in their end products - they were not accustomed to creating real, playable games or interactive texts, although elsewhere in the ICT curriculum they may have produced animations, web sites, or interactive systems, which included action buttons, macros, or clickable objects and links; outcomes in other subjects tended to be 'essays' or printed documents. Pupils expressed pleasure in the fact that they had managed to 'get things to work'. They also expressed pride in the graphical interfaces they had created and the start sequences of their games, which they had created using either Game Maker or Flash.

Plans for future development of the unit of work include strengthening the programming aspects by completing a web based Game Maker resource to enable pupils to access software skills, game authoring and programming concepts at the point of need, so that they are able to develop their games more flexibly. The website would include ready made graphic and audio resources, visual solutions for commonly required game effects (e.g. objects continuously falling from the top of the game window) and GML scripts for commonly used behaviours.

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## Inclusivity for All

*Author: Serco Learning*

*Djanogly City Academy is a specialist ICT school located in Nottingham. Its ICT specialism means that technology is widely incorporated into the school's curriculum and the aim of this is to endeavour to improve all aspects of teaching and learning. Despite a number of secondary schools appearing unlikely to meet the 2010 deadline for the implementation of online reporting, Djanogly is progressing fast with its introduction. Here, Matt Buxton, Djanogly's director of learning technologies, discusses the provision of online reporting to parents. He also discusses why a school with a specialism in ICT has a particular need to ensure that parents are facilitated, both in terms of knowledge and skill, and that they have access to the resources required, in order to positively utilise the online reporting system.*



For children in the 21st Century, technology is a standard and integral part of their lives. A huge contrast lies between the ICT knowledge of children today, compared with those from 40 or even 20 years ago. ICT is a fundamental and infinitely valuable tool within today's education. Whereas in the past learning resources were typically far more primitive, consisting of basics such as a paper and pen, in the present day the use of ICT has become increasingly widespread. Computers are integrated into numerous areas of the curriculum and children have access to the latest educational software, providing students with a thorough grasp of online reporting. ICT now even extends across the school to parent reporting systems, with traditional reporting being supplemented by online reporting.

ICT is capable of maintaining and improving student engagement, thus positively enhancing their overall learning experience. Its incorporation across the curriculum can create profoundly constructive results and this expands beyond the traditional method of using a computer in ICT lessons. A recent Ofsted study, *The Importance of ICT*, which explored ICT in primary and secondary schools between 2005 and 2008, demonstrates the impact of ICT on learners. The report identified that using ICT positively contributes to 'the personal development and future economic well-being of pupils and students.' It also revealed that those students who are 'capable in ICT are able to make informed judgements about when and where to use ICT to consider the implications of their choices of solutions when solving problems.'

These points are significant and certainly ones we concur with at Djanogly. One of the aims in the school's mission statement is that we 'will specialise in using state-of-the-art ICT to develop intellectual capability and to enhance learning, teaching, leadership and management.' Therefore, in order to provide a high standard of education to our students we try and incorporate ICT into the curriculum when and where possible. Our aim is to fully exploit the capabilities of ICT and we are proud of our innovative integration of ICT. For example, students are very fortunate here and benefit from a plethora of technologies, including plasma screens in the school corridors announcing messages and lesson times, and robots in science lessons. We also have high levels of ICT access through Tablet PCs, laptops and desktop devices. This results in our students being highly engaged and enthusiastic about learning and many of them develop their ICT skills to a highly proficient standard.

Conversely however, whilst this is largely positive, it can create a number of barriers to inclusion. Since the students are using ICT so frequently and are able to utilise such a range of technologies, they progress quickly. In some cases this can cause a sense of apprehension or isolation amongst parents, particularly if they are ICT illiterate or do not have the funds to purchase a computer. Observing their child's high level of ability and understanding can be intimidating for some parents, particularly if they are accustomed to helping their child with other assignments. In addition, students who are slower learners in comparison to their peers

may feel intimidated if their classmates employ the use of technology with a greater level of ease.

