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Graham Glass,
Founder & CEO

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Teaching Professionals Supporting the EdTech Development of Other Teaching Professionals

By James Garnett, Director of IT, United Learning

Faced with mass disruption during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and colleges saw how important technology became in enabling education to continue. Staff faced steep learning curves to cope with the changes in teaching and learning, not just with remote and blended learning strategies, but also with the effective use of the technology to facilitate it. Now as we emerge from crisis management to more traditional face-to-face models of education, it is essential that they learn from the experience and embed the use of technology into their strategies and leverage the gains EdTech can bring.

In 2020-21, over 4,000 schools and colleges benefitted from funded support offered via the Department for Education's EdTech Demonstrator Programme, which has been extended for a further year. The programme helps to enhance teaching and learning by integrating technology into existing processes, via support from 43 EdTech Demonstrator schools and colleges. James Garnett, the EdTech Demonstrator Delivery Partner Programme Lead and Director of IT at United Learning, explained, "Schools and colleges across the country are facing scenarios, such as how best to integrate the educational benefits they found in EdTech during their crisis response into more normal times. Many senior leaders seeking support via the programme see this as an opportunity to upskill staff as part of their CPD, as well as helping them to plan and implement an enduring digital strategy."

Ben McGinnes, a teacher at Danesfield School (an EdTech Demonstrator), has been pivotal in embedding technology across their curriculum, leading training to bring staff on the journey with him and enabling them to feel confident to effectively use a range of EdTech resources to support teaching and learning.



James Garnett

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Ben explained, "Since becoming an EdTech Demonstrator School in 2020, the importance and impact of effective staff CPD have never been more evident. Danesfield School's journey with EdTech began with staff lacking in knowledge and confidence to use technology effectively in the classroom and so the right training was imperative to our success. As primary school teachers, creative ideas are plentiful, yet these ideas cannot become reality without the necessary tools." Although Ben leads much of the training at Danesfield, he was conscious that empowering staff to manage their own learning was also key in their development. "We introduced teachers to the Microsoft Educator Centre (MEC), an online platform providing on-demand courses and learning pathways, that focus on how to use Microsoft tools and integrating technology into your teaching."

The MEC allowed the teachers to choose a tool or software package to focus on and become an expert in that area by following the structured courses, earning badges and Microsoft Innovator Educator status. He continued, "By developing specific areas, our teachers became progressively more proficient with their use of technology; combining this with peer-led training on EdTech use in the classroom, we now have highly skilled staff, who implement technology in their everyday teaching to enhance their lessons and subsequently improve children's outcomes."

Another EdTech Demonstrator shared their approach to CPD through utilising the Google platform. Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) is one of the largest multi-academy trusts, operating 58 schools across England. Their EdTech venture began in 2011 when they migrated the central Trust team to Google. Since then, their academies have developed their EdTech expertise and collaboration skills within the school, across the Trust, and beyond.

Richard Sparks, their eLearning Strategy Manager said, "The core of our EdTech ecosystem is Google Workspace, where Google Meet and complementary tools can be used to deliver hybrid learning and low stakes quizzing, and Google Classroom to set assignments and monitor progress. Prior to April 2020, we had established a network of digital champions called #innovAETors across the Trust. During the pandemic they were the catalyst that provided CPD and support for our staff, leading to the deeper and wider use of Google and other EdTech tools in our academies, and in our partner schools via the EdTech Demonstrator Programme. Similar to Danesfield, Richard highlighted the benefits of staff certification through programmes such as boot camps to achieve level 1/2 Google Certification and badging for Google Workspace skills for staff and pupils.

Through the EdTech Demonstrator Programme, Richard has delivered support through events such as monthly EdTech CPD sessions and drop-ins, virtual EdTech Conferences as well as bespoke training to individuals and teams. The support consisted of a multitude of practical solutions around live and virtual lessons, that contributed to improved planning, execution, and assessment of learning experiences.

These are just two of the approaches to supporting schools and colleges through the EdTech Demonstrator Programme, which is in place to support any publicly-funded school or college in England. It provides free access to support that enriches and enhances existing methods of teaching and learning and integrates the digital tools that are most likely already in place. James concluded, "Platforms like MEC demonstrate the tangible benefits of different learning management systems that enable staff to upskill and share their own learning to colleagues and encourages continuous development for all involved." **ET**