07 wriggle newsletter

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St Louis Grammar School strives to meet demands of the modern learner

Established in 1925, St Louis Grammar School in Ballymena currently caters for almost 1,030 pupils aged 11-19. Technology is one of the core features in the schools developments plan. In 2014, the school decided that they would take the step towards 1:1 mobile learning. Principal Sean Rafferty says: "We decided to upgrade our facilities to meet the demands of the modern learner and technology software delivery is a main priority as we enhance the opportunities for all our students. Technology is also used to support teacher methods and create more relevant and engaging subject delivery across a range of subject areas."

Choosing the Device
One of the biggest challenges for any school implementing 1:1 is choosing the right technology to suit the needs of their pupils and teachers. After reviewing the different mobile devices available, Sean and his team decided that the Microsoft Surface was the device for them. Sean comments: "We were impressed by Microsoft's compatibility, the USB port and the apps that can be uploaded quite readily, back up support is also very reliable when required. The detachable keyboard is also a great asset as it makes the device more user friendly and allows for more of the screen to be available when in use."

Why Wriggle?
We asked why Wriggle was the chosen partner for 1:1 to which Sean responded: "Wriggle was very supportive, valued our custom and for a nominal fee took the hassle out of the configuration process. The fact that they dealt with queries in a knowledgeable and professional manner meant that we could be assured of the devices coming on stream in perfect working order. They took the logistics out of school hands, and as our partner were able to deal with the consumer side of things and let us as a school teach."

Students and their Surface
The students in St. Louis are more independent in their learning and confident to present their own work. Sean says: "No more queues for computer rooms, less excuses from students not being able to complete tasks. In gender terms we have also noticed a better engagement level from boys."

Hopes for the Future
Sean referred to eLearning portals and discussed how they are keen to develop the use of such a portal in a effort to deepen the quality of learning, whilst providing teachers with a platform where they can share resources, mark responses, provide real time feedback to students, accurately track student achievements and store resources.

"We see the end product as win/win for pupils as learners and teachers as facilitators of learning through modern technological features."

Key Trends Accelerating the Adoption of Technology in the Classroom

Recently the internationally recognised NMC Horizon Report was released. This annual report identifies and examines the emerging technologies that are likely to impact the education sector over the next five years. This report is based on 65 countries from around the globe and covers a variety of areas.

We were keen to explore the drivers influencing schools to adopt technology into the classroom. This study found six trends ranging from fast trends to long range trends.

Fast Trends: Driving adoption of technology into schools over the next one to two years:

Rethinking the Roles of Teachers
A shift to more student-based learning is taking place in the global classroom resulting in the role of the teacher altering too. With technology, students have access to a multitude of resources at their fingertips meaning teachers are no longer the primary source of information. Instead teachers now have the task of instilling good habits in their students and shaping life long learners. The term 'Flipped Classroom' is gathering momentum around the education community. Students use their mobile device to receive Information provided by the teacher after class in the form of videos, podcasts and more. Class time is left for reflection, discussion and presenting key findings.

Shift to Deeper Learning Approaches
Deeper Learning is the term given to approaches in which students learn by examining and answering complex problems. Students are now urged to become self-directed learners and apply skills such as the ability to critically think and effectively communicate to their peers. These skills are aligned with the core fundamentals of 21st century learning. In order to enable this shift to deeper learning, schools are looking to technology as the tool to extend learning experiences beyond the classroom.

Mid-Range Trends: Driving adoption of technology into schools within three to five years:

Increasing Focus on Open Educational Resources
The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) is emerging in Ireland. Instead of using textbooks, some teachers are choosing to use tools such as iBooks Author and Learning Management Systems such as Schoology to create, store, and share educational resources. One of the main benefits of OERs is that teachers can create a customised learning approach for each student thus improving their learning experience.

Increasing Use of Hybrid Learning Designs
Also known as blended learning, Hybrid learning designs are based on combining the best of online learning and traditional classroom instruction. Due to increased access to internet and broadband services, not to mention MOOCs, there is a growing acceptance that online learning can add value to almost any learning environment. Emphasis is put on using school time for peer to peer collaboration and teacher-student interaction, whilst online environments are used outside the classroom for independent or deeper learning.

Long Range Trends: Driving adoption of technology into schools in five or more years:

Rapid Acceleration of Intuitive Technology
In the last five years we have seen many classrooms have changed dramatically. Thanks to the introduction of tablets such as iPad and the Microsoft Surface, students and teachers are equipped with the natural user interfaces (NUIs). The ability for learners to naturally interact the content on their screen without any barriers has transformed the learning experience. Electrovibration is a word we will be

Students from CBS Thurles collecting their mobile devices.

Students from St Louis Ballymena working on their mobile device

hearing more of over the next five years. Electrovibration refers to been able to feel the content or media been viewed by the user placing their finger on the screen– how exciting is that?

Rethinking How Schools Work
Ultimately all of these trends are leading to one thing - the reinvention of the traditional classroom into a 21st Century Learning Environment. Using methods such as project based learning and challenged based learning students will be in charge of their own learning and enabled to move from one subject to another more at their own pace rather been limited by the traditional bell schedule. Ultimately this will equip these young people with the 21st century skills they need to succeed in 3rd level and on into their careers.

The full NMC Horizon Report can be obtained from http://www.nmc.org/publication/nmc-horizon-report-2014-k-12-edition/

Congratulations!

Apple Distinguished Programme 2014-2015 Awarded to Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas

"Congratulations to the MGO (Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas) who were recently awarded the Apple Distinguished Programme for 2014-2015. The MGO is an Initial Teacher Education Programme provided by the School of Education NUI Galway which prepares teacher to teach is Second Level Irish Medium Schools. The programme has deployed a 1:1 iPad learning environment and is delivered entirely 'as Gaeilge'. The Apple Distinguished Programme has recognised the MGO as an exemplary learning environment for innovation, leadership, and educational excellence.

Terrific courses scheduled in Limerick Education Centre over the coming weeks led by teachers from Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh - http://www.lec.ie/apple-courses.html

Schoology and Formative Assessment – How do they work together?

Formative Assessment, Personalised Learning, Assessment for Learning - all different terms, but ultimately they all mean the same thing. The goal is simply to monitor student learning and provide consistent and ongoing feedback in an effort to improve the learning of students and the instruction of teachers.

Schoology allows you to customise learning objectives to reflect curriculum or institutional goals. Once these objectives are set, tasks such as quizzes, assignments and discussions can be aligned to track the progression of students. Students can also view their development and mastery of the set objectives.

Setting up an assignment on Schoology is easy. You can allow for multiple submissions, meaning that students can modify an essay after feedback. All copies/versions are saved along with the feedback. Imagine the possibilities for reflective journals!

Schoology also enables classroom discussions, which can be used for 'Think, Pair, Share' opportunities. It allows for Peer-to-Peer feedback in a controlled, safe environment that can be graded to encourage active participation.

The main benefits to teachers are:
- Clear goals and standards are established.
- Easier to monitor a student's progression and make the required changes.
- Keeps students up to date with their progression and mastery of objectives.

The benefits to students include:
- Increased motivation to learn.
- Encourages responsibility for learning.
- Simplifies self evaluation with clearly defined rubrics.
- Allows for self assessment and reflection.
- Allows students to retain multiple submissions.

New team member

Wriggle is delighted to announce a new addition to our team. Fintan Costello has come to us from Microsoft where he gained a wealth of experience in the education sector particularly around the implementation of Office 365. He is now Wriggle's in-house expert for Schoology. Contact: *fintan@wriggle.ie* for more information on Schoology.

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