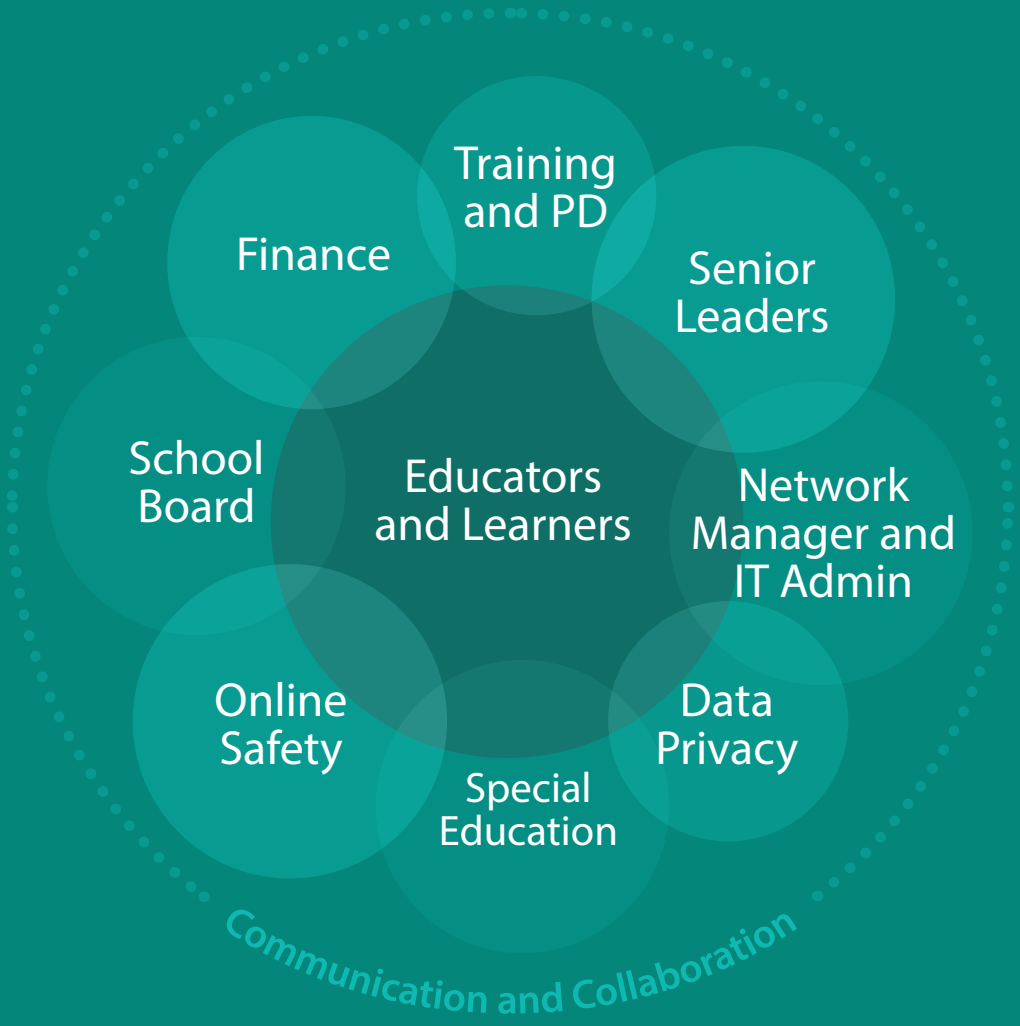
VERSION 3

A GUIDE TO CREATING A DIGITAL STRATEGY IN EDUCATION



Mark Anderson and Al Kingsley

@ICTEvangelist @AlKingsley_Edu

NetSupport

SUMMARY

The intention of this guide is to provide a brief overview of all the interlocking stakeholders who need to play a part in delivering a successful digital strategy for a school, district, local authority or group of schools. With any strategy, its success is based on the time taken to co-produce, with all voices heard, and then ensuring it is sufficiently embedded so that it will remain effective and deliver impact over time.

In education, we all accept that funding is a core barrier to investing, but with a well-developed digital strategy, you can ensure investment along the way is made with an eye to the end game – and, hopefully, mistakes can be avoided. As with every strategy, if everyone is on board from the beginning, it has a much greater chance of success.

Our updated Digital Strategy Guide now also shares real-world voices from across the globe, as well as an additional focus on Remote Learning, Connectivity, Collaboration and Communication in light of worldwide events.

Good luck and thank you to all those who shared!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

AL KINGSLEY @AlKingsley_Edu

Most of the time, I am CEO of NetSupport, with almost 30 years' experience in educational technology and digital online safety. In addition, I have a passion for education – particularly governance and raising organisational performance. With that in mind, I am Chair of two Multi Academy Trusts in the UK, my local area's Governors' Leadership Group and the county SEND Board. I am on the Regional Schools Commissioners Advisory Board for the East of England and north-east London, and the Local Authority Education Scrutiny Committee. A 2020 **EdTech 50** winner, I continue to support schools nationally and internationally with mentoring, writing and speaking at events about all things EdTech. You can find lots of my resources at **schooltrustee.blog**.

My book, "**My Secret #EdTech Diary**", was published in 2021 and takes a look at educational technology through a wider lens from my experience in both education and software development.

MARK ANDERSON @ICTEvangelist

I am a former teacher and school leader with more than twenty years' experience in the classroom in England, leading successful faculty departments and being a Local Authority lead teacher. I am now an in-demand independent strategic consultant, trainer and keynote speaker, have written several books and contributed to many more.

I am a passionate advocate for the purposeful and evidence-informed use of technology linked to pedagogy and am recognized for this globally. I know the power and importance of student voice in developing sound practice and I co-founded the Digital Leader Network in the UK. In addition to writing, presenting and broadcasting, I am also an Apple Distinguished Educator, Google Certified Innovator, Microsoft Certified Educator, Independent Thinking Associate, expert in mobile learning and associated pedagogies, and now Head of Education at NetSupport. Learn more about me at **www.ictevangelist.com**.

CONTENTS

DIGITAL STRATEGY STAKEHOLDERS

INTRODUCTION

Every school identifies that it has a need for technology, and when technology is used in the right way, it can have a positive impact. But at the same time, with financial budgets and pressures on schools, it's difficult to know – and choose – where those precious funds are best spent.

Our advice and belief is always that the best starting point is to have a digital strategy; a plan of what you want to achieve and why. First and foremost, it should be driven by educators and leaders in terms of outcomes – and secondly, it should tally with the financial and budgetary opportunities of the school.

In lots of schools, and particularly in groups of schools, the driver for implementing new technology is often determined by the finance function saying, "We have this much to spend – what would you like?". Although that has a degree of sense, it's the wrong way round to start a digital strategy. The impetus should perhaps instead come from the educators in the classroom, setting out the things they want to do and deciding on the tools that they believe will have a positive impact on learning. As **Michael Fullan** writes, a "pedagogy first" approach is most likely to bring the best rewards.

Then comes the part where the school considers, based on their budget, how they will achieve those ambitions. Therefore, the starting point shouldn't be where the finance team says, "We only have X amount to spend, what are you going to do?", because we need to plan for not just 'the now' but what the subsequent steps of the strategy will be, linked the teaching, learning and curriculum aims of the school and its key stakeholders.

> "Investing in the right technology in education without a digital strategy is like relying on your sat nav for directions without first entering the destination. You can keep on driving, but you're unlikely to end up at the right location or via the most efficient route."
>
> **AL KINGSLEY, CHAIR OF TWO MULTI ACADEMY TRUSTS AND CEO OF NETSUPPORT**

SO, WHAT THEN?

Within the bigger picture, not least after our recent enforced focus on delivering effective remote learning, it's never good to say, "Let's try to do everything today!". It is far better to work step by step and evidence impact along that journey, which is why, if you're planning new technology to support teaching and learning in the classroom, you need to have that wider view of what that will mean for students in three or five years' time. What will need to change in terms of infrastructure and support services so that we can achieve the best outcomes? What sort of refresh cycle will we need to ensure sustainability?

Alongside that, there's the intangible element (which should also form an important part of your digital strategy) and that is the focus on educator and support staff training; embedding skills and confidence so you can get the most from your technology; empowering individuals within schools – whether it's Heads of Faculties, Pastoral Leaders or classroom educators – to be the flag bearers; helping them be the ones who take that technology and support and entrench it with other educators throughout the school. When it comes to thinking about remote learning, support and training, mechanisms for family and the wider community are important too.

So, our guide is about identifying that, for an effective digital strategy to be successful, there are many stakeholders you need to consider:

- It starts with educators within the classroom and how they use technology to enhance teaching and learning. It also involves students, in terms of what the best fit is for the cohort of young people within the school.
- School leaders have a fundamental role as part of the broader school context and they will need to make sure that what is being proposed aligns with the school's development plan and the school's current priorities.

> Over the past two decades, educators, education technology companies and government have been increasingly focussed on the efficacy of digital technologies being used in schools. Central to this is the recognition that a strategic approach is best applied when implementing such technologies across a whole school, trust [or district]. This in itself can often prove challenging for schools – and digital initiatives, such as this guide, offer useful practical assistance.
>
> **CAROLINE WRIGHT, DIRECTOR GENERAL, BESA**

- Encouraging parental engagement has a positive impact on the school, the students and their progress.
- The IT team will need to ensure it can identify what any change in digital strategy means to them (whether that be changes to infrastructure, delivery of technology, its maintenance and support), to make sure it is operational at all the right times.
- Another consideration includes what training may be required to ensure sound and solid support – and, with recent events, infrastructure and capacity to access technology remotely.
- Finance is at the heart of any strategy within the school and clusters of schools, but in the context of a digital strategy, it's important to ensure that it is the facilitator and not the driver.
- With increasing technology and access to students' data, it is fundamental that we are mindful of what data we retain, how long for, and to ensure that it is secure and appropriate.
- The Special Education team will need to consider whether the digital strategy is broad enough to support the various types of learners who have special needs in your context.
- The Online Safety team will need to make sure that any new technology employed does not impact the school's ability to meet its obligations in terms of keeping children safe while using it and that children accessing resources online are still kept safe.
- And finally, the school's board or committee should, rightly, support (but also challenge) any proposed expenditure (while ensuring that the school can measure its impact), that it is scalable, can be adapted locally and remotely where relevant, and make certain that there are the right economies of scale in the approach to be taken; in a nutshell, determining whether it is the best investment for the school.

Pulling all these stakeholders together will ensure that the school has a full view of what it wants to achieve at the end point – and then it can work backwards, step by step, on how to realize it.

In this guide, we are going to focus on each of these different stakeholders and look at the things they should be considering, the questions they should be asking and what, ultimately, they are defining as their measure of impact. In England, the Government's quality assurance program that checks whether schools are operating as they should be is known as Ofsted (The Office for Standards in Education). Its inspection framework asks schools to consider 'Intention, Implementation and Impact' (known as The Three I's) for any initiatives they put in place. The thinking here is applicable for any school, regardless of geography.

> It was the economist Peter Drucker who famously said that 'culture eats strategy for breakfast' and he's right... culture is absolutely key in ensuring that activities in an organization are successful. Despite that, while it is the culture which forms the foundation for activities in an organization, without a sound strategy, you'll be equally as likely to fail as if you didn't have the culture at all.
>
> **MARK ANDERSON, ICT EVANGELIST**


NetSupport
School
Dedicated classroom management and instruction tools designed with teachers, *for* teachers.

EDUCATORS

Educators are primarily concerned with the business of teaching and learning, regardless of whether they are teaching our youngest learners or those at the older end of the scale. The job of the educator is increasingly difficult. The good news is that technology can help.

When it comes to thinking about teaching and learning with technology, it's important to identify what it is that you actually want to achieve. With so many different apps, tools and products available for educators to use in the classroom, it's easy to get swept away. It's not hard to see how sometimes the latest fad or gimmick can be picked up and taken on board by educators, departments and schools.

Plenty of research has been undertaken into areas where technology can impact upon teaching and learning. This is an important approach to take to inform your thinking around what you choose to use. It is equally important to remember that not all your uses of technology need to be linked to quantitative data from research. There will be times where the benefits that can be gained from technology can be qualitative. Therefore, it is important to consider not just where technology can bring an impact but also where it can provide value.

An instance of this might be where the use of a variety of tools in your working toolkit can bring efficiencies and time savings. Let's consider the **OneNote Web Clipper**. If you are a school using OneNote and Microsoft 365, this tool is an invaluable time saver when it comes to curating resources to share with learners. This will not bring a direct improvement to learning; however, the efficiencies gained from using this tool will free up some of your time. The tool therefore has value. Consider this approach too when exploring using technology to support your work as an educator.

According to research undertaken by the UK's **Education Endowment Foundation**, technology can bring moderate learning gains of, on average, four months' progress – however, impact is variable. In what Mark Anderson calls 'the Bananarama principle', when it comes to technology, 'It ain't [so much] what you do, it's the way that you do it'. With this in mind, careful thinking needs to go into what you want to actually try to achieve with technology to support your teaching and their learning.

What is hopefully clear from all this, is that while technology use is important and is, to a certain extent, a driver for many of these ideas, it is your vision and values that will drive your choices of use. It is, more often than not, a curriculum and teaching/learning development that will inspire your thinking about fulfilling a need when it comes to technology. Certainly, in recent times, this has been a huge driver in the thinking of schools and their leaders when it comes to supporting online learning.

> "Creating a digital strategy is something that was once perhaps thought of as being optional – but it isn't any longer! Technology is a commodity that is intrinsic to every aspect of student learning. Our goal is to make sure that our students and staff have appropriate devices for their needs that fit within our budget. Constant professional development and evaluation of our services ensures that we are using the best tools in the best manner possible."
>
> **GRANVILLE EXEMPTED VILLAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Terms such as 'synchronous' and 'asynchronous' are now synonymous with planning and thinking for online learning and, while previously might not have been in the thinking of school leaders, they certainly will be now. **As highlighted recently by School Principal, Jeremy Williams,** in a live show with Mark and Al, we can well envisage that all new school principal interviews will now be asking the question about candidates' experiences under lockdown and how they managed and led on their provision during this time. As mentioned above, it is predominantly about your values but additionally linked to mindfulness of your context which, of course, includes your educators and learners.

ASYNCHRONOUS

Learners collect their learning materials and work through them at their own pace, responding when appropriate and able to.

An example would be using **ClickView** to share videos so learners can access learning content when it's possible and appropriate.

Benefits
Easier for educators and learners to manage and complete, and for parents to support. Supports limited home access. Flexible.

Drawbacks
Not as much content covered, students find time management difficult.

VS

Think carefully about which approach is most appropriate and manageable for your learners, parents and teachers.

A polar approach is likely to be unsuccessful. A mixture of both has multiple benefits for all.

SYNCHRONOUS

Learners receive their learning at a specific time and work through content as they normally would during a lesson.

An example of this is using live video conferencing and delivering lessons remotely as if you were in the classroom.

Benefits
Students react well to structure, more content is covered, attendance checking, potential for face-to-face interaction/ wellbeing checks.

Drawbacks
Rigid. High pressure. High stakes. Lots of assessment. Difficult to support and deliver.

As demonstrated in the diagram above, context is key. Being mindful of the benefits and drawbacks of each delivery model will help you to tease out what works best for you when thinking about your digital strategy; both when in school under 'normal' circumstances, but also under lockdown. From the lessons we have learned from the Coronavirus pandemic, a principled, mindful and sustainable approach is clearly going to be key to the success of your strategy in your context.

> "We've been using the G Suite for Education platform at Leading Learning Trust since 2017. When the schools were forced to close due to COVID-19, we were able to leverage the power of G Suite to transition relatively quickly into distance learning. Our students already had experience with using the G Suite tools at school and so we were able to use Google Classroom to quickly populate the classes with an ongoing programme of work for the students to complete at home on a daily basis.
>
> We were also able to support families who don't have devices at home by lending out our estate of Chromebooks which were not currently being used, thus allowing as many students as possible to take part in and benefit from distance learning.
>
> **ABID PATEL, IT DIRECTOR AT LEADING LEARNING TRUST**"

A good place to start with your thinking in this regard is with the learning. The **TPACK model** is particularly useful here. Developed from the PCK (Pedagogical Content Knowledge) model by Shulman and furthered by Koehler and Mishra, the TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical and Content Knowledge) model combines three areas of knowledge related to teaching and learning.

classroom
.cloud

Easy breezy, low-cost, classroom management and teaching platform for schools

Pedagogical knowledge is what we know about teaching and learning. Content knowledge is what we know as educators about our subject specialisms. Technological knowledge is what we know about technology that can support our work as educators and the processes involved in learning. A key tenet of TPACK is that good teaching and learning isn't about ensuring each element of the diagram gets equal focus (particularly when it comes to our technological knowledge), but that it is about educators having sufficient training and, therefore, knowledge about what tools, apps or products can help the learning process at a given stage. Part of the issue related to this is that while many educators will have received lots of support around their content knowledge (such as when they completed their specialism degrees), and their pedagogical knowledge (while training to be educators), often, technological knowledge is an add-on and an afterthought.

You don't know what you don't know, and so, when looking to develop your digital strategy, an important part will be to ensure that (in general) you allocate equal budgets to both the cost of your technology purchase and the provision of professional learning opportunities for colleagues to maximize its use. You cannot purchase a lot of technology and just expect educators to get on with it. We have seen many times over the consequences of not supporting educators in this regard. A good example of this was the introduction of interactive whiteboards at the turn of the century. Despite this huge investment in thousands of schools, few ever saw the benefits of having these expensive pieces of technology in the classroom, largely due to a **lack of training in how to use them**.