Commonly referred to as the 'digital divide' it is becoming increasingly crucial to counteract this and ensure that with ICT taking on an increasingly significant role within education, no one gets left behind. Technology should be all encompassing and if integrated within education, needs to ensure that everyone involved is catered for. Technology is widely positive, however for those who cannot access it or do not have a full understanding of how it works, it becomes something that rather than opening doors, actually closes them.

### The background behind online reporting

The online reporting initiative was first announced by Sir Jim Knight in 2008. Online reporting, he stated, is designed to provide parents with a strong flow of information - "a channel which is more efficient and more frequent than a once a year written report, or a letter home when there is a problem or something to celebrate." Online reporting utilises technology in order to provide parents with a more in depth understanding of their child's education. The flexibility and ease at which parents can access educational information such as attendance records, exam results and behavioural data is facilitated, and instantaneous access to comprehensive information is enabled providing that they can connect to the internet.

A huge factor in ensuring the smooth implementation of online reporting and something that we constantly strive to ensure at Djanogly is that a high level of parental engagement is achieved and maintained. To maximise the benefits of online reporting, accessibility is key. Jim Knight acknowledged the importance of this, commenting that with over a million families having no home-access to a computer, this would be addressed by investing £30million to help low-income families purchase computers and gain internet access. His aim is to make a computer in the home "as important as having a calculator or pencil case."

As aforementioned, with one of the points in our mission statement affirming that we would drive forward new technology, it was therefore a natural progression to provide online reporting. To facilitate the provision of this, it required us to introduce a new Management Information System (MIS). We sourced and selected Serco Learning's MIS, Facility, as we felt that this provided a highly flexible, accessible and effective MIS. Prior to the introduction we used a basic spreadsheet to input grades which required each member of staff to access it and then add in student grades at the end of each term. This provided a highly inflexible solution; one that was time-consuming and from off-site was not accessible; therefore teachers could not input grades and other information from home. Collating information proved time-consuming and as such a huge amount of work was necessary, meaning the viability we required was not available.

Djanogly decided that an online system capable of collating all information across the school which would also competently store information online and be accessible both remotely and on site was required. Implementing our MIS enabled us to take a big step forward in the provision of online reporting to parents.

The MIS has facilitated and increased the engagement for various stakeholders within the school. Jim Knight stated that online reporting should "deepen the school-parent relations." He also commented that an effective technology system should be able to "significantly cut the staff workloads - but it has to be to be manageable for individual schools and meaningful for parents." This is precisely what our MIS has achieved for us.

It makes liaisons between parent and teacher a great deal more meaningful. A particularly positive example is the way it allows student's grades to automatically link to the teachers predicted grades. Grades entered by a teacher are then matched up with the grade predicted by the teacher. If the inputted grade corresponds with that predicted by the teacher, a green light appears. If the student has over or underachieved compared with the teacher's prediction, an amber or red light will flash to notify them; the colour of the light is dependent upon how far from the original prediction it is. This is an immediate and effective way to highlight a child's strengths or weaknesses and identify where attention is required.



With this system in place, able to produce accurate and up-to-date information, it significantly enhances the parent-teacher relationship. At parent's evenings now, the conversation is enhanced and becomes more meaningful because it immediately focuses on academic results and teachers have data to support their comments. Parents can assess the evidence and if their child is underperforming they can try and ascertain why. Perhaps their child is sitting next to someone they do not work well with which acts as a distraction - parents can become actively involved in their child's education.

### Combating a digital divide

At Djanogly, we recognise the value and benefits of online reporting. Nonetheless to ensure that all parties reap these positive aspects, planning is required, as well as a certain amount of secure publicity to parents. With online reporting, a user-friendly service is available but if the resources and basic knowledge are not provided then it can exclude some families.

In order to tackle the challenges we have a number of initiatives in place, both to educate and engage parents and also make sure they have the necessary tools available to utilise this system.

