Alternative ways of presenting

Can alternative presentation technologies improve interactivity in classrooms?

Over the past ten years, projectors and interactive whiteboards (IWBs) have generally been used to bring more interactivity and engagement into teaching and learning in primary classrooms. Even though IWBs can be used effectively, they can sometimes restrict teachers to teaching from the front of the classroom, as well as restrict or limit the ways in which they teach. Requiring pupils to come up to the IWB may in some cases limit pupil engagement, or may disrupt the flow of a learning activity. So are there other technologies with the potential to provide teachers with more flexibility in how they teach and present in classrooms?

Some more recent technologies have the potential to provide more flexibility of movement and engagement for both teachers and pupils. One of the better known of these is AppleTV, which when used with a teacher’s iPad and projector allows a teacher to wirelessly project or ‘mirror’ whatever is on their iPad screen onto the large screen from anywhere in the classroom. Similarly where pupils have iPads, the teacher can allow pupil iPad screens to be projected or mirrored to the large screen. This can facilitate more flexibility of teaching positions and movement for the teacher and also allows students to share their work to the rest of the classroom without having to physically touch the IWB or move from their seating position.

This can facilitate more effective teaching and improve the flow of classroom activities. It also has the potential to facilitate a more accessible classroom environment for pupils with disabilities or easier engagement for pupils who may be reticent to explain/give feedback at the IWB.

AppleTV and wireless networks

Though AppleTV uses a wireless technology to communicate with an iPad, it is possible to connect an iPad and AppleTV without having a wi-fi network in the school. This is because the iPad and AppleTV effectively set up their own ‘private’ wi-fi connection using what is referred to as ‘peer to peer Airplay’.

Alternatives to Apple TV

As AppleTV only works with iPad/Apple devices there are a number of other solutions available for non-Apple platforms, a number of which require a suitable wireless network to be in place and configured to connect teacher mobile devices to the projection screen over the school wireless network. These approaches generally involve adding the relevant software application to the teaching computer that is connected to the classroom projector. Some of the better known solutions that work in this way include Reflector and Airserver.

Before a school decides on a suitable solution, it would be important that they are confident that the chosen approach is the suitable one for their school. Seeking advice from a similar type of school already successfully using one or more of these approaches is an excellent way of getting relevant information and feedback.

For more information on this area, including relevant videos and additional links, please refer to the section on ‘Presenting in the Classroom’ on the Technology section of the PDST Technology in Education website. The link is: www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/ technology.

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PDST Technology in Education have facilitated a number of workshops for teachers in recent months on the use of mobile devices and applications in teaching, learning and assessment at the MiTE, CESI and Power Up conferences. All workshop slides can be accessed at www.pdst.ie/mite2015; www.pdst.ie/cesi2015; and www.pdst.ie/powerup2015 respectively. All of these workshops can be scheduled through your local education centre, (contingent on there being enough participants) so do not hesitate to request same.

There will be eight face to face summer courses designed by PDST Technology in Education offered by the Education Centre network this summer. The courses cover the following areas:

- Teaching, learning and assessment using ICT.
- Creating and using digital resources in literacy and numeracy.
- Using ICT for literacy and numeracy in junior classes.
- Using Scratch to develop numeracy (PDST TIE and LERO).
- Using tablets and online tools for literacy and numeracy.
- Fís: film making process to promote literacy.
- Reading and writing process using ICT.
- Leading digital learning and ICT integration as a school leader.