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the technology group

What have we learnt? What next?

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Introduction

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to read these articles about how the pandemic impacted teaching and learning, and what lessons we have learnt regarding remote and blended learning. The articles explore the importance of Apple technology and digital strategies, along with a look into what we can expect next.

At a time when there has never been more pressure on school budgets, the amount of money that will be wasted if we don't get IT strategies right is frightening. However, if we can ensure that the next phase of technology deployment is underpinned by a strategic plan then the rewards for both staff and pupils could be huge.

As we look to invest, we must also look to see how technology can further develop what education looks like in the lives of students of any age. Where and how learning takes place has never been more of a strategic decision.

We hope you and your colleagues find these articles useful.

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Contents

Mat Pullen

Mat is a Senior Lecturer at the University of South Wales, where he works with pre-service teachers to develop their skills for education in the 21st Century. He has developed a series of projects that have enabled the students to see alternatives to their own professional development as they make a start on their careers in the classroom. Mat also works as an Apple Professional Learning Specialist to support schools in their development of the use of Apple technology to integrate IT into learning and teaching.

Greg Hughes

Greg is Vice Principal: Learning Technologies & Curriculum at The de Ferrers Academy and Trust Leader: Digital Strategy, responsible for the highly successful 1:1 iPad programme and the Apple Regional Training Centre. He is also an Apple Professional Learning Specialist, Apple Distinguished Educator and National Geographic Certified Educator. He has been a physics teacher since 1990 and an advocate for harnessing ICT in Education. Greg has previously been a Head of Physics and Assistant Science College Director. In 2005, he received the Salters Horners A-level Physics Teacher of the Year award, and worked on the rewrites of new AS and A2 Physics textbooks with The University of York.

Dr. Steve Bunce

Dr. Steve Bunce is an experienced educator of over 25 years, an author and Apple Professional Learning Specialist. He has taught in primary and secondary schools, including Head of Computing and Senior Leader. In Higher Education, Steve has developed undergraduate teachers, as an associate lecturer. For the Open University, he researched and advised schools on their technology use. He is a National College of Computer Education Facilitator and Sphero Hero! Steve has a love of learning and uses many approaches when working with schools, including storytelling, robotics, augmented reality and spark imaginations.

James Hannam

James is an Apple Professional Learning Specialist with over 20 years in IT leadership across the educational, charity, consulting, training, technology, SME and corporate sectors.

Simon Pile

Simon is a passionate educator who puts creativity at the heart of the curriculum. In the classroom, he looks to inspire learners to think differently about what technology can do for them. As a result, the children in his classrooms are authentic creators who use film, radio and the power of the written word to share their work with a global audience. In addition, Simon runs the Brent Apple Regional Training Centre, is an Apple Distinguished Educator and sits on the Apple Education Advisory Board. He is also an Into Film Ambassador and Editorial Board Member on the London Grid for Learning. In 2016 he was chosen as Teacher of the Year at the National Into Film Awards.

Jo Maule

After an initial career in the Royal Air Force, Jo moved into working in IT and eventually branched out into staff training, which gradually migrated into becoming a teacher. After running various IT courses for the local council and adult education, Jo became the E-Learning Manager for Talbot Heath School in Bournemouth, Dorset. In the last six years, Jo has implemented and managed over 700 iPad devices, 2 iPad estate refreshes, switched from one MDM system to another and achieved Apple Regional Training Centre and Apple Distinguished School accreditations. Working at a school with excellent tech facilities, and a ground-breaking interdisciplinary curriculum, under a visionary head, is a fantastic opportunity to make a difference to pupils and showcase the wonderful work going on in the school community.

Rob Williams

Rob has been headteacher at Malton School for 16 years and has worked tirelessly to bring an ambitious vision to fruition. The pillars of the school are "Support, Inspire and Thrive" and these have been seamlessly woven into the fabric of the school. Rob has created a culture in school where everyone feels safe and respected. He has balanced the pressures of accountability, school finances and the changing educational landscape with a personable and caring approach based on a desire to see the whole community thrive and succeed.

Rob Williams has developed an ideal balance of the best traditional values – respect, tolerance, politeness, smart appearance and an industrious work ethic – with innovative approaches. This includes every student having an iPad to enhance their learning, ensuring engaging and stimulating experiences in and beyond the classroom. This meant that when they switched to home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, students could continue with their full timetable from day one.

Encouraging a more personalised approach to learning

Author: Mat Pullen

I have been in education now for 20 years, not including my own education as a child. I have seen the slow changes that are made year on year as to how we could do things such as new curriculum, new approaches, and plenty of buzz words. I have also seen a lot of this get thrown away pretty quickly because it is new and different or because, 'It's not the way we learnt in school". The problem is that the education system, in general, is still designed for a world that moved on long ago, a system that used to prepare learners for a workplace that doesn't exist anymore. With the Covid pandemic accelerating how companies operate, it's getting more and more lost in the process.

The last two years have been some of the hardest that any educator will no doubt have experienced: rapid change; isolation from the learners and no clear idea of what the next day might bring; all of which take a toll. You don't enter this profession if you don't care about the learners, and not being able to support them is extremely difficult. We learnt a lot, however, about alternative ways to overcome that issue. Schools started in general, to embrace technology, as a way to connect with learners, to reach out and let them know you were there. Then the learning started again; schools adopted systems to enable education to take place remotely (it should be noted that many schools transitioned very easily because they had already seen the role of technology).