For some parents a digital divide may arise due to financial difficulties. With a large percentage of low-income UK families without a computer, online reporting generates problems as these families are unable to benefit from the instantaneous access that other parents have. This creates the problem of exclusion which is exactly what online reporting does not intend to do. One way of counteracting this is that we have collaborated with the e-Learning foundation, a trust that works with schools to help reduce the digital divide and strives to ensure children have access to the technology required to support their learning. Parents are provided with a grant, and parents can also contribute financially as a result of this trust. Already this year, 170 families have benefitted; receiving a Netbook and a USB dongle for home access.

In addition, to ensure inclusivity and aim to overcome the financial barrier, commencing September 2009, Djanogly is planning to collaborate with New College Nottingham to provide parents with the opportunity of using a bus kitted out with nine computers. This will be available for an initial duration of six weeks per group, and depending on its popularity we may increase the frequency of these sessions.

For parents whose knowledge of ICT is not that proficient, we plan to organise workshops in which they receive an update on online reporting, including step-by-step advice on how to best utilise it. It is in the school's best interest, and the child's too, that parents are fully engaged and want to log-in to learn about their child's education, but for this to happen parents require an understanding.

Parental engagement has the power to influence a child's level of engagement - for example, if parents demonstrate a genuine interest in their child's education, then a child is more likely to be motivated to achieve. Another way we strive for parental engagement is ensuring that face-to-face communication is also maintained between teacher and parent. Consequently, the first Friday of every new term we hold an Academic Review Day, which provides an opportunity for parents to meet with teachers to discuss and review their child's academic achievements and progress. The aim is to achieve a level of inclusion for parents and should there be any problems, this is where intervention methods can be discussed and agreed.

### Online reporting and the future

A well-managed and effective implementation of online reporting can result in a hugely positive outcome for all stakeholders.

However, for success to be achieved parents need to be educated and supported in keeping abreast of how it works. Without the appropriate guidance parents may not be able to fully embrace the array of benefits that online reporting presents. Ultimately, to take full advantage of technology and online reporting inclusion of parents is crucial - parental engagement will prove extremely powerful and motivating for all learners.

Djanogly City Academy use Serco Learning's MIS, Facility. For more information visit [www.sercolearning.com](http://www.sercolearning.com)

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# Naace

## Iran becomes iRan - Censorship meets connectivity and what this means for our schools

*Author: Dr Jason Ohler*

*Revolutions are so much about connectivity. We can see an army advancing from miles away and prepare to meet them at the gate. But electronic messages quietly ooze through leaky political borders no matter how hard the status quo tries to stop them.*

The 1979 Iran revolution is often called the cassette revolution because it was the mass production of cassettes illegally smuggled into Iran that brought about the Shah's downfall and put the current regime in power. Historian Bretton in his book *International Relations in the Nuclear Age* (1986), explains how the Shah of Iran's brutal secret police used their control of all the internal and external communication channels to maintain order and security. However, connectivity trumped censorship. He writes, "Highly inflammatory revolutionary messages demanding his overthrow, taped in exile by his principal opponent the Muslim leader Ayatollah Khomeini, reached the masses. Smuggled by cassette into Iran, they reproduced and distributed en masse, the Ayatollah's word eventually triggered a popular uprising, forcing the Shah's departing."

Fast forward to the Iranian election during the summer of 2009, when bulky cassette players are replaced by sleek cell phones. Although the government tried to stop the bloggers, tweeters and everyone else plugged into the great international data cloud, the world learned once again that there is simply no stopping connectivity. With so many ways to connect, and so many info savvy, motivated people willing to speak, radio free Internet filled the ether waves. All that was required to change world perception was for a few bloggers to let us all know that the official word and the word on the street were very different. In the iPod age, Iran became iRan. Although the forces of repression ultimately prevailed, the forces of change retreated to rethinking their next moves, no doubt using electronic communication to do so.

What's our take away? There are a number of them. Here are two.

First, we are reminded once again that the medium is forever the message. What is truly important is not so much what the bloggers said but the fact that they could say it. We reawaken from our unconscious dependence on social media to see clearly our secondary ecosystem, a tEcosystem, that never sleeps and encourages us to behave as citizens within a global village.

