



camara
education
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Case Studies

Google Framework Project

Introduction

Below, we have compiled information from a number of schools on this project who we are supporting in developing a holistic approach to technology integration in education. The examples below will demonstrate the key areas we are supporting schools, through the framework, including: vision and leadership, professional development, pedagogical shift and community buy-in. The case studies are divided into three sections: individual schools, framework established clusters, and government established clusters.

1. Individual Schools

1. 1 Vision and Leadership | St Paul's Secondary School, Monasterevin

Overview

St Paul's are an example of a school who had taken some initial steps on their journey to improve technology integration before signing up to the School's Framework project. The school had set up a G Suite account and were using it for communication with staff through Gmail. However, there had not been significant use beyond internal staff communication. Leadership and teachers were unsure of the best ways to go about developing both practical and innovative uses of G Suite.

Needs

After talking with staff and leadership separately during staff interviews, conducted by Camara, it became apparent that one of the key barriers to progressing technology-use in the school was a lack of clarity and direction in how technology could be used effectively in an education context.

'It feels like there's more that could be used but I'm not sure where to begin. There are search costs to finding out'

St Paul's are also due to move to a new building, after a sixteen year wait, in the coming 12-18 months. Leadership saw this as an added impetus and opportunity to improve the school's use of technology, as the move will involve a significant investment in hardware as well as an improvement in the school's network infrastructure. Investing time now in researching and trialling new technology-use in the school will help them better understand their infrastructural and hardware needs when moving to the new school.

Solution

Vision & Leadership

In our first year working with St Paul's, we supported the school in the creation of their digital strategy. In line with the government's School Self-Evaluation guidelines, we gathered evidence, through interviews with 30 staff members. The resulting quantitative and qualitative data from these interviews was presented to leadership in a written report. This report, along with the schools previous experiences and questions about technology integration, were discussed and clarified, before planning how the Camara team could best support the school in improving effective technology integration.

It was clear, during the teacher interviews and our leadership meeting, that the starting point for the school was to develop a digital strategy, led by the newly formed Digital Team. The creation of such a strategy required the team to develop the school's vision for digital technologies, which aims to provide clarity and purpose for the use of technology, in the whole-school community. Furthermore, the plan aims to address the barriers identified by staff preventing them from using technology effectively in the school. Crucially, this team included a mix of staff; a member of the leadership team and teachers with both high and low self-reported abilities, in the use of technology in the classroom.

CPD

The first training session helped to address two key areas of difficulty for the team: firstly, the Admin Console was not being used, or understood, to a level that allowed for smooth management and expansion of G Suite; and secondly, staff were unsure of the practical ways in which G Suite tools could help them in their own classrooms. To address this in a practical way, we looked at how Google Classroom could be used to teach a concept, scaffold a digital project and collect students' work. This was particularly important for teachers responsible for teaching the new Junior Cycle, which involves the completion of digital projects.

'I would like to do more digital creation with students especially now that the Junior Cycle is pushing it too'

Summary

With the support of the Framework project, it was possible for St Paul's to continue the digital journey they had already started, by establishing an ICT Team who are leading the school in their vision, plans and actions. With the additional lift of moving to a new building in 2019, it is an exciting time for the school.

1.2 Professional Development | St Thomas' Senior National School, Tallaght

Overview

St Thomas' are an example of a school whose leadership is strongly supportive of their ICT Coordinator, who has a personal interest in the use of technology enhanced learning. Furthermore, staff reported a high level of self-rated ability, relative to other schools: on a scale of 1-10, 29% of teachers rated themselves as an 8 or higher, while 58% of staff rated themselves between 5-7. These combined factors provide an opportunity for the school to develop effective integration of technology in the school.

Need

Barriers

In this case, where some technology integration was already occurring, the staff audit proved a useful tool to identify the areas where staff saw need for further support or growth around the use of technology. Examining the data, 18 out of the 24 staff interviewed cited time constraints as a barrier to the further use of technology in the classroom. The quotes below indicate the types of frustrations felt by staff:

'I would like to use technology to make more digital content, but time constraints make it difficult. I would love them to be creating their own projects, but the time to plan it and get it done in the hour is difficult'

'In terms of time, the out of class time to look it all up and decide what to do makes it harder'

'I know I could be doing more but I don't have the time to sit down and learn the technology.'

Digital Learning Culture

During the leadership meeting, we discussed ways in which these difficulties may be alleviated. Over the course of the meeting, a clear plan was put in place to develop an online sharing system that would allow teachers to learn from one another. As a large primary school, with three to four teachers in each year group, as well as multiple teaching assistants, we agreed there is an opportunity for internal collaboration amongst teachers in the development of their lesson plans, teaching resources, project ideas and assessments. Previous attempts to encourage collaboration amongst teachers in the same year group have focused on file sharing systems on a network drive. Staff felt that this was an ineffective way of sharing, as it can often be hard to navigate folder structures and read another teacher's lesson plans.

Solution

Knowledge Management Portal & Storage

After discussing a number of options, the leadership group decided that the school would aim to develop the school's collaboration amongst teachers through Google Sites, over the coming 18 months. This would include training sessions with Camara on the use of Google Sites, as well as showing examples of how other schools are using the platform to share their ideas, resources and student examples of work.