Learners now had communication, content and, more importantly, time and space in order to learn. In general, no timetabled lessons, no time limits, no fixed routine, and for many this may have proved to be very difficult, but for others, this may have been refreshing. This was an opportunity to engage with the content in a deeper way, to spend longer trying to master a skill before being told to move to the next class, and a chance to practice, review, self-correct, analyse, create and problem-solve, for themselves.

Let's look at those learners who often get labelled as disengaged in lessons. They are the ones that might not answer questions, don't lead groups and are often less vocal in general. What impact did remote learning have on them? It could be argued that by giving them an alternative way to share their views (chat windows on video conferencing, etc.) they were given a voice, a chance to share a view. They may well have just been introverted, rather than disengaged. What happens to them when they return to the classroom?

It can't be ignored that technology played a huge role in supporting learning; it may not have been equitable but that is a different issue altogether (funding issues and policies that mean people don't get the same access, as well as budget decisions and traditional approaches to equipment). Technology did allow learners a chance to learn, though it may also have been the case that it was a different type of learner that emerged as a result. Where many would have missed the traditional approach of content-driven, somewhat controlled education (teacher provides the structure, the content and the process) remote learning offered something different (self-paced, independent, self-regulated), and as a result, these students may well now see that education in the traditional form was not for them, but education in general, definitely is.

McKinsey and Co. in their article 'Reimagining a more equitable and resilient K-12 education system highlight this very thing'. 'Students with high levels of selfmotivation, persistence and independence have thrived.'

So how do we continue to support those learners as we return to the classroom? Persistence and independence are things that need time and space, catered for in a remote learning model where school days go beyond the 9-3, but get a lot more restricted if you give a fixed time and space. Where technology probably supported those learners, is it still available to them in the classroom? Do they have the opportunity to learn at their pace, to try things in a different way, to share their knowledge in more than just writing in a book? I often hear how people want to get things back to normal, but whose normal do you want to return to? The majority of teachers probably benefited from the system as it is; they became teachers because they liked school, liked the system and so why change what works? But it doesn't work for everyone; that's why schools don't have 100% success, the system is built to favour the majority and historically fails the same students every year. If I look at the students I have taught and those I went to school with, many of those who struggled at school, have gone on to be very successful. They are the resilient, self-motivated and independent ones that education did not relate to, but their skills have got them to where they are regardless. What if the system also supported those?

We want students in school and as they leave to be decision-makers, problem solvers, and creative individuals; it's what the World Economic Forum refers to in its Future of Jobs report and what many other reports highlight. For these skills to flourish we need to allow them to happen in schools, for learners to immerse themselves in that experience. I hear often that learners need keyboard skills for instance, yet technology is moving at a pace where that is just one way to input information. It is always linked to a skill they need to get a job, so in saying that, do schools teach children how to make videos and to upload them to YouTube, to market the site on social media, because that is now a very real job for many. If the argument is to teach them a skill that will get them a job, then we need to look at the jobs they could realistically get. Creativity is something that isn't (yet) automated so will still need that human element.

Where schools have encouraged technology, the results are that students start to understand how the technology can be used; they become educated about it, rather than working it out for themselves. Where teachers encourage its use, learners have a more personalised approach to their learning.

Technology may mean adapting an approach as a teacher but it doesn't replace the teacher. It is not something to be feared but to be embraced, and above all, it's something that the students need to understand as the world has changed and technology plays a huge role in many industries. COVID-19 has only accelerated that. Students don't want automation, they want personalisation.

Technology offers a chance to move away from traditional learning to a deeper learning model, offering authentic links to the real world, sharing and developing content that will be used to solve real problems, to work with others in true collaboration that develops personal skills, to use technology not only to access information but to connect with it and use it to amplify their own voices in creative and unique ways.

Creativity is so important now, not just for future employment but also current engagement in learning. A recent Gallup study identified that 87% of teachers and 77% of parents agree that teaching approaches that inspire creativity in the learning process have a bigger payoff for students.

How are we encouraging creativity in the classroom? Technology allows it and, if used well, it can be a new way to communicate, and not just via a keyboard or mouse, a chance to really express learning, and to make it personalised.

As we reflect, what lessons have we learnt? How will we support those that saw new opportunities when learning in the new ways we offered them? How can we adapt the system to engage those that traditional education missed but we now see it doesn't have to? How do we make sure that learning is personalised and relevant and not just a replication of what we have done before?

Mat Pullen

Woodland Academy Trust

Ignite the spark, reveal the champion

Woodland Academy Trust is integrating Apple technology into every aspect of teaching and learning. Their students can now access the curriculum in a way that supports them individually and no student is left behind.

About Woodland Academy Trust

The Woodland Academy Trust (WAT) was formed in September 2011 and consists of four primary schools, three of which are in the London Borough of Bexley and one in Kent, with a further primary free school currently under construction. All schools within the Trust share the same mission; ignite the spark, reveal the champion; that goes for their pupils, teachers and support staff alike. WAT believe in empowering every child to achieve their full potential and become leaders in their own lives and wider society.

Julie Carson, Director of Education at WAT says, "As a Trust, we recognise that we are stronger together and value the collaboration of all our staff and are passionate about improving life chances for all of our children and the wider community."