The second point is about, of all things, blocking internet access in our schools. If an all out assault on the Internet by a conservative, repressive government could not bring the Internet to its knees, then we can be assured that the Internet will never leave our shores, our schools, or our children's lives no matter what we do. While internet lock down in our schools is enticing and plays well in the press, it is rarely effective because it is basically impossible.

This leaves us with a clear imperative: no matter what kind of internet filtering we may wish to use in schools, we need to couple digital skill training with wisdom building if we are going to teach students how to manage their lives in the infosphere. If we don't like what is on YouTube, let's teach students how to create media we would like to see there. If we think blogging is dangerous and superfluous, then let's teach them how to make it safe and relevant. And doing so simply is not possible for logistical, social or political reasons, then at least we can involve parents in the conversation and ask what they want. Would they rather have schools step into the fray or keep out? And if they want schools involved, in what ways?

This is so reminiscent of the debate about offering sex education in schools in the U.S. decades ago. Forces on

both sides of the argument were strong, loud and emotional. But as of 2004, a poll by National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government found that only 7 percent of Americans say sex education should not be taught in schools. The devil is in the details to be sure, with serious disagreement about how and what to teach. But the basic idea of sex education is now largely an uncontested go.

Perhaps our experience with sex education provides a model here. One of the early comprises involved sending information home directly to parents, which they could then use to educate their children. If that doesn't work, then perhaps we can blend what students do at home with what they do at school, giving parents an opportunity to be involved. This approach has the benefit of bringing parents into the digital domain, building a bridge across the digital divide that tends to separate students from the adults in their lives. I know about interesting approaches in this regard, in which parents are taught how to read browser histories and are provided talking points and background material about how to approach the issue of adult material on the web with their kids. We need to study all approaches that emerge from the honest desire to use the internet openly and responsibly in our schools and continually make them available to educators. Ironically, the most effective way to do so would be to use social media that are largely banned in schools.

My guess is that the issue will eventually fall from its own weight, much the way the issue of sex education did. At some point it will be up to schools to assume responsibility for teaching our children how to handle another messy but important area of growing up: how to Google responsibly and appropriately. When this happens, schools need to be specific in the permission slips that parents sign - another approach used during the early days of sex education compromise - and even clearer about being relieved liability. In the end, this just may be the more practical way to go.

Whatever we do, let's stand ready to help students process whatever happens by teaching them perspective not just keystrokes. Right now lockdown gives us no opportunities to do this. That is, if we don't allow them to fail, and pay the price for doing so, then we can't give them the opportunity to succeed either. We know students are going to circumvent internet filters at school and experience a non-filtered internet outside school, and we need to assume some responsibility for helping them manage that reality. Like water that crosses borders, information flows around any rocks in its path. Let's teach our students how to navigate that water critically, creatively and with a sense of humanity that will serve us all well.

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# Naace

## Making Parental Engagement Meaningful

*Author: Fiona Aubrey-Smith, Head of Educational Development, UniServity*

*"As children move through school, parental involvement and engagement remains key to their success." (Baker, L., Mackler, K., & Sonnenschein, S., (2001) Journal of School Psychology 39:5 pp.415-438)*

### Introduction

Parental Engagement is high on the agenda with the recommendation by the DCSF that "schools should consult with parents, learners and staff in deciding what aspects... will be most meaningful and useful to provide and how ICT can be exploited" and this requires a creative approach<sup>i</sup>. Schools across the UK have been exploring different ways to extend meaningful parental engagement using their existing school learning platforms and a variety of approaches have emerged which are worth us all exploring.

### Scaffolding Parents as Active Partners in Learning

It is common sense to use the collective expertise of parents and teachers to build purposeful and equitable partnerships between home and school, and the school learning platform provides an ideal vehicle for this partnership. Good schools are great at providing information for parents. Outstanding schools are great at also listening to what parents have to say about their child, and combining both sets of information to best support children's learning. At Grays School in East Sussex there is a genuine partnership between children, their families and their teaching team, and their learning platform is at the centre of making this achievable and meaningful. This has been most recently observed by Becta with the school winning an Excellence Award for their work in this area.