WHY?

There are many reasons why you might choose to use technology to support your work as an educator, particularly in the classroom. It could be using dictation to speed up typing. It could be reducing your marking by using online tools to test your learners. It could be all manner of quantitative and qualitative reasons; the important point here is that you do not start with the technology. Pedagogy is often the driver for technology use in the classroom.

Another good reason to look at technology is cost savings.

Just because you can use technology, it should not automatically make it so that you do. If you start with the technology, you end up with the tail wagging the dog and not the other way around. It is important that if you want to make the most of – and get the most benefit from – using technology as an educator, it should be something in place to serve you and your work, not the other way around.

HOW TO MEASURE IT?

Measuring impact of the use of technology in the classroom is often done by looking at the results of students in different classes; comparing the results of those students who had access to technology with those who did not. This often, however, negates the real benefits of technology use.

When you start to measure the impact of technology use, you will notice that there are both qualitative and quantitative improvements and impacts.

There are a variety of key things you should be looking for:

- Time saving
- Cost saving
- Supporting and enhancing learning
- Supporting and enhancing teaching
- Ease of use
- Ease of sharing
- Consistency of approach
- Improved communication
- Improved collaboration

Research shows that the use of technology itself does not automatically improve results. The benefits you find are often subtle and require the right attitudes to learning from students and uses of technology by educators. Therefore, careful thinking about how to implement technology into your specific phase, subject area or topic is an important element to consider. **This curated collection of online learning resources** provides a wealth of information to reflect upon.

HOW TO DO IT?

How you go about doing all this highly depends on how this is being worked upon in your school or organization. If you are reading this and it is only you who is exploring the use of technology in the classroom, then the approach is different from if it was being explored at a whole-school level.

Where we see the best use of technology in schools is when we see a consistent and supportive (by training and other activities) approach taken on board by all members of the school community: from educators, to middle leaders, to the senior leaders. In general terms, keeping things focused upon **four key areas** will bring the most benefits:

1. Explore how technology will improve teaching and learning before introducing it.
2. Explore how technology can improve the quality of explanations and modelling in your subject/topic focus.
3. Explore how technology can improve the impact of pupil practice in your subject/topic focus.
4. Explore how technology can improve assessment and/or feedback in your subject area/topic focus.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO?

When looking at these things at any level, training is of paramount importance, as is ease of support for when things don't go quite right. A regular and persistent focus on getting all the elements in place and used by all will ensure that things (albeit maybe not straight away) will work well for you in your classrooms.

Learning from our experiences of lockdown about blending learning for our students, equally, this could and probably should apply to our colleagues too. Think about using the tools you have available to you to help provide synchronous and asynchronous opportunities for professional learning. One of the reasons why Twitter is such a popular platform for professional learning and discourse isn't the platform itself, but the fact that it is there whenever you want it. Factor this thinking into the outlined points shared below.

You will need:

- A clear and consistent vision of what you are trying to achieve.
- An action plan stating when, how and where different things will take place.
- To make staff aware of who will be expected to and will be using these technologies. This will help to give support across colleagues and other key stakeholders.
- To ensure the infrastructure is in place to support these efforts, such as: sufficient Wi-Fi bandwidth, access to devices, access to software.
- To provide training to ensure everyone knows how and when best to use software and hardware and how it can support learning.

LEARNERS

There are so many ways that technology can support students: from wellbeing apps to help with sleep to the use of simple tools such as 'Screen Time' to help them manage their own digital usage, there's a plethora of tools that can support them with their day-to-day activities as a learner.

Of course, there will always be the pull of the latest games in vogue and keeping up with appearances on a variety of social media. Part of our responsibility as educators is to ensure that learners get the best in terms of supporting them with their digital literacy and citizenship. Another important part of that links directly to their own wellbeing, but metacognitively it's important that they know how best to use education technology to support their endeavors as learners too. In this section, we will explore how to approach that.

Another issue which has been compounded in light of worldwide events and our need to respond to remote learning, is to consider what access to technology your student community has at home. Thinking back to synchronous vs asynchronous, if students don't have access to the infrastructure (bandwidth, sufficient data and Wi-Fi) or the hardware they need, they simply will not be able to engage at home.

"

At the British School of Barcelona, our three educational aims are:

Academic - We inspire all to be creative, curious thinkers within a culture of support and challenge.

Character - We provide individual growth through high expectations; demonstrating commitment, resilience and respect for all.

Global - We are global citizens, embracing difference, cared for and caring, and principled in our beliefs

Our #BSBDigitalStrategy is interwoven through these educational aims. We want our learners to be future ready, curious, challenged and be able to be sound global and digital citizens and it's something we are passionate about. To this end, we work hard to ensure that our #BSBDigitalStrategy is inclusive, accessible and equitable to ensure all learners' experiences are enriched. Developing a digital strategy involves careful thinking across every phase of our school – from EYFS right through into our Pre-University provision – and none of this would be possible without careful planning, discussion and engagement with all stakeholders within our learning community. Our #BSBDigitalStrategy holds great importance for us and for this reason, it is embedded within our whole school vision.

EMMA OVERTON - HEADTEACHER OF EYFS AND PRIMARY AT THE BRITISH SCHOOL OF BARCELONA

"

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE AND WHY DO IT?

As mentioned in the Educator section, it is important to think carefully about the approaches that research has shown can have an impact on learning and teaching. It is also important to think carefully about those tools that don't necessarily bring improvements to learning or teaching, but still provide value. Areas to consider include:

- The time savings they bring.
- The protections they give linked to online safety.
- The improved accessibility opportunities they afford learners and educators.
- The improved communication or collaboration opportunities they offer.
- The opportunities technology can bring to help develop creativity.

For many schools and educators, using technology has many wide-ranging impacts other than just teaching and learning specific apps and tools. The same is true with students. Another good example of this is around resources. By comparing traditional sharing of learning materials with learners, we can see quickly there are some clear benefits to sharing resources digitally:

TRADITIONAL PAPER-BASED RESOURCES	DIGITAL RESOURCES
Costly to copy	Zero cost to duplicate
Time cost on distribution, time spent at photocopier	Distribute to a whole class with the click of a button
Not environmentally friendly (paper/toner)	Doesn't use paper or toner
Cannot be multimedia	Can be multimedia: online, videos, audio, recordings
Have to carry around	Ease of access on any device
Flat annotation (i.e. you can write on them)	Multiple types of annotation: collaborative, audio, video, links to other sources etc.

As we can see, digitizing resources for students does not bring about teaching and learning gains; however, efficiencies and cost savings can be made.

Other areas that should be considered include:

- Ease of assessment
- Organization
- Dual coding
- Revision
- Accessibility
- Modeling
- Quizzing
- Spaced practice
- Creativity
- Retrieval practice
- Collaboration

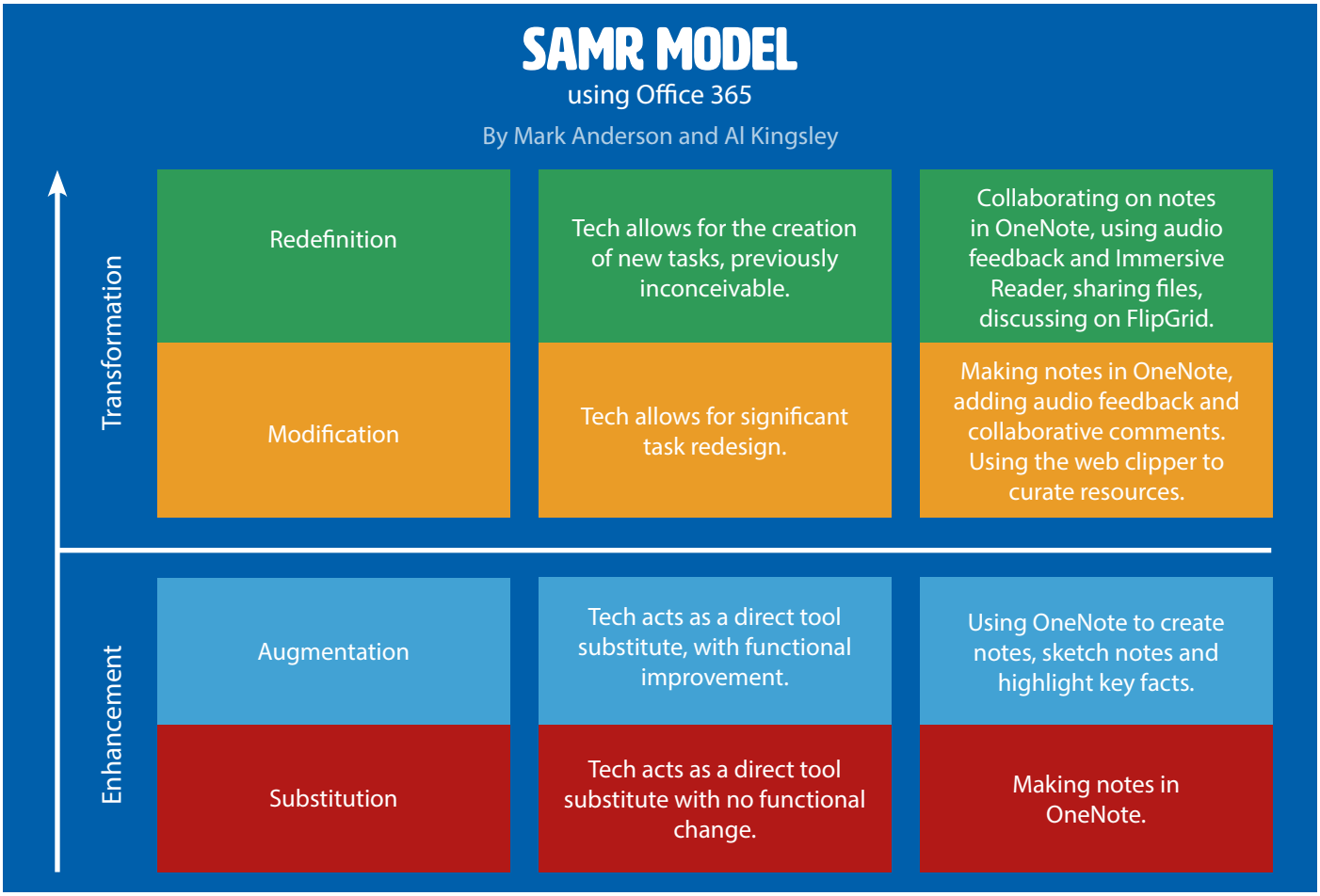
Some of these areas may not bring gains in terms of raising standards, but they can bring about qualitative improvements which cannot be gained without technology (or at least without extra work for the educator!).

A great and important example of this is accessibility. Regardless of whether you look at Microsoft, Google or Apple, each technological ecosystem has lots of accessibility options to ensure your learners can easily access the materials that you are sharing with them. Additional to that, as an educator, you are far more easily able to see what work learners are doing (through a tool such as NetSupport School, for example), thus reducing the amount of time it might otherwise take to highlight issues learners may be having in the classroom.

The key takeaway should be that all this thinking should inform what you do following your exploration of each of these different opportunities, while gauging how each can provide value to you in your context.

> "Our digital strategy is an integral part of our learner journey in our College. Our strategy encompasses how technology can support teaching and learning, allows personalization of information and guidance, and allows new and exciting learning opportunities for our learners. We pride ourselves on our values of 'inspirational, influential and inclusive' – the last being of strategic importance. By planning our strategy, we are advancing the equity of access to learning for our learners with ALN/SEND, something that we pride ourselves on here, helping us create skilled and employable people.
>
> **JAMES DONALDSON, DEAN OF FACULTY, LEARNER JOURNEY, CARDIFF AND VALE COLLEGE**

A great tool to help us with our thinking about what is worth exploring with technology is the SAMR model from Dr Ruben Puentedura.



HOW TO MEASURE IT?

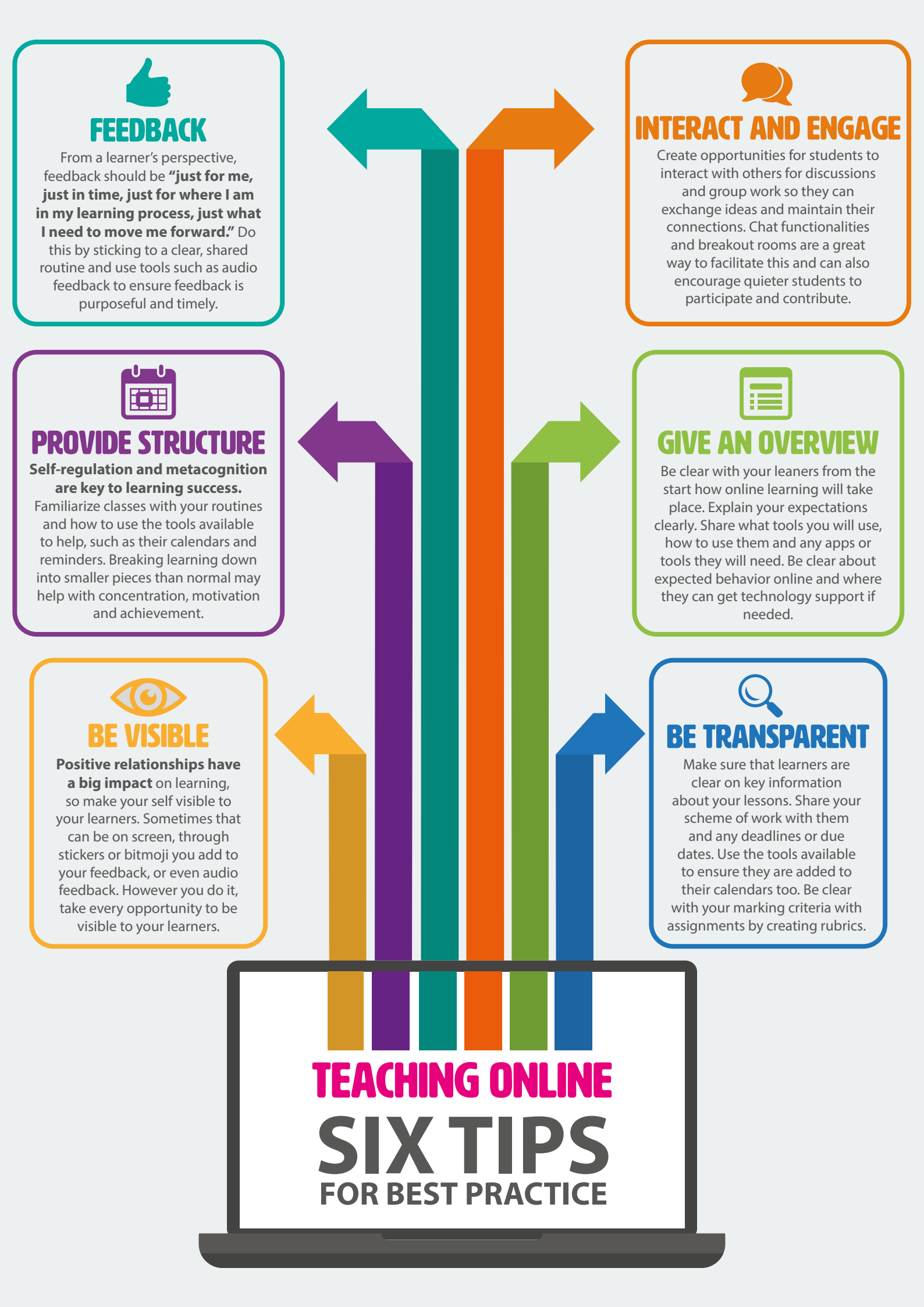
The impacts of technology use can be huge; they can however also be subtle. The most important thing is that you have considered your intended outcomes in some detail and tested things out before trying things on a large scale.

If you are new to a particular tool that hasn't been widely adopted or in use within your organization, a good consideration of its usefulness is to try it out with a number of internal test groups before deploying it on a larger scale. You will be looking for qualitative and/or quantitative improvements such as those mentioned earlier, that bring value and/or impact, before opening it up to a larger scale implementation.

HOW TO DO IT?

There are many approaches you can take; however, a joined-up one is often best. Rather than asking students to use three tools with one educator, three with another, and three with another and so on, having a consistent approach to technology use across your school will mean learners are far more adept and skilled at using them in each context. This means you won't have to spend precious curriculum time training learners in the different opportunities available – and, more importantly, learners only need to remember the few specific and regularly employed tools that they use with many of their classes.

Taking this joined-up thinking one stage further, what is often seen in schools that use technology well is incorporating skill-building in using the different apps within one specific area, e.g. in technology-related or Computing lessons. Some schools have a lesson where they spend time not only training students how to best use EdTech to support their learning, but also work closely with them to help them learn about learning and metacognitive techniques. Research shows that educators who help students to improve their learning behaviors are 10 times more effective at improving their students' final grades than educators who focus solely on **test scores**.


