CREATIVE USE OF TABLETS IN SCHOOLS: MODULE 1

SECTION 1.3 – WHOLE SCHOOL ISSUES (BRINGING TABLETS INTO LESSONS)

In the beginning although it can be tempting to let as many students as possible access the devices you will find it easier to document your evidence and evaluate the process if you select a particular year group or a subject. It is important that you don't think of these as "tablet lessons", but equally you also have to be prepared for teaching and learning to be different. It will be an expensive purchase if you put the devices in front of the students and teachers do the same as they did before. Tablets will change the possibilities with what the students can do during the lessons and the types of outputs that students can produce. Teachers can provide lesson content, and give feedback in new ways and this should impact on student learning and assessment.

[LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS]

One of the areas that schools don't always think about to begin with is learning environments – both physical and virtual. Tablets are mobile devices and depending upon the set up in your school, it can mean that students need more space or different spaces to learn. The CCL project showed that one of the biggest restrictions can be wireless connectivity. Some schools are still struggling with reliable access in only certain areas of the school or for a small number of devices. Whilst you may only have enough devices for one class to begin with, think about your long term plans for wireless connectivity.
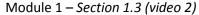
Some of the scenarios in the CCL project encourage active learning and collaboration. As a school, you need to consider whether your teaching and learning spaces could look different. Indeed, you may find some inspiration from the Future Classroom Lab. Ideally, you should think about how the students can work together and how the teacher can work with smaller groups of students.

In terms of the virtual learning environment, this is something that lots of schools forget to take into consideration from the beginning – they often think about it further down the line and by which time teachers and students will have introduced different ways to share and save lesson content and resources.

You have to consider as a school how your students will access lesson content and resources and where they will upload and save their work to. You will also need to look at which applications and tools students use to collaborate and communicate. There are different possibilities for this, but the key for schools is to have a "standard." This will help your teachers and students to be consistent and transparent.

[ESAFETY]

There are also issues to address around e-safety and data pricacy: Are all the students and staff aware of e-safety issues? Do you have school policies and procedures in place to advise your staff and students about e-safety and data privacy?

[TECHNICAL SUPPORT]

Another area that often gets forgotten is technical support. Who in your school is responsible for sorting out the maintenance of devices? Who will support students and teachers in class? In the CCL project a number of the schools trained students to provide first line support and deal with some of those easy fix problems. It's a good idea to identify who these students are.

One of the real difficulties for some teachers is "some students know more about the tablet than me", the reality is that this might be the case, but you have to identify two student tablet experts in each class, and give them a responsibility to support your staff.

[INVOLVING PARENTS]

From the beginning of any tablet implementation programme, you need to involve parents. Keep a note of the kinds of questions they ask, have a frequently asked questions page on your website. Set up a parents group and provide times when students and parents can learn how to use the tablets together.

You also need to decide if the students are going to be able to take the devices home. If you want to implement scenarios around flipped learning or personalisation, then certainly, students need access beyond the lesson time. The whole notion of liberating learners is to give students the freedom to make decisions about what they learn and when.