The challenge

Keeping up with the times

Technology is a huge enabler in all aspects of modern life. To equip its students to grow their technological skills and confidence, WAT decided to improve its computing curriculum. Having seen the positive impact of modern EdTech (Education Technology) tools on other schools, the WAT wanted to embrace the opportunity it presents. To bring teachings more in line with modern standards, and better prepare students for their futures, they wanted to fully integrate tech into every aspect of teaching and learning. Their existing program did feature technology, but WAT no longer wanted it to be seen as an 'add on' that was only available in certain settings.

Julie and her team decided to increase the number of technology devices pupils used and also to expand the variety they experienced, introducing a wider range of hardware and software. Amongst their staff, they wanted to build excellent knowledge of technology, how it could be utilised, and how to guide their students to get the most out of it.

After visiting the Apple Headquarters whilst in the United States and getting first-hand experience of how Apple can enrich teaching and learning, Julie realised that introducing Apple would dramatically enhance their use of technology, offering the variation that their existing curriculum lacked, and opening up new EdTech opportunities. She turned to Academia for support in introducing Apple into their environment.

"With the modern-day overload of information at our fingertips, our pupils need to develop IT skills to navigate, verify and know how to use this information effectively and our teaching style needs to reflect this." - Julie Carson, Director of Education

The solution

Upskilling WAT staff

Academia and WAT worked together with Apple Education to design an iPad pilot scheme. They initially introduced 30 iPad devices at each of their four schools to judge performance and identify how best to maximise the technology. At the heart of the pilot, Apple Education guided staff members through 10 days of specialist training.

As part of this training programme, each school appointed an internal digital champion from amongst the staff. These individuals underwent additional training to lead and guide their colleagues through developing their technology skills and pioneer the use of Apple technology within their schools.

The champions worked hand in hand with one of Academia's Apple Education specialist consultants, Mat Pullen, to design a bespoke computing curriculum that embedded technology at every learning stage from Year 1 to Year 6.

A new digital curriculum

The new curriculum starts in Year 1 by guiding children through using iPad in a structured way, providing foundational skills that they can develop as they move through the school. It's also designed to open up areas that WAT have previously struggled to teach, such as coding, which is now able to be taught to all pupils and in Julie's view, is being "taught well". Also embedded is the development of essential digital skills such as staying safe online and responsible device use.

"We have been so impressed with Mat's knowledge and professionalism. Throughout our EdTech journey, Mat has been very responsive to our needs and provided invaluable analysis of what support is needed for parents, teachers, those with accessibility needs, and the wider student body." - Julie Carson, Director of Education

Why iPad

Using iPad has unlocked some unique benefits for WAT:

- iPad accessibility tools, such as dictation, allow all children to do their work in the way that works best for them, regardless of whether they have SEND, or simply a natural preference to work digitally;
- the portability of iPad lends itself well to the school environment, particularly during the initial pilot phase, where devices were being shared amongst classes;
- manageability of devices in learning scenarios;
- the ability to create iPad-specific workbooks for each year group, enabling teachers to record children's work and track their progression;
- a huge range of specialist education apps and services to choose from, with new versions of software and apps being developed all the time;
- tools such as Padlet aid collaboration and shared learning amongst students and give quiet children a voice when working with others.

The impact

On the student experience

Participation: iPad devices in classes have removed barriers to learning such as confidence in writing, reading and asking questions.

Interactivity: Learning topics have been brought to life for the children using Augmented and Virtual Reality programmes on the iPad devices.

Engagement: The children love learning with the iPad devices and are noticeably more motivated when lessons involve them. They make learning fun whilst expanding children's knowledge.

Accessibility: The iPad devices increase accessibility to the curriculum both for children with SEND and for those with EAL (English as an Additional Language).

Bespoke learning: Personalised accessibility features, such as text size, background colour and talk to text have transformed classes for any child that struggles with their writing.

Assessment: New opportunities such as interactive online quizzing expose children to a wider variety of assessment methods.

Home learning: Where some children have access to similar technology at home, they have been able to use their new digital skills to create and share homework.

"We use the iPad to record our learning using photos, for example, when creating circuits in science. It also helps us to do quizzes on apps like Kahoot and to research things in lessons." – Year 4 pupil

For teachers

Responses amongst the WAT teaching staff have been overwhelmingly positive, with 50% of them having already achieved Apple Teacher status, and the remainder being well on the way.

Creativity — More creativity for teachers in how they teach and what they teach, enhancing learning for all students.

Refined focus — Teachers can spend more time focussing on expanding children's knowledge, rather than on capturing evidence of progression.

Assessment — Quicker, more focussed assessment opportunities offered by iPad apps impact positively on their teaching and learning.

For the Trust overall

The entire WAT community has recognised the impact of iPad. Julie says, "Everyone from parents to board members has seen how necessary it is for our pupils to have devices and develop their IT skills." Having seen the benefits, WAT is keen to keep expanding their use of technology. As well as investing in the technology itself, they have appointed a computing teacher to work across the Trust, as well as a non-school based Trust technology lead.

"iPad devices have increased both the motivation and participation of students as they bring subjects to life. I don't know what I did before iPads were used." – Mr Forrest, teacher at WAT

91.7% of WAT teachers agree that students interact with each other more whilst working with technology. – Apple Impact Tool

The unexpected benefits

One very positive impact has been the closer working relationship between WAT's respective schools.

Teachers and students have been collaborating across multiple sites, sharing their own iPad hot tips, and enjoying the natural opportunities for peer assessment that have developed thanks to collaboration tools on iPad.