FEEDBACK
From a learner's perspective, feedback should be "just for me, just in time, just for where I am in my learning process, just what I need to move me forward." Do this by sticking to a clear, shared routine and use tools such as audio feedback to ensure feedback is purposeful and timely.
INTERACT AND ENGAGE
Create opportunities for students to interact with others for discussions and group work so they can exchange ideas and maintain their connections. Chat functionalities and breakout rooms are a great way to facilitate this and can also encourage quieter students to participate and contribute.
PROVIDE STRUCTURE
Self-regulation and metacognition are key to learning success. Familiarize classes with your routines and how to use the tools available to help, such as their calendars and reminders. Breaking learning down into smaller pieces than normal may help with concentration, motivation and achievement.
GIVE AN OVERVIEW
Be clear with your leaners from the start how online learning will take place. Explain your expectations clearly. Share what tools you will use, how to use them and any apps or tools they will need. Be clear about expected behavior online and where they can get technology support if needed.
BE VISIBLE
Positive relationships have a big impact on learning, so make your self visible to your learners. Sometimes that can be on screen, through stickers or bitmoji you add to your feedback, or even audio feedback. However you do it, take every opportunity to be visible to your learners.
BE TRANSPARENT
Make sure that learners are clear on key information about your lessons. Share your scheme of work with them and any deadlines or due dates. Use the tools available to ensure they are added to their calendars too. Be clear with your marking criteria with assignments by creating rubrics.
TEACHING ONLINE
SIX TIPS
FOR BEST PRACTICE

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

Collaboration and communication have been at the heart of the offer from the likes of Google since way before they created Google Suite for Education. Since the early years of Google's tools such as Google Docs, Sheets and Slides, Microsoft has worked hard to develop online versions of its Office 365 tools too, including the use of and access to cloud services such as Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Azure.

The Coronavirus pandemic has seen a huge jump both in terms of usage and innovations to both Google and Microsoft's online offerings and, while Google's tools are still predominantly only available in the cloud, they do have app-based versions for most of their tools that work on iOS and its Android platforms.

Linked to their predominance in the browser-based sector, as demonstrated in the poll below, Google Chrome also remains the most popular browser choice in schools too:

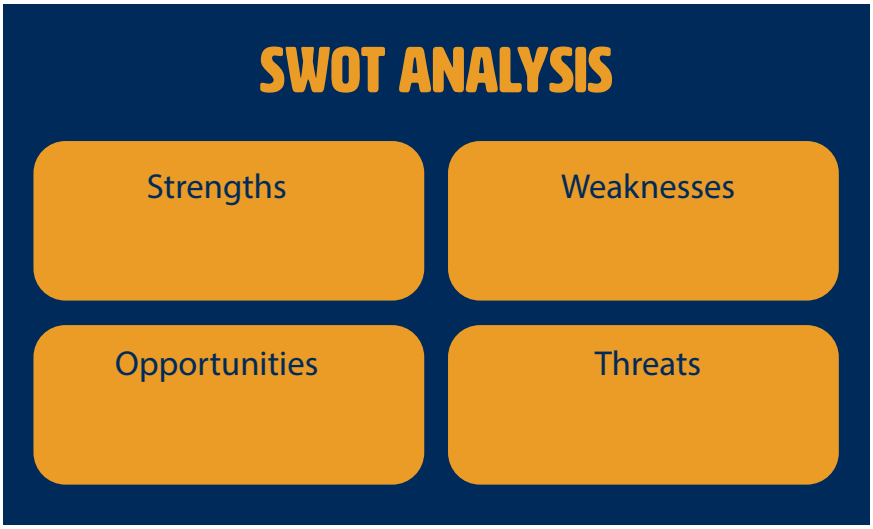
Using online tools can bring significant benefits. If we take for example the big shift towards the use of Chromebooks in schools... This has brought significant cost savings as the unit cost of devices is significantly lower when compared with laptops and also brings a change in the infrastructure required in schools.

Tools you might have previously used that required specialist hardware, such as video or other content creation, now work superbly well in-browser, offsetting the need for local processing to that which is available through the cloud.

If the pandemic has taught us anything in regard to working and learning online, it's that whether you work within a Google or a Microsoft digital ecosystem, having access to superb tools that promote collaboration and communication at their core has been so important.

If you're a Google school, that tends to mean using **Google Classroom** and **Google Meet** - and likewise in a Microsoft school, using **Microsoft Teams** and **OneNote Class Notebook**. To give an idea of the increase in usage, in the first week of lockdown, Microsoft Teams usage jumped from **32 million daily active users on 11 March, compared to 44 million just a few days later on 18 March 2020**.

This has led to **Microsoft sharing that they think the pandemic has changed the way we work and learn forever**.



When thinking about how you're going to work with any kind of initiative, a useful tool to help provide balances and checks against a new activity is the completion of a SWOT analysis. This will help you to identify any strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats that the initiative may involve. Examining what you plan to do this way can help you decide what is worthwhile and what may need to be mitigated for.

Another similar framework to support your planning and preparation is a PEST analysis. This works in a similar way to the SWOT analysis, but in the alternative, this asks you to consider any Political, Environmental, Societal or Technological issues or barriers you may face when developing your strategy.

COMMUNICATION

One of the huge benefits of using online tools is the opportunities for ease of communication and doing so in easily trackable, targeted and strategic ways. In the business world (and for many schools who use it), tools such as **Slack** are fantastic for communication between colleagues, a space for working on projects, tracking activities, sending short messages, rather than pinging lots of email threads which can easily clog up your inbox – and much more.

The Google and Microsoft ecosystems have great tools for communication through things such as Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Chat and Meet and the tools they work with in a linked-up way too, such as OneNote Class/Staff Notebook, OneDrive, Google Drive, Outlook and Google Calendar.

Making use of these tools is a fantastic way to communicate with each other strategically, helping you be more productive and taking on board some of the things learned over the years through productivity approaches such as those by Dave Allen and his '**Getting Things Done**' strategies, and other productivity approaches such as '**Inbox Zero**' **from Merlin Mann**.

There's a lot to think about when it comes to communication – and email management is a large part of the solution. Simple things such as banning 'all staff' emails can have a big impact on collective efficacy. As outlined by the **research from John Hattie**, collective teacher efficacy in their teaching and learning approaches can have a big impact on student learning (he says it's among one of the most impactful strategies you can develop around teaching and learning). This applies to the benefits that can be gained from developing your communication methods too. The same is also true of using the collaborative tools that are available to you, which we will cover later in this section.

Mindful, consistently applied approaches to communication using the tools you have available to you can both improve efficiency and productivity and also reduce workload.

USE OF VIDEO COMMUNICATION TOOLS

One of the strengths of the two ecosystems from Microsoft and Google during the pandemic have been the use of the available video tools for interaction, engagement, teaching, wellbeing check-ins and more.

The innovations have been coming thick and fast and that hasn't been just from them. Another hugely popular video conferencing tool for lesson delivery, catch-ups and more has been **Zoom**, which, due to some security flaws at the start of the pandemic, led to a new phrase, '**Zoombombing**,' becoming part of everyone's everyday vernacular.

Whichever tool you choose to use, there are some **simple guidelines** you can follow to help make sure online safety and best practice sit front and center in your thinking.

This is a good point in your digital strategy planning to be mindful of the digital divide and accessibility of the tools you select. Often, a smartphone is the lowest common denominator for children, with some households needing them to share a single tablet or laptop with their parents. Schools also should consider resources like 4G dongles to ensure the entire cohort is able to engage consistently.

GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Before starting with any live lessons, working closely with families to ensure successful onboarding for video communication is key to success (the same is true for all your remote learning approaches).

Sharing a guide with families on this prior to starting a session and giving them the opportunity to get comfortable and confident with the platform from the start, will help to ensure these things work every time.

Other general guidelines will also help, such as:

- Parents review features with their children, so they all know what is possible and permissible (e.g., mute sound, use text chat, screen share, annotate a whiteboard etc.), depending upon the functionality of the software.
- Wear appropriate dress for being on camera.
- Engage in video sessions in appropriate spaces – not bedrooms or bathrooms!
- Parents attend for the first few lessons with their children, if possible, to ensure all stakeholders know what to do and when to do it.
- Create a calendar or use the calendaring tools available from Microsoft or Google to map out when video sessions will take place.
- Check your camera and microphone are working and set to the right levels.
- Make sure necessary equipment is nearby, e.g., books, pens and other stationery.
- Close other browser tabs to reduce the load on your computer.
- Keep your laptop plugged into mains power.
- Choose appropriate backgrounds.
- Keep pets or other distractions away.
- Respect the platform – behavior is important, so do not send inappropriate messages or be silly with the tools available.
- Be mindful that sessions will most likely be recorded for online safety reasons – choose your words and messages carefully.

GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS

- Have consistent processes for all teaching staff. Share your processes with educators and, just like you would with an Acceptable Use Policy, have a similar form or agreement in place for video sessions signed by colleagues – not just for consent, but for agreement to meet online safety regulations.
- Use a consistent platform which has been properly checked for data privacy reasons.
- Do not use personal devices or accounts, e.g., your personal Google account.
- Wear appropriate dress (top AND bottom!).
- Be mindful of your background, even if you can use green screen-type effects.
- Have a few test runs with colleagues to ensure you are comfortable with running a video chat for connecting with learners in this way.
- Use the tools available to you (such as those within Google and Microsoft) to set up your lessons/sessions.
- Engage in video sessions in an appropriate location, not your garden or bathroom.

- Do not start sessions with students in a one-to-one setting – some schools recommend a 1:4 ratio as a minimum.
- Close other tabs, programs or apps to reduce the load on your device and ensure the computer can handle what you're doing, without interruptions or technical issues.
- Keep pets and other distractions away. If you are having to parent while trying to complete these things, consider discussing with your school whether it is appropriate for you to be doing this.
- Share a calendar of planned video sessions with your students. This is a key benefit of Google Meet and its links to Google Classroom – and similarly within Microsoft Teams.
- Think about your body language. Sometimes you will be presenting full screen so you cannot see yourself, but your learners can, so don't pick your nose or do other things you wouldn't normally do in front of them!
- If possible, record your sessions and save to the cloud (either Microsoft Stream or Google Drive, depending upon your infrastructure) for transparency and online safety reasons.
- Check your desktop – you will often want to share your screen. Keep personal items off your desktop and close other apps or tools that may contain personal information, such as that found within your MIS.

TOP TEN TIPS FOR USING VIDEO CONFERENCING WITH LEARNERS

1. Be mindful of online safety and data privacy.
2. Be transparent and share what and when you are going to do it – and record it.
3. Use video conferencing as part of a blended approach.
4. Recognize that there are several ways you can use video as part of your blended approach – not just video conferencing.
5. Acquire consent from stakeholders.
6. Provide training and time for familiarization for all stakeholders.
7. Be appropriate in your language, body language, attire and attitude.
8. Choose a suitable location and remove distractions.
9. Ensure digital divide in your community is mitigated for by auditing stakeholders.
10. Provide equipment for educators to deliver these sessions.

COLLABORATION

As discussed above, the collaboration opportunities available from the platforms schools use are a real strength of the offers from both Google and Microsoft. Mark Anderson recalls an experience prior to using these:

"I remember developing our School Improvement Plan (SIP) a few years ago before we started using collaborative tools. We would all be working in a document being pinged around by email to each other. We had multiple file names for the SIP such as "SIP v4 final final.docx" – nobody really knew which was the latest version and we were overwriting each other's amendments and improvements. It was a complete nightmare and a productivity sinkhole. Something had to change.

"By moving our SIP into the cloud, it was:

- secure
- collaborative
- always live
- easy to work on
- and we could work on the document at the same time, with multiple users on multiple devices.

"It was a godsend. We hugely improved our collective efficacy and our productivity. From this, we developed part of our digital strategy to move many of our school-based documents into the cloud:

- Meeting agendas (which then became the minutes)
- Lesson observation notes
- Learning walk notes
- The School Development Plan
- The School Improvement Plan
- Strategy documents
- Policy documents
- School board/committee meeting agendas
- School board/committee meeting minutes

"In fact, we did this not just with the documentation we worked on together in a collaborative sense, but also with the documentation we shared with our parent and student body too.

"Using the granular access controls available on each document and folder meant that we could give edit access, read access and comment access. This made us significantly more productive and, as a result, more agile and ultimately more successful with our use of the technology."

The same sorts of principles can be and are applied in many of the tools available to you through your Microsoft and Google offering to support teaching and learning.

For example, if you set an assignment activity in Google Classroom, you can share documents with the learners. You can:

- Share a collaborative document that all students can work on.
- Share a template document which Google Classroom will then make a copy of for each individual student you assign it to (and link in Google Classroom to where that document has been saved into each student's individual Google Drive folder).
- Share a copy of an uneditable document as a resource – and more!

Similar opportunities exist within OneNote Class Notebook, Teams and in Apple's 'Schoolwork' app.

As we share elsewhere in this guide, the Bananarama principle applies here too; it isn't (so much) what you do, it's the way that you do it.

You could for example, photocopy a worksheet and deal with an analogue paper-based system, or even spend time emailing a document or learning resource to your learners and receive them back into your email inbox. This would be overwhelming and excruciatingly difficult for educators to manage and navigate.

Before Google Classroom was developed, Mark distinctly remembered trying to get learners to work using Google Docs and receiving 30 notifications of documents being shared with him, then attempting to navigate that and, while having been taught many times to ensure sharing was done giving 'edit' access to a document, half of the class only giving 'view' access, so he couldn't leave feedback. It was a logistical nightmare.

By bringing your collaborative and communication tools under one roof, using them in consistent ways for teaching, learning, leadership, sharing and whole school activities, you will see savings in time, workload and, ultimately, money.

NEXT STEPS

There are many ways that the tools available to you to collaborate with can be used. It's not just about the documents you can work on together to speed up productivity and completion rates.

Using the features of tools such as Teams or Slack can provide fantastic spaces and breakout places for discussion – not just using text or audio, but video options too.

Consider your policy around the use of staff devices too. The device an educator or school leader will always have with them is their phone, so do you, for example, allow colleagues to have the Teams app on their phone for ease of communication? Best practice is to not allow such tools on personal devices, so, if your budget allows for it, does the school allow for key staff to have school devices (such as phones) as part of the offer? Does the opportunity cost of the potential financial savings balance against the increased productivity that can ensue? All things to consider. Alongside that:

- Think about what you can collaborate on in the cloud with colleagues.
- Set up folders with sharing set at a folder level to enable automatic sharing with specific groups or users.
- Use tools outside of your ecosystem which have links to your platform, e.g., **ClickView**, which can operate within Microsoft Teams or send directly into Google Classroom.
- Use consistent tools with learners, such as Microsoft Teams or Google Classroom.
- Use instruction tools that are device agnostic, such as **NetSupport School** or **classroom.cloud**.
- Set rules for collaboration with colleagues and learners.
- Set permissions for sharing documents to read-only access when you just want to share information.
- Make it so sharing on your platform is limited to those logged in with your organization's credentials.

> "You wouldn't think of taking your team with you to a destination, without agreeing on the destination first, right? We are all familiar with the importance of Vision and Mission in the school strategy, yet when it comes to collectively determining the most impactful use of technology in learning, sometimes schools do not have the big picture in mind; they don't have a digital strategy. Where do you want to be and how technology can help you get there, are part of the conversations that can be enriched with your digital strategy. I strongly recommend you consider developing a digital strategy for your school."
>
> **YOLANDA RAMÍREZ LAGOS, DIRECTOR OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION AT INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS**

OLLY LEWIS

TRAINING LEADERSHIP EDTECH

SELF-INTRODUCTION

I am an educator with over ten years' qualified experience, including various middle and senior leader roles responsible for pastoral, academic and professional development within schools. I currently lead on teaching and learning, along with leading the Science faculty. Next year, I will be leading on digital strategy across my current school.

In 2020, I won a GESS Award for best use of digital learning in the classroom for school-wide strategy and implementation of CENTURY. I also hold a Masters in Educational Leadership, along with various other post-nominals such as QTS, PGCE, BSc, FCCT, #MIE, #GoogleCE and #AppleEducator.

I'm passionate about student outcomes, pedagogy, technology, teaching, learning and educator professional development. I engage in my own professional development outside of school too, and through my networking and sharing I have run workshops in schools and conferences across the UK and UAE.

ORGANIZATION
British International School Abu Dhabi

@OLewis_coaching **ollylewislearning.com/**

CASE STUDY

Our digital strategy is framed around the use of the Office 365 ecosystem. We chose to use this because it enables stakeholders in the school community to work from anywhere, provided they have access to the internet. It's easy to manage, with the additional benefits of single sign-on, and provides a safe and secure platform within which to store and manage whole-school data.

We developed our digital strategy by firstly exploring our curriculum to see areas where technology:

- was already being used well
- needed improvement
- could provide opportunities for development.

By doing this and then closely evaluating the technology we already had in the school, plus running a full digital audit of the hardware, software and digital subscriptions we already had, we were informed of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis). This gave us a clear roadmap of the areas we could capitalize on in terms of teaching, learning and our infrastructure and where any potential cost savings could be made.

Our digital strategy was constructed around the following principles:

- Streamline effectiveness and efficiency
- Improve accessibility for all stakeholders
- Foster creative teaching, learning and professional development opportunities
- Secure data and safeguarding within our ecosystem.

The most prominently used tools to facilitate teaching and learning are Microsoft Teams, OneNote Class Notebook and Microsoft Stream. As our approach is a blend of both synchronous and asynchronous learning, with an emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity, we provide learning opportunities for students which are equitable, have suitable academic rigor and promote collaboration.

We decided that for our digital strategy, the best method for teaching and learning with technology was for each cohort to have a simple and uniform approach, regardless of year group within the Secondary school. We aimed to provide consistency in the usage of Microsoft Teams and OneNote Class Notebook and ensure that, included within each, there was a channel for each subject.

Having this consistency across the board for our learners and educators makes navigation, communication, accessibility, planning, sharing and knowledge of the tools as easy as possible for all stakeholders. This strategy makes everything - from the subject channels to the wellbeing channel - easy for students to navigate through, helping to drive efficiency and effectiveness.