Summary

It was felt that such a platform, which allows for easy navigation and sharing of multimedia files, provides a better opportunity for staff to find resources and ideas that are relevant to their students' context, abilities and interests. With easier access to colleagues' resources and ideas, it is hoped that the time spent by teachers to find and learn about new ways of approaching a topic in their class will be reduced significantly.

2. Framework Established Cluster

2.1 Community Buy-in | St Dominic's College, Caritas College, and St John's College De La Salle.

Overview

St Dominic's College, Caritas College and St John's College are three secondary schools, located within a one-kilometre radius of one another, in Ballyfermot, Dublin. They are single-sex schools, with 200-400 students in each.

Need

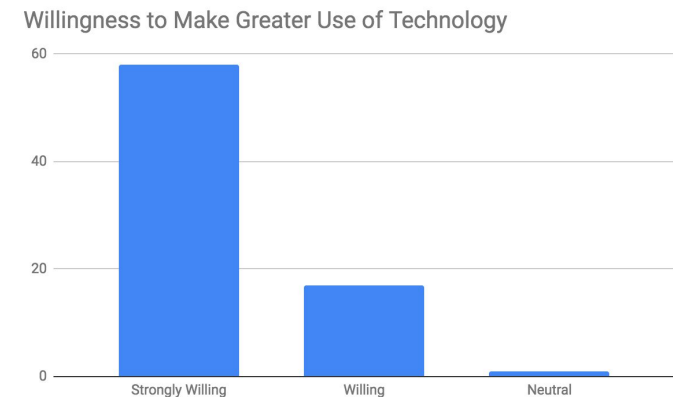
Having met the majority of staff during each school's audit, it was clear that staff were strongly willing to further integrate technology in education. The graph below visually represents the collated staff responses when staff were asked about their willingness to further integrate technology in the classroom. In spite of this eagerness, staff felt it was difficult to use technology effectively with students as they lacked access. 62 of the 78 staff surveyed pointed to access as being a key barrier preventing the further use of technology in the school.

Solution

Digital Schools Cluster & Culture

Leadership in these schools already communicated with one another bilaterally, before this project, but it was decided that improving coordination and collaboration across the three schools would help each school maximise their resources, as well as provide greater opportunities for their students.

The first step in this journey was for all schools to agree on a common cloud platform to facilitate communication, creation, storage and sharing within and between the schools. Each school was at a different point in their journey: one school had adopted 365, another had signed up for G Suite and the last was using neither. After investigating each platform, it was decided that G Suite would be the best platform for each school individually, as well as collectively. With all three schools using the same platform, it is possible to combine the training sessions provided as part of this project. This will allow for sessions to be streamed by ability level, departments and software, which will allow for a greater impact over the next two years of the project.



Another benefit of this decision is that it allows for each school to provide greater choice for their students. For example, since each school has a small staff, it is impossible to offer all subjects for their students. Now, with the help of technology, in September 2018, a handful of students will be taking a subject offered in one of the cluster schools that is not offered in their own. Through a school issued account, the pupil can securely and safely communicate with their new teacher in the other school, as well as access the relevant resources in the shared virtual classroom space. If the student is unable to physically attend the class, due to weather conditions, it has been agreed that they can join through Google Hangouts or the class will be recorded and shared via Google Drive.

Summary

Now that all three schools are working together closely, facilitated by leadership, it is possible to build strong communities of practice amongst the staff in the three schools, to build expertise in the G Suite platform, cultivate ideas and promote further pedagogical shifts amongst teachers.

3. Government Established Cluster

3.1 Pedagogical Shift | Educate Together Cluster

Overview

In April 2018, as part of the 'School Excellence Fund - Digital', the Government announced that over 200 schools in 32 clusters had been chosen to work on projects, chosen during the application process 'to work together to use inventive methods to enhance teaching and learning through digital technology...Each cluster will receive up to €20,000 funding over the course of the programme'¹.

Project Goal

One of the funded clusters, consisting of six 'Educate Together' primary schools, had two schools who were part of our Framework project. We had capacity in the Framework project, due to schools who had declined to take part, to bring the other four schools in this government cluster on board. Therefore, our project will further support this six-school cluster, which 'aims to create an online classroom to teach *'Educate Together's Ethical Education'* curriculum to six schools where children will collaborate to build up a complete programme of work for all schools to use.'²

Solution

The project aims use a common cloud platform to develop these resources. Therefore, it was agreed that, first of all, each school should agree to use the same system. With four schools already using G Suite, the other two schools have since setup G Suite accounts. As part of the Framework, each school will develop staff competency in using the core G Suite platforms that will facilitate the creation of resources between the schools. We will support this vision through the provision of five staff training sessions in each school over the next two years. These sessions will develop staff competence in the cloud platform, as well as support the cluster's goal of developing the schools' Ethical Education curriculum.

¹ "02 April, 2018 - Schools funded to work together on Experimental" 2 Apr. 2018, <https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR2018-04-02.html>. Accessed 13 Jul. 2018.

² "02 April, 2018 - Schools funded to work together on Experimental" 2 Apr. 2018, <https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2018-press-releases/PR2018-04-02.html>. Accessed 13 Jul. 2018.