

CASE STUDY



BLACKBURN COLLEGE

CultureShift: embedding technology in staff and student practice

Staff 'DigiPals'

PROJECT LEAD

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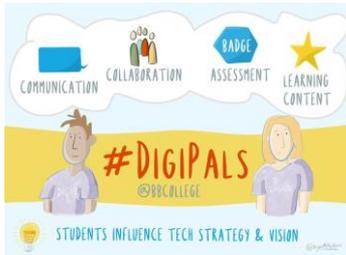
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CASE STUDY

BLACKBURN COLLEGE

Staff 'DigiPals'



1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY

Alex and Jade share their story of being a staff 'DigiPal' - what that entails, how it works in practice and how it has enhanced their own teaching and learning. Share this case study with those who wish to set up and develop their own 'DigiPal' models.

2. WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS CASE STUDY AND WHY

The case study will benefit:

- Learning Technologists who wish to develop new approaches to support staff to adopt and embed learning technology in the curriculum;
- Quality Managers who wish to support staff with techniques and resources to embed the use of technology within curriculum;
- Human Resources/Organisational Development teams responsible for staff development who would like to develop staff technology skills.

3. ABOUT BLACKBURN COLLEGE

Blackburn College is a large Further and Higher Education college in Blackburn, Lancashire. The College has been delivering training and education for over 125 years and is the largest provider of college based higher education in the country. Currently over 15,000 students are studying a range of qualifications, including:

- A Levels;
- Apprenticeships;
- Vocational qualifications from Entry Level to Level 3;
- Foundation Degrees;
- Degrees;
- Professional qualifications.

www.blackburn.ac.uk

4. WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO AND WHY

Blackburn College wanted to develop a new model to support its teaching staff in their use of learning technologies. The Head of eLearning created the 'DigiPals' - Advanced Practitioner roles who would use their digital expertise, enthusiasm and knowledge to lead the development of technology enhanced learning, teaching and working across the College. The aim of the roles is for the 'DigiPals' to develop and

implement strategies which raise the quality of Technology Enhanced Learning and blended learning and general ILT practice.

The 'DigiPals' were asked to focus on enhancing staff practice by sharing and disseminating best practice across the College and researching learning technology developments and practices from a global perspective to inform the College's future direction.

The roles were advertised across the College and awarded remission hours from teaching and a bursary.

Two staff 'DigiPals' were recruited. Each 'DigiPal' was tasked to work with four individual members of staff and their learners to review their skills and knowledge, improve their confidence and trial new learning technologies.



5. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

The 'DigiPals' have worked with 12 members of staff and 57 students to support them to trial new learning technologies. Of those 12, seven staff members have and will conduct CPD sessions with their colleagues.

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Staff 'DigiPals'



'DigiPal' Alex and his participant, Chris have delivered five staff development sessions on the use of Twitter to improve learner engagement. Over 80 staff members from across the College attended the sessions.

"My 'DigiPal' was wonderful and supportive. I now have more knowledge of what's available and I now feel confident in assessing the needs of the individual student and matching them to appropriate technology that will enhance their learning"
Curriculum Support Tutor

The 'DigiPals' and the Head of eLearning participated in 42 Learning Walks (a short 15 minute mini peer observation to share good practice) and 20 Dual Observations engaging with 62 tutors to support them in the use of technology within the classroom.

Through staff engagement with the 'DigiPals', learners have received direct benefits:

- Sports students have achieved a 100% first time pass rate in their 'Current Issues in Sport' module with 80% of high grades;
- The technology made a great deal of difference for two learners with additional learning support needs. Assignment work was handed in on time, with correct spellings and good presentation. The two learners achieved a pass for their Injuries in Sport module with the first submission – the first

Staff 'DigiPals'

time this had been achieved all year for one of the learners. Both students have progressed, one to a Level 3 sports course and the second to an Apprenticeship in Sport.

"I now have more knowledge of what's available and I now feel confident in assessing the needs of the individual student and matching them to appropriate technology that will enhance their learning" Curriculum Support Tutor

"The Learning Futures project and has helped my confidence tremendously. I've really enjoyed learning how to use I.T and the students seem to enjoy showing me their skills. The time factor was never an issue." Sports Tutor

6. LESSONS LEARNED

The 'DigiPals' found that the initial task of working with four staff members each proved problematic due to time needed to dedicate to each individual, timetabling issues, and trying to combine with Learning Walks and dual observations.

Therefore although the 'DigiPals' worked with 12 staff members they intensively worked with two individuals each. This worked well as each individual then fully engaged with the 'DigiPals' as a resource for their development. The participants have now participated in staff development sessions across college and

Staff 'DigiPals'

have promoted the 'DigiPal' resource to their colleagues. This has created a ripple effect and in the long term the 'DigiPals' have engaged with more staff members. This model will be continued into the next academic year.

It became apparent that the key to success was working with those staff members who volunteered as they had the enthusiasm and willingness to embrace new learning technologies and critically review their own skills and knowledge.

The 'DigiPals' experienced some resistance, mainly from those staff members who feel that they work well without the technology so why would they need to introduce it to their teaching and learning.

Some other barriers to participation were:

- Those who felt that the *CultureShift* pushed them to learn about new technology;
- Time constraints - unable to commit time to learning about technology;
- Timetables - matching up those of the teaching staff and the 'DigiPal' in order to schedule time for the project.

7. TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- Teaching staff with the enthusiasm to trial new learning technologies within the classroom;
- An understanding of how adopting new learning technologies can improve teaching and learning regardless of existing quality;
- Learners willing to engage and embrace new learning technologies;
- Offer group staff development sessions with the participants' own curriculum teams as this helps to disseminate good practice and allows the participant to act as an ILT pioneer within their department.

8. SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **DigiPals, a how to guide;**
A what, why and how guide to the 'DigiPals'.
- **Case Study – Supporting learners with additional learning needs;**
Elaine shares her story of how learning technologies can support those learners with additional learning needs.
- **Case Study – Collaborative learning;**
Chris tells his story of how tutors and learners can trial new learning technologies learning from one another to improve the learning experience.

- **Case Study – From a learners perspective;**
Tyrone shares his story of how he worked with his Curriculum Support Tutor to trial new learning technologies and how it improved his teaching and learning.

9. CONTACT DETAILS

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