The impact of COVID-19

Shortly after introducing the iPad pilot scheme, the first national UK lockdown was mandated. This accelerated the need to improve technology provision access across all staff, and ensure all students were equipped for remote study.

WAT's iPad pilot meant teachers had both the skills and experience necessary to quickly pivot to remote learning.

When it came to the second lockdown, WAT chose to secure further Apple devices to make home learning accessible for all children that needed additional support. Across the Trust, they provided 313 children with iPads for use at home.

"The iPad devices helped our children to explore their creativity in ways that we had not considered, and we discovered new skill sets that we did not know they had." – Julie Carson, Director of Education

The outcome

"It has been amazing to see everyone at WAT working together and approaching this new way of working with such a positive 'can do' attitude." – Julie Carson, Director of Education

Digital equality across the trust

One hugely positive outcome has been the equality iPad has ensured. All children can now access the curriculum in a way that supports them individually and no student is left behind. Children who lack confidence in more traditional modes of learning now have an alternative way to explore and complete work. Teachers also now understand how to make the device work best for students and can apply this knowledge to support them in their independent learning.

Looking to the future

Constantly refining processes, WAT continue to monitor the performance of their iPad scheme, testing and refining their approach to eLearning as they go. Via their own internal Apple Impact Tool, they can identify key metrics on the efficacy of their solution such as how teachers feel students are responding to it, and areas in which they feel introducing iPad has been most successful. These metrics will be used to inform their future digital strategies.

Further technology investments

WAT aspire to a 1:1 iPad pupil ratio across all their schools, a project that they are currently working on. Their goal is to "close any digital divide and ensure all our pupils have access to the same quality devices to pursue their learning both in and outside the classroom."

What the trust have learned

Julie and her team share their experience and support other schools to introduce Apple and other EdTech tools into their environment. WAT's top tips for any EdTech project are:

1. Visit other schools with EdTech programmes and listen to their experiences;
2. Establish your goals and a roadmap of how you plan to achieve them;
3. Communicate your intentions to your community, including the parents;
4. Identify digital champions;
5. Focus on key apps and develop your EdTech offering gradually.

A centre for EdTech innovation

The proven impact of EdTech within WAT has them striving for more. Their goal is for all their schools to be Apple Accredited. The accreditation is for schools that Apple believe are centres of leadership and educational excellence and that demonstrate Apple's vision for learning with technology. We look forward to supporting them on their journey.

Learning technologies and online learning

Author: Greg Hughes

Learning Technologies and Online Learning really came to prominence during the last 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, all across the globe. In England particularly, the side-lining of ICT across the curriculum since the demise of BECTA in 2010 and a limited government focus on how it could be used, did catch many schools out. Indeed, the government EdTech Survey (May 2021) found that 46% of secondary schools and 64% of primary schools had no Ed-Tech strategy at all!

A really good digital strategy is not just about the hardware, it really should connect the dots between many areas including:

- teaching, learning and lesson planning;
- staff CPD and digital skills;
- inclusivity;
- online safety;
- hardware and ICT infrastructure;
- financial sustainability/upgrades.

However, at The de Ferrers Academy, it really was business as usual for most students, thanks to an existing, detailed digital strategy. We had 10years of experience running a 1:1 iPad programme and all students in Years 9-13 already had their own devices to use and online Showbie/Google Classroom groups for their work. Staff were confident in their use of ICT thanks to a variety of approaches to CPD and we ran regular online webinars and drop-in clinics for those that needed extra support.

Our only area of concern was Year 7/8 students - as soon as we suspected a lockdown might be forthcoming, we asked all staff to create online groups for these classes and share codes with their Faculty Directors of Learning and parents/carers. After a quick survey, we identified any students without devices and used additional DFE iPad/ spares and 3G dongles to provide access to those that would struggle. We produced guides of remote learning expectations for all stake-holders, Google forms were used to track any students not completing work and Support and Guidance teams were involved as needed in chasing up student work/checking for any issues or difficulties.

We also introduced a Trust-wide professional Zoom package to allow us to deliver webinars to students and connect staff for CPD/meetings, as well as providing all Trust staff with access to an Online Learning guide, modelling various approaches to blended learning and ICT use. There was a strong emphasis on Assessment For Learning and mixed lesson formats. As highlighted by The EEF and OFSTED, the quality of online lessons and learning is often more important than the delivery mode or amount of time spent online.

What's next?

We introduced 1:1 iPad to all Year 7/8 students in September 2021 at The de Ferrers Academy and our other 2 Trust secondary schools, so we are fully prepared for any future issues. We were also able to invigorate our Key Stage 3 curriculum with a more creative approach to student work and digital skills in all subjects.

We have continued to develop a detailed, online CPD portal using Google sites to provide all Trust staff with access to videos, research articles, best practice modelling and links for a whole variety of topics, including EdTech pedagogy and 'how to' guides. This leverages staff experience across multiple schools but also sidesteps the difficulties of trying to get different teams together at the same time for face-to-face sessions.

I hope that all schools will embrace the best examples and lessons that EdTech highlighted during the pandemic and continue to develop effective blended learning models. I do think we need a more detailed national EdTech strategy for schools that goes beyond hardware and basic access and dives deeper into effective pedagogies, assessment for learning and student digital skills. Time will tell…

From home to the classroom - what have we learnt about professional learning?