By using OneNote Class Notebooks, educators can easily distribute work, set collaborative group tasks and provide meaningful feedback in the form of audio notes, written comments and digital inking. Students can use the Office 365 suite of tools to connect and collaborate during learning and then upload documents or additional multimedia to help facilitate real-time collaboration that is supported and stored in a secure environment.

In terms of assessment, as a school, we decided that our digital strategy should focus on pedagogy first and evidence-informed approaches to using technology. So, when it came to assessment, we decided on two key areas:

1. Low-stakes formative assessment using technology; this allows educators to monitor student learning with a means to provide feedback to help move the learning forward and support learner progression through our choices of platform, such as **CENTURY**, **Microsoft Forms** and **Quizizz**.
2. Using technology to provide feedback in formats that are easy for our learners to access (such as via audio messaging) and for our educators to complete. This has seen far more engagement from our learners as a result.

What has been really powerful through our choices has been that by using these tools we have not only reduced workload, but we have increased our efficiency and helped learners to respond to their feedback more fully, creatively and with more engagement. We have also noticed that the feedback loops have been tightened, while colleague satisfaction with our processes has increased.

Nicole Ferguson, Head of Year 3, says, "The students love the fact that their feedback is immediate and [they] use the resources more carefully as they know it forms part of our discussions with them – this is crucial! This means that together we can move on quickly and helps to improve our overall efficiency and effectiveness."

Another benefit of using consistently-applied tools where we use low-stakes approaches (such as those through Quizizz, Microsoft Forms and CENTURY) is that it gives us a rich data set which, in turn, means teachers are enabled to make evidence-informed decisions in their next-steps planning and lessons. This further helps them to develop student knowledge and deal quickly with misconceptions to move student learning forwards.

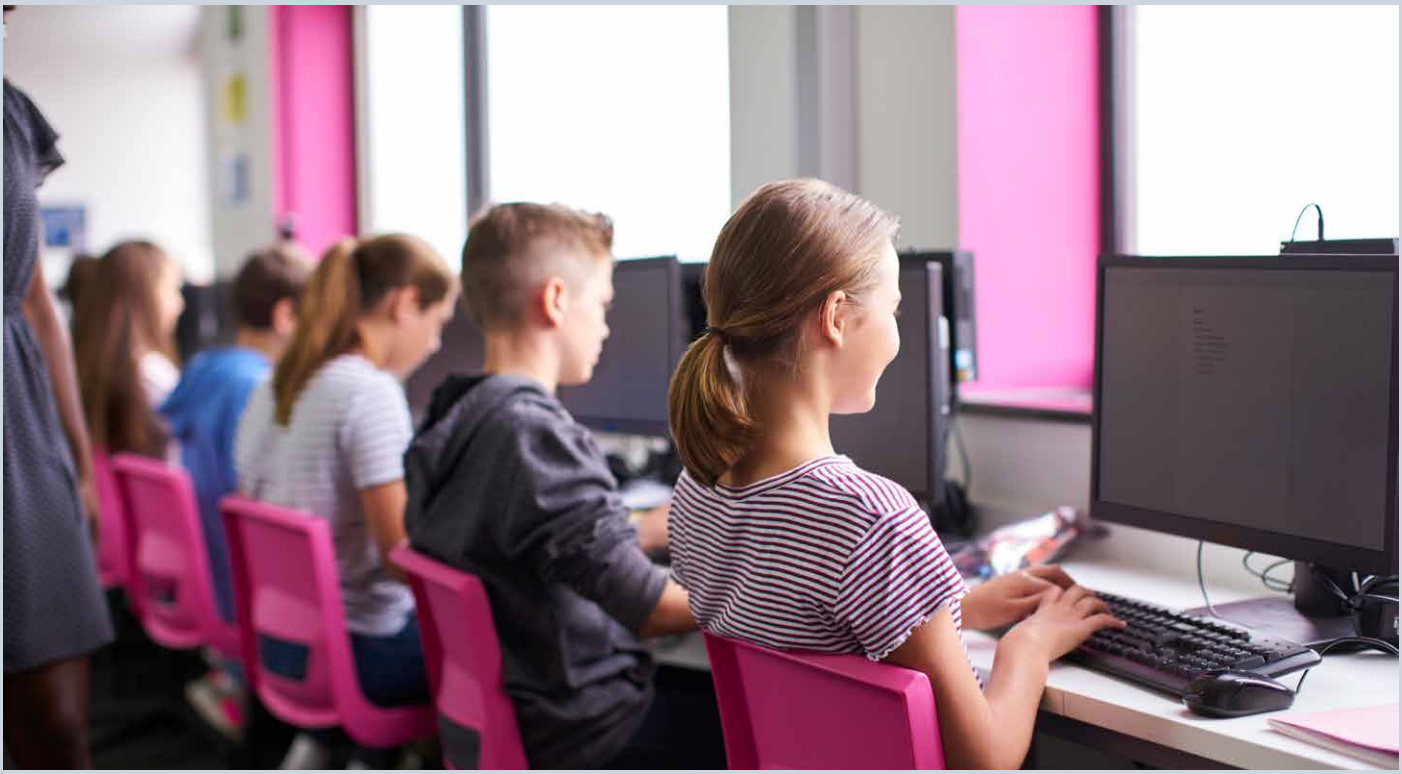
Transitioning to online learning will have been a challenge for many institutions, even when already familiar with using technology tools at scale, due to the inherent and embedded ways of working we are all familiar with. At scale, moving to online learning for many has required rapid adaptation and autonomy of new skills, underpinned with a heuristic approach to the challenges of screen time. Due to the hard work and planning we undertook at the school, incorporating training, infrastructure improvements and stakeholder engagement, our transition to learning online has been smooth.

At the British International School Abu Dhabi, post lockdown, we have been using a blended approach of synchronous and asynchronous learning, built upon our pre-existing digital strategy and our school values. The benefits of this are many:

- Enabling flexibility and autonomy for all stakeholders
- Ensuring opportunity for connectivity through scheduled live lessons
- Facilitating focused sessions which support both the learning and wellbeing of students
- Reinforcing our school's values of support, encouragement and showing kindness to one another.

Examples of activities that have proven popular using our strategic approaches have been:

- Service challenges for each month
- PE challenges
- Staff/Wellbeing Action Group (SWAG)
- Daily riddles for year groups
- Celebration assemblies for each year group
- House challenges
- Wellbeing channel.



LINDA PARSONS

DIGITAL STRATEGY DIGCIT EDTECH

SELF-INTRODUCTION

I am a Science Educator in a British school in the UAE who has a passion for integrating educational technology to make my life easier and my students' education easier. I started off as a Google Educator in a leading school in Kuwait, before joining my current school. This passion spilled over to my entire school in 2018, when I became the Digital Lead for the Secondary branch of the school. This year, I even started speaking about our school's EdTech journey at the British University and GESS Dubai.

Back in September 2018, we didn't have a digital strategy and educators were left to integrate whatever technology they wanted into their lessons. This was great (but only to an extent!), as there were pockets of brilliance, but also some very apprehensive students and educators who felt the school could do much more regarding training and using our resources effectively to "supercharge" our learning. Furthermore, although we had a brilliant Microsoft Education package, our educators and students were taught to use iPads, which made integration from all the apps we bought into a little tricky.

ORGANIZATION
Deira International School

@digilin_ https://digilinlearning.com/

CASE STUDY

Rewind 18 months and Deira International School was preparing to begin the school year, 2019-2020. This year, there would be a difference. This year, there would be a digital strategy.

This marked a significant change for us. To understand its significance, we need to first explain what our digital environment was, before we developed a strategy.

Like the majority of schools worldwide, we consider ourselves regular users of technology in the classroom. For the last seven years, our school has cemented a Bring Your Own Device policy, heavily recommending iPads for our students and providing iPads for educators. Optional sessions were held throughout the year on a series of apps that the "techiest" educators had found, creating enthusiastic, yet uneven delivery. Our students and educators were expected to communicate and learn on a series of apps that were optimized for best use on Windows devices. Every single document was also saved onto the school's immense physical servers, which created multiple copies of the same document when educators attempted to work together to create content.

If this sounds complicated and a little confusing, it was. Now add to the mix that we had been paying for, but not actually using, the Office 365 Suite for Education, and our school felt like we had all the tools laid out for a great digital environment, but no vision for the future or direction to guide our educators' and students' adoption of technology.

At this point, I would like to stress that although this was not an ideal situation for a school to be in, it is also not an uncommon one.

Before developing a digital strategy, we needed a digital vision to develop our Primary and Secondary school as a harmonious unit. This was written based upon our school's vision, and clearly focuses all our strategic decisions towards the teaching aims of the school. Every policy and rollout we implement needs to be related back to our digital vision to ensure we remain consistent throughout our school.

Using our new digital vision, we went about rebuilding a better, more sustainable and future-ready digital environment. We decided on a five-year long-term plan for the school, which was split into five strands. These strands were:

1. Digital Communication
2. Citizenship
3. Educational Technology
4. Device Strategy
5. Staff professional development.

We selected these to focus on in order to ensure even development of all aspects of our digital environment.

The Digital Strategy Group leading our change incorporates at least one representative for our six key stakeholders (teaching and learning, students, parents, educators, IT Management and Administration) to ensure our vision is kept on track. We communicate regularly, which ensures we are moving towards one digital environment that spans both of our schools.

We planned in detail our first year aims and the roadmap of our digital transformation by using the ADKAR model. The ADKAR model for change management provides a framework to consider your audience's Awareness for change, Desire for change to happen, Knowledge of what needs to happen to reach the goal, Ability to facilitate the change, and Reinforcement of their new skills once they have transformed.

Awareness for change

Desire for change to happen

Knowledge of what is needed for change

Ability to facilitate the change

Reinforcement of new skills

We picked this because it guides change transformation by enabling advanced planning in order to coach small groups and large organizations through the trauma of change. We did not want to rely on isolated training days and speeches and just hope our parents and educators would follow us into the huge upheaval we were are about to throw at them. We wanted to know that they were willing, prepared and active participants in rebuilding our school's digital environment.

AWARENESS:

The first step was to complete a school-wide audit of every subscription to ascertain the strengths and diversity of our digital environment. By inviting every member of the Primary, Secondary and Administration teams to take part, we instantly gave everyone the Awareness that change was coming, and a personal voice in the process.

We used the audit data to decide on the yearly objective for each strand. Digital environments are complex in their many fluid parts and the ever-developing nature of the EdTech industry. Focusing on foundation whole school apps to support teaching and learning made it easier for the educators to develop their skills in a sustainable fashion, and easier for the digital environment to support students as they progressed through the school.

DESIRE AND KNOWLEDGE:

It is important to acknowledge the foundation of skills that your stakeholders already have. Everyone will be different.

Our training is now delivered and run as practical workshops by trained expert educators or Microsoft trainers. By the end of every session, all educators will have something to take away to use in their classrooms immediately. Our workshops also had easy ways that educators could realize their own progress and the next steps they could

take. Student training was completed in form time in a similar fashion, and the skills repeated consistently by every educator in their lessons.

Considering the hardware that the students, educators and parents use to access the environment was integral to the success of our digital strategy – for any platform we implemented, we provided tailor-made instructions on how to access the platform on iOS, Windows and mobile devices. Our friendlier and more flexible whole-school environment needed to work seamlessly on the devices that we would guide our students to purchase, otherwise it wouldn't provide the support at all! Educators are now provided with optimized devices to allow them to carry out all work tasks with ease, wherever they are. Our digital environment now develops the key skills of personal cloud management, effective online collaboration and citizenship in every lesson.

The more we developed our community, the more knowledge they received. It was fantastic to see us all move organically onto the next phase: Ability.

ABILITY:

Our new environment is tailored to encourage both staff and student use of only their school account Microsoft SSO (Single Sign On), making our digital classrooms easier to access and more secure. Coupled with our educators feeling more empowered by their personal development and knowledge, we found that the community was moving forwards and displaying their ability of the foundation skills they had learnt in a variety of innovative ways in their own digital classrooms. Their ability to use more viable and efficient ways of working also enabled our IT budget to be more effectively spent for a sustainable future. For instance, in September, we will stop using our physical servers and move onto cloud-based management of our school files for both educators and students. This was made possible because of the development of cloud-based collaboration and communication integrated into our first year of development.

REINFORCEMENT – AND REFLECTION:

In hindsight, the events of COVID-19 supercharged our digital transformation; however, we are pleased to reflect that because we had already implemented a strategy, it was easier to map the training and professional development of our staff, parents and students in relation to their synchronous online learning this year. Reinforcement of the skills developed, the knowledge gained and pushing the educators' and students' ability to communicate and learn in innovative ways happens every day. Our aim for next year is to continue reinforcing the skills developed this year and move towards a better digital future. Just like the development of the physical school environment, we cannot afford to stagnate or regress in our development. We are confident that we have guided the development of digital teaching and learning skills so that they will continue to grow in the immediate and long-term future – whatever that future may hold for us all.

LEADERSHIP

With the increasing use of digital technologies and media in education, the need for a digital strategy is more important than ever, but the driver for producing a plan will be different for each organization.

A 2015 survey undertaken by **Planet eStream** in conjunction with the **ISC Digital Strategy Group**, cited the top catalysts that led to the implementation of a digital strategy were:

- Historic under-utilization of educational technology
- Ageing technology/reliability
- Data security/storage concerns
- Too many disparate technologies in place
- Breaking the cycle of IT strategy just being a rolling replacement plan
- Requirement for 24/7 access to data
- Lack of value for money from existing technology
- Increasing support overhead.

These drivers, amongst others (perhaps now including pandemics or other impacts on access to school facilities), still hold true and, as always, it's preferable to plan for the future before one of these topics creates sufficient impact to force a change.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

When the same respondents were asked what their digital strategy goals were, there were clear, common themes alongside variances specific to a school's current challenges. The top responses were:

- Enhance learning outcomes
- Increase staff, student and parental engagement
- Implement collaborative technologies
- Promote digital wellbeing
- Implement unified and integrated technologies
- Technology refresh as part of an overall strategy
- Increase attainment
- Implement a data security policy that delivers on both legal and operational requirements
- Achieve better value for money
- Drive efficiencies within your technical team.

WHAT ELSE?

This year, we have seen COVID-19 redefine very quickly the way schools have had to deliver learning to their children, with a different emphasis on remote learning and maintaining effective communication with both peers and students. Add to that (and quite rightly so) a shift in recent times towards ensuring the protection of personal data, as well as an ever-growing eye towards deploying cloud-based technologies. Some have seen a more cautious approach to the cloud and question the need to shift all data away from the local enterprise, but no matter what the driver, it only further validates the need to have a strategy in place.

With staff costs accounting for typically 75-85% of a school's operational costs, it's no surprise that workload, retention and wellbeing continue to be a core concern for senior leaders, and the deployment of effective (and proven) solutions to reduce workload, help towards staff retention and, of course, support outstanding teaching practice, are never more important.

With the advent of Covid-19 and a different way of working, it brings back into question the rationale for replacing individual devices for teachers (laptops, typically) with front-of-class PCs. Some schools have taken this approach to reduce IT costs and ensure a classroom is always operational from an IT perspective, but it leaves the onus on staff to have their own tech to use at home – and, as we have seen recently, that's not always viable or reasonable to expect.

STAFF HAVING 1:1 DEVICES MAKES A LOT MORE SENSE IN THIS NEW FLUID AND MOBILE WORLD.

Ultimately, all the above will be structured into a priority order, and this might well start with alignment to the school's current year development plan. But no matter which step is first within the strategy, it's fair to state that better decisions will be made if the longer-term direction is agreed in advance, rather than making decisions in isolation.

For leaders, the starting point is to consider who should be involved as stakeholders in the creation of the digital strategy. The start of this guide provides a high-level suggestion of the areas of the school that should be included, and part of that process will be identifying which individuals will take the strategy forward within the school. It might be tempting to identify one individual who is most able/enthusiastic to drive it forward, but it's important to ensure your strategy won't derail if they leave the school, so having more than one lead is a sensible approach.

When considering what key steps are required to achieve your digital strategy, many are contained within this guide under the different section headings. The most frequently cited will include:

- Leadership – ensure all teaching staff have IT skills at a level to support implementation.
- Leadership/Educators – make sure leadership are on a shared journey with educators by ensuring they know how to use EdTech to support teaching and learning too.
- IT Management – ensure a robust infrastructure is in place.
- Leadership – develop a structured training program for staff.
- IT Management – secure and safeguard your data.
- Leadership – gain support for the proposed strategy from all teaching and support staff.
- IT Management/Finance – review current technology platforms.
- Educators/IT Management – research potential new technology platforms that facilitate both local and remote learning (ensure teaching and learning is at a capacity where adding digital solutions will enhance rather than impede).
- Leadership/Finance – secure a budget allocation.

POSSIBLE BARRIERS

Other than budget and how that might impact the timeline for delivering a digital strategy, the biggest single barrier to successful implementation will be lack of 'buy-in' from staff of time allocated to execute it. This can partially be overcome by clear co-production of the strategy alongside its communication and vision, thereby setting a reasonable level of expectation for staff. Also, factoring in sufficient professional development time to familiarize and gain confidence will ensure equality of access to technology for educators.

TOP TIPS

1. Keep it simple – overly complicated strategies offer less flexibility and are more likely to disenfranchise the school community.
2. Be clear on your current starting position and know what does and doesn't work well already.
3. Assign value to current technology on the simple measure of: would anyone notice if it was gone?
4. Consider whether your plan is sustainable (time and finance).
5. Ensure true co-creation and the broadest possible input (whilst managing expectations).
6. Factor time and budget to training – it will make or break your success.
7. Seek peer reviews from other schools or professionals who have already been on the journey.
8. For good practice, check to ensure your vendors have strong security rules and a commitment to cyber security in place for their own operation.