At Grays School each child has an eportfolio within their learning platform which contains a learning journal blog divided into the Foundation Stage Curriculum six areas of learning. Children are shown how to add blog entries through simple sound recordings from Early Years upwards. Parents and teachers both add annotations of children's learning activities and experiences to these learning journal blogs, supporting observations with photos, film and scanned work samples, building up a comprehensive range of evidence to support Foundation Stage Profile assessment. Significantly this is providing true value of the children's formal and informal learning experiences both at home and school.



This means that the child, family and school are all working collaboratively in the same space to record, reflect upon and celebrate children's learning. This in turn leads to more meaningful



dialogue about learning both at home and school, and forms a fuller picture of children's deep understanding and skill range for assessment

purposes. Significantly, parental contributions are clearly valued and used towards the holistic assessment of their child's abilities and attainment.

Question: How could you use learning journals to record, celebrate, reflect upon, evidence and assess children's learning across subjects, particularly where children have specific learning goals, or Individual Educational Plans with specific targets?

### Giving Parents Visibility to their Child's Classroom

Most schools make a great deal of information readily available for parents through newsletters, curriculum

plans, parents meetings and policies. The school learning platform provides an easier and further reaching vehicle for this communication channel; newsletters with RSS feeds to ensure parents are aware of the latest additions, topic plans with linked activities and resources for home use, parent meeting agendas with linked presentations and handouts for parents unable to attend, and policies or forms which can be easily downloaded at home. In addition, there is an opportunity through the school learning platform to also provide further visibility into classrooms through sharing of filmed school performances, podcast speaking & listening activities, photographs of activities and achievements, class blogs and public knowledge-web-wikis amongst many other ideas.



Children at Polehampton Infant School photograph their activities for review during their plenary, and share through their class homepage alongside sound-recorded annotation so that parents can continue dialogue with their child beyond the school day, focusing on specific learning objectives and activities.

At Westbrook Old Hall Primary School the teaching team understand that it's great to keep parents informed about curriculum plans. The school have taken an innovative and creative approach to sharing curriculum plans, lesson coverage and key objectives, by empowering children to access the resources and information within class, and to report and record this for the parental audience. This ensures that parents are well informed without needing to take up teacher's time after school, provides the children with a sense of ownership and motivation for understanding their learning goals, and enables the parent to step back to view their child's understanding of the curriculum being covered, and also their understanding of how this relates to their wider learning journey. Seen here, Year 3 children have collaborated to build up a "Year 3 Wiki" which is co-constructed over the academic year as learning takes place. Within the wiki children have created links to subjects, specific lessons, learning goals and the resources used to achieve these goals, all within the context of their longer term year and termly plans. Children are therefore working together to review their learning and add to a shared wiki reflecting upon their daily learning activities and providing links and information to help parents understand exactly what they've been doing and which methods and resources were used (particularly helpful in areas like mathematical addition). This enables parents to better support children at home through meaningful dialogue and active guidance.



At Tideway Secondary School in East Sussex students have been using their learning platform to support the design and improvement stages of their DT project. Through sharing their work and self-review within the learning platform discussion forum, students are able to seek feedback from both peers, teachers and significantly also from parents.

Building on the expertise that parents jobs have, this is an ideal way to engage parents who may themselves be designers, architects, builders or have related hobbies where their knowledge can add value and extend children's learning.

At The Colleton Primary School in Wokingham, children in Year 5 were learning about World War II, and engaged parents and grandparents in dialogue to find out about real-life experiences of people who were alive during the war, or had inherited artefacts such as ration books and photographs from the war. Family members responded to questions through interview and forum discussion within the school learning platform; with typed responses, podcast answers and photographs or scanned relevant items. This increased engagement with local people;





both parents and extended family, leads to a higher level of understanding by the children, which is quickly seen in the quality of their work. Being involved in the specifics of children’s questioning and learning objectives also enables parents and the wider family to better understand what children are learning, which supports meaningful and purposeful curriculum related dialogue beyond school hours.