Author: Dr. Steve Bunce

Think of your favourite app? That's the opening question I ask the children in the classroom. However, they are in a school and I am miles away at home, joining via an online video meeting. Before the lockdown, all my work in school was face-to-face, as an Apple Professional Learning Specialist. It was inconceivable that professional learning sessions would be facilitated via online meetings, instead of in-person. The pandemic changed that view.

A great example of online professional learning was team-teaching in computing lessons. This was based on the 'Inclusive App Design Activity' from the Apple 'Everyone Can Code' resources. In the lesson, the children thought of many amazing ideas for apps, to help solve problems that they cared about. They carefully considered how to make their apps accessible, for example, with subtitles, audio descriptions and language translations.

What have we learnt from this? When I was coaching teachers in-person, in the lessons, I often found they would stand back and let me lead, despite planning to team-teach the session. When we taught together via online meetings, the teachers were empowered to lead in the classroom. My role was to facilitate the activities, but they really took charge of leading the learning, with their excited students. The experiences from the past two years will inform how we move forwards with professional learning. Now that a hybrid model of in-person and online is possible, we can choose the most appropriate ways to work together and make the most effective use of our time, to enable the best outcomes.

From the classroom to the App Store - what's next with professional learning?

Going forwards, many schools have requested professional learning, focussing on computing and coding. The teachers can see the potential for their students to be able to change the world with technology. The 'Inclusive App Design Activity' has enabled students to think about real-world problems and give them a voice to speak up. So, what can we do next? The Apple 'Everyone Can Code' resources continue to grow, with high quality, engaging support for teaching and learning. Integral to learning coding on the iPad, is the Swift Playgrounds app and huge update which has recently been released. The new 'Swift Playgrounds 4' enables students to build apps! To get started, 'Celebrating You', is a new guide, designed to introduce students to 'App Projects' in Swift Playgrounds. Learners personalise an app that celebrates a place or tradition that is important to them.

As we embark on the next two years, we can all think about what we have learnt and what's next. Apple Professional Learning Specialists can support teachers through bespoke sessions, including coaching and planning, to enable deeper student learning experiences. Professional learning with 'Everyone Can Code' can build confidence with teachers, via in-person and online sessions. As we travel forwards on this journey, let us continue to learn together and make a difference in our students' lives.

What have we learnt, where next?

Author: James Hannam

The pandemic has shown a significant shift in how education is viewed and delivered. The shift towards blended learning, remote learning, training, and the adoption of technology has been highlighted over the last two years, especially in terms of speed and scale of change. I've been lucky to have been able to work with schools and leaders across education, from HE to primary. All have seen very similar challenges, but more importantly, all have been able to adapt by using tech...

Business as (the new) normal

Platforms like Teams and Google Classroom / Workspace have allowed schools to maintain 'continuity of service' for both the classroom and backroom 'services'. These web first applications have been developed to be able to run the majority of their services across multiple operating systems and mobile devices - leading to users (students and teachers particularly) being able to complete more tasks, communicate and share more, and maintain better connection and awareness to their work.

Malton School is a particularly great example. Just before COVID hit, we had been developing a project to pilot a new piece of software from Microsoft (Microsoft Teams). Having already achieved a great 1:1 device project across the school, students and staff were able to quickly adopt Teams as their new normal. This meant that the school was able to maintain 'business as usual' throughout the pandemic by very quickly and efficiently moving their staff and students into Microsoft Teams.

Increased collaboration through innovative new software

A myriad of software providers were fast to react to the immense changes the pandemic created. Microsoft Teams and Google Workspaces were two such platforms that vastly increased the development of new features, all aimed at improving the ability for learners and teachers to operate better together remotely.

Several smaller developers, and other companies typically commercial or those focused on non-education industries, also found their products being used across schools and staffing teams. One of my particular favourites is Miro.com, a web-first platform that took the great features of apps like Explain Everything or Noteability and blended them with video conferencing.

Miro.com has allowed staff and students to work within one web-based application to host large scale educational conferences, small project brainstorming sessions and even staffing teams to collaboratively plan out a new curriculum. I use it, particularly in an HE setting to map out complex service development, training plans and project timelines - all live, all shared, all through a web browser.

Greater potential for change

With the increased use of web-based communication platforms like Teams and the wider use of 'webhooks', it opens the door wider to automation. Previously, these automations were the preserve of geeks, techies and developers. There has been a drastic seed change in the need for users to solve their own problems remotely. As such, the use of 'low code no code' (where people simply use 'blocks' to build software solutions to solve specific problems) has increased. You can see this in the launch of the popularity of IFTT (if this then that) and more recently Microsoft Flow.

The ability for anyone (with a little introduction) to build automations and digital systems to solve very user-specific problems will become a more commonplace in school. Imagine being able to create booking systems for parents' evenings that auto books an available slot, sends out invites, add meeting details to everyone's calendars etc., something completely doable within these new low code no code environments. Or perhaps recording a live lesson which is later automatically sliced into snippets of key points, then loaded into a video sharing platform with class notes and transcripts of your input?

I see these types of new ways to solve problems such as reducing, or removing, hassle from the system. Completing a report or assessment will always involve an amount of work and personal input. The hassle on either side of the task is where the reductions in time and effort will come in. Finding the information, putting it into easily digestible chunks, arranging it and then sharing it... those tasks involve hassle. Gathering the information, then saving it, putting it into a template, saving it, sharing it into different locations, getting feedback... all hassle. Apps like Shortcuts, Microsoft Flow, Power Apps and Power BI are all enablers to help us remove the hassle from common jobs... all with the ability to incrementally save time and effort!