With the advent of Covid-19 and a different way of working for educators, it brings back into question the rationale for replacing individual devices for educators (laptops, typically) with front-of-class PCs. Some schools have taken this approach to reduce IT costs and ensure a classroom is always operational from an IT perspective, but it leaves the onus on staff to have their own tech to use at home – and, as we have seen recently, that's not always viable or reasonable to expect.

OLLY LEWIS

TRAINING LEADERSHIP EDTECH

SELF-INTRODUCTION

I am an educator with over ten years' qualified experience, including various middle and senior leader roles responsible for pastoral, academic and professional development within schools. I currently lead on teaching and learning, along with leading the science faculty. Next year, I will be leading on digital strategy across my current school.

In 2020, I won a GESS Award for best use of digital learning in the classroom for school-wide strategy and implementation of CENTURY. I also hold a Masters in Educational Leadership, along with various other post-nominals such as QTS, PGCE, BSc, FCCT, #MIE, #GoogleCE and #AppleEducator.

I'm passionate about student outcomes, pedagogy, technology, teaching, learning and educator professional development. I engage in my own professional development outside of school too and through my networking and sharing I have run workshops in schools and conferences across the UK and UAE.

ORGANIZATION
British International School Abu Dhabi

@OLewis_coaching ollylewislearning.com/

CASE STUDY

Part of my role as Assistant Headteacher at **BISAD** (British International School Abu Dhabi) is to develop the use of technology to support teaching and learning. As we all know, education is a constantly evolving profession and a key aspect of the leadership teams within schools should be that we reflect and evaluate our work in an ongoing way to inform how we develop. This aids our careful future planning to drive learning and governance forward across all areas within our community.

When looking at change management, therefore, we should involve key stakeholders in the process. Sometimes this can be limited to a few key staff; however, there will be occasions where this needs to be school-wide, such as when deploying large-scale technologies. Even if a staff member isn't going to use the technology, their buy-in and support are invaluable to ensuring the success of the initiative.

One such deployment that I led on recently was that of inviting **CENTURY Tech** into school. CENTURY provides an AI-based solution which supports teaching and learning while reducing workload. They came in and presented to key colleagues across our Primary and Secondary schools, so that everyone had a clear picture of what the product could do and could ask questions relating specifically to their phase.

When proposing a case for change, it is important to have a focus group that will strategize the road ahead, seek out and then analyze potential solutions before implementing any change(s).

In our case and context, we wanted a product that could really put data in the hands of educators and learners, plus stretch and challenge while supporting learners as individuals; this is where CENTURY came in.

Along with a clear plan, communication is a vital element in the process to ensure there are no mixed messages and that every stakeholder understands what you are doing and why. This should not only include educators and leaders but also your network manager, as they will often deal with a multitude of scenarios behind the scenes to make sure that it works where it needs to: the classroom.

Continuing with the theme of communication, making sure that the narrative with both colleagues and your EdTech vendor doesn't stop once a product is live, is super-important. A key driver for keeping your colleagues focused on moving forward and using the technology is keeping it fresh in their minds – so keep this up through regular conversations in department meetings, whole-school communications and sharing with parents. It is equally important to stay up to date with future updates and plans with the product your vendor supplies, so that this can be factored into your own strategy within the school.

Another driver for using the product is to ensure that the initiative can be embedded and incorporated into existing established structures and systems within your school. For example, with trying to ensure our students used CENTURY regularly, we had to decide: do we reward students in assemblies with certificates, a house points system, a rewards folder or online journal of achievement? Including success and achievement within your existing frameworks helps to both identify and acknowledge success with your initiative. It will also help to drive engagement and add value to systems for students and other stakeholders, such as staff.

One thing that we did was to make good use of the CENTURY display boards, which gave us another opportunity to visibly showcase students' success. Having these in a central location in the school to celebrate students added further value; we called them CENTURIONS of LEARNING. Shifting the focus slightly each half term provided us with the opportunity to help make the initiative more equitable to ensure all students gained the opportunity to make it to the top.

OUTCOMES

In the first six weeks since the launch of CENTURY, students have answered 198,779 questions. CENTURY estimates this to be 552 hours of educator time saved marking (based on 10 seconds per question), allowing for greater intervention, stretch and challenge in lessons as a direct result. There were also 11,485 recommendations made to extend learning for students. These were smart interventions made by the AI, of which nearly all have been acted upon by the students. These stats placed our school in the top user category (top 5%) of all schools using the platform, which is remarkable given the short period of time we've been using the product.

We have also displayed leaderboards across the school in core subject areas, awarded CENTURY certificates to students in awards assemblies and linked their achievements to our House system to further promote learning, while also starting to embed it into the fabric of the school. The next phase of this will be to link each individual's success on the platform to our BISAD diploma, which recognizes achievements across all academic and non-academic curriculum areas.

CENTURY has enabled BISAD to better prepare its students for life in a fast-changing world by not only improving their learning, but also enhancing their learning agency. It provides our students with greater freedom and flexibility to flourish as learners. On top of this, providing students, educators and their parents with greater levels of data and insights into learning has improved the school's overall learning environment.


DIGITAL
GLOBAL
NEWS
PEOPLE
CONNECT

IT INFRASTRUCTURE

When it comes to a piecemeal approach to updating or introducing technology in the classroom, it's true to say that in many schools, the IT management and infrastructure are often forgotten.

For every new device added or application deployed, consideration needs to be given to how that device will be managed and maintained, who will have responsibility, and what additional demands it will place on the existing school infrastructure. The classic example is the school that introduces a new class full of iPads but makes no consideration (or budget allowance) for additional Wi-Fi Access Points, MDM (Mobile Device Management) tools or training budget. We also now need to factor in a greater need for technology to be accessible both locally and remotely, the ability to deploy devices in the field and connect staff with students, no matter where they are.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Who will be responsible for managing and maintaining the new technology?
- What connectivity or services do they require to operate as expected?
- How will devices be managed (MDM/IT Management software) to ensure controlled and appropriate use?
- Has training been allocated for the staff using the technology?
- Who will lead that training? How much will it cost? How long will it take?
- Has training been allocated for the network manager/IT admins who will be supporting the technology?
- What is the expected useful life of the new technology and when will it need replacement?
- Is it compatible with the existing technology in the school?
- Have other schools deployed the same technology successfully? What issues did they have initially?
- Where appropriate, has consideration been given to data protection and privacy? This is relevant when an application or service captures or retains students' personal information.
- Does the new technology pose any data protection or privacy implications?
- Can the relevant technology be used by students on their own devices?
- Do we have effective tools to foster collaboration and learning remotely?
- Can cost savings be leveraged by implementing more effective IT management tools?
- Do we have a suitable Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity plan in place?

One of the key starting points from an infrastructure and IT management perspective is having a grip of your current IT estate; being able to identify assets that are upgradeable or prioritizing those that will soon be due for replacement, so your existing IT refresh can be part of the broader digital strategy.

Any decision to spend valuable resources on EdTech needs to have the opportunity to ultimately evidence impact. A good starting point is to have the tools in place to evidence that your current IT is being fully utilized and deployed in the right areas, so that wastage and savings can be identified. A good example is the renewal of some curriculum software licenses. Establish how many you own versus how many are installed and then, most importantly, how many times they have been used by staff and students. The latter information can generate significant savings in not automatically renewing underutilized or obsolete software.

> "Essentially, from a network manager's point of view, it's important that the school has a digital strategy. That way, the senior management team and the technical staff are working together. There is no point in teachers/management wanting to introduce a technology if, from a technical point of view, it isn't possible."
>
> KARL DENTON, IT MANAGER, ST BEDE C OF E PRIMARY MULTI ACADEMY TRUST

WATCH OUR BIG EDUCATION DEBATES!

Our invited guest education sector experts join together to discuss topics of the day, including...

- online safety and digital citizenship
- using EdTech in the classroom
- challenges in the education sector
- the future of EdTech – and much more!

WATCH THE DEBATES HERE!

Some of the challenges faced by network managers when implementing a digital strategy can be:

- Time constraints and capacity to implement alongside day-to-day responsibilities.
- Not enough 'buy in' from teaching staff.
- Constantly evolving technology choices, making it hard to back the right solution.
- Insufficient communication from leadership to all stakeholders about the strategy, vision and practical timescales.
- Confidence in suitable support from technology partners and vendors (especially in the current economic climate).
- Delays in decision making due to uncertainty with school funding.

Most of these start with straightforward communication to ensure all stakeholders have a common expectation. The key to a successful strategy is ensuring that the IT manager and their team have a clear understanding of what is needed and a voice to flag and provide solutions to barriers. As mentioned earlier in the guide, a co-produced strategy will have a much greater chance of success than one forced upon staff.

What the school's digital strategy should mean for IT services:

- Efficient management of resources.
- A central coordinated port of call for IT support.
- Adequate training to ensure skilled staff and managing users' expectations.
- Planned development of secure systems with reliability, futureproofing and documentation.
- Rigorous Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery plans.

NEXT STEPS

1. **CREATE A CLEAR PICTURE OF YOUR SCHOOL'S (OR CLUSTER'S) CURRENT TECHNOLOGY.**
2. **ENSURE IT'S BEING USED AND LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF IMPACT.**
3. **BUILD YOUR FUTURE STRATEGY AROUND ENSURING YOUR EXISTING TECHNOLOGY WILL CONTINUE TO ADD VALUE.**

Click here to read a recent article written by Al Kingsley for Forbes on how schools can prepare themselves for a digital future.


Forbes

Shaping Your School's Digital Future

Al Kingsley Forbes Councils Member
Forbes Technology Council COUNCIL POST | Paid Program

SHAPING YOUR SCHOOL'S DIGITAL FUTURE

Published by Forbes | Comments by **Al Kingsley,** MD of NetSupport.

What does a school built for the digital world look like? It is where pedagogy, experience and outcomes come first. It is where education technology (edtech) is not a discussion but an integral part of the school day — and is only used when appropriate, rather than being forced into every class or subject. Teachers have the confidence to use existing tools and are not afraid to try new ones to enrich

Knowledge is power

Being informed and in control of all the technologies, devices and software your school owns or subscribes to (and knowing where they are all located) is a good base to work from as you begin to form your digital strategy. Most importantly, you will need to take stock of your school's infrastructure and decide whether it has the capacity to run whatever future technologies you choose

i d students, parents, the IT team and school administrators to leaders with responsibilities for finance, data privacy, e-safety and more — and your digital goals will need to consider them all.

It is worth enhancing your school's communications with tools that will help achieve this wide reach, for example, using solutions like Teams, Google Meet

AL KINGSLEY
@AlKingsley_Edu

MARK ANDERSON
@ICTEvangelist

We recommend...

ALLANA GAY
@AllanaG13

BRETT SALAKAS
@MrSalakas

STEVEN HOPE
@hope_steven

NADINE BERNARD
@Nadineolivia32

JONATHAN GLAZZARD
@j_glazzard

ERIC SHENINGER
@e_sheninger

KATHI KERSZNOWSKI
@kerszi

BUKKY YUSUF
@rondelle10_b

JAKE MILLER
@JakeMillerTech

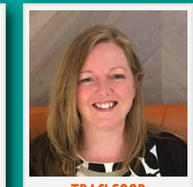
ALISON KRIEL
@AlisonKriel

LINDA PARSONS
@DigiLin_

KEN SHELTON
@k_shelton

KELLY HANNAGHAN
@mindworkmatters

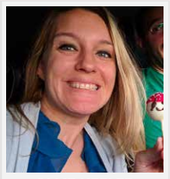
BEN WHITAKER
@Itsbenwhitaker



TRACI GOOD
@OnlineSafetyHub

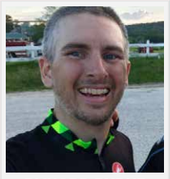
DEB KELLSEY
@DebKellsey

MONICA BURNS
@ClassTechTips



ALICE KEELER
@alicekeeler

MARK MARTIN
@urban_teacher



RICHARD BYRNE
@rmbyrne

MARK STEED
@independenthead

TONY VINCENT
@tonyvincent

JAZ AMPAW-FARR
@jazampawfarr

STEVE BAMBURY
@steve_bambury

ZEINA CHALICH
@ZeinaChalich

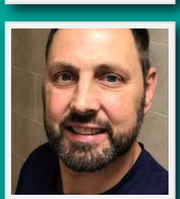
MARTIN BAILEY
@animate2Educate

MATT MILLER
@jmattmiller

OSI EJIOFOR
@OsisTechTips

SCOTT HAYDEN
@scottdhayden

RUSSELL PRUE
@russellprue



JULIAN WOOD
@ideas_factory

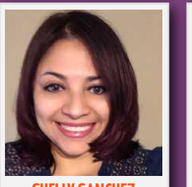
DAN FITZPATRICK
@DanFitzTweets

DAWN HALLYBONE
@dawnhallybone

JON NEALE
@jnealeuk

KELLY EDWARDS
@KellyEd824

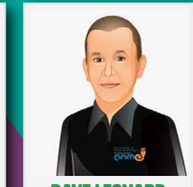
ADAM CHASE
@_geekyTeacher



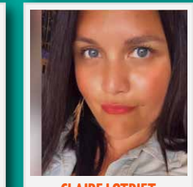
SHELLY SANCHEZ
@ShellTerrell

CLAIRE JONES
@ClaireJones_HT

NIC FORD
@nfordteacher



DAVE LEONARD
@itbadger



CLAIRE LOTRIET
@OhLottie

TOP EDUCATORS AND EXPERTS TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER!