Similarly, children at Polehampton Infant School in Wokingham interviewed local residents who had lived in their local area for many generations and podcast these interviews for the whole school to learn from, bringing local history to life; and removing the dependency upon the limits of teacher’s knowledge. Again, this increased engagement with local people; both parents and extended family, leads to a higher level of understanding by the children, which is quickly seen in the quality of their work.

**Question:** What sort of interesting jobs and hobbies to parents and extended family members have within your local community, and how can these best be used to support children’s learning.

### Continuity when Learning at Home

One of the challenges for parents is supporting their child with specific knowledge, skills and understanding which differs from the parent’s own schooling experience. Learning to read being one such topical example with children learning phonic sounds and parents using alphabetical letter names. Using the school learning platform, it’s easily possible to provide the same resources and materials used in class for parents to continue to use at home. With basic skills such as phonics and mathematical strategies this continuity is key, and thus supporting learning at home and school in this way ensures that children are more likely to develop a solid foundation in these areas.



Parents at Gunton Primary School in Suffolk are able to reinforce children’s phonic learning accurately beyond school by using the podcast sound clips ensuring accurate phonetic pronunciation. These short and simple sound clips can be created using a simple learning platform sound recorder. Alongside this teachers have used a simple screen recorder (www.jingproject.com) to screencast their handwriting demonstrations made during classtime on their interactive whiteboard. All of these when combined, and used at both home and school provide both continuity and accuracy; ensuring that when parents play simple ‘I spy’ games with their children their phonetic use is accurate, and when children play their role play ticket-office games, their letter formation is correct.

Through careful planning, schools can create resources and guidance which can be used at home by parents with their children to support each subject and learning objective covered in class. When created through the school learning platform these resources can also be repeatedly and regularly used across the school, reducing workload but maximising impact. This way parents are provided with the knowledge and information that they need to support their child’s learning at home, without creating additional teacher workload in responding to individual requests for information or resources.

One of the many ways that Grappenhall Heys Primary School in Warrington use their learning platform is to enable children and their parents to access a wide range of resources and activities which support and extend children’s learning and understanding across the curriculum. These resources have been carefully identified and differentiated to target specific attainment levels and targets, and so are ideal for using both at home and school. By providing both attainment information and links to next-step activities parents are empowered to make their knowledge of



children's attainment make a difference by actively supporting them to reach their specific next steps, and the continuity of resources ensures children's secure understanding.

In many schools subject leaders coordinate the creation of these resources to ensure the highest quality materials are provided for both school and home use. This curriculum subject specific planning and monitoring thus also provides an excellent way of providing teacher's professional development in a supportive and innovative context.

**Question:** When the parents in your school community are more informed about their child's key data on a more regular basis, how will you help them to use this information purposefully without creating extra demands upon teacher workload?

## Raising Expectations of Learning Beyond School

The importance of continuing and applying learning beyond the school day is one of the most influencing factors of a child's achievement longer term. By reusing and repurposing knowledge, skills and understanding beyond the school day children are more likely to retain their learning. However, activities that encourage this need not be formal homework, and are usually best when meshed into everyday activities at home. By providing parents with the opportunities, resources and support to extend learning with their child beyond the school day, children's learning can be supported with increased effectiveness.



At Walter Infant School children have been adding to their class mascot's diary at home and school using both text and sound recording. In this way children are sharing formal and informal learning experiences for both classmates, parents and teachers to read and listen to which can become prompts for meaningful dialogue between parent and child. For many parents who work full time the first time that they will see their child after school is when they are collected from the childminder's house 3 hours after school finished. In this period of time children often forget what took place during their day at school and so empowering parents to

be able to login to their learning platform to view the class mascot's diary before leaving work enables parents to scaffold and prompt dialogue with their child, bridging that gap, and supporting both learning reflection and relationship building between parent and child. Where schools have used this approach there has been categorical approval and gratitude by parents.

