CASE STUDY

BLACKBURN COLLEGE

CultureShift: embedding technology in staff and student practice

Supporting learners with additional learning needs

PROJECT LEAD

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CASE STUDY

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1. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDY

Elaine is a Curriculum Support Tutor and she shares her story of overcoming her reluctance to use technology to support learners with additional learning needs. Share this case study with those responsible for additional learning support to help identify new ways to support and engage learners with additional learning needs in the classroom through the use of learning technology.

2. WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM THIS CASE STUDY AND WHY

The case study will benefit:

- 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 want to develop staff technology skills;
- Those responsible for providing additional learning support to learners who would like to develop their own use of technology and those of their learners;
- Curriculum staff who are keen to develop their skills to support learners within the classroom.
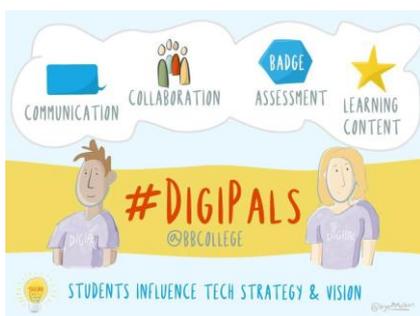
3. ABOUT BLACKBURN COLLEGE

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's staff 'DigiPals' worked with a number of staff across the College to improve their confidence and skills in the use of learning technology within the classroom. Elaine chose to participate as she was wary of using technology within the classroom due to previous technical hitches.

Elaine saw her participation within the Learning Futures project as a fantastic opportunity to receive direct support and learn new skills with the guidance of a 'DigiPal'.

The challenge was to identify new learning technology which Elaine could use to support learners within the classroom. Elaine chose to work with two learners studying a Sports Injuries module as part of their Level 2 Sport qualification. Both learners have severe dyslexia and one of them also has Attention Deficit Disorder. Problems within class included them being disengaged from learning, not being able to write assignments due to the fear of a blank piece of paper and nerves around spelling. Their organisation of class notes was weak and Elaine often spent the first 10 minutes helping the learners look for handouts and assignments.

Through consultation with Elaine and the learners, 'DigiPal' Jade supported them to trial Blendspace.

5. EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

"Jade, my 'DigiPal', was wonderful and supportive. She showed me that I did not need to be an expert on technology to use it in the classroom."

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"The technology was fantastic. It empowered the learners to show their tutor how something works. The learners were engaged and keen and this allowed me time to actually teach them instead of using my time and energy coaxing them/trying to motivate them to do work."

Elaine

The technology made a great deal of difference for the learners. Assignment work was handed in on time, correct spellings and good presentation. The two learners achieved a pass for their Injuries in Sport module with the first submission – the first 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" Elaine

Comments from the learners:

"iPads ...better than writing - makes it different. I am rubbish at spelling and technology lets me do it quicker."

"Lesson was fun therefore I felt I learnt more"

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In addition the staff 'DigiPals' presented specific staff development sessions on use of learning technologies to 12 members of the Learning Support team. This has resulted in requests for additional support from the 'DigiPals' and has increased awareness on how learning technologies can support their learners.

6. LESSONS LEARNED

The collaboration between the staff 'DigiPal' (Jade) as a teaching practitioner and Curriculum Support Worker (Elaine) worked well as both used their expertise to create suitable action plans for the individual learners. This sharing of knowledge and ideas between two different job roles and across college areas created a strong working relationship that benefitted all involved.

The process was fluid and ever-changing, adapting to the needs of the learners as and when required. The learners were involved in the planning and implementation of the project which meant that they got out of it what they wanted and allowed the 'DigiPal' and Curriculum Support Tutor to assess the importance of the different aspects of the project. The learners chose to focus on specific resources rather than being shown a wide range of possibilities, which then dictated how the support was offered to them and how the project moved forward.

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The barriers experienced by Elaine mainly consisted of the restrictions placed upon Curriculum Support staff when relying on the involvement of the main teaching staff they work with. If a member of teaching staff lacks the enthusiasm or willingness to allow assistive technologies to be trialled with highlighted learners within their class, then the Curriculum Support Tutor has an additional barrier to overcome. Those members of staff who shared the enthusiasm of the Curriculum Support Tutor in increasing the engagement of their learners, created a far more conducive environment for the trial to take place.

Greater staff awareness and training is needed across the College to ensure that Curriculum Support staff are given the support and encouragement to allow assistive learning technologies to have a place in the delivery of the curriculum.

The skills, experience and knowledge gained by Elaine was disseminated throughout the Learning Support department with requests for further training and support from Elaine's colleagues after they had heard of the project and how it was progressing. This has continued into the new academic year, with more training on offer, and being delivered, to the Learning Support staff.

Elaine has now fully embraced the concept of using assistive technologies and is realising and investigating the possibilities

available to tutors in her curriculum area and has advanced her own CPD through further research of available technologies. She is using this knowledge in her new elevated job role as a Support Co-ordinator who manages Curriculum Support Tutors across two Curriculum areas. This new role enables Elaine to support the Curriculum Support Tutors to trial new technology as and when appropriate to improve the learner experience and engagement in their chosen study programmes.

7. TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

- Teaching and Learning Support staff with the enthusiasm and expertise in trialling new learning technologies;
- Availability of peer support roles and mechanisms to provide staff with practical support;
- Learners willing to engage and embrace new learning technologies.

8. SUPPORTING RESOURCES

- **A guide to the LearningWheel Prezi;**
  A short presentation that introduces the what, why and how of the LearningWheel.

- **Resource LearningWheel - Assistive Technology LearningWheel**;
  68 suggestions how to use a range of assistive technologies mapped to each of the four modes of engagement.

- **Resource LearningWheel – Blendspace**;
  A visual guide that suggests a wide range of opportunities available within each of four modes of engagement for Blendspace.

- **Resource LearningWheel - Blendspace: Easy steps**;
  How to set up Blendspace in 8 easy steps.

9. CONTACT DETAILS

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