DIGITAL AWARENESS UK
@DigitalSisters

LAURA KNIGHT
@asklauraknight

NICOLE PONSFORD
@NicolePonsford

SOPHIE BAILEY
@soph_bailey

OLLY LEWIS
@OLewis_coaching

ABID PATEL
@abid_patel

HENRY PLATTEN
@Henry_Platten

AUGMENTIFYIT
@AugmentifyIt

TONY SHEPPARD
@Grumbledook

ANN PALMER
@Ann_Palmer20

ALAN MACKENZIE
@esafetyadviser

ANN MARIE CHRISTIAN
@Annmariechild

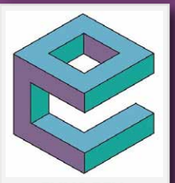
SARAH THOMAS
@sarahdateechur

KIRSTY GRUNDY
@KirstyGrundySTP

CAT SCUTT
@CatScutt

PAUL WATKINS
@Lanny_Watkins

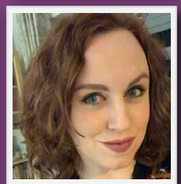
DREW POVEY
@DrewPovey



EMMA BELL
@El_Timbre

GARY SPRACKLEN
@Nelkcarps

BOB HARRISON
@BobHarrisonEdu



MARIE-CLAIRE KELLY
@eLearnMissKelly

SIMON BLOWER
@SimonPobble

JON TAIT
@TeamTait

MATTHEW LYNCH
@Lynch39083

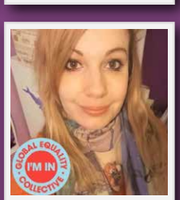
PAUL TULLOCK
@MrTullock

CAROLINE WRIGHT
@CJPWright

CAROLINE KEEP
@Ka81

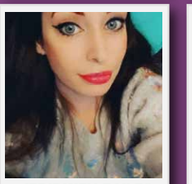
JENNIFER GONZALEZ
@cultofpedagogy

DEE SARAN
@dee_saran

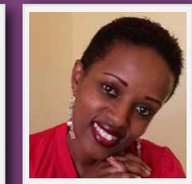


KAT CAUCHI
@ReallyschoolK

ABDUL CHOHAN
@abdulchohan



CERIDWEN ECCLES
@Teacherglitter



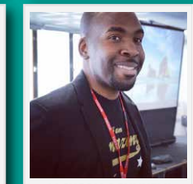
SUSAN GAKUNGU
@SuHappyNess

LORD JIM KNIGHT
@LordJimKnight

DR JILL BERRY
@jillberry102

ANDI PRICE
@MrAndiPrice

RACHEL COATHUP
@TechMissC



JACKSON OGUNYEMI
@Actionjackson

HOLLY CLARK
@HollyClarkEdu

SIMON JOHNSON
@clcsimon

AFTAB HUSSAIN
@Aftab_Hussain

ESAM BABOUKHAN
@soslearning

PETER HORNER
@peterghorner

J GROCOTT
@Deputygrocott

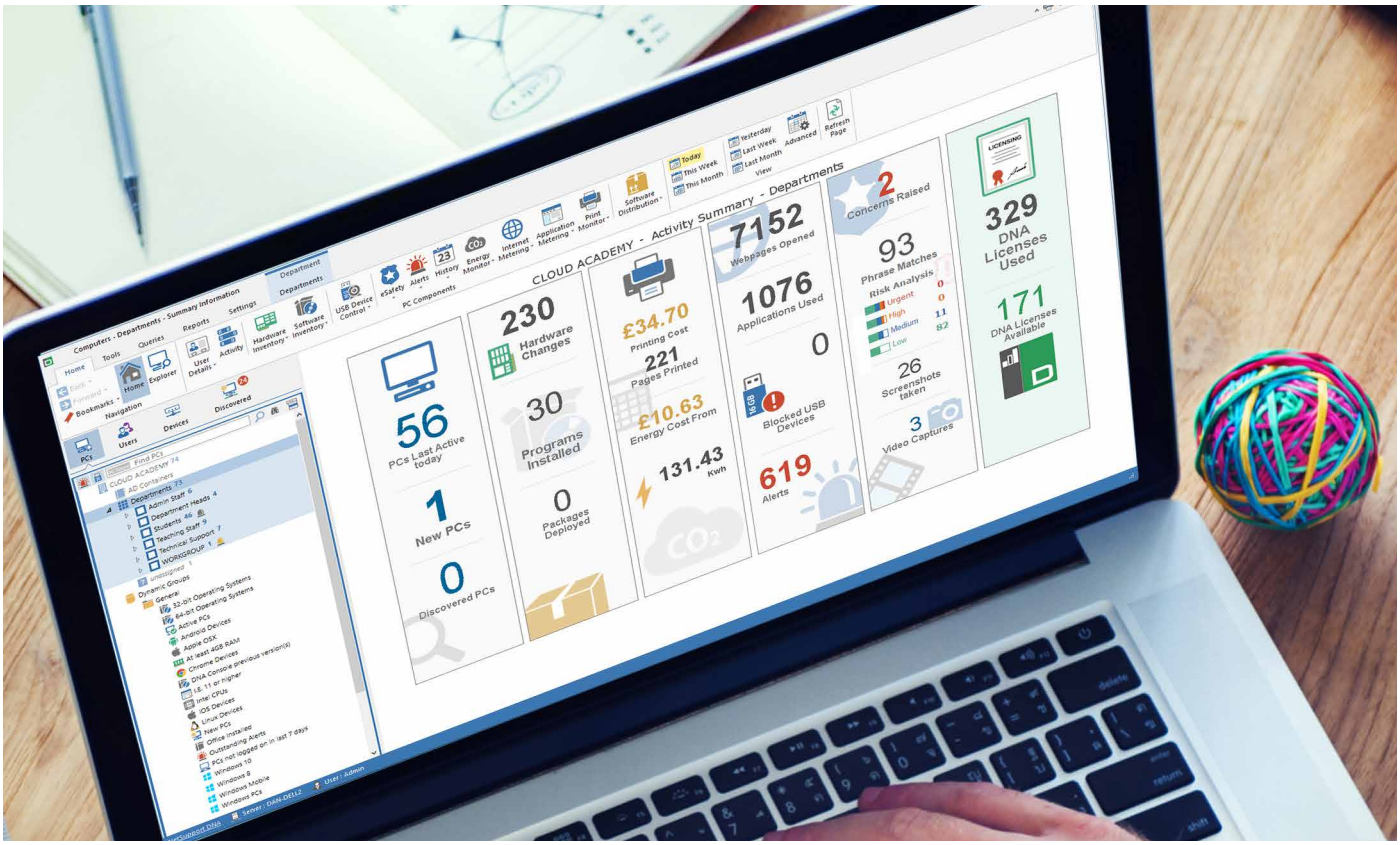
FINANCE

It's safe to say everyone in education recognizes the current challenges with school budgets that don't present any short-term optimism for school finances. With that in mind, it's a difficult landscape in which to be planning a digital strategy.

Or is it?

If schools are simply waiting for the 'right time' (i.e., when they have the money) to plan their digital strategy, then it will be a long wait. Therefore, we need to be clever about it. We know that the classroom solutions chosen as part of a digital strategy should be primarily based on sound pedagogical reasons and their future impact on student outcomes. That said, a broader view can also incorporate the benefits of that same technology in other areas, e.g., to help with school administration or to deliver efficiencies for educators and/or different support departments.

You are never going to find one solution that does everything you need, but by being open to the idea of what additional functionality any single product can offer you, you can take advantage of any multi-tasking capability which will often translate into savings of either money or time – and as they say, time is money.



NetSupport DNA Dashboard

SO, WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The financial foundation for a digital strategy should always be to look at efficiencies with your existing technology, before adding more. Questions to consider and seek answers for might include:

- Are we able to identify current rarely-used IT devices that can be better redeployed elsewhere to avoid needing to purchase additional kit?
- Can older devices be redeployed to areas where they are needed for less challenging purposes (e.g. can an older Windows laptop be repurposed as a Chrome-based device for minimal cost)?

- Are some devices suitable for upgrade rather than disposal and replacement?
- Are we confident that all software licenses we own are actually installed on school computers?
- Are we confident the software licenses we renew each year are actually being used regularly? (In many schools, automatic renewals of subscriptions and maintenance agreements occur year-on-year without checking if they are still required, which wastes precious budget funds).
- Are staff and student devices being left on at night or over a weekend and creating unnecessary energy costs?
- Do we have a breakdown of our current print costs and could we achieve savings by going paperless?
- Can the technology we invest in provide greater resilience for both local and remote learning if needed?

The final measure is, of course, use. Once you know the devices you own and the software on them, the final part of the jigsaw puzzle is to be able to monitor and evidence use. Schools will often have requests for perhaps more PCs for older students (such as those aged 15 to 18 studying Business Studies) and, rather than purchase new devices, will identify PCs elsewhere that are rarely turned on, or tablets in carts that are only used once or twice a week.

Savings generated from the above can then be used to support any new plans in your digital strategy. In essence, get the foundations right and don't build on sandy land, and get the most out of what you have before you spend on more.

ECONOMIES OF SCALE

This applies more typically to groups of schools than individual ones but can be relevant where clusters work together on a regular basis. It's often identified that the key areas where schools within a cluster can make real savings are within HR, Finance and IT. This is typically focused on delivering a single centralized resource rather than replication in each school, but within the context of IT, this also factors in things like standardizing on applications used, group purchasing for more competitive supply rates and sharing training costs for new solutions so staff from individual schools can come together to attend a single session.

Multi-use is also a worthy variable. We know each type of technology has a particular strength, so where traditionally a PC would be installed front of class for an educator, perhaps consider instead a tablet and keyboard; these can still perform the typical use for registration, presentations, student data and so on, but can also be used to showcase apps, new curriculum content, AR and more. The more multi-use a device, the less need for additional technology – even if, in the short-term, there doesn't appear to be an immediate saving.

A good, centralized IT management system should deliver a return on investment within months and is often the starting point for freeing up savings to be used to support the school's future digital strategy.

Perhaps another consideration, albeit an intangible cost, is the deployment of appropriate technology that reduces educator workload. This could potentially play a small part in staff retention and, as a result, help to reduce future recruitment costs. We wouldn't suggest this is the key factor, but under the broader measure of 'marginal gains,' a school with a good digital strategy, and the right tools to empower educators, will be a more attractive work environment.

> "Multi-year financial forecasting in schools has never been harder or more reliant on a degree of crystal ball gazing. So, with an uncertain funding landscape, it's even more essential to ensure that the money we spend on EdTech now is going to have maximum impact on outcomes and, just as importantly, is sustainable for the long term.
>
> **AL KINGSLEY, CHAIR OF TWO MULTI ACADEMY TRUSTS AND CEO OF NETSUPPORT** "


IMPACT

HOW TO MEASURE IMPACT

Ultimately, alongside student outcomes, the simplest measure of impact with all school IT systems is their use: how quickly can they become adopted and does their use help save time, improve accessibility to data and reduce operational costs. Seeing a return on investment from any technology purchase is welcome and with solutions that start by helping schools to keep energy use or print costs in check, for example, that will soon become evident.

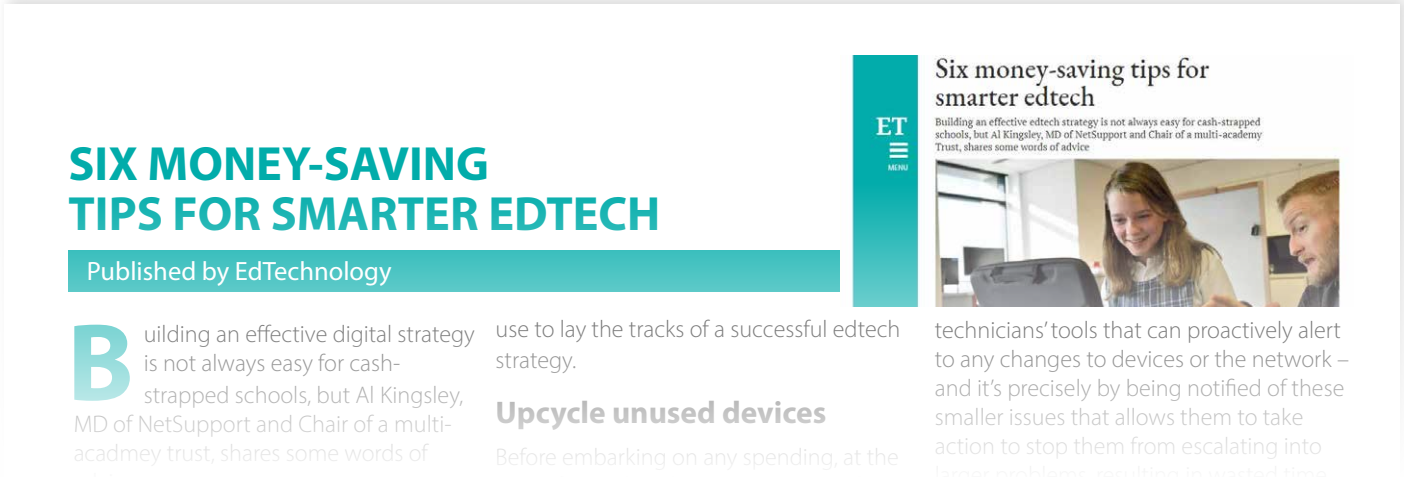
Financial restrictions will rarely mean that a digital strategy can be adopted in one go, but a clear picture of the strategy from day one will ensure that short-term purchases aren't wasted by being redundant in the longer term.

NEXT STEPS

1. IDENTIFY AREAS OF FINANCIAL SAVINGS WITH YOUR CURRENT TECHNOLOGY (BETTER DEPLOYMENT, WASTED LICENSES, POWER MANAGEMENT, ETC.)
2. IDENTIFY WHERE MARGINAL GAINS CAN BE ACHIEVED (STANDARDIZING TOOLS, CENTRAL MANAGEMENT, GROUP PURCHASING)
3. IMPLEMENT TOOLS OR PROCESSES TO ENSURE VALUE CAN BE EVIDENCED FROM NEW TECHNOLOGY.

> "Digital technology is transforming how we teach and learn, however with a lot going on in the world of education technology, it is vitally important that you have a digital strategy in place to help you outline and create a clear path to strategic goals. A digital strategy is a way to ensure everyone is on the same page, helping align every department, at the same time encouraging conversation and collaboration - both crucial to strategic success.
>
> TIM EVANS, EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR, STAMFORD AMERICAN SCHOOL HONG KONG"

Click here to read a recent article by Al Kingsley in Education Technology magazine on how schools can save time and money with technology.



SIX MONEY-SAVING TIPS FOR SMARTER EDTECH

Published by EdTechnology

ET MENU

Six money-saving tips for smarter edtech

Building an effective edtech strategy is not always easy for cash-strapped schools, but Al Kingsley, MD of NetSupport and Chair of a multi-academy Trust, shares some words of advice

Building an effective digital strategy is not always easy for cash-strapped schools, but Al Kingsley, MD of NetSupport and Chair of a multi-acadmey trust, shares some words of

use to lay the tracks of a successful edtech strategy.

Upcycle unused devices

Before embarking on any spending, at the

technicians' tools that can proactively alert to any changes to devices or the network – and it's precisely by being notified of these smaller issues that allows them to take action to stop them from escalating into

DATA PRIVACY AND USER RIGHTS

With recent events pushing much of learning online, it's not surprising that the accessibility of more data from our IT tools comes with the need for greater responsibility on how that data is used, where it is stored and more. As part of your digital strategy, it is important to ask some key questions:

- What data do we currently collect and store?
- Do we need all of it to perform our statutory duties?
- Where and how do we keep it and is it secure?
- How do we know it is secure?
- How long do we keep it for?
- Do we have a data retention policy?
- Who has access to the data within the school?
- Who (if anyone) external to the school should have access?
- Where required, have we sought consent to store personal information?
- What processes do we have in place to make sure all colleagues know what to do and how to keep it secure?

These are key questions that need to be considered as part of a broader digital strategy and, depending upon your location around the world, it is likely that you will have legal obligations in relation to this. From an IT perspective, it starts with having full visibility of all the applications the schools uses (gathering a full software inventory) and then identifying the information that each collects and, where relevant, stores. Vendors should provide a data map for software solutions that contain any capacity for storing student or staff data. This will allow you to have clarity on data retention and where it is stored (key for cloud-based solutions).

Where a solution gathers and stores student information, if you're based in the UK you should complete a **DPIA** (Data Protection Impact Assessment) which will help you review the risk associated with storage of the data, controls over access and broader security of the information. If you don't have this in your country, we would recommend you have a look at it for your school.

Fundamentally, we all have a responsibility to use, store and retain the minimum amount of data required to undertake our roles in schools – and there is an onus on all stakeholders to ensure the data we do need is kept secure and for the minimum period required.

> "Knowing what data is being used, the reasons why you need it and how long you need it for, along with the right tools to help you manage it, are essential to successful data management."
>
> **TONY SHEPPARD, HEAD OF SERVICES AND OPERATIONS AT GDPR IN SCHOOLS**

There are strong views held by many about the retention of student data and how it is processed, so to ensure balance in this strategy guide, you may also wish to visit **https://defenddigitalme.com/** who advocate to protect children's rights to privacy and for greater transparency and safety with the use of data in education.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

In special education (also referred to as SEND, ALN or anything else in-between), there are several ways that technology can help learners who have a variety of learning or life differences. Whether it's the built-in accessibility tools that come with an iPad, the **Immersive Reader and Learning Tools** available from Microsoft or the different options available via Google, the important thing is to ensure you know what is available to help.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

As an education professional, there will be times when the learners who come across your path in the classroom will not only benefit from additional support but also from some of the many opportunities that technology can bring to support accessibility.

If you have a responsibility in your school to track, support or manage support for learners with additional needs, there are also many software solutions that can help you in this regard. Linking into previous chapters, technology doesn't always just help with the business of learning or raising standards. From helping you to manage all your intervention plans, to communicating with parents, there are many ways technology can support and provide value and impact to both you and those you support.

WHY?

Having an inclusive classroom is really important to ensure all learners have equal opportunity to succeed. A significant reason to use technology within the SEND space is to help ensure accessibility to the huge array of resources and teaching and learning activities educators share with learners.

A good example of a tool from Microsoft to help support this is 'Learning Tools' including 'Immersive Reader'. They can be found in many of their popular programs such as OneNote and Word and are exceedingly helpful when looking to create an inclusive classroom. Even better, the software makes your resources accessible without you as an educator having to do anything other than use the tools to share the resources. Even when dragging an image into Word, AI (Artificial Intelligence) running in the background will recognize what the image is showing and automatically place 'alt text' (the descriptive text which is read to visually impaired learners by their screen reader technology solutions) on the image.

HOW TO MEASURE IT?

Measuring the impact or value of the tools you use to support inclusivity and accessibility in your classroom(s) is, as with other areas, difficult to pin down. That said, there are some markers you should look for relating to the use of these tools, much as you would with other types of technology in education. You should be looking for things such as:

- Saving time
- Improving accessibility
- Accessibility built in as default
- Cost savings
- Consistency of approach.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO IT?

Earlier in this chapter, we shared examples from Microsoft, but it is important to recognize that there are inclusive opportunities around resources from both Apple and Google too. It is worth remembering that there is no single 'right' approach. What is important in this area (in common with others) is to not look at technology as an end in itself. It is the thinking that goes before any purchase that leads to its use being most effective.

Therefore, as with the other areas, professional development is paramount: not only in terms of learning how to use the different tools available but to also keep abreast of new developments and technologies. As mentioned previously in the 'Educators' section, think carefully and break things down clearly.

Make sure you have:

- a clear vision of what you are trying to achieve.
- an action plan stating when, how and where different things will take place.
- made staff aware of who will be expected to and will be using these technologies. This will help to give support across colleagues and other key stakeholders.
- checked that the infrastructure is in place to support these efforts, such as: sufficient Wi-Fi bandwidth, access to devices, access to software.
- considered the need for provision outside of school through remote learning and how appropriate tools can support that process.
- made provision for training to ensure everyone knows how and when best to use software and hardware and how it can support special education.


Online Security
CONFIRM
Click here for more information

<html>
<body>
Code*

ONLINE SAFETY AND DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP (#DIGCIT)

With the advent of more and more technology in schools, much as in our lives in general, the greater accessibility to online resources requires that students are kept safe online. Schools in England and the US have an obligation under the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance (**KCSIE**); the Prevent Duty; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (**FERPA**), and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (**COPPA**) to ensure content accessible to young people is age appropriate and that tools are in place to monitor and ensure they are safe online.

It's a genuine challenge for all schools to provide students with greater access to technology to support their teaching and learning while simultaneously ensuring that suitable safeguards and controls are implemented. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic places even more focus on the need to support the safe and responsible use of online apps used for learning, collaboration and accessibility. Alongside the technology solutions is the long-term aim of ensuring children are educated and aware of the risks online, sharing their personal data and conducting themselves safely; in essence, to become good digital citizens.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Allow all children to have access to appropriate and valuable online tools and resources while remaining safe – and the risk of exposure to inappropriate content is minimized. As part of your digital strategy, where new IT or software resources are added, it's key to ensure that the school still considers the implications of any new solutions within the context of your online safety obligations. Under the guidelines mentioned earlier, schools must put appropriate internet filters and monitoring systems in place to protect pupils from harmful and unsuitable content. An effective approach to online safety empowers a school to protect and educate students in their use of technology and establish mechanisms to identify and intervene in any incident where appropriate.