Where homework is provided for children through activities that are a) open ended, b) repeatable, and c) using technology, engagement and completion rates tend to be significantly higher<sup>ii</sup>. For example, provide children with a worksheet list of addition sums and they will complete the sums once. Provide the children with the same set of sums through an auto-marked online quiz and they will consistently repeat the activity multiple times. With specific types of activities this repetition is key to achievement, and so the learning platform can provide an ideal vehicle for this to happen.

Children at Elm Grove Primary School are able to practice their keywords and spelling at home with their parents through the learning platform auto-marking quizzes, leading to far greater enjoyment and ultimately attainment results. By taking part in these activities regularly, together, parents are able to support the repetitive practice necessary for learning keyword spelling. This reinforces learning at home and ensures continuity.



With activities such as learning double-digit addition methods or trigonometry for older students, the

continuity of strategies used by those supporting them is critical. Consider for example the impact on a teenager of learning one way of applying trigonometry at school, and then when tackling homework, being shown a completely different strategy at home. Through the provision of consistent resources and demonstration of methods and strategies, the support provided by the combination of parents and teachers can become complementary rather than opposing.

**Question:** How will you equip parents with the information and resources that they need to be able to support and extend their child's learning beyond school; and particularly, doing so with a sense of continuity?

## Parental Support Communities & Parental Voice

There are at least twice as many parents as there are children in each school community, and tackling the challenge of engaging parents effectively is not an easy one. Looking beyond learning into the wider aspects of school life there are a number of ways of ensuring that parents are involved, supported and heard.

Parents at Windmill Infant School have been able to communicate with each other about effective ways to support their children's participation in specific homework activities through a learning platform forum provided by teachers. Tied closely to the specific learning objectives of their children's homework activities and linking to the relevant resources, these discussion forums enable parents to have meaningful and helpful conversations with each other; sharing the collective expertise.



In the same way that student voice has had an increasingly important profile in schools to ensure that students voices and opinions are both heard and acted upon, it is also equally important to value parental voice. In many schools, such as Earl Soham School in Suffolk, students are working together to build plans, policies and actions through the co-constructive nature of wikis.

By inviting parents to co-construct school visions and policies alongside leadership teams, teachers, governors and students, the policies become living documents, with shared vision and ownership and achievable in their aims. This kind of collaborative working results in these policies becoming more than documents in a folder; turning policies into practice.



## Recommendations

Since Jim Knight outlined the aim for schools to use technology to increase parental engagement, much of the focus has been on transferring data such as grades, levels and percentages (attendance for example). Whilst this will no doubt inform parents and provide an easier way for parents to 'track' their child, it will not automatically engage parents in the complex processes of learning. The challenge for teachers, school leaders, and those who support schools now is very much about finding effective ways of making this data transfer meaningful; through resource provision to empower parents to continue learning at home, or avenues where parents can become more active as partners in their children's learning. The decisions made and the ways of realising these opportunities will be unique for every school, but the one constant across all schools is the need for all the stakeholders involved to discuss these ideas, share good practice and to share both ideas and challenges.

With technology such as learning platforms providing such an achievable way to engage parents, in what way could you in either your school, local authority, charity or consultancy role, use the learning platform itself to explore, plan and review the vision and realisation of meaningful parental engagement?

10 easy & creative ways to achieve meaningful parental engagement

- Provide continuity of resources, support and guidance for parents to support their child beyond school
- Collaborate to create home/school ePortfolios showing children's formal and informal learning
- Provide parents with the opportunity to share their parental expertise with each other
- Scaffold key skills practice and revision by providing resources for children to do this with their parents at home
- Bring parents skills, hobbies and jobs into the classroom for children to learn from
- Encourage parental visibility into their child's class through active participation in learning activities
- Provide parents with continuity of resources, methods and skills to replicate demonstrations at home
- Encourage purposeful communication between parents about their experiences
- Facilitate after-school dialogue between children and their parents about each day's learning experiences
- Offer opportunities for parental voice to be heard and acted upon when designing whole school plans and policies

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### Useful Sources of further investigation