The future of education and EdTech

As hybrid working becomes the norm in virtually every industry, education needs to look at how this model could be used to jump-start new ways of approaching learning and teaching. There is certainly a clearer need for training, particularly a need post-COVID, to provide ongoing 'tech' training which focuses on measurable impact, targeted and improvement, and isn't just an 'after school after thought'. Schools and businesses reacted fast to the changing landscape of lockdowns and had great staff training and development that didn't just focus on app training. Simplified systems that have universal access - one challenge of remote and hybrid working has been the need to reduce the number of platforms and apps staff and students use, having to manage multiple apps and devices, and looking at improving the interaction and integration between school systems.

Traditionally getting in early before the office/school opens to do work or spending long hours working is either seen as a commitment to work or an inability to prioritise work. The measure of effort or ability has sometimes been how many hours are put in or expected to have been put in... rather than looking at the output. Increased opportunities to work more flexible hours and new ways to create and deliver content have meant that now, more than ever, there is the possibility to focus on output over hours served.

Conclusion, what's next?

To round-up...

There is now more than ever a need to prioritise ongoing training, embedded within the working day and not just evenings or focused days off timetable.

A clear need for better access to the web, making use of web-based collaboration and communication platforms.

Shifting from 'time on task', to 'time to output' - looking at how to reduce 'hassle' leveraging automation and low code no code.

James Hannam

We're not in the same ocean, let alone the same boat

Author: Simon Pile

Everyone has been hit by the pandemic and it's not all negative. Indeed, for some of our children, it's been the best of times as their families were forced to spend time together, learn together, play together and build stronger relationships.

For some, it's been totally horrific.

There have been deep emotional impacts on families across our local authority – deaths, job losses, family break ups and food poverty.

So, while as a school leader I cannot remember the last time I woke up and didn't have to find cover, rearrange timetables or think about risk assessments, my day-to-day juggling is a non-event.

The reflection and comparisons of our experiences are critical as we head out of the pandemic because the last two years have exposed issues in our system that need more creative thinking than a good catch-up programme in schools. Education can't fight this battle alone.

I look back on December 2019 with incredible optimism. At the end of the year, we had just reviewed our latest assessment data and were seeing some incredible progress from the children of Anson. As a school with over 40 languages and growing levels of deprivation in our area, one of the most pleasing elements of our work at Anson was that the pupil premium children had not only closed the gap between themselves and the rest of the school but in most year groups were ahead in all areas of the curriculum.

As the pandemic closed our school, we were feeling optimistic. The community was engaged and we worked hard to reach every pupil, enable all learners and support families at the same time. Our educational offer was in line with our vision and highly creative. It utilised innovative approaches to learning and we created wonderful content which could support learners beyond our school too. In the early days, we were amazed at the engagement and the response.

Of course, we kept hearing on the news about how we were all in this together - that this was the first time we were all facing the same issue across the planet. It was levelling the playing field. We were all in that same, often spoken about, boat.

We were not.

As the pandemic progressed, those families who were already struggling, living close to poverty and getting by on a day-to-day basis in cramped living accommodation before the pandemic, were hit harder and harder. Education wasn't their priority for long. Survival was more important.

As we return to school and analyse performance now, it isn't surprising that the gaps we had closed in 2019 have opened like a large wound. Those who had the hardest lockdowns and live in the harshest of conditions are still struggling.

As a school, we are committed to starting again. Every school in the country will play their part. Every child can succeed again. However, education cannot fight this alone. As a society, we need to recognise that the issues families face each day only exacerbate when conditions grow harsher. They don't suddenly get easier when a crisis ends.

2022 looks like hitting us again with a different, but still substantial, challenge. We must look to support our communities and families to heal the wounds and close the gaps, not just in education, but in the way we support people to live their lives. We may not be in the same boat, but we should at least be sailing together in the same ocean!

Academia recently shone the spotlight on Anson Primary School to share best practice. Watch or read Anson Primary School's case study today.

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“What have we learnt and what next?”

Author: Jo Maule

Nobody can deny that there have been significant changes for all of us over the last couple of years, but thankfully, not everything has changed for the worse. In my school, we have noticed a significant upskilling of both staff and pupils’ IT skills and many have become more self-sufficient as a consequence.

Remote learning is now a constant alternative. Working at a school with 1:1 iPad from Reception to Sixth Form gives students a huge amount of autonomy when studying, revising, researching and producing work. We were fortunate enough to have foresight in that mobile learning would become a part of everyday life and that mobile devices were a key part of operating a forward-thinking school, providing a first-class education.

Our decision around seven years ago really came into its own when we were able to continue learning throughout lockdown situations, and lessons proceeded as normal. Teachers followed their usual timetable, delivering lessons via video conferencing, setting work and uploading resources to Google Classroom. Pupils worked alone or in breakout rooms on group tasks, creating and submitting work via Google Classroom. Work was then viewed, marked (often using an Apple Pencil), and returned to students.

IT support staff ran online ‘drop-in’ sessions, to ensure that staff and pupils were supported in teaching and learning, and that parents did not feel alone when supporting remote learning, meaning that many could continue working from home, without the added pressure of homeschooling. After physically returning to school, and gradually getting back to “normality”, there are many aspects of educating during a pandemic, which continue to embed themselves in our everyday lives. Blended learning is now an option, and pupils who are unable to physically attend school can still partake in learning, meaning no pupil need get left behind.