The three key areas are:

- Content (being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material).
- Contact (being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users).
- Conduct (personal online behavior that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm).

Schools and colleges should be doing all that they reasonably can from their IT system to limit children's exposure to the above risks.

> "A digital strategy needs to address and give clarity around why and how we deal with safeguarding concerns in an evolving digital world. It should outline measures that will allow us to critically evaluate our impact which, in turn, can help shape and improve future practice."
>
> **TRACI GOOD, ONLINE SAFETY CONSULTANT**

HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

There are a few strategies schools can take. The first consideration is the nature of technology being used (desktops, laptops, tablets) and the systems being accessed, either locally or in the cloud. There are a number of solutions, like **NetSupport DNA**, that allow a school to provide device-wide keyword monitoring and filtering. These solutions are based on detecting the activity of a child online, and, based on terms or phrases typed or copied, will alert staff if they are ones that may place a child at risk. This could be anything from concerns over grooming, where a child is being asked for information such as their age, sex and location, to accessing resources on self-harm or researching information that might be linked to radicalization.

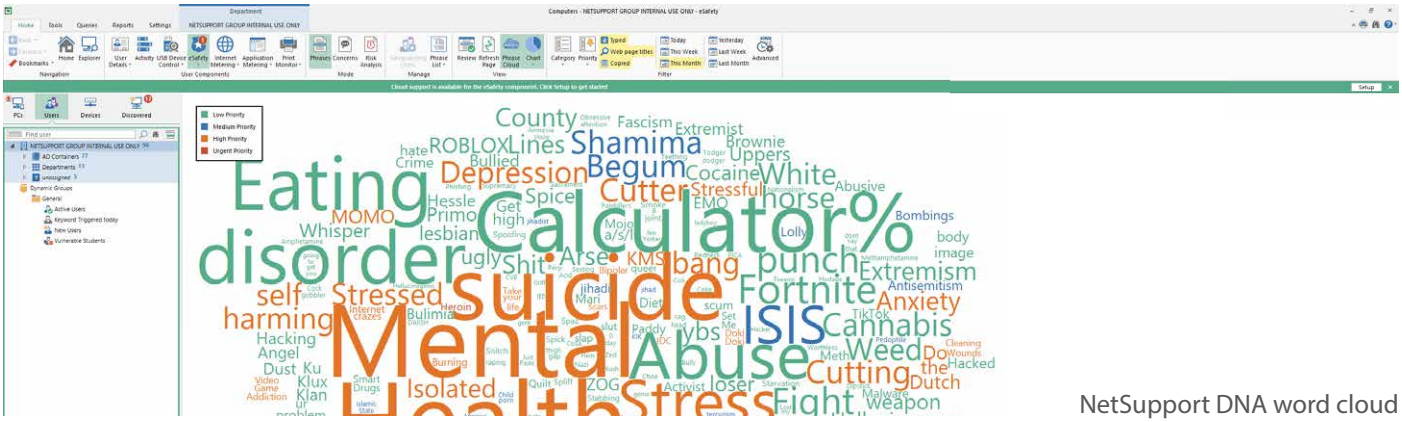
ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE

DISCOVER THE LATEST TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN ONLINE SAFETY

Young people's online worlds consist of social media, chat forums, online games, websites and more, all of which can be accessed via laptops, mobile phones and tablets – 24/7.

Unfortunately, this opens them up to new online risks – from cyberbullying, radicalization and grooming, to sexting and more – meaning that it's more important than ever to educate them about how to be a good digital citizen and how to keep themselves safe online.

Read our Online Safety Guide here!



NetSupport DNA word cloud

Context is key in a school. A good solution like NetSupport DNA will apply rules based on who the child is, how many times they have searched for terms, what kind of website they were on, time of day and more, to ensure alerts to the Student Assistance Counselor, Student Safety and Security Coordinator or Year Group Leader provide the context to identify if there is a genuine concern that requires immediate intervention and support. We recommend that a school should also complete a **DPIA** (Data Protection Impact Assessment) – or local equivalent – for any solution where they will be storing any personal information about a child, as well as ensure they have clear controls over access and data retention.

Under the umbrella of digital citizenship, schools can look to introduce tools that allow a student to digitally report a concern to a trusted member of staff. Also, for younger settings, there are student-led programs such as **eCadets** that delivers training and guidance on keeping safe online, or **GoBubble** that provides a safe space for under 13s to learn, collaborate and communicate with each other. In addition, educators can find useful resources, professional development materials and information on websites such as **commonsense.org** and **ISTE**.

HOW TO MEASURE IMPACT

Evidencing the results of your school's online safety activities is key and having the right digital tools in place can help you answer these three essential questions any inspecting body might ask of your school (as an example, these questions are taken from England's Inspectorate, Ofsted):

1. What do you consider are the most important aspects of online safety at your school?
2. Can you identify three pieces of evidence of a strong online safety culture at your school?
3. What are the inspection activities that will assure inspectors that this is the case?

> "When teaching online safety, the risks often outweigh the opportunities. Technology isn't going away, it's embedded into life; embrace it and if you want impact, balance the positives and inject the risks. Don't teach by fear."
>
> **ALAN MACKENZIE, ONLINE SAFETY SPECIALIST**

NEXT STEPS

1. **REVIEW YOUR CURRENT POLICIES AND ENSURE YOU ARE MEETING YOUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER LOCAL LAWS TO MONITOR, SAFEGUARD AND SUPPORT YOUR STUDENTS ONLINE.**
2. **ENSURE TRACKING AND MONITORING OF ONLINE SAFETY ALERTS AND CONCERNS IS ROBUST AND EFFECTIVE.**
3. **ENSURE ANY NEW TECHNOLOGY INTRODUCED AS PART OF YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY WILL BE COVERED BY THE ABOVE TOOLS AND PROCEDURES - AND ISN'T DEPLOYED UNTIL YOU ARE SURE.**
4. **MAKE SURE ANY NEW ONLINE APPS AND RESOURCES ADDED RECENTLY TO SUPPORT REMOTE LEARNING HAVE BEEN THROUGH ALL THE RIGHT CHECKS (SOME SCHOOLS UNWITTINGLY RELAXED THEIR PROCESSES DURING LOCKDOWNS IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESPOND QUICKLY).**

TRACI GOOD

SELF-INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is Traci Good and I am the Director of The Online Safety Hub, a Community Interest Company (CIC) that specializes in helping to keep children safe online. With a very strong background in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the UK, I am very well placed to provide training and consultancy for professionals, parents and young people.

I draw on experience from previous roles as a Multi-Agency Team Manager, Resettlement Officer and Youth Work Manager to help others assess risk and deploy preventative strategies and provide bespoke, educational support to help keep children safer online. Working with Education, Police and Local Authorities, I have the opportunity to provide grass roots training, alongside policy and strategy development.

I am currently working with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver an Online Safety Project to over 80,000 children and young people, including a specialist 'spin-off' for those with special education needs.

I am a founder member of AACOSS.org, associate member of UKCIS, 360 Assessor and a finalist for the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce 'Enterprising Women' Award 2020 for Outstanding Contribution to STEM.

ORGANIZATION
The Online Safety Hub CIC

The workshops and training I provide meet statutory guidance and training. As a CIC, we put our profits back into the community; this increases reach and allows us to safeguard more young people more effectively.

@onlinesafetyhub **esafetytraining.co.uk**

CASE STUDY

I was very lucky to be funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire, UK, to run a pilot project across 26 primary schools in Chesterfield, as we were seeing a rising number of young people in secondary schools taking nudes and sharing them online. The aim of the project was ultimately to reduce these incidents and to stop other anti-social or inappropriate behavior that is often displayed online. The project was aimed at younger children and involved them becoming digital leaders (or iVengers!) as we wanted to influence positive behaviors from a younger age.

> "Genius, such a cleverly written scheme of work. Our students were so engaged with the topics that getting parents on board was easier, this has in turn reduced the amount of time that we have to spend dealing with incidents in school."
>
> **W.T. (PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER AND ONLINE SAFETY LEAD)**

I trained the educators and professionals that were going to support the children – they then chose four digital leaders from each school. We brought our digital leaders together and trained them too (they chose the name iVengers) and looked at curriculum planning for the next academic year.

The project was peer-led and had significant interaction with parents, as they are our hard-to-reach group. This meant our students were able to teach adults and vice versa. It was brilliant! Our iVengers became the online safety heroes for their school, sharing tips and information, holding assemblies and taking over Twitter. They were, and still are, Online Safety iVengers to be proud of.

The iVengers program was a huge success and this was noted by the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner which is now seeking funding for the iVengers to be rolled out across all Derby City and Derbyshire schools. Once this is up and running, we will look to provide this nationally and also to British schools abroad.

> "Thank you for involving our Special School, we really enjoyed being iVengers and will carry it on into the future.
>
> **A.B. (SPECIAL SCHOOL TEACHER)**"

ALAN MACKENZIE

SELF-INTRODUCTION

Online safety has been a passion of mine for a very long time – I love technology and the huge benefits that can be realized through global connectivity and collaboration. I'm a strong believer that online safety is an enabler, not a showstopper; it should not be a barrier to innovative use of technology. I'm a heavy user of social media, have been a gamer since my early 20's and I love YouTube.

In other words, I use all the things children and young people use; I understand their online spaces, and when I'm in schools or speaking at a conference, this is exactly what I'm talking about.

I strongly believe that if you educate children using the spaces they engage in, they understand more, they're more enthusiastic, they engage and therefore the likelihood of positive impact is greater.

ORGANIZATION
esafety-adviser

@esafetyadviser **esafety-adviser.com**

CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

I worked with a group of sixteen 10-11-year-olds for their Safer Internet Day project. The theme of this project was 'Personality and Identity', the purpose of which was to ask the students to consciously think about the different parts of their personalities and how these change under different circumstances, such as home, school, with friends etc.

Next, we looked at identity and how we reveal different parts of our identity, such as wearing a school uniform or filling in forms. The main part was to then look at these two elements in an online context to see whether there are differences (and to what extent) when behind a device screen.

OUTCOMES

This was a very interesting project for the students to take part in. Described as 'thought-provoking' and 'inspirational' by many, it revealed that for many aspects we don't apply conscious thought to what we are doing in real life; it just comes naturally, mainly through life experience. However, online we have to apply conscious thought, due to the fact that behind a screen there can be a feeling of anonymity, leading to higher risk-taking and identity-revealing.

Click here to read Al's article in Teach Middle East on technology's role in tackling bullying.

HOW SCHOOLS CAN
USE TECHNOLOGY
TO TACKLE BULLYING

SCHOOL BOARD

We all accept that staff at a school board or committee level are primarily concerned with the business of ensuring the delivery of the best and broadest possible curriculum, teaching and learning outcomes. But if we take one step back, then the longer-term discussion about our approach as a school to a digital strategy opens up far more questions for discussion.

Much in the way that all oversight and supportive groups have a strategic plan for the operation, growth and management of a school or cluster of schools, a digital strategy is an important part of a school's ongoing process of review and improvement.

The concepts of 'Intention, Implementation and Impact' that we shared earlier can and should be considered as part of a school's digital strategy. Staff working at this level can both challenge and be reassured that a strategy is in place by using a simple What, Why and How approach.

WHAT?

Has the school considered (where appropriate) how technology can be most effectively used; what technologies aren't but could be used; why specific EdTech has been adopted; and what the school leaders' plans for the next few years are – from a curriculum, management and financial perspective?

WHY?

Technology plays a number of roles within a school. We can start with the obvious one it can play in supporting outstanding teaching and learning. We can also consider its potential role in reducing educator workload and overall operational costs, delivering better internal and external communication, providing digital online safety in line with local legal obligations, and tighter management of the existing IT infrastructure.

Questions to consider:

- How many PCs and tablets do we have in the school?
- How often are they used each day?
- Is there sufficient protection for these devices, if needed, such as with tablets?
- Do we need to have a specific insurance policy for this equipment?
- How do we know they are all used regularly and, if not, should they be deployed somewhere else where there is a greater need?
- Should we buy more kit if we don't know how effectively the current kit is used?
- Have we reviewed how specific solutions could be deployed to reduce educators' workload or improve visibility of student data?
- If so, how did we do that?
- What is our refresh plan, i.e. how often is our current technology renewed or replaced?
- We know budgets are tight, but do we set aside or plan within our finances for a renewal program?

In light of recent worldwide events and the need for schools to adapt and enhance their online learning provision, school board members have a role to challenge plans and progress on this too by asking simple questions, such as:

- What is our current provision for online learning?
- How do we measure its use and effectiveness?

- Is it accessible for all students? What about those who don't have equal access to technology?
- Have we considered the ease with which students will be able to access learning materials?
- How do we maintain appropriate levels of communication with different cohorts of children remotely?
- How do we ensure our staff are able to collaborate and communicate effectively with both peers and students?
- How do we mix synchronous learning (when students are live learning at the same time as the educator) with asynchronous learning (when students are learning remotely without live educator input)?
- Have we considered how we support and manage both staff and student wellbeing when working remotely?

Typically, the reasons why existing EdTech isn't used in the classroom regularly or effectively is either due to lack of relevant educator training (so they lack confidence using the technology) or insufficient planning in updating the school's infrastructure (so the technology is unstable, unreliable or inconsistent). See the Educator and IT Infrastructure sections for more details on how this can be addressed but AI's top tips for questions school board members could ask are:

TOP TIPS

- How do we know what staff competence/confidence levels are?
- How often do all our staff get professional development training on the effective use of technology in the classroom?
- When did we last ask/survey staff to gain an understanding of their levels of confidence?
- How do we capture ideas from new educators on tech they used effectively in previous schools?
- Do school leaders have experience of and understand using EdTech effectively in the classroom?
- Who is leading the school's digital strategy?

One of the biggest topics that board members need to consider, helping them gain confidence that the school has a viable digital strategy, is to understand how the strategy is led. In some schools, the 'strategy' isn't a strategy at all; it's an annual advisory from the Business Manager or Finance Director on what limited funds are available for IT equipment and that some of the current kit is being replaced, like for like.

The most effective digital strategy is one where all relevant stakeholders have been involved in defining the digital vision for the school. It ultimately should be led by educators and shaped by the school's development plan. Within that, school board members with relevant education or technology experience could and should be part of that discussion to support, challenge and ensure the broadest possible approaches are considered.

HOW?

We would argue the questions start with: 'What would we like to achieve and why?'. Not 'What can we afford?' That comes later. Initially, front-line educators, middle and senior leaders should be considering how appropriate technology can be used to improve teaching and learning, its impact on outcomes and, ideally, its potential to reduce educator workload. Within the 'teaching and learning' will hopefully be discussions around innovation, how best to embed digital skills, educator and support staff training – and more.

With that ambition, the plan then needs to involve the technical support manager to ensure the infrastructure and support needed for any new technology is included. Plus, considerations for learners with special needs and online safety requirements from the School Counselor add to the mix, alongside the financial considerations of priorities, how many months or years it might take to achieve – so that even if you can only tackle step one in this year's budget, the expenditure is made with an eye to the long-term objective.

The next questions to ask are:

- What is our digital strategy and is it in a format where all stakeholders can review it?
- How will we measure if any of the elements within it have a genuine impact?
- Who has ownership of the plan? (And if they leave, are others equally informed and able to maintain it?)
- Have we included training for staff within the strategy and how will that be measured?

- Has the plan accounted for support for effective remote learning?
- How does the digital strategy align with our current school development plan?

Hopefully, this section provides both food for thought and some questions to get you started.

NEXT STEPS

1. **ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL'S DIGITAL STRATEGY IS A DISCUSSION POINT FOR YOUR MEETINGS (MAKE SURE SENIOR LEADERS ARE AWARE IN ADVANCE).**
2. **REVIEW CURRENT ASSOCIATED POLICIES AND ENSURE YOU ARE ARMED WITH SOME OF THE QUESTIONS ABOVE.**
3. **CONSIDER A ROLLING REVIEW – PERHAPS WITH SOMEONE IN CHARGE OF MAINTAINING THE VISIBILITY OF THIS STRAND, IF YOU AGREE IT IS IMPORTANT.**
4. **SHARE A COPY OF THIS GUIDE WITH THE SCHOOL'S SENIOR LEADERS AND REST OF THE SCHOOL BOARD.**
5. **SPEAK TO BOARD MEMBERS OF OTHER SCHOOLS OR DISTRICTS TO ASK ABOUT THEIR DIGITAL STRATEGY AND SHARE IDEAS.**

Click here to read an article by Al Kingsley about how technology can support students' and teachers' wellbeing.

Supporting Student and Teacher Wellbeing with Technology

Published by Teach Middle East

Wellbeing has become a hot topic across the globe, for teachers as well as students. It has been revealed by the Ministry of Education that about a quarter of all school pupils in the UAE are being bullied. In addition, results from the Adults@School Wellbeing Survey (of 20,000 school staff) revealed that 40% of participants were 'just getting by'.

Wellbeing should no longer be seen as an individual's issue but as a collective school duty. As Dr Abdulla Al Karam, Director-General of Dubai's Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), says: "Wellbeing of students is no longer optional but a right that schools must uphold". He also refers to wellbeing as "a human right" for pupils, teachers and parents.

Supporting students

The use of technology in schools

Allowing students to report concerns they might have, is also key to encouraging wellbeing and pupil voice. This feature is especially useful for those who feel uncomfortable speaking directly to a staff member, as it allows them to share their problems and get help from staff without having to approach them in person. In addition, providing them with independent access to a tailored list of safeguarding resources can further support student empowerment.