Becta Parental Engagement <http://www.becta.org.uk/schools/parentalengagement>

Grays School (Family Led Eportfolios) [www.graysschool.co.uk](http://www.graysschool.co.uk)

21st Century Schools <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem/>

Oh Nothing Much Report <http://www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/AboutUs/Research/ohnothingmuch/>

i Jim Knight, Letter to Schools, June 2008

ii Aubrey-Smith, F., (2007) Led and Loved by Infants. NAACE. <http://www.naace.org/178>

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# Naace

## Technology on the menu at South Birmingham College

*South Birmingham College are discovering the true versatility of the interactive whiteboard by implementing it not only in classrooms but also in the student kitchen of their hospitality and catering course. Lecturer, Mike Gilbert discusses how the board is being successfully used as a teaching tool for chefs of the future.*

Set in the multi-cultural area of Hall Green, South Birmingham College offers levels 1-3 NVQ courses in hospitality and catering, short ethnic and food hygiene courses to name but a few.

Gilbert explains, "Before the implementation of the SMART Board™ interactive whiteboard our pupils and teachers found that lessons were one-dimensional; they lacked the visual element needed to engage students. PowerPoint was of course available for teachers to use but only in the theory classroom; we wanted to move technology into the kitchen as it is an important part of the learning environment after all. Our desire to engage students with technology meant that it became college policy to equip every classroom with an interactive whiteboard.

"The interactive whiteboard has been an invaluable learning tool in the theory room. Opportunities for stimulating students and making teaching more exciting are endless; often when explaining theory I will pull up additional pages from the internet, diagrams for instance, to aid understanding. Alternatively video demonstrations - how to bone a chicken for example - are stored on our college learning platform and by logging on, it can be played to the classroom audience. This is particularly useful for those students who missed the demonstration during lesson time; the lecturer is then saved from having to repeat the process with another chicken for those who were unable to attend the first time.

"We also have a database within the college that offers a selection of recipes for teachers and students to choose from and display on the interactive whiteboard for all to see. Alternatively the ease of accessing the internet through the interactive whiteboard means that we might Google for new recipes or use the BBC food website when searching for ideas for 'specials'. Often when recipes are taken from the internet or the database we might like to make our own adjustments, making variations to the ingredients or scale up recipes, changing the quantities in order to cater for a larger number of people. With the interactive whiteboard we can make these amendments, using the whiteboard pens to write over the original recipe, offering truly interactive learning. When it is plain to see that students are no longer thinking about how to prepare artichokes but instead what their plans are for the weekend, I often involve the class in quizzes and games using the interactive whiteboard to ensure increased attention from the students. One example of this is to display a grid on the board with pictures and questions behind each square. Dividing the class into two teams, I ask each team to pick a square in the grid, and identify the image or answer the question.

"Handheld interactive voting systems also allow for further interaction and collaboration in the classroom. Once a vote is cast, the instant feedback enables students to see what they are getting wrong and the areas they are struggling with, whilst teachers can determine class averages.

"Within the college, we have our own on-site restaurant Karibunis, which is open to the public. The food is cooked and prepared by a team of our students. Each table in the restaurant and their orders are displayed on the SMART Board, the student chefs can then see what dishes have been ordered for which table - much more organised than having orders on loose pieces of paper, waiting to get misplaced.

"Both students and staff have reaped an array of benefits from the interactive whiteboard. The compatibility of the interactive whiteboard with existing resources, Microsoft for example, facilitates ease of use - it is

possible to transfer PowerPoint slides and word documents on to the board without having to recreate in to an alternative format. Many students had already used it in school so they knew what to expect from the interactive whiteboard. Out of a group of 17 students all expressed their satisfaction, they love it! I feel that at South Birmingham College, interactive and collaborative learning has been revolutionised by the whiteboard. It has had a truly positive impact on both students' learning and behaviour in the classroom and teachers' pedagogy. It is like having an office in the classroom - everything is at your fingertips."

Two years on, students are connected to classroom technology and benefiting from innovative learning methods. Enhanced learning will no doubt produce inspired chefs for the benefit of many diners to come.

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