

Managing resources and engaging dialogue online

Many teachers have electronic folders full of digital resources acquired over the years – documents, presentations, sound and video files etc. This article will explore how this content can be managed and shared with our pupils – inside and outside the classroom walls and on a variety of internet accessible devices to which students may have access.

Reflect on our learning online

Technology has advanced to such an extent that active learning can be facilitated online and both children and teachers can embark on a rich learning journey using a variety of tools and applications. Through insightful instructions and questioning, teachers can encourage older children to reflect on their learning.

The modern teacher can have a safe online space to engage in dialogue with their class and share/embed resources, not just for consumption but also for collaboration. Recorded lessons can be shared with annotations ensuring that many of our best lessons can be experienced again.

Initial set-up

A useful free tool for creating a safe yet functional 'online learning classroom' is *Edmodo* (www.edmodo.com), which is accessible online from a PC/laptop or through apps on the iOS and Android platforms. Please note that the apps do not have the same level of functionality as the browser version. Once signed in as a teacher, management control remains with you. The children in your class/group must sign up as students and need your unique class code to join your group. Once all students have joined, you can lock your group code to new students (in the event of your code being passed to another student outside your class). Students can only join groups – they cannot create them. For every pupil,

there is a corresponding parent code.

Unlimited storage in teacher 'library' and student 'backpack'

As teachers, we can create our own *Edmodo* 'library' that gives unlimited storage for documents, presentations, videos and other resources. All students have the same unlimited storage for their resources in the *Edmodo* 'backpack'. Furthermore, the teacher profile synchronises with a Google Apps account, if you have one, thus allowing the sharing of any resource in a Google Drive. By posting messages to the students in the group, we can share whatever resources we deem necessary with our classes and they can access them from one place. Through creating their own folders and sub-folders, they can acquire skills necessary for managing digital resources. They can work on any resource and upload back to the teacher in a safe, controlled online environment.

Collaborative discussion and ongoing assessment

Active learning is a social activity where learning can be clarified through questions and extended by thoughts and ideas. *Edmodo* facilitates collaborative discussion between teacher and pupil. It is also a great environment in which to teach about etiquette in online communications. In extreme cases, a child who violates agreed class etiquette can be set to 'read only' by the teacher so they cannot post any further messages. Continuous assessment of pupil learning is facilitated with inbuilt quiz, assignment and poll tools. Quizzes can be self-correcting thus cutting down on workload and giving the child instant feedback on the test they have just completed. The quiz and assignment results for all pupils are stored in the class gradebook.

For experienced teacher Ciarán Kennedy,

in St Patrick's NS, Tuam, the greatest benefit has been to engage pupils.

"In the nearly 30 years that I have been teaching, I have never come across anything that has engaged students as much as *Edmodo* does. I have seen students engage with their learning like never before, particularly outside of class time. I never thought I would see a student voluntarily take a maths quiz at nine o'clock on a Saturday morning! Because of its ease of use any student, regardless of ability, can use it. It allows the teacher to easily post differentiated material to either individuals or class groups. In our own school we have implemented *Edmodo* from second to sixth class without any difficulty. Students can be up and running in no time and need very little instruction on how to use the interface."

There are a number of other uses for *Edmodo* in the classroom. As teachers, we can create our own groups containing fellow teachers to facilitate professional learning, sharing of ideas and professional practice. "When we share – that is poetry in the prose of life" (Sigmund Freud).

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