

Supporting you along your digital journey - wherever you may be

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young" – Henry Ford

Such is the pace of change in a variety of domains impacting the teaching profession, there is no fear of a teacher's mind growing old if this quote from Henry Ford rings true. For the duration of my journey in the teaching profession, advances in technology have changed how I teach and how the pupils in my classes learn and, on occasion, the integration of new technologies has been one of experimentation – some abandoned; some retained in my teaching toolkit. At the core has always been the art of teaching – "The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery." – Mark Van Doren.

PDST Technology in Education have a range of face to face and online summer courses developed by teachers for teachers to assist you on your learning journey in the use of ICT for teaching, learning and assessment. The aim of our courses is to assist you discover new technologies you may embed into the art of teaching for the benefit of learning and assessment in all subjects in your class/school.

With almost weekly calls for 'Coding to be part of the curriculum in schools', it must be appreciated that coding has been in Irish schools for a long time – not as a separate subject or discipline. I was fortunate enough to have a Commodore 64 computer at 13 on which I dabbled with BASIC programming and was reacquainted with BASIC programming again in a module in 'Academic Maths' in St Patrick's College. There was a disconnect for me at that stage. The first meaningful integration of ICT into teaching came with the use of MS-Logo as there was now a means of giving commands to a sprite on screen to draw a variety of 2-D shapes. If a pupil could programme the sprite to draw a regular hexagon, then I knew they knew the properties of a hexagon rather than rhyming off that 'there are six equal sides and six equal angles'. This enhanced the teaching, learning and assessment of mathematical concepts.

Scratch is the more modern equivalent of MS-Logo and if you want to develop your skills in the use of Scratch to develop numeracy in your class, then our summer course entitled **Using Scratch to develop Numeracy and Problem Solving Skills** (PDST TiE/Lero) is for you. This course is also available in online format through

teachercpd.ie

Some people think that the drive to have coding in schools is fuelled by a need to create a generation of programmers but that is losing sight of the fact that we

are equipping pupils to be problem solvers, experimenters, testers, collaborators, creators and of course they can be programmers if they want (but certainly not everyone!). Coding/programming means writing instructions in a language that a computer can understand to execute a task so having this 'in the curriculum' alone does not make sense.

Our summer course entitled **Embedding ICT in the Primary Classroom** has active learning methodologies at the core and how ICT can be used in that context thus showing that ICT can be used effectively in all subjects and with time, pupils will see that it is used in all professions. Our course entitled **Using ICT for Literacy and Numeracy in the Junior Classes** differentiates the content for teachers of infant and junior classes. Our course entitled **Using Tablets and Online Tools for Literacy and Numeracy** will be of interest to teachers who use/intend to use tablet devices in their teaching while **Creating and using Digital Resources to Support Literacy and Numeracy** supports a constructivist approach whereby a variety of digital resources are created collaboratively and digital content is not merely 'consumed'.

It is appreciated that not everyone is at the same stage on this digital journey. Levels of digital literacy vary – some students will research all their projects in commercial search engines like Google and Bing and are not aware that they can find differentiated approved content (differentiated by reading level with functionality to use text to speech and activate inbuilt dictionary) in Britannica School via scoilnet.ie and, with time, could also use student friendly search engines like DuckDuckGo.

Levels of digital citizenship vary and we differ in our levels of awareness of appropriate and responsible online



behaviour. Are all pupils aware that they cannot just copy and paste content from the internet into a class project without attributing the source. The same applies to digital images sourced online – are they free to use them? Are all pupils aware that their images and names can very easily be shared with the world online? In all our summer courses are two core modules giving you opportunities to find and select information online as well as internet safety topics developed with our colleagues in webwise.ie thus developing both digital literacy and digital citizenship. Another core module supports you in planning and implementing elearning planning by reflecting on where you are with regard to the use of ICT and planning your next steps. Our course **Whole School Approach to the use of ICT for Teaching, Learning and Assessment** addresses these topics at whole school level and is particularly suited to school leaders.

Educational technology has become ubiquitous and hardware and software can support the art of teaching in all school subjects and disciplines. Storytelling can now be done as a consultative process culminating in a short film or animation and the final product does not have to be simply a written/typed essay. Our summer course entitled **FIS - Film Making/Animation to Develop Literacy in the Classroom** concentrates on the digital storytelling process while **The Reading and Writing Process using ICT** is self explanatory.

Your local education centre will be hosting a number of the PDST Technology in Education courses detailed above this summer (some may even be hosted in your own school). We hope all our courses support your digital journey.

SEÁN GALLAGHER, PDST Technology in Education
www.pdst.ie