We also now appreciate the detrimental effect not socialising has on our mental health, as well as the negative impact that sitting in one position for most of the day has on our physical health. Obviously, not everyone is a ‘people person’, but I for one, desperately missed interacting with colleagues in the same way… whether a quick catch up at lunchtime about a mutually enjoyed series on a streaming platform or sharing ideas about running a new club or trialling some new apps relating to a specific topic. It’s not only about working alongside each other, but also about improving working relationships. Pupils also really missed their peers and missed out on the usual milestones of growing up (birthday parties, driving lessons, school proms etc).

We are, therefore, able to support our pupils in their studies, better than we ever have before. Knowing we were united in our struggles, we now encourage spending time outside, in nature, enjoying the little things. Yes, of course, technology is a huge part of our lives, and connecting with others using technology, is thankfully easier than ever. But similarly, it has served as a reminder that we also need to spend time with others in person, outside as well as inside, in nature as well as suburbia, and that we all need to be a bit kinder to each other.

Talbot Heath School

Talbot Heath School is an independent girls' school located in Bournemouth, catering for pupils aged 3-18. They are a proud Apple distinguished school who have a 1:1 iPad learning program for all 600 pupils.

The Head of the forward-thinking Talbot Heath School clearly understood the importance of digital resources and the increasing need to implement the use of mobile devices to support education. Before any work began, a considerable amount of research was undertaken, exploring various models and devices. From this, it was overwhelmingly clear that Apple iPad devices were the most ideal and innovative.

Why iPad?

The attractiveness of iPad devices was obvious. Not least of all the robust security measures, but the quality of the available apps in the app store was also a significant factor in the decision. The school uses a vast array of apps, the main ones being:

- Apple iWork apps (Keynote, Pages, Numbers)
- Foldr
- Seesaw
- Classkick
- Procreate
- DoodleMaths
- Book Creator
- Classroom
- Duolingo
- Expeditions
- Hologo
- All the Google G-Suite apps

The ability to manage the devices securely and effectively allowed the school's Technology Team to have complete control, which meant that teachers could focus on education. They were also no longer restricted to 'teaching from the front' and talking to pupils in a classroom layout that has barely changed since Victorian times.

The solution

Academia originally met with Jo Maule at an Apple event where Academia was hosting a presentation. It was during this event, and through collaborative discussion that it was clear that the goals and measurements of success that Talbot Heath was looking for were something that Academia could support. The school were looking to refresh their next set of devices and for a partner that could support the next steps of its journey. After several meetings around strategy and vision, Academia was able to partner with the school and provide the next set of iPad devices through a lease model with CHG-Meridian. Academia's ReviveIT team also worked with the school to remove old hardware and offer funding back to the school for other technology projects.

The school's suite includes 600 iPad devices that focused on an initial rollout to staff, followed by a staged roll out to pupils concentrating on specific year groups before expanding that to the wider student population.

Financials

As an independent school, Talbot Heath was able to absorb the cost of the 1:1 iPad scheme within their school fees. Leasing the devices via Academia and CHG-Meridian is not only a cost-effective method but also means that the school are able to refresh the entire iPad estate every 3 years, ensuring that pupils and staff always have the most up to date models, supporting all the required apps they regularly use.

Training

All of the current staff received comprehensive training on using the iPad devices, the Apple Teacher programme, as well as recommendations of useful apps.

Jo says: "This is a whole-school approach, where digital leaders among staff are given extra support to relay useful information among their departments and faculties. We find that by receiving training and support from non-specialist teachers, staff are more likely to think 'if they can do it, then so can I'. We have some fantastic teachers who have really run with it and often share best practice and support their colleagues with new initiatives."

Outcome

Since the implementation of 1:1 iPad from Reception onwards, a significant difference has been made for both the pupils and staff.

Jo Maule tells us: "Talbot Heath is a very traditional school, so it is wonderful to see a mix of our 130-year-old history and traditions, alongside our brand-new technology STEAM* hub. The days of teachers fighting over booking the IT Suite for lessons are thankfully a thing of the past. Students can take their iPad out and begin researching and working at any time necessary and can produce work within minutes.

"They are given the autonomy to use whichever apps they prefer, to produce a piece of work and no longer need to carry all their heavy textbooks around in their bag all day. They have all their books, computer, camera, video camera, microphone, calculator, alarm clock, sat-nav, calendar, address book, ruler and notepad in one easy to carry device!

We've noticed a significant difference in the attitudes of the students and pupil engagement has definitely improved. They love to be given autonomy and never cease to amaze me with the work they produce. The devices completely align with our Head's vision of preparing our students for the real world and complementing traditional academic skills and knowledge with other holistic skills to support their future lives."

The pupils have embraced the Apple programs, Jo says "We use the Everyone Can Code1 curriculum which guides you through Swift Playground, an app that teaches coding for kids. We also use the Everyone Can Create2 guides to teach students to develop and communicate ideas through video, photography, music and drawing. The Apps we use here include:

- Photos
- Tayasui sketches
- Procreate
- GarageBand
- Clips
- iMovie

On working with Academia, Jo says: "Academia's staff are always friendly and helpful, and you know that they're only a phone call or email away, should we need their support or guidance. We receive a prompt response and they often make us aware of new developments and opportunities that we should be aware of. They have also helped support us as an Apple Regional Training Centre, which has been hugely beneficial, and their experience and knowledge often lead us to liaise with suppliers and other companies we could mutually benefit from working with."