When it comes to internet metering, sometimes it's best not to blanket ban everything, and instead use effective controls that can help monitor and educate students on positive digital behaviour.

Additionally, in the classroom, a student feedback mode is a great way for teachers to capture how students feel, their confidence in a topic and whether

boosting learning outcomes. But first, schools must ensure the technology they have is easy to use. It sounds simple, but so many teachers struggle to use technology effectively or simply lack confidence – which, in turn, causes them anxiety and stress. Schools can address this by, for example, using solutions that have graded user modes, making them more accessible – or, if the investment has already been made, create student digital leaders to help and support the teachers in their class.

Once the teacher is up and running, they can start to make the little gains that add up to a big win for teaching and learning in the classroom. For example, with the click of the mouse, they can push a specific website to every student's computer in the classroom, instead of wasting vital moments waiting for them all to get to the correct start point. Small time-saving measures such as this can soon

FEEDBACK AND THOUGHTS FROM OUR READERS...

Building an effective Digital Strategy is complex, especially with the pace of edtech advancement. **Like a wizard, this guide has arrived precisely when it needed to for our school.** Thank you so much.

LINDA PARSONS, ELECTRONIC LEARNING COORDINATOR

So, reading through @ICTEvangelist & @AlKingsley_Edu's new Digital Strategy Guide. **Brilliant stuff. You are both my heroes this week!**

CAROLINE KEEP, DIRECTOR OF SPARK MAKERSPACE

Well worth a read. **Very good advice on offer from two guys who know what they are talking about.** You could do far worse than using this as a starting point when reviewing/implementing digital strategy in your own school. Thanks for the hard work fellas.

DAVE LEONARD, IT MANAGER

Folks, **you're going to love and value this very much**, it's the digital strategy document that you'll want to read. Great work Mark & Al, loved it, really loved it!

RUSSELL PRUE, FOUNDER OF ANDERTON TIGER

A great resource for all schools wanting to better their digital technology use.

COBY REYNOLDS, PRIMARY TEACHER AND HEAD OF IT

Schools, please take a look at this **really useful document**.

TRACI GOOD, ONLINE SAFETY CONSULTANT

Looks fantastic, Al and Mark - and **a great read.**

ALAN MACKENZIE, ESAFETY ADVISER

This is **a great guide and will be really helpful for all schools** who are looking to create (or re-create) a digital strategy. Thanks @AlKingsley_Edu and @ICTEvangelist for your hard work on this.

BEN WHITAKER, CERTIFIED GOOGLE EDUCATOR, TRAINER AND INNOVATOR, AND FORMER ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL.

Fantastic! Well done both.

HENRY PLATTEN, FOUNDER OF ECADETS AND GOBUBBLE

This is excellent, Al and Mark! **Wish I'd had it last year when we reviewed our digital strategy**... but will still give a copy to the Head and Head of IT nonetheless! Hope it gets the exposure and appreciation it deserves.

ROSIE KOLSTER, PRIMARY FRENCH AND DRAMA TEACHER

A really useful read. It definitely helped improve my knowledge about digital strategies, which made informed decision making quicker and easier whilst working on our digital strategy. Thanks for sharing!

THOMAS SLACK, TEACHER OF COMPUTING, DIGITAL LEAD AND WELLBEING LEAD

This guide is easily accessible, and, using the various models/approaches to embedding a digital strategy, focuses on how to leverage all stakeholders to ensure a consistent approach that looks at all critical success factors. Most importantly, it reinforces the approach that teaching and learning is at the heart of the strategy.

JAMES DONALDSON, DEAN OF LEANER JOURNEY AT CARDIFF AND VALE COLLEGE

USEFUL RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Bearing in mind the regional differences, the following resources all have salient and helpful information for educators, schools and school clusters…

SOLUTIONS AND RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

Buncee – Helping educators to create, present and share engaging multimedia lessons.

Common sense education – Digital citizenship lessons and resources (UK).

Drops – A vocabulary-focused app for language learning that uses pictographic word games.

eCadets – Training resources to make children online safety experts.

Elias Robot – Innovative language learning app, where students practice multiple languages by listening and speaking with Elias in real time.

Flipgrid – A video platform for student engagement and formative assessment. Free for users of Microsoft 365.

GoNoodle – Custom-created videos to inspire children of all ages to move and be mindful.

Lifeliqe – Delivering learning experiences with 3D, AR and VR for enhanced engagement.

Padlet – An easy way for educators and learners to create and collaborate.

Powtoon – A visual communication platform for the creation of customized videos.

Skriware – Helping children learn to design, build and program 3D-printable robots while developing the most sought-after skills across STEM fields.

SplashLearn – Making maths learning fun for younger children.

ThingLink – Making it easy to annotate images and videos.

TinyTap – A social platform to create personalized, shareable learning apps on any subject.

TrilbyTV – Simple-to-use digital signage platform.

Tutorful – Helping families find trusted tutors.

Wakelet – A free content curation platform.

AND FROM NETSUPPORT...

classroom.cloud – New cloud-based virtual classroom and teaching platform for in-school or remote learning.

NetSupport DNA – School/district wide IT management and online safety suite to monitor, manage and maximize EdTech investments.

NetSupport Notify – Notification solution supporting school communication and lockdown with one-way alerts that can't be ignored.

NetSupport School – School classroom management tools to leverage the full value of technology-enhanced teaching and learning.

FOR COLLABORATION, REFERENCE AND DISCOVERY

Education Endowment Foundation – Research site with practical hands-on and research informed approaches to many things in education. Has a superb teaching and learning toolkit.

Education International – Promoting the development of education across the world.

EduFuturists – Listen to weekly EdTech podcasts.

EduGeek – An online community and information portal for IT professionals working in the field of education.

European Commission – Information about education and training in the EU.

Global EdTech – Global news and articles on EdTech.

Global Partnership for Education – The largest global fund dedicated to transforming education.

Great Schools.org – US national non-profit empowering parents to unlock educational opportunities for their children.

ICT Evangelist – A blog full of resources and practical ideas for teaching and learning.

Mindshift KQED – Exploring the role of technology in the future of learning.

Nordic EdTech Forum – Bringing together EdTech founders from eight Northern European countries.

OECD Education – Helping nations to identify and develop the knowledge and skills to create better societies.
Office of Educational Technology – US national educational technology policy and useful resources.
TED talks – A wealth of informative talks from educators across the world.
The Education Foundation – An organization accelerating and supporting positive change in the education system in the UK.
UNESCO – Providing leadership on the Global Education 2030 agenda – and more.
UNICEF Latam and Caribbean – An overview of the education systems in South America.

FOR SCHOOL BOARDS

Canadian School Boards Association – Representing members from provincial school boards associations across Canada.
National School Boards Association – The leading advocate for US public education.
SchoolTrustee.blog – Hundreds of useful resources for school trustees and governors in the UK.
The Key for School Leaders – Wealth of resources for school governors in the UK.
SchoolGovernance – Information for school boards and senior leaders in Australia.
School Education Gateway – Europe's online platform for school governance, education and more.

INFORMATIVE EDTECH BLOGS

Jennifer Gonzalez – A blog from the USA about classroom management, instruction and technology and more!
Teacher Toolkit – A wealth of teaching and learning ideas, resources, training and a best practice 5-minute lesson plan.
George Couros – Informative blog from Canada about innovative teaching, learning and leadership.
Simon Johnson – A useful blog covering technology's role in supporting teaching and learning across all subjects and phases.
Tom Sherrington – A headteacher's blog exploring contemporary educational ideas.
Richard Byrne – Practical ways to use technology to enhance lessons, increase student engagement and more.
ICT Evangelist – A wealth of information and advice around the purposeful use of technology linked to pedagogy.
Steve Bambury – Informative blog about all things digital in learning, including the use of AR and VR.

USEFUL EDTECH YOUTUBE CHANNELS

Sethi De Clercq – Flipped Classroom Tutorials: clear tutorials, EdTech reviews, plus helpful tips and tricks for teachers.
Sam Kary – New EdTech Classroom: weekly education technology tutorials and implementation tips.
Jacob Woolcock – Tips for iPhone and iPad: practical iPhone and iPad tips for teachers to use in the classroom.
David Lee – Videos on education: examples of effective technology integration and STEM education.
Phil Whitehead – Teachblend: helping teachers to teach and learners to learn with online tools and technology.
Alfonso Mendoza – My EdTech Life: connecting educators around the world with each other.

THE CHECK IT OUT! SHOW

Hosted by Al Kingsley and Mark Anderson, the **#CheckItOutShow** uncovers new education services and solutions to help schools everywhere.

You can watch the show on **YouTube here** or listen to the podcast on **NetSupport Radio here**.

Here are just some of the solutions that have been featured so far…

BettFest – A virtual event for 2021, offering product discovery, practical CPD and best practice for educating students during a pandemic.

Chatta – Helping teachers to ensure the best progress in oracy, vocabulary use, writing, memory and wider learning.

Trilby TV – Digital signage solutions for schools everywhere.

IncludEdu – Personalizing a learner's experience through the integration of Assistive Technology into mainstream, small group or individual learning activities.

Discovery Education Pathway – Curriculum-matched content, professional development solutions and professional networking opportunities for schools (UK).

classroom.cloud – Easy breezy, low-cost, cloud-based classroom management and teaching platform for schools for blended and remote learning.

Teach Learn Create – Consultancy to help inspire staff, develop their practice, motivate students – and more!

Tassomai – An online learning program helping students achieve outstanding exam results in GCSE science and other core subjects.

Adobe Spark – Empowering students and educators to create and share visual stories.

Reschool – Reschool aims to stop technology waste in schools and put unused classroom equipment into the hands of schools who can reuse it.

YouTeachMe – Supporting increased learning in school and beyond.

CENTURY – An intervention tool that combines learning science, AI and neuroscience.

Natterhub – Digital citizenship resource for younger pupils.

Now Press Play – Immersive audio, bringing the curriculum to life.

Myedtechbuddy – Learning solution for teaching and assessing computing skills for younger children.

iAchieve – Helping schools to successfully implement and deliver high-quality vocational and technical qualifications.

NetSupport Radio

Stay up to date with NetSupport's latest broadcasts and listen back to our previous ones at your leisure on topics such as online safety, digital citizenship and teaching with EdTech – plus, catch up on all the activity and interviews with key education experts and speakers at recent Bett shows.

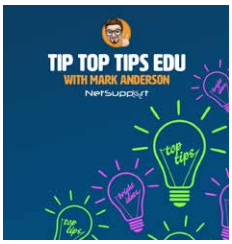
You can also listen to chats about all things education-related from specialists in the sector in our Big Education Debates, find out about new solutions in the Check it Out! show and more in-depth discussions with education sector innovators and experts in our Tip Top Tips Edu series…

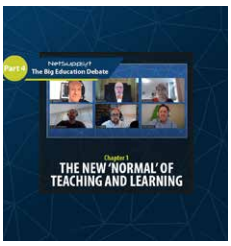
Check it out! Show

In this lively, informative show, NetSupport CEO, Al Kingsley, and ICT Evangelist, Mark Anderson, help schools to discover new solutions in bite-sized segments. Each edtech supplier or guest has the chance to give a five-minute overview of their solution, providing an easily accessible format for busy educator viewers.

#TipTopTipsEdu

In this series, ICT Evangelist, Mark Anderson, chats to guests with interesting things to say on all kinds of education-related subjects! From educational video games, tips on NetSupport edtech solution use, online learning advice, to work/life balance for educators, there's always something new to discover.





Big Education Debates

Our Big Education Debates series sees a panel of seven education sector experts gather for lively discussion on a number of current topics, such as safeguarding and digital citizenship, technology in the classroom, top apps for adding value, the future of UK edtech, challenges across the sector – and more.

Discussions with sector experts

Al and Mark talk to education sector experts about a range of topics, from schools' experiences of setting up their digital strategy, how to shape the 'new normal', look after students' and staff mental health and wellbeing – and much more.

Five in Five

An accessible series of short interviews with education sector guests where each gives their top five tips for their area, all in five minutes! Topics include GDPR, getting kids coding, engaging parents, using iPads effectively and slick network management.

Live interviews from Bett Shows

NetSupport Radio has been lucky enough to interview lots of top education experts over the last few years – live from the Bett show! We've chatted to schools, Bett keynote speakers, experts with celebrity status such as Professor Sugata Mitra – and more!

Listen to NetSupport Radio here

AN OVERVIEW OF NETSUPPORT'S SOLUTIONS

I.T. ASSET MANAGEMENT WITH SAFEGUARDING

This easy-to-use solution provides schools, Trusts and districts with the tools to track, manage and monitor school technology, both in the classroom and across the school, while ensuring learners have a safe environment in which to learn. Network Managers, Online Safety staff and Educators all benefit from dedicated toolkits allowing them to achieve best practice.

CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION AND MONITORING

NetSupport School provides award-winning monitoring, control, collaboration and assessment features to help maximize the benefits of technology-enhanced teaching – supporting all students' learning styles. Working seamlessly across multiple platforms/devices and made in consultation with teachers, it's no wonder NetSupport School has been the complete classroom management solution of choice for 31 years.

SCHOOL ALERTING AND EMERGENCY LOCKDOWN

Schools are fast realizing the benefits of using mass notification solutions such as NetSupport Notify to boost school communication and support their emergency and lockdown procedures. It delivers one-way alerts and notifications (with varying priorities, customizations, audibility and delivery options) to desktop users across multiple platforms, that cannot be skipped, ignored or saved for later.

PRIMARY ASSESSMENT, TRACKING AND JOURNALLING

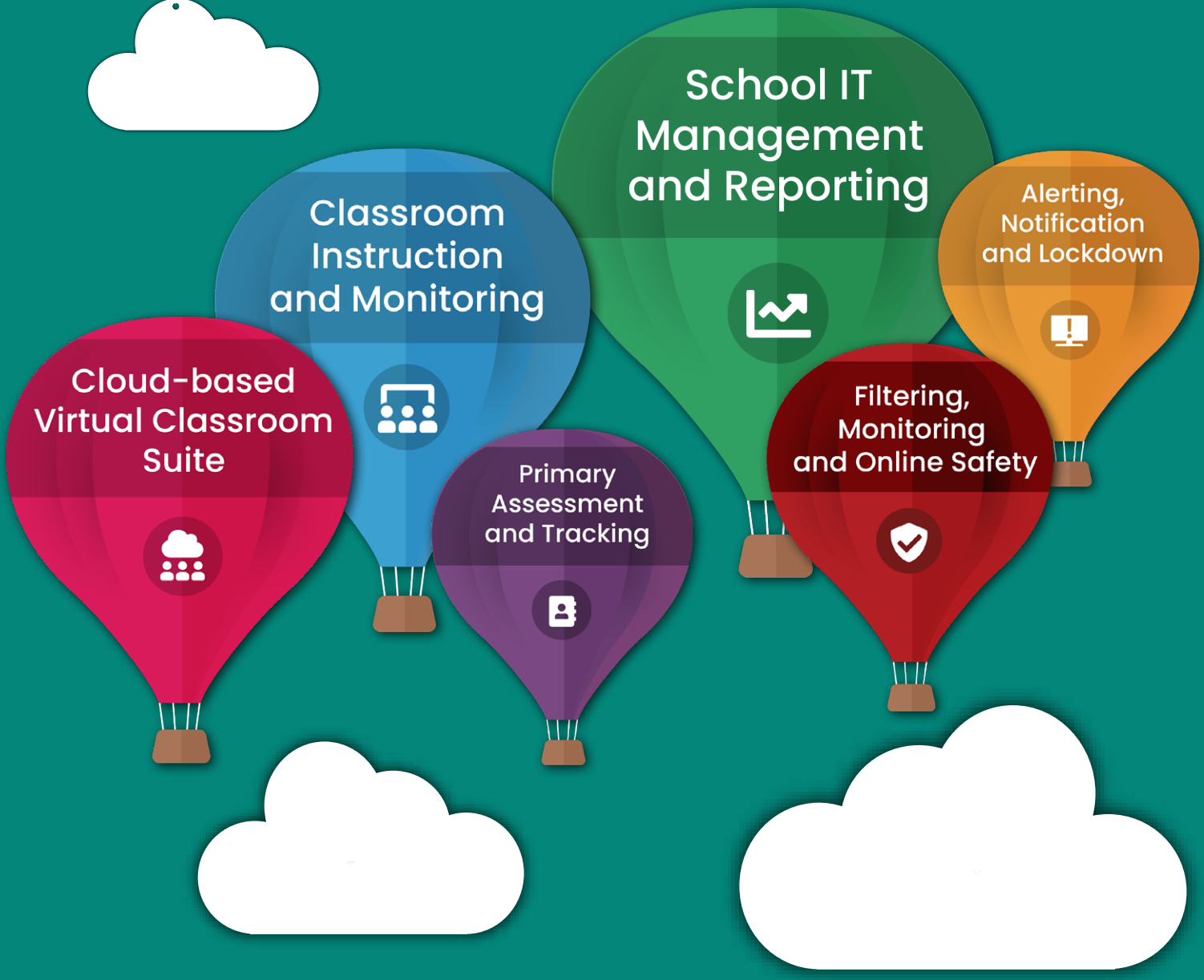
ReallySchool helps UK primary educators to capture and record observations, carry out assessments from the in-built list of local assessment points, identify child-initiated activities – and much more.

CLOUD-BASED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Whether pupils are in school or learning independently at home, providing a sense of continuity can really help support their progress. **classroom.cloud** provides schools with a set of stress-free, cloud-based tools to help teachers lead learning with their class, no matter where they are located.

NetSupport

The sky's the limit



www.netsupportsoftware.com