

TITLE

Mentoring Teachers to improve Digital Literacy

VISION (ASPIRATION AND AIMS)

- to support action-based teacher collaboration and professional development through the fostering of students' and teachers' digital literacy

BACKGROUND MOTIVATION STATEMENT

Knowing how to use the web and digital technologies effectively and appropriately is a critical skill for students to learn and is one that is now being addressed within many schools. Teachers are therefore often expected to have high levels of digital literacy themselves. However, lack of confidence or competence in their own knowledge and skills is often a barrier to using technology in classrooms. Peer learning and support is one way teachers can gain the necessary skills and knowledge to develop their own – and their students' – digital literacy.

NARRATIVE

I am developing activities and tools to foster the digital literacy of my students in my own subject, and through involvement in an international project (i.e. iTEC) I am able to showcase this work in a whole school staff meeting. Two of my colleagues (one in my subject and one from another department) express an interest in exploring these issues with me but have less experience and confidence.

Although my expertise is in online video sharing platforms, together we decide to broaden our focus to look at a wider range of issues and new tools, such as open source and cloud video editing. We quickly identify students with existing expertise in this area in our classrooms and so we invite them to demonstrate some of these to us.

My two colleagues and I begin to plan lessons and activities together, observe each other's work and reflect on our experiences. We are given some opportunities to team teach, because it is recognised that our collaboration is helping both to improve students' progress and skills and also raise our own skills and confidence.

I am also finding it very helpful to access an international educators' forum around digital literacy which contains advice and tips. The three of us use this forum to contact relevant experts, search event listings (such as Webinars) and read current research. We also share our new expertise with others on the forum, and this further validates our work. It is also very interesting to hear other professionals' observations on the work we complete and our students create. This encourages us to set up a face-to-face staff forum in our own school for sharing ideas and fostering new mentoring relationships in other areas.

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TREND/S

Beyond the tool

The web and current digital tools offer great opportunities for information seeking and knowledge creation, but they also pose challenges, such as coping with too much information and the lack of quality control. Therefore, there is an increasing emphasis on teachers' digital literacy, less in terms of mastering specific tools, and more in terms of developing a critical attitude, in order to observe and evaluate the information-seeking and knowledge-building activities of students.

A new professionalism

There has been lately a great emphasis on teacher professionalism. It appears that many education systems have come to the conclusion that the quality of teachers is the most important factor to improve learning. This is leading to incentives for those teachers deemed to be good, to tighter recruitment of graduates, and stricter controls on the quality of teaching.

KEY CONCEPTS

Mentoring, digital-literacy, international, team-work, CPD

ENVIRONMENT

- school classrooms
- online forum/space to share good practice
- home for individual working

PEOPLE & ROLES

- teachers – supporting each other through different activities
- teachers as peer mentors
- students developing their digital literacy in classrooms
- students acting as teachers or mentors to their teachers on digital technologies they are knowledgeable about

INTERACTIONS (INCL. PEDAGOGIES)

- teacher interaction within schools
- interaction among educators on the forum
- students supporting teachers' use of technology
- teachers and students developing their digital literacy

ACTIVITIES

- team planning, training and teaching
- learning activities using digital technologies or around digital literacy
- evaluation, observation and reflection of teachers
- managing own CPD
- contributing to online forum, discussions

RESOURCES (INCL. TECHNOLOGIES)

- digital-literacy forum/online space where mentors share experiences/best practice. Also includes links to other research and other teacher forums eg Promethean Planet, Learn Central
- digital tools and resources as appropriate for activities
- training materials for students and teachers on using digital technologies effectively and appropriately