As a forward-thinking school, with a visionary Head, Talbot Heath are fairly unique in its approach to education. Being independent, they are fortunate enough to be able to focus on topics and skills that they believe are important. Academia fully supports both their aims and vision and complements the school well as a technology and training provider.

"They touch base with us frequently, which is very much appreciated, so we never feel we're on this unique journey alone. They have a plethora of relevant knowledge and experience and help us achieve what we want, by providing us with the information, equipment and associated companies to help see our goals through to fruition," Jo tells us.

The future

Since starting work with Talbot Heath School our relationship has flourished, and we have been pleased to have Jo and the school present at some hosted events. We have been able to showcase the school's success but also the importance of the work we do with our customers by supporting their projects and enabling them to reach their measurements of success.

Academia's Luke Holdcroft-Young says: "Jo has been phenomenal in her approach to the digital journey and as part of our next steps with Talbot Heath, we have been able to plan their next phase around changing their MDM to an alternative provider which in turn will provide an even better experience for their staff and students and also enhance their technology journey.

The school also approached us to support their new STEAM hub and we are supporting through guidance and long-term strategic planning.

"We also continue to support Talbot Heath in their journey as an RTC, and an Apple Distinguished School as well as supporting the school and Jo with continued Apple Professional Learning. Working with the school and being their trusted technology partner is a privilege for Academia and we look forward to supporting their continued success."

Academia recently shone the spotlight on Talbot Heath School to share best practice. Watch Talbot Heath School's case study today.

Watch Now

What have we learnt over the last two years during the pandemic and what is needed next for our education system?

Author: Rob Williams

As we look forward to seeing the details of the new White Paper from Secretary of State, Mr Zahawi, it is a good time to take stock of our education system, identify what we have learnt in the face of the pandemic and draw out some key priorities as next steps if we are to achieve the world-leading standards to which we aspire and which our young people deserve.

If education is really the mechanism to be the "great leveller" in terms of social equality, then we can only say that we have stalled under successive governments to get close to such a lofty ideal. In part this is to do with levels of funding; in part with recruitment, retention and training of high-quality staff; in part with political disputes over organisational structures and curriculum priorities; and in part with our assessment systems and qualification framework. These are the areas that we need to address to make a qualitative shift in the system as a whole and to better level up the life chances of all those hindered by disadvantage.

The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) have published their blueprint to address this question: "A Great Education for Every Child: The ASCL Blueprint for a Fairer Education System". This is an important and timely intervention. Whilst there is much overlap between my own views and this recent ASCL paper, this is a personal take on the two key priorities that I believe must be addressed now.

Over the last 20 months, I have campaigned that the media, and our political elite, should stop talking about our students as being a "lost generation". This isn't fair or accurate. It comes from an obsession with the current assessment and qualification framework that measures young people's success by a small number of grades for academic subjects on a certificate. It is time for a root and branch re-evaluation of what we value in our young people and how we can best capture this as they move through the school system. I am not anti-exam or even anti-A level, but I do believe that these elements should only form part of an overall leaving certificate that seeks to capture wider personal development, skills, knowledge and understanding – much as the Confederation of British Industry has been lobbying for. This is a key plank of any meaningful reform and improvement of the system.

The use of 1:1 technology has to become embedded within the teaching and learning strategies of every school in the country. We are over a fifth of the way through the 21st century, yet the lockdown images of school staff driving round to students' home addresses to deliver boxes of photocopied worksheets were reminiscent of 20th-century solutions. It is not good enough. There has been a collective failure to establish a vision for the use of technology within education on a national scale and this would be my second main plea to Mr Zahawi. My school has developed the use of iPad devices within our teaching and learning approaches since 2012 and we became fully 1:1 in 2016. We have used Pupil Premium funding to support disadvantaged students to access the technology on an equal footing. The long-established nature of our practice allowed us to switch seamlessly to online learning at the start of the lockdown and continue with our curriculum delivery. All students deserve to have the best of modern technology incorporated within their learning programme and practice.

Rob Williams
Secondary Headteacher of the Year 2020 (Pearson National Teaching Awards) Headteacher at Malton School, North Yorkshire, but writing in a personal capacity.

Academia recently shone the spotlight on Malton School to show how they transformed teaching and learning with iPad.

Watch Now

Read Now

Learn how a number of educational establishments are using Apple technology to transform teaching and learning:

» Saint Francis Xavier (SFX) Sixth Form College
» The Institute of Contemporary Music (ICMP)
» Sheffield Medical School
» ABRSM
» Middlesex University
» University of Leicester Medical School
» University of the Creative Arts
» Police Education Consortium – Police Apprenticeship Scheme
» University of Gloucestershire
» Anson Primary School
» Malton School
» Woodland Academy Trust
» Coventry University
» Portsmouth College
» Lizzy's story – The de Ferrers Academy
» University of Westminster
» Dame Ellen Pinsent School
» Cedar Lodge School

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What next?

We hope you enjoyed reading this report. We recognise that there is a lot of information here, so please feel free to pick up the phone for a chat.

Beyond that, our specialist education team at Academia can deliver a FREE Planning Essentials Workshop, on-site or remotely. We spend 2-3 hours meticulously planning your upcoming ICT project with you and your colleagues in order to ensure that nothing is overlooked. For more information, contact us using the